

St Christopher School

The Parents' Circle Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 17 January, 2010

Present: Richard Palmer (President of the PC) Emma-Kate Henry (Deputy Head of School) Rouane Mendel (Chair) Alison Baigent (Secretary) James Smyth (Treasurer) Heidi Earle (Joint Chair of the JMPC) Allison Phelps

Apologies: Sue Rix (Head of the Junior School) Peter McMeekin (Parent Governor)

In attendance: Ralph Wilce

Agenda

1. Welcome from the Chair and approval of the last minutes
2. Introductory remarks from Richard
3. Treasurer's report
4. JMPC Officers' report
5. Year Group Reps' report
6. Drug Awareness evenings
7. Parent forums
8. Timing and frequency of committee meetings
9. AOB

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November were approved.

2. Richard reported that despite the snow, school attendance had been good. Students who had been absent before Christmas would have missed taking home the School Magazine, copies of which were now available from the School Office.

School was now in the middle of examinations with A level students taking modular exams. Upper 6th students were in the middle of the university entrance process.

School inspections were also taking place this term. The Monte had been inspected very successfully by the Montessori Association. The Boarding Houses are prepared for their inspection by OFSTED on the 8 and 9 February. It had been agreed by the local children safeguarding board that it was acceptable for Evening Classes to take place on School premises, even though this would mean adults who had not been vetted would be coming on to School premises.

There had been a good level of response to the questionnaire sent out to parents and the feedback had been useful. Richard has responded to some of the issues raised in the last mailing.

3. The Treasurer produced an updated report which was then discussed. The report showed a balance in the PC current account of £6650. Richard identified some expenses (totalling just over £600), which were being claimed from the Junior School, as expenses resulting from Junior School Council requests and indicated that the cost of these items would be met by School.

Heidi clarified that monies raised by the JMPC were currently recorded by Linda, the Junior School Secretary. Richard explained that these monies are paid into a School account, the Junior School Play Fund. The meeting was clear that any monies raised by JMPC which were not raised for charity should be used for the benefit of children in the Monte and Junior School. It was also accepted that an efficient method of paying for any expenses incurred by JMPC was needed. It was agreed that there was no need for monies raised by JMPC to be paid into PC funds, nor for cheques to be raised from the PC account. To ensure that these items were properly dealt with in the PC accounts, however, the Chairs of the JMPC would notify the Chair of the PC of expenses needing to be paid by JMPC. The Chair of the PC could then formally approve the payment. At the end of the year, a report on financial movements would need to be provided by the Chairs of the JMPC so that the PC's accounts could be properly prepared.

The Summer Ball had made a loss of £1054. Richard confirmed that the loss would be underwritten by the School and it was agreed that the event should be treated as a School event for accounting purposes. A discrepancy of £505 remained between the figure for ticket sales and that for ticket receipts. It was unlikely now that this could be reconciled. Karen Anthony would be asked if she could provide a file note to that effect. This problem should be borne in mind when future arrangements were made for ticket sales.

It was agreed that for accounting purposes the Fireworks event should also be treated as a school event.

The Treasurer's report listed a number of items (totalling approximately £5000) which had been approved for purchase in the past, which School had bought and paid for, but which had not yet been charged to PC funds. For some of these items no invoices seemed yet to have been provided. Richard undertook to raise these items with the accounts department to clarify which, if any, needed to be charged to the PC.

Approximately £3000 had remained ring-fenced in the PC's deposit account for some time as a contribution to the Colin and Betsy theatre project. It was agreed that it should be transferred into a School account as this would be more financially efficient.

4. Heidi reported that JMPC had held two events last term, as well as assisting with the Fireworks event. There had been a very well attended Quiz Night which had raised around £600. The end of term Coffee Morning had also been very successful. This term three events were planned. It was hoped to have a social evening, a children's event and a family event, which might respectively be a wine tasting, a film showing and a treasure hunt). The next JMPC meeting would be on 20 January.

5. Rouane and Alison reported that IV Group parents had met for a meal at the Three Horseshoes in Norton. Although the event was not as well attended as had been hoped, it had been a very enjoyable evening for those who came.

As III Group and V Group were currently without Year Group Reps it was agreed that the Chair should ask in the next PC mailing to parents if anyone wished to take over those roles.

6. Richard reported that to date 28 parents had indicated they would be coming to the Drug Awareness evening for parents of younger students and 24 to the evening aimed at parents of older students.

7. Richard circulated an outline of the role of the new Parent Discussion Forums (see Appendix). As there would be no time during the Drug Awareness evenings for discussion of School's policies on substance abuse, the first Parent Discussion Forum would have this as its theme. There would be a presentation on the subject and then there would be time for discussion. It was hoped this would take place at the very beginning of next term.

In the light of this new initiative, which the meeting warmly welcomed, it was agreed that a PC World Café event would be postponed for the time being.

8. The meeting discussed whether the timing and frequency of committee meetings could be improved so as to encourage more parents to become involved with the PC. It was agreed that formal committee meetings, particularly ones held on a Sunday evening, might put off some parents. The second meeting of term would in future, therefore, not be a PC committee meeting as such but a meeting of Senior School parents to discuss social events. The first meeting held at the beginning of each term would continue to be a formal meeting of the PC which JMPC officers as well as the Junior School Head and Staff Rep would attend.

Given that PC committee meetings were now included in the School calendar, it was agreed that the next meeting (which would be for Senior School parents to discuss forthcoming events, possibly including the Summer Fair) would still be held on the date originally planned, Sunday, 28 February. The next formal PC committee meeting would be on the first Thursday of next term, the 22 April. Parents would continue to be welcome to attend the formal committee meeting.

9. There were no items of other business

Appendix

Parents' Discussion Forums

Parent discussion forums are intended to give parents the opportunity to discuss a range of issues concerning education. They are open to all parents, staff and governors.

The forum will usually meet twice per year and the Agenda will be set by the Head of the School in conjunction with the Chair of the Parents' Circle Committee.

Parents may suggest items for discussion by writing to the Head at least 7 days before the meeting. This will allow the Agenda to be set and publicised in good time for the meeting. Trends that emerge from the annual survey of parents may also generate ideas for discussion.

The forum is not a decision-making body. Neither is it a place where individual concerns should be raised – these should be raised in the normal way with the relevant member of staff.