

St Christopher School

PARENTS' CIRCLE

Minutes of meeting held on 1 March 2009.

Present: Richard Palmer (President of the PC), Sue Rix (Head of the Junior School), Rouane Mendel (Chair), Alison Baigent (Secretary), Peter McMeekin (Treasurer), Lucy Orsman (Joint Chair of the Junior School PC), Allison Phelps, Jenny Roe, James Smyth, Peter Wesley, Mike Collins (Senior School staff representative).

In attendance: Debbie Mintz

Apologies: Emma-Kate Henry

Agenda

1. Welcome from the Chair and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
2. Introductory remarks from Richard
3. Election of new Treasurer and review of finances
4. Summer Ball
5. School Development Plan
6. World Café event
7. PC Constitution
8. AOB

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January were formally approved. It was agreed that, in future, while minutes would continue to be approved at the next committee meeting, they would also be sent out to committee members before being posted on the School website.

2. Richard reminded the meeting that during periods of bad weather the School's policy was that it would not close unless there was a significant loss of services, such as a power failure. This policy was explained on the School website and updates on the recent bad weather had been regularly posted on the website from around 6am onwards. Attendances during the recent snow had been at over 90% in the Junior School and approximately the same in the Senior School. The London buses had left early on only two occasions. Richard asked for feedback from the committee as to how the policy was working and whether there was anything further the School could do. The committee felt

that the School had coped well in the circumstances and no changes to the School's practices were suggested.

Richard sought the committee's views on whether the Parents' section of the website should be made secure. He pointed out that anything sensitive would be mailed to parents separately. The committee did not feel that it was necessary to make the website password protected as it would make the site more difficult for parents to use.

Richard reported that:

- The Recycled Fashion Show, held the day before, had been a great success
- The Rajasthan trip and the ski trip had both gone very well
- The open afternoon for the Junior School and Monte had been very well attended
- French exchange students were due to arrive on 5 March and Spanish exchange students the following Thursday
- Elections for Major Officials had taken place last Friday and had now been published

3. James volunteered to become the new PC Treasurer, subject to approval from his firm. He would take over once last year's accounts had been signed off. The Chair thanked him for agreeing to take over this role.

Richard reported that he had gone through the accounts prepared by Peter and that some items had been identified as no longer current and could be written off. He emphasised that the accounts would be properly signed off and the PC would be maintained in a reasonable financial state. Lessons would be learned from the financing of the 2008 Summer Ball when responsibility for expenses was not always clear, because everyone was working so hard to make the Ball a success.

Richard acknowledged that the fund set aside for an outdoor performance space as a tribute to Colin and Betsy would have to remain ring-fenced. He explained that the Environment Committee had designed a suitable performance space which had been costed at around £40000. Further funding would therefore be needed. Richard had spoken to Colin and Betsy to explain the position and would invite them back when the performance space was completed.

James raised the issue of the interest that had accrued on the money contributed by parents for the Colin and Betsy fund and it was agreed that it should be accounted for as part of the fund.

It was agreed that at the next meeting the accounts would be signed off prior to their being placed before members at the AGM. An appropriate approval process for incurring expenditure would need to be agreed in future to keep a careful oversight of expenses.

Lucy asked if Junior School PC funds could be kept separate. The Junior School PC raised funds through events such as the afternoon teas and also incurred expenses: treating the Junior School children at Christmas and giving them ice creams at Sports Day. Richard explained that when the School had collected PC subscriptions, a third had been allocated to the Junior School. It was agreed that rather than the Junior School have a separate bank account that it should keep a separate cash book.

It was also agreed that further discussion of financial matters would take place after last year's accounts had been signed off and James had taken over as Treasurer.

4. The meeting discussed whether it would be practical to run a Summer Ball in 2009 as no other parents had come forward to help. It was acknowledged that the 2008 Ball had been very successful thanks to Lauren and Polly's hard work and that ideally a small sub-committee was needed to take the lead in planning such an event. Concerns were expressed regarding the PC's ability to support a Ball financially, given the capital currently in the Bank Account.

Richard offered to arrange for the marquee and the catering provided the PC would be prepared simply to sell tickets and help on the day. On that basis, it was agreed preparations for the ball should go ahead and that Year Group Reps would take the lead trying to sell tickets. It was also agreed that the Ball should be a social event and that the charity auction would not be repeated this year. Any profit made would go to PC funds.

5. Rouane produced a summary of PC thinking on the Parents' section of the School Development Plan and invited any further comments to be sent to her by e-mail. Suggestions regarding the outcome section were also needed as that had not been drafted to date. Richard explained that he intended to finalise the strategic plan by the last day of term. He would need to receive final comments by 20 March.

There was some general discussion of how to advance an understanding of the role and activities of the PC. It was agreed that it would be helpful if Rouane's letter, posted on the school website, could also go out to parents in the School newsletter. Parents could be reminded to check the parents' section of the website regularly. The dates and location of PC committee meetings should also be included in the School calendar and Year Group reps should encourage parents to attend. It was agreed that future meetings should be held in the Junior School to make sure that there was sufficient space for parents who wished to attend.

6. Richard explained that he and Emma-Kate were still researching possible speakers but had not yet been able to find anyone suitable. They would continue to look into this.

7. Although no comments had been received on the PC constitution as such, a number of issues had been raised which were related to the operation of the PC and so to the constitution. The role of the Junior School PC was discussed. Sue pointed out that questions were sometimes raised which she could not properly respond to without advance notice. Richard indicated that input from parents, students and staff was always welcome but that some issues needed more thorough discussion than could be achieved in a PC meeting. They would be best dealt with at a separate meeting. Richard's view was that the PC should not act as a conduit on individual matters between parents and the School; individual problems should be raised with the School directly.

It was agreed that it was premature to attempt any revision of the constitution before the PC's role had been clarified and that further consideration of the constitution should take place after the preparation of the strategic plan.

8. Jenny updated the meeting on her work developing the Nearly New Shop. She had met with the Bursar and had agreed that the Nearly New Shop would be sited next to Lost Property. As the Bursar did not want Reception to be used as a dropping-off point for the Nearly New Shop, it was still to be agreed where items for the shop could be brought. It had been agreed that a percentage of the takings would be paid to the PC and that payments would be made from the shop's takings in October and March. The shop would be running by next term. Coffee would be available there and information could be put out about the PC and PC events.

Parents would need to be informed about the shop and a list of items which the shop would accept and sell would have to be drawn up. Jenny agreed to draft a letter by March 18 for Richard to include with the next parents' mailing, which would go out on March 20. This would invite parents interested in helping with the shop to come forward.

Rouane indicated that the next PC committee agenda would include reports from Year Group Reps.

The date of the PC AGM would be the 9 May.

The next meeting of the PC committee would be 26 April.