

St Christopher School

The Parents' Circle Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 8 November 2009

Present: Richard Palmer (President of the PC) Emma-Kate Henry (Deputy Head) Rouane Mendel (Chair) Alison Baigent (Secretary) Sean McGovern (Joint Chair of JMPC) Allison Phelps, Carly Smith (Junior School staff representative)

Apologies: Sue Rix (Head of the Junior School) James Smyth (Treasurer) Mike Collins (Senior School staff representative) Peter McMeekin (Parent Governor)

In attendance: Julie Cole, Sula Katsiani, Anita McGovern, Mark and Simone Payne, Nick Payne, Nimi Hirani, Vivien Ryan, Kim Brosan.

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. Fireworks event
7. Role of the parents in the PC and wider contribution to the life of the School
8. School's policy regarding eating meat on school trips
9. AOB

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the parents attending a committee meeting for the first time. The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September were formally approved.

2. Richard reported that this was a busy term, including GCSE module exams and rehearsals for West Side Story. Plans were also being made for the

Christmas gathering, Monte Christmas event and Junior School Coffee Morning. Emma-Kate was heading a new teaching and learning initiative. School Council had been concentrating on the issue of safety on Barrington Road. The local council had been contacted and progress was now being made. The language exchanges for Year 10 students had been very successful. From next year it looked likely that criminal background checks would need to be carried out on families hosting exchange students in this country.

A drugs awareness event for parents and staff was being planned for January. It was intended that there should be two separate evenings devoted to this, one for parents of children in Years 4 to 8 and the other for parents of older children. The evening would include a talk about School's policy and a speaker from the Hertfordshire Drug Awareness Unit. Invitations should be going out to parents before the end of this term.

3. James had prepared a written Treasurer's report which was circulated. James identified a number of financial matters which needed to be clarified and some issues on which the PCC needed to provide guidance.

Karen Anthony had also produced an evaluation report to Richard and Rouane on the Summer Ball. It looked as if the Ball would make a loss. The exact amount remained unclear as some tickets seemed to have been bought but not paid for. This was still being looked into. There were a number of reasons why the Ball had not been more successful financially, not least that the band had cost £730 although it had originally been hoped that a band could be found that would perform without charge. Karen sent her apologies as she was not able to attend the meeting and confirmed that she would be happy to organise a summer event again.

Richard pointed out that the Fireworks event may also not make a profit.

It was agreed that James and Rouane would liaise with Richard to deal with more minor matters on the accounts and questions requiring decisions from the PCC would be addressed at the next meeting.

4. Sean reported that the JMPC had held a meeting in September which had been attended by 19 or 20 parents. Thought was being given to how to welcome new parents better and how to improve the dissemination of information to class

reps. A new PC notice board had been put up to raise the profile of the PC. Junior School parents had contributed to the organization of Bonfire Night and a Quiz Night on 13 November was already sold out. Issues being raised by the Junior School parents included increasing the parental input and putting on new events for the children which could be funded out of, for example, cake day monies. Ideas for events included a children's disco and a film club

5. Rouane reported that James and Peter Wesley wished to stand down as Year Group Reps for III and V Groups respectively so new Reps would need to be sought for those years. The other Year Group Reps reported as follows:

I Group: Debbie and David Mintz sent their apologies as they were unable to attend the meeting but reported in writing. There were no issues raised to them by I Group parents. They were hoping to arrange a Christmas event and asked whether the PC would be prepared to provide any funding. The meeting agreed that it was not the PC's current practice to do this. Allison offered to talk to Debbie and David about the options for year group events.

II Group: Allison reported that a meal had been held at a local Indian restaurant. Although not very well attended, the evening was enjoyed by those who came and two parents had travelled up from London.

IV Group: Rouane reported that a meal was planned at the Three Horseshoes in Norton and that invitations would go out soon.

Rouane also reminded everyone that the PCC was meeting for drinks at the Three Horseshoes on Thursday 12 November and any parent at the meeting would be welcome to come.

6. Richard reported that the fireworks event had gone well and thanked everyone who helped. The same amount of money had been spent on the fireworks as last year, although the display last year was 90 seconds longer. All of the tickets had been sold, but the event would probably make a slight loss. The meeting discussed how this might be avoided next year. It was agreed that increasing the ticket price or reducing the length of the display would not be desirable. Not including food in the ticket price might have to be considered. No decisions would be taken on this until the final accounts for the event were received.

7. Sean explained to the meeting that the perception in the Junior School was that the PC was largely about fundraising and establishing a good social network.

Although these aspects of the role were successful and important, the feeling among many Junior School parents was that more opportunities to understand and contribute to the ethos of the School would be welcomed. Richard offered to initiate a twice-yearly forum at which parents could raise issues with him. There was then discussion as to how agenda items for such a forum would be agreed, bearing in mind that Richard would need adequate notice of issues to be raised in order to give a properly considered view and the risk that issues of interest to only one or two parents might dominate a forum unreasonably. It was agreed that Richard and Sean would discuss the terms of reference for such a forum and recommendations would be brought to the next Committee meeting.

Rouane explained that pressure on the agenda had prevented further discussion of a World Café event but this would be on the agenda for the next meeting and any suggestions for keynote speakers would be welcomed.

8. Alison raised concerns on the part of some parents that students on school trips (where the food was not being prepared by the School) were allowed to eat meat. Richard emphasised that there had been no change of policy on this issue, although there had been some confusion about the policy itself. The issue had been discussed by Governors, staff, major officials and Council to help clarify the situation which is that *'All catering on School trips should, wherever possible, be vegetarian. All packed lunches, whether provided by home or School must be vegetarian. Where pupils are eating in a communal dining area with other groups and the service is self-service buffet style the children may have free choice, although a vegetarian option must always be available.'*

Providers would continue to be told that St Christopher was a vegetarian school and that good quality vegetarian food would be needed. Where necessary, support and specimen menus would be offered to providers.

9. Nick Payne raised concerns that there had been increases in fees for individual music tuition because music tutors had been asked to pay a back-dated "service charge" for the use of school facilities. Richard explained that such a charge had originally been introduced in the 1980s and all music teachers had been engaged on the basis that the charge was payable. As a result of an administrative oversight the charge had not been paid by the teachers or collected by School for the past few years. After discussions with music teachers, School had agreed not to collect the full charges. The arrangements would also be reviewed annually.

Rouane reported that Rebecca Hammond had asked parents to help with the West Side Story interval bar. Although some parents and a number of staff were already helping out, help was still needed on the Thursday evening. Anyone able to help should contact her as soon as possible.

The next meeting would be Sunday, 17 January.