

# **JOHN ROAN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**MAZE HILL, 7.15PM**

## **MINUTES**

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Present: Simon Baxter (Chair), Nicki Turner (Vice Chair), Julian May (Treasurer), Des Malone (Head), Liz Gardiner (Chair of Governors), April Shelton (Music Dept.), Mike Sayers (Maths Dept. and Braithwaite trustee), Jill Powell, Diana Greaves, Sarah Thomas, Julian May, Sharon Crawford, Denise Howe, Patrick Cooper, Rosemary, Judith Barrett, John Davidson, Andrew Barrett, Angie Birkett, Dave Davis, Andrew Steeds, Sam Binns, Isabel O'Neil, Sally Spong.

Apologies: None

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Simon welcomed the new parents to the meeting and said how pleased we were to see some new faces and hoped they would find the meetings useful and interesting.

### **2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 No amendments proposed. A new policy on homework was discussed at the last meeting and a meeting with parents had been planned but we have heard nothing further. Des gave an update.

2.2 The latest research now suggests that of three options, (a) a simple numerical mark for home work, (b) mark and comment and (c) comment alone, option (c) is the most productive way for a teacher to deal with reviewing homework. Des will provide the notes of his presentation on this issue to Simon by e-mail for onward transmission to JRSA parents. The notes contain references to the actual research.

2.3 Maths and Science teachers are not enamoured of the idea and the matter is still a subject for staff discussion. The school needs to go through the process of putting in place agreed formalities on assessment of lessons and homework and once that has been done parents will be updated. Des is expecting to be able to communicate with parents in the second half of this term.

2.4 Information sheets for permission slips for school trips – these have previously been sent out for every trip and the proposal was that they should only be filled in once at the beginning of each school year. This will be implemented this year and a form will go out with the next letter.

### **3. FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF JRSA**

Julian explained, for the benefit of new parents, that the JRSA role encompassed not only fundraising but also, perhaps more importantly, provided an avenue of communication between parents and school that both sides found useful. In addition there is a social aspect, in particular events such as the Quiz Night, which had proved popular gave parents the opportunity to get to know on another in more informal surrounding that a meeting.

### **4. WELCOME TO JOHN ROAN FROM THE HEAD**

Des introduced himself and explained he attends the meetings and have been coming since January of this year. He had found the meetings very useful as a means of getting to know parents' concerns and hoped parents had found them equally useful.

### **5. COMMUNITY & FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES & MULTICULTURAL EVENING**

5.1 April (Music Department) outlined the plans for the multicultural event planned for November (tentative date 13 November 08). April and Claire Flynn are organising the event. The school has 37 different languages/nationalities and none predominate. It is the staff's observation that the school does not have a problem with racist clashes and in April's experience that is not common in London schools and is certainly a situation worth fostering.

5.2 Good staff turnout for first meeting and plenty of ideas so much so that further activities may be planned for school days later in the year). The very general layout being discussed is an hour or so of activities where students share their culture through language cooking, history lessons, then dancing singing involving students, parents possibly also outside agencies and a finale that might involve some sort of parade involving costumes and flags.

5.3 Really keen to involve parents so people get together and get to know each other and very keen to have any help on offer. Letters will go out to parents later this term. It will not be a fundraising event but will be funded by the school. It may have some fundraising potential though – a recipe book has been mooted.

5.4 April has been working on corporate fundraising. Some parents were involved in a fundraising committee last year and the plan was to reconvene this term. Nicki and April will liase over reconvening Committee and comparing notes on the results of the cold calling we have done.

### **6. TREASURER'S REPORT [Report at Appendix A]**

Not much activity on the accounts except continued receipt of the lottery money. Current balance £3797.27 but a cheque to the school for £600 will shortly be cashed (donation of £300 each to PE and music departments agrees last term).

### **7. BRAITHWAITE**

7.1 Sally Spong, Josiah Spong and Mike Sayer spoke about Braithwaite, an outdoor pursuits site with buildings and grounds. Mike, Sally and Des are trustees of the charity, which maintains Braithwaite. The site was acquired by a headmaster of the school in the 1920s and used as a camping ground for pupils. A generous donation in the 1970s enabled the trust to build on the site and Braithwaite now provides opportunities for all sorts of outward bound activities. School trips take place every summer and pupils will get at least one chance to visit in their school lives, often more.

7.2 Sally has 3 sons who have been on Braithwaite trips and it has 'a very special place' in her family and her son Josiah came along to the meeting to talk about his experience there. He described the experience as magical and very special 'when you are there you can feel it' and eloquently described the how pupils' relationships were changed by the trip. It gave pupils the opportunity to mix and get to know each other and teachers outside the school environment, friendships were forged which lasted the rest of schooldays.

7.3 Mike was called upon to explain why a letter from a certain pupil's parent, extolling the virtues of Braithwaite, referred to her son wearing a tiara and waving a wand ....he was able to give a respectable explanation. Sally rounded it off by saying the weather can be very uncomfortable but nevertheless Braithwaite 'never disappoints'. This sentiment was echoed by other parents at the meeting whose children had had the same experience as Josiah.

7.4 Des said he had plans to make use of Braithwaite more extensively for field trips etc. It is largely booked up this year but next year there are opportunities. Some departments such as maths had already been organising trips along these lines.

## **8. UPDATE ON PROPOSED SCHOOL MOVE**

8.1 Des and Liz had met with head of Regeneration Greenwich and representative of English Partnerships. It is planned meetings will take place every 3 months. Des assured us that he and Liz have been and were continuing to press for an early resolution and timetable for building. The issue regarding the gasometer was being dealt with at ministerial level. It now appears the gasometer owner has plans for its removal in any event. The issue is how soon the decommissioning will take place and whether the building can proceed in the meantime. There are also still the other planning issues to be resolved.

8.2 Des confirmed that John Roan has not fallen off the first phase of the BFS timetable but the phase has now been split into 2 and John Roan was in the second part of the first phase. They have been assured funding will not be lost. If it appeared that the plan would not ultimately proceed contingency plans would be explored in good time.

8.3 Des and Liz will agree an addition to the next letter to parents to set out the current plans for the new school building and the current state of play.

8.4 For the next three years at least students will be occupying the presents sites and therefore the focus will be on those sites and on ways to improve them.

8.5 Please see additional comments on this issue from Andrew Steeds (Appendix B)

## 9. SCHOOL WEBSITE

Jan Farmer had been dealing with this but has been away for some time because of a badly broken wrist. Colin, the school's media resource officer has been working on it. With Patrick's assistance the problems with the previous site owner have now been settled. Colin has been asked to turn on the new website ASAP and a date will, if possible, be given in the next parents' newsletter.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Simon explained that his, Nicki's (Secretary) and Julian's (Treasurer) tenure has come to an end so nominations and elections will have to be dealt with at the next meeting. If anyone wants to put forward any nominations prior to the next meeting he would be happy to receive them by email ([simon@baxter5596.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:simon@baxter5596.wanadoo.co.uk)).

10.2 Des confirmed academic review days have not been abandoned but it is now counted by the local authority as a non-teaching day and had already exhausted its quota of non-teaching days for this term. There is therefore a 'catch-up' evening session with tutors on 23 October 08. Des mentioned there is a calendar section on the school website, which shows all the significant school dates (<http://www.thejohnroanschool.co.uk/school/timetable.htm>).

10.3 Des also confirmed that the 'statement bank' of school report (i.e. where the teacher has a set number of phrases in the electronic report document from which to choose the comments to be included in a child's report) was to be withdrawn. He could not give a firm date but it would certainly be changed by the end of the school year 2009. This news was enthusiastically received by parents.

10.4 Liz mentioned that there are governor posts to be filled and invited nominations which she or Des would be happy to receive by email (Liz Gardner [pj@pj.freemove.co.uk](mailto:pj@pj.freemove.co.uk), Des [dmalone.thejohnroan.greenwich@lgfl.net](mailto:dmalone.thejohnroan.greenwich@lgfl.net)).

10.5 A new pupil has badly broken ankle and cannot get into school from home (Deptford area). Parents have been advised to contact the special needs department at Riverside House but in the meantime, if the parents contact Des he will see what he can organise.

10.6 Des confirmed the English and Science SATs results have only just come back and some of the English papers have not in fact been marked.

10.7 Lockers for pupils were discussed. All parents find it less than satisfactory that pupils have to carry all belongings (including sports kit) with them all day. Des said, apart from the 6<sup>th</sup> formers, there is simply insufficient space for lockers. He has had to reorganise to try and create more classroom space which is a priority and there is simply nothing left for lockers. The plans for the new school building do have provision for lockers.

10.8 The temporary dining areas, which Des had hoped to have constructed by the start of term, have been delayed. They do not need planning permission but, because local residents have objected to them the Council is treating the issue as a planning process. Once the issue is public then it would be very helpful if parents could write to the Council in support of the structures. Parental presence at a planning meeting (which is public) in due course may also be helpful.

10.9 Teachers have not been giving exercise books to pupils when they are full so revision is difficult. Des said this should be done without question and he will follow up on this.

10.10 There is still a problem with the opening of the toilets at the Westcombe Park site.

10.11 Some children were told who their English teachers would be at the end of last year but changes have taken place over the holidays. Des said this was inevitable as this Department had had the largest number of staff changes but things should now settle down and he had every confidence the new staff would deliver a very good teaching service.

10.12 KS3 targets in Maths and Science (which were high) had been exceeded in the SATs results. English is close to target but we won't know the true result until all papers had received marks. GCSE results were excellent. 50% of children achieved 5A\* to C. 34.5% 5A\* - C in an all GCSEs including Maths and English. The targets were 52% and 39% respectively. The predictions for Maths were not matched by results and this is being taken further. 40 children's results are being challenged as a result of a striking discrepancy between the result in their final papers as opposed to previous papers and performance through the year. The A levels show a Grade II value added result which is outstanding.

## **11. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Des demonstrated how the virtual learning environment, which will eventually be available on line in all subjects and to all pupils and families, works in practice. It is being rolled out so far in 2 subjects. John Roan is the pilot for all Greenwich schools. Eventually all lessons and the homework should be on line.

## APPENDIX A

### JRSA Treasurer's Report

09/09/08

<b>Income</b>	July & August		
	Business Premium Account	July	£171.00 lottery payments
		August	£168.00 lottery payments
	prizes	Community Account	July
prizes		August	£30.00 transfer for lottery
<b>Expenditure</b>	Business Premium Account	July	£30.00 lottery prizes
		August	£30.00 lottery prizes
	Community Account	July	£55.65 to Sharon Crawford, expenses, new parents' evening

Business Premium Account balance @ 29/08/08 £2,750.25

Community Account £853.21

HSBC Business Money Manager Account -  
(awaiting quarterly statement) Balance £93.90

HSBC Community Account - no transactions in July and August  
Balance £99.91

**Total funds: £3, 797.27**

However, cheques for £600 - £300 each for music and PE depts. about to be processed.

## **APPENDIX B**

Sent: 17 September 2008 08:48:00

Nicki

Thanks very much for these. I have a couple of amendments to make to your section 8, to reflect the actual conversation, and one to your section 10:

- I think you need to clarify (8.2) that 'the second phase' is the second phase of the first phase, not Phase 2 of the BSF programme for Greenwich.
- Des said that the quarterly meetings (the first of which had been held at the end of August) would continue for a 12-month period, at the end of which (around the end of the school year, though there was some vagueness here) the school would either be firmly committed to a move to the Peninsula or not.
- Concerning 8.3, a number of people mentioned that few parents coming new to the school were at all clear about the proposed move. Others raised the fact that parents had not been told about the governing body's decision at the end of this February to move its agreement to support the move in principle to a firm agreement in fact. The meeting was told that the decision had not been considered sufficiently noteworthy to merit such a letter; that's when the decision was taken to 'add a paragraph' to Des's letter. Why this letter should come from Des when he was not the chair of the meeting that made the decision was not made clear.
- When a question was raised about what might happen should the move not go ahead at the end of the 12-month period, no indication of a Plan B was mentioned in the course of the meeting. Des said that he would 'take the waters' and, if he felt the meetings were running against a decision to move, he would begin to formulate a Plan B.
- Finally, as far as 8.4 goes, there was considerable vagueness about the timescale involved, and Des was understandably reluctant to commit himself to any date. Maybe 'for the foreseeable future' is a better representation of the information given in the meeting.
- Finally, one addition to your 10.12. Excellent though they clearly were, you didn't give the targets for GCSE results, which leaves the figures a bit out of context. The targets were 52% and 39% respectively; I don't think we were told what the figures were last year, but that might be worth adding, too.

Thanks.

Andrew Steeds