

**ST. JAMES THE GREAT ROMAN CATHOLIC (VA) PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL**  
WINDSOR RD., THORNTON HEATH, SURREY CR7 8HJ

**Minutes of the Annual Governors and Parents Meeting** held on Monday 4th November 2002 in the school, commencing at 7:40 p.m.

Governors present:

|                  |                                       |                |                         |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Rev M Jones      | Foundation Governor (Chairman)        | Mr S Beck      | Head Teacher Governor   |
| Mr F Butler      | Foundation Governor                   | Mr R Gonsalves | Foundation Governor     |
| Mr A Mills       | Foundation Governor                   | Rev J O'Toole  | Foundation Governor     |
| Mrs A Scowcroft  | Foundation Governor                   | Mr D Watson    | Foundation Governor     |
| Mrs E Williamson | Foundation Governor (Vice Chairman)   |                |                         |
| Mrs E Macadam    | LEA Governor                          | Mr S Pollock   | LEA Governor            |
| Mr R Kremis      | Elected Parent Governor(arrived late) | Mr B Hughes    | Elected Parent Governor |

Others present:

Mrs L Lewis (Acting Clerk), 80 Parents and Staff

- 1 Fr Jones opened the meeting with a prayer remembering the children in southern Italy and all who died in November, and welcomed all parents, guardians, governors and staff attending.
- 2 Apologies for absence were recorded from Mr C Hart (Foundation Governor), Mrs T Cefai (Elected Teacher Governor), Mrs D Lawless (Elected Staff Governor) and Miss Berry. The governors present introduced themselves and outlined their areas of interest.
- 3 Corrections to the minutes of the last Annual Governors and Parents meeting, held on 14 November 2001 were: Mrs Conti was not present and gave her apologies, apologies were also given by Mrs Stock and Mrs Gumley. With these corrections, the minutes were accepted as a true record. Fr Jones later signed them accordingly.
- 4 Under matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting, it was mentioned that the puddles in the playground were getting worse. Mr Beck said the LEA had visited in the week before half term. They saw the boundary fence and the Infant playground as high priority. They will reply as soon as possible about funding. They are surveying all schools in Croydon, so it could be 2 – 3 months before a reply is received. The playground would cost £25,000 to resurface. Recoating would be cheaper, but not so durable. The school regarded this as high priority.
5. Fr Jones then gave his opening remarks and introduced the Annual Report for the academic year 2001/2002, and thanked those who had worked hard to compile it, including the people who had typed it and taken the photographs. He apologised for the late despatch of the report and said they would try to do better next year. The report was taken as read, and as no questions arose initially from the floor, some written questions were answered first. He thanked the parents who had submitted written questions.
  - a) The first question congratulated the school on the developments to the web-site and asked if all the school's policies could be put on the web-site. Mr Beck thanked the questioner for her compliments and said that all the school's policies would be gradually added to the web-site over time. A question was asked from the floor about the school's homework policy. Mr Beck said it was available from the school office.
  - b) The next two related questions were regarding the lack of notice of the Annual Parents and Governors' Meeting and the issuing of the report only three days before the meeting. Mr Beck apologised for the delay in issuing the report, which was due to both pressures of work and collating problems. Notice of the meeting was given in the first Newsletter of the term, so that the statutory requirement for 14 days notice had been given. The 2003 meeting will be on Monday 17th November at 7.30 pm.
  - c) The next question concerned the lack of canvassing in the Parent Governor elections and asked if canvassing was not part of the procedure. Mrs Macadam said the procedure was to give a half page biography and philosophy with a photograph. She said that personally she thought canvassing was inappropriate.

- d) The next question concerned the exclusion of the names of non-teaching staff from the report. Mr Beck said that the non-inclusion of a further 19 names should in no way be seen as a lack of regard for these personnel, who were greatly valued. The format and content of the report are kept under continued review.
- e) Concern about the balance of children from St Bartholomew's and St Andrew's parish attending the school and that more are now coming from St Bartholomew's, despite the fact that St Andrew's parishioners do not have an alternative school, was expressed in the next question. Fr Jones said the two parishes are viewed as one geographical area and applicants from both parishes are judged against the stated admissions criteria. The statistics are provided for interest only.
- f) The next question was about the need for the attendance analysis graph, when the detailed attendance analysis on page 7 seems sufficient. Fr Jones said that it was something of a Catch 22 situation with either too much, too little or unclear information provided. The graph was only given to show the information in a different way and was in no way intended to be offensive. Again, the presentation of this information is kept under review.
- g) More details on the curriculum evening covering the school's approach to Numeracy were requested in the next question. Mr Beck said details would be sent out closer to the date.
- h) The next question asked what was the name of the local partner school to which we gave targeted support and what support was given. Mr Beck said it was not considered appropriate to name particular schools to which we are lending support. The support consists of staff from St James the Great working alongside staff from other schools, sometimes here and sometimes at the partner school.
- i) In answer to the next question about special needs, Mrs Macadam said that there were currently 49 children on our special needs register and Mrs Pillay worked on a full-time basis, with 0.6 of her contracted time being allocated to special needs. She said that early identification of special needs is carried out at Nursery level by both Nursery staff and support staff working with them. Mrs Pillay was aware of these children and would become more directly involved as they entered Reception.
- j) The next question about the National Curriculum Results asked for a graph showing Level 2 achievement in the Year 2 writing test; for the use of Year 2 and Year 6 instead of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (terms not always recognised by parents); why there is only a teacher assessment for Year 2 science and whether it was a statutory requirement to produce the tables on pages 12, 13 and 14 inside the report or could they be put in an appendix (and that the information in these tables is as indigestible as ever and getting worse). Mrs Scowcroft said that the governors were confident that the information is provided in a format that makes it understandable to the parent body as a whole, although the format is kept under review, as mentioned earlier. She said Key Stage 1 and 2 were now well established within education and while acknowledging the need to avoid jargon, the governors feel that they are now widely understood terms. Foundation stage is Nursery and Reception, Key Stage 1 is Years 1 and 2 and Key Stage 2 is Years 3,4,5 and 6. There is no statutory test for Science in Year 2 and only a teacher assessment is required. The tables on pages 12-14 are the recommended tables for inclusion in governors' annual reports. We could appendix them.
- k) Two questions expressed concern about the Oratory being left empty for over a year since it was blessed by the bishop and being used for storing snacks and advertising cake sales and so on, which showed a lack of respect for our blessed and holy places and set a bad example for the children. A detailed report on progress towards completion was requested and it was asked why this had not been given regularly in the school newsletters. A request was made for information on how much money had been raised from family plaques and how many families had contributed to the scheme. It was asked if the Oratory could be dedicated to Our Lady of Compostella. Mr Beck said that donations from parents towards the Oratory fund totalled £8000 from some 300 families. Mention had been made in the school Newsletter about progress - in particular with the stained glass windows. The installation of these is imminent and the contractor is due to hand the room back to us on completion of the remaining remedial works to deal with expected settlement cracks. At the time of construction, it had been decided to dedicate the Oratory to Our Lady and St James, although not to Our Lady of Compostella in particular. Mr Beck said the Oratory had inadvertently been used for what was acknowledged as inappropriate. This was quickly resolved when the matter was brought to the school's attention. Once the windows are installed, the whole area will be refurbished and the Oratory will be used for its designed purpose.
- l) A further question on the school environment asked for more financial details about the planned development of the sporting facilities. Mr Beck said the development of the sporting facilities is proposed as a LEA project with lottery sports funding. It would be organised by the LEA, although the governors would have to give their agreement. The school would be expected to contribute 10% of the costs. At this time we do not know the size of the project – it is hoped it will be 2 multi purpose courts.

- m) A question on financial matters asked if Elaine Williamson could be given the platform to talk about school finances and to explain the huge surplus (£93,898). Could we have an insight into the 2003/4 budget. Mr Pollock spoke rather than Mrs Williamson. He said the £93,898 was not a true surplus as nearly £74,000 was committed expenditure, e.g. laptops, interactive whiteboards and projectors, the Oratory, a contribution towards the minibus and the general purposes fund, leaving a small contingency of £20,000. The school is not notified of its budget until late February early March. It is the governors' duty to cover fixed costs before considering other spending.
- n) The next question asked if Mrs Vassallo could give parents more information about the school council. Mr Beck said that the school council is currently working on a statement outlining the work they do for inclusion in a future Newsletter. It is hoped that there could be regular items in the Newsletter in future and/or a school section council on the web-site.
- o) Mr Beck said that the Friends Association would answer a question about the replacement of the minibus.
- p) The final written question asked if the governors had produced a leaflet giving children and parents a clear explanation of the process by which the school deals with bullying incidents. The question went on to detail some recent incidents. Mrs Scowcroft said that the governors had not produced such a leaflet, because it is felt that the children have a very clear understanding of the way the school handles behavioural issues and this was endorsed at the school's last inspection. The school is aware of the incidents alluded to and dealt with them quite severely. Extra support for the child involved has been actioned. She said that St James the Great, as a Catholic school, should do all in its power to support this pupil with exceptional needs, while not putting other pupils at risk.

6 There were then several questions from the floor.

- a) We have been waiting for a path round the Nursery for many years and now the Nursery kitchen has reduced space even further. What will be done to reduce congestion? Mr Gonsalves said that the kitchen was a curriculum requirement. Mr Beck said that perhaps it should be made one way! The school will re-examine this issue.
- b) What happened to the half-term school trip? Mr Beck said that the school coach was being repaired. There was a broken ball bearing and when it was restarted, metal debris got in the steering box. It needs to go away for repair and will take about 7 – 10 days. Everyone wants coaches during half-term.
- c) It is very difficult to hear the children at assemblies and concerts. Does the school have microphones? Mr Beck said that a firm is coming in to address this and a sound system for the hall with radio mikes and surround sound should be installed by the end of November. A grant had been given by the LEA. It was asked whether a loop system in the hall would help. Mr Watson said that he is hearing impaired himself, and that it was never easy to address these problems.
- d) It was asked if there was provision for the more able in Key Stage 2. Mrs Vassallo said there was and gave details.
- e) The next question asked why the links with Bishop Thomas Grant and Year 6 going to visit had stopped 5 years ago. Mr Beck said that they had restarted this year with Year 5 visiting BTG.
- f) A question was asked about children being excluded from Years 4, 5 and 6's swimming lessons. Mr Beck said that there were transport issues. The coach was not big enough to take all the children. It had been decided to focus on the less able swimmers. The more able took a swimming test, and if they passed the test they moved on to ice-skating. When the coach was back in service the swimming lessons would resume. He said it was possible that the pool and the ice rink may close.
- g) A question was asked about violin, guitar and flute lessons. Some children wanting flute lessons had not heard whether they could have them yet. Mr Beck said the school was in negotiation with the teachers about providing additional lessons. The demand for lessons was the highest it had ever been.
- h) A parent asked about the Easter trip for Years 4 and 5. In the past parents were told about the arrangements before the summer holiday. This year they were promised details by half term, but they had still not heard. Mr Beck said they were having difficulty getting the dates they wanted with the

transport provider they wanted. He was still investigating and parents should hear by the end of next week.

- i) A question was asked about the exclusion of Year 3 pupils from the Wednesday French Club. Mrs Jones said that there had been so much demand that they had to have a cut-off. Priority had been given to Year 6, so no Year 3s could be accommodated.
  - j) In reply to a question about free bottles of water, Mr Beck said there was a pilot scheme in Year 5 and there were proposals to extend. The Nursery children were given free pieces of fruit, would this be extended? Mr Beck said that there was a government initiative to extend this to Reception and Years 1 and 2. It will cost £40 million to do this across the country.
  - k) Concern was expressed about parents using camcorders at concerts and so on. Would it be possible for one person to record the proceedings and sell copies of the tape? Fr Jones said it was difficult to stop people using camcorders, but the governors would look into it.
- 7 In his closing remarks, Fr Jones thanked parents for coming and for their support for the school. He thanked the hard working and active Friends Association, who had arranged refreshments to follow the AGM. He thanked the staff and governors for giving so much of their own time, and especially Stephen Beck for his enthusiastic and inspiring leadership and hard work. He said it was no reflection on the questions asked tonight, but in most schools the parents were complaining about 50% getting Level 2.
- 8 Fr Jones concluded with prayers at 9.00 p.m. The meeting was followed by the Annual General Meeting of the Friends Association.