

# Parent Council Newsletter



## INVITATION to public meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, will be visiting Dundee to hold a public meeting, which parents are invited to attend. The meeting will take place at Morgan Academy, Forfar Road, Dundee, at 7.30 pm on the 12th of January 2011.



## FAMILY FUN QUIZZ NIGHT at St Clement's RC Primary School

St Clements Parent Council recently organised a Family Fun Quiz Night and raffle, which was held in the school. The event raised £180 and proved a very enjoyable evening. Twelve teams, which included parents, children, family, friends and teachers, took part in a closely fought competition that was won by the Belles and Bhoys team, who



pipped the Frantic Five team by one point, and received a prestigious trophy! The Wooden Spoon was 'won' by Chloe and Family. Head Teacher Andy MacGregor said, "It was a very good evening, enjoyed by all and was a great example of partnership working."



**Dundee Schools Music Theatre (DSMT)** This project engages young people from all nine Dundee City Council secondary schools in musical activities resulting in live performances. Since its inception in 1999, over 1,800 young people have taken the opportunity to become involved.

Young people are given the chance to work collaboratively with their peers and with adults, using professional resources in a way that has a positive impact on their personal and social development. DSMT is non-selective, is free of charge and there is no entrance audition.

There are four distinct groups within the DSMT framework; S1/S2, S3/S4, S5/S6 and Back-to-Back, the post development group, all of which meet at The Space, Dundee College, Kingsway Campus on Sunday afternoons or evenings. Each group is presently working towards its own performance in 2011. The S1/S2 section will perform "Seussical Junior" at The Space on 21st and 22nd April. The Space is also the venue for the S3/S4 production "All Shook Up", which includes many Elvis favourites, from 24th to 27th August. The S5/S6 group will perform "Me and My Girl" in the Whitehall Theatre from 1st to 3rd September. Back-to-Back will put on their version of the Madness musical "Our House" at Dundee Rep from 17th to 20th August.

Contact Alison Strachan on 01382 434888 or [alison.strachan@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:alison.strachan@dundeecity.gov.uk) for any further information.

#### TWITTER

Dundee City Council now has its own Twitter feed. We are posting relevant information for people using the city council's services, which will include news on any school closures during bad weather.

The council would be delighted if Parent Councils at school would follow our feed and also encourage other parents and families to do so.

We will also continue using the traditional methods of announcing any school closures through local radio.

<http://twitter.com/dundeecouncil>

#### Dundee Youth Music Initiative

The Young Performers' Groups meet in Dundee College, Graham Street on Tuesday (P4 pupils 6-7pm, P5 pupils 7-8pm) and Thursday (P6/7 pupils 6.30-8pm) evenings.

The groups work on a variety of musical theatre activities including singing, dancing, movement and drama. The children have regular performance opportunities during the year through formal concerts and informal open evenings, which have resulted in an increase in musical and performance skills, as well as confidence and self-esteem. This year all of the groups participated in a production of "African Jigsaw" a musical looking at the problems of urbanisation, its effects on tribal life and the casualties left in its wake. As well as providing the on stage talent, the pupils also participated in the set design.

Classes restart on Tuesday 26th October and Thursday 28th October. All groups are free of charge and there are no entrance auditions.

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## National Parent Involvement Co-ordinator visits Dundee

Lorraine Sanda, National Parent Involvement Co-ordinator from the Scottish Executive came to Dundee recently, visiting Longhaugh, Newfields and Craigowl Primary Schools. Her visit, hosted by Taletta Jamieson (Dundee City Council's Parental Involvement Officer), was a thoroughly encouraging experience.

"Firstly, can I say how much I enjoyed spending the day visiting the schools and seeing some of the great practice that is going on. Each school and situation was very different and taking their own individual approach to parental involvement – as it should be. It was very impressive and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with everyone. Please pass on my thanks to the Head Teachers, parents and staff who gave me their time. I have already mentioned their good practices several times as it made such an impact on me"

Lorraine Sanda, Dundee,

### Lorraine joins the 'Meet the Management Team' event at Craigowl Primary

Once a term the management team at Craigowl invite a random selection of parents in to have a chat over tea and cakes. The meeting was planned and invitations ready to go out when Taletta Jamieson phoned and asked 'Is it all right if I bring Lorraine Sanda along?' Taletta, being difficult to say no to, was obviously expecting a positive reply and so it transpired that Lorraine Sanda, the Parent Involvement Co-ordinator from the Scottish Executive attended one of our Meet the Management Team events.



Euan Smith and Lorraine Sanda

As always, there was no agenda and so we had no idea what the parents would like to discuss and whether this would be good or bad!! As I introduced everyone I was secretly thinking 'What have I done?' However the meeting went well with lots of discussion around what the school was doing well and areas where we could change things for the better.

Lorraine joined in the discussion, asked a few questions and later commented positively on the event, the parents' involvement and how impressed she was that the parents had formed the agenda. As the last parent left we realised we had forgotten to take any photographs but Lorraine and Taletta willingly posed for us!

*Euan C Smith, Head Teacher, Craigowl Primary School*



Taletta Jamieson and Lorraine Sanda

### Lorraine is "impressed" at Newfields Primary School

Lorraine Sanda met with two of our Parent Council reps – Lorna Thomson and Shirley Downie. She showed genuine interest and was impressed with the work that we have been doing to engage parents in the life and work of the school. She also gave us some very helpful ideas of good practice from other schools, which we intend to follow through. Overall, the visit was a great success.

*Kim Flynn, HeadTeacher, Newfields Primary School*

## NEWS from St Joseph's Primary School

### **Communication is at the heart of what we do**

When the members of the present Parent Council joined last year, the decision was unanimous that communication was going to be at the heart of what we do and be at the foundation of any decisions or activities that we, as the Parent Council, take forward. Communication between the Parent Council and the Parent Forum is very important because the members of the Parent Council have the responsibility of representing the diverse views shared across the school community. We wish to share some of the successful outcomes that are a result of the feedback solicited from the Parent Forum through formal questionnaires, informal conversations at the playground, regular newsletters and meetings.

### **Merging of parent groups and a new name**

It was decided when the Parent Council was formed in 2006 that the PSA will continue to operate independently from the Parent Council for various reasons that were felt to be relevant at that time. This resulted in some confusion in the Parent Forum with the question of why there are two parent groups instead of one. The bandwidth of a small group of active parents was also getting smaller. Many meetings were held towards the end of the last school year between the Parent Council and the PSA to explore the benefits of working together as a single parent group, which we are happy to say has now happened! The PSA is now a working group within the Parent Council and continues to focus on fundraising and social events – things that the members of this group enjoy doing most!

Feedback from the Parent Forum last year also suggested that the name 'Parent Council' sounded too formal and, though it had representatives from various groups (Teachers, the Diocese, etc), that it did not reflect the wider community that was involved. We took this on board and asked the school children to help us with our search for a new name. Kiran and Maita visited the Pupil Council during one of their meetings and explained the challenge. There were lots of ideas to make a shortlist from. The name that received the most votes was St. Joseph's Community Council, which we modified slightly to incorporate the other ideas raised by the children, resulting in the new name of St. Joseph's Parents and Community Group (SJ-PCG). Some other Parent Councils have also

adopted other names and we are very happy with our new one! Thank you to all the children and to the teachers for their assistance.

### **Calendar of activities**

Parents and carers gave feed-back saying that they want to be informed in advance of the various activities occurring throughout the year so that they are able to plan holidays and childcare in advance. We worked closely with our Head Teacher and Assistant Head teacher to put together an integrated calendar of activities that we distributed to our Parent Forum. The calendar incorporates the school's key dates, including: Parents' Evenings, Sports Day, Christmas shows, parties, fundraisers, school masses, meetings, holidays, in-service days, etc. By providing this we hope that we may assist and support parents and carers to plan in advance and give them an idea on what activities they may wish to be part of.

### **Halloween social**

We organised and held a Halloween Party on the 27th October for pupils. The event was a huge (!!!) success (over 180 pupils attended) involving Halloween-themed games such as make a mummy, pumpkin bowling, trick or treat, etc. There was a proper disco, face painting, a tuck shop and, of course, fancy dress & pumpkin carving competitions (rest assured, no knives were wielded on the night!!). The costumes and the pumpkins were amazing – a credit to the parents, who must have helped to create the masterpieces.

Without doubt the success of the evening was down to the partnership between the teachers and parents, many of whom offered help and advice in advance – we had about 10 days after returning from the October holidays to pull this together, and on the night the turnout of helpers was around 30 (many also dressed up) and included former St Josephs pupils, the current P7 pupils, teachers, parents, Stephen the DJ and pals and Raymond the caretaker!

We organised this as the first of, hopefully, many social events of this school year, and, as we appreciate that not everyone celebrates Halloween, we look forward to other themed events as the seasons move on. A final word to our marvellous pupils who behaved so well on the night!! Thank you all. *Maita Crowe, Chairperson.*

## GARDENING at Lochee Primary School

Fiona Taylor, the chairperson of Lochee Primary School's Parent Council, has some help creating a garden area with imaginative paving, raised beds and a selection of plants to put in them.



### MERRY CHRISTMAS from Taletta

Thank you for your continued hard work and commitment for parental involvement at your school. It has been an exciting year and I have enjoyed meeting you all, being a part of your meetings and visiting your schools. I look forward to 2011 and all that it brings.

Thank you to Ian Rae, Primary Manager who will be leaving us to start his retirement. Ian has been a strong supporter of parental involvement over the years and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

I wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful holiday and look forward to seeing you all in 2011.

*Taletta Jamieson, Parental Involvement Officer*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**