



Summer Newsletter

Madras College Newsletter

June 2001

Rector's Message

Many people have noticed the ants. This year they seem to be more in evidence than usual. Watching them on an open area can be fascinating, their busy movements, their sense of purpose, their great strength for creatures so small, their refusal to give up when all their plans and projects are wrecked by a careless human foot or sudden shower of rain. Above all, though, they seem to know what they are doing and each one seems to have a task. The natural rhythm possessed by ant colonies is impressive. There is a time to do things, a time to pull together, a time to go out alone, a time to do nothing.

We could learn from the ants. We can't rush all the time, though we often feel that there is no option. Anthropologists tell us that our earliest ancestors rested or played much more than us, and had a different concept of time. Several of those who took part in the recent TV documentary "Surviving the Iron Age" made the same point. They also took time to work out their relationships in the close confines of village life. We could learn, too, from the Iron Age dwellers, in planning for the challenges that lie ahead.

The education minister Mr McConnell has just announced some big changes to schools. We are to draw up our own codes for discipline and dress to help create a better sense of order in our schools. This we shall do, in the spirit of partnership recommended.

We already have a discipline code but will review it with the involvement of all parties, staff, parents and pupils. The right of all pupils to benefit from what school can offer is absolutely central; no individuals should be able to spoil things for others. We are already working on the links between good discipline and good learning; pupils carrying out a task

that they understand are usually keen to succeed. Encouragingly, the minister is stating that each school should feel that it has the power to work out its own best solution to good discipline. We have not had such a feeling of being empowered for many years. The culture of blame or unrealistic targets has ruled supreme for too long. Let us all take up this welcome challenge.

We already have a dress code but will review it with the involvement of all parties, staff, parents and pupils. For many years the benefits of school dress codes have been apparent, particularly in levelling the differences of wealth or attention to fashion between pupils. With the minister's encouragement we will put into practice an agreed code in a calm and organised way so that the matter should cease to be an issue at all, and we can get on with the main business in hand. As a starting point to what will be a major development in the coming session we had already begun to frame some advice to parents on appropriate outdoor garments for school. This is mentioned in the article on page 2. The School Board met last Thursday and agreed to make the school dress code one of its main points for action in the new session and to call an early joint meeting with the Parent Teacher Association. Several of the Year Councils have already begun discussing uniform and we thus look forward to a genuine and lively decision-making process.

As a staff, too, we have been reflecting, as part of the new McCrone arrangements. In attempting to codify and quantify the various tasks we presently undertake we have run up against an immediate problem: there are not enough contractual hours to do our work properly. Put another way, if we work to the 35-hour contract the pupils

will not get anything like the present quality of service. We have reached an agreement on the most sensible way to allocate hours additional to the normal school day, but we know that the figures on the page do not tell the whole story.

A brief comment about the continuing tests for asbestos in the Kilrymont Road building. Fife Council and the national Health and Safety Executive have acted swiftly to address all potential risks. As mentioned in the recent note to all parents we have been told that the air tests thus far have apparently indicated safe results. One unfortunate consequence of the situation is that all work on the building, including decoration, has had to be temporarily halted.

So ends the session as it began, in a rush and with a few problems. We recall the disasters of inaccurate or missing SQA examination results for many pupils, the anger this caused, the feeling of being let down by those we had trusted for so many years.

And yet there has been so much that is good, so much common effort, so much generosity of deed and gesture, so much pride in achievements shared, so many new initiatives. The articles and information which follow help to spell out some of the projects and activities of Madras College in the term and session ending.

All staff thank parents for the support so willingly given, wish them a happy and relaxing summer, and invite them to join with us and the pupils in reflecting on some of the major issues mentioned above so that the best rhythm of life and work in our school may be achieved in the years ahead.

L S G Matheson

School Uniform

Much has been said recently on the issue of school dress codes. Mr McConnell, the Education Minister, has emphasised the importance of school uniform, believing that every school should have a dress code as it 'raises the feeling of a school community and sets standards'.

On a regional level Fife Council echoes this, stating that the advantages of pupils adhering to a code of appropriate dress are many. Security can be improved by aiding identification of pupils within a school, making it easier to identify intruders; young people can develop a pride in a neat and tidy appearance; uniform can create a positive image and improved reputation in the local community while promoting a positive school ethos and sense of identification with and a sense of belonging to the school; it can also encourage a purposeful attitude to work and behaviour.

We welcome these national and regional views which are extremely appropriate to our own dress code at Madras. The section on uniform in our school prospectus reflects at its core these very statements.

Uniform encourages pupils to show their pride in belonging to Madras College and to indicate their commitment to the school. The common bond and sense of identity created by uniform helps all individuals to feel part of the school, which is an important element in providing a sense of security, especially for pupils drawn from a widely scattered catchment area.

The school believes that most Madras College parents, in line with national opinion, wish their children to dress in uniform and in the past have given the school their full support. At a time when the importance of this issue in reinforcing an effective learning environment is being recognised, we would call on your

support again to promote with your children the wearing of uniform at Madras College. It is our intention to commence a full consultation with all involved at the beginning of next session. This will include parents' groups (School Board, Parent Teacher Association) and Pupil Councils.

The School Fleece

For next session we are introducing a Madras College fleece '1833 M.C.' as an optional extension to our existing uniform. It is our aim to attempt to replace the divisive designer label garments worn to school thus bringing an added benefit. Already they are proving very popular with our younger pupils and new intake. We would like to think the seniors will show a lead.

Samples of fleeces can be examined in both school offices from where order forms can be collected.

3-Day Activities

From 30th May until 1st June the third year timetable was again suspended to allow all 300 third year pupils to take part in the 3-Day Activities Programme. Over 200 pupils enjoyed residential trips ranging from the bustle of London to a remote Bothy in the Highlands. Those opting to stay at home enjoyed a variety of day trips from Go-karting to a Survival Challenge at Tentsmuir.

The hard work put in by all the staff who organised and led the activities was more than rewarded by the enthusiasm and positive feedback from all pupils participating.

German Visitors

Our German visitors from Kiel arrived on 13th June. This exchange between Madras and the Kieler Gelehrtenschule started in 1957 and must rank as one of the oldest, if not the oldest, school-to-school exchanges in Scotland.

Token Totals

Many thanks to all of you for handing in your Tesco tokens. We managed to collect over 16,000 which will be used to purchase software for the Learning Support Department.

Music Notes

Jackal, one of a number of up-and-coming rockbands at Madras, took part creditably in the final of the Fife Schools' Rockband Competition and while they didn't win, at least feature on the resultant CD. Well done to them - we are sure a lot has been learnt in the process and that they and others will be back.

Kilrymont Singers rounded off their year with participation in a major concert with Cupar Choral Society. This involved singing with a professional orchestra and was an exciting and stimulating experience for all concerned, not least our 2 soloists Julie Brown and John Galloway. The singers also made a trip to Stenhouse and Carron Parish Church in Stenhousemuir to take part in a service celebrating 20 years of the Strathcarron Hospice. The choir, conducted by Robin Bell, APT Music, helped to raise some £600 for the hospice.

The annual Bell Baxter Centenary Music Competition involving the 3 local secondary schools was again a closely-fought event, although not particularly well-attended. The writer goes to this occasion not so much for the competition as for the excellent choice of music performed by the 9 finalists - 3 from each school - and the breathtakingly high level of performance achieved. Could it be that we take all this for granted? Maybe we do - Madras swept the board with first, second and third places going to Hannah Craib, viola, Adam Greig, piano and Mary Erskine, piano. Hannah picks up the inscribed Caithness glass trophy. She has also recently been awarded a Woolfson Scholarship to continue her studies at the RSAMD.

With four major public concerts annually - and this has been sustained over the last 20 years at least - the Music Department gets through a lot of rehearsal time. None more so that this term when Senior Orchestra, Wind Band and Pipe Band, in total some 80 players and staff, all make their final preparations for a concert trip to Holland, taking the school summer concert and local bandstand appearances in their stride. We wish them all the best in this new 'departure' and hope that they will enjoy the experience and more than a drop of continental sunshine.

Staffing News

On the staffing front another reasonably quiet term has passed.

In the English department Mr Walker left in May to take up a post in Kinross and was replaced by Mrs Payne. We greatly benefited from Mr Walker's very pupil-centred and encouraging approach to learning and wish him all success in his new school. Mr Hynes also more recently joined the department. Both Mr Walker and Mr Hynes have brought a trans-atlantic approach to the department. Mr Bell was appointed at the start of June to the Grade 4 Janitor post.

At the end of term Miss Doig, Assistant Librarian, leaves to take up the post of Librarian at Bell Baxter High School. Her knack of taking the terror out of new technology has been particularly appreciated by staff and pupils. She pioneered the Madras entry to the national Carnegie Medal shadowing project, with pupil reviews posted on the internet. We thank her for her 3 excellent years and wish her well in our sister establishment in Cupar.

Mrs Blair retires as Home-School Link Officer this summer. Anne, who has been with us for 21 years, has been a much-liked and highly-valued colleague to the numerous Guidance staff with whom she has worked. Undoubtedly many pupils in our large catchment area have also benefited from her concern! We wish her all happiness in her well-earned retirement.

We thank our modern language "assistantes" for the session past, Fabienne Bourbonnaux and Johanna Steffen. They certainly entered into the

work and spirit of the school with great energy and good spirit. They even wanted to stay on!

Lastly, we welcome back Mr Bennett, Assistant Rector, after the end of his 20-month secondment to work as Coordinator for Fife Council of the Study Support Programme. Mr Bennett returns as Year Head for S5/6. We take this opportunity to thank the colleagues who assisted while Mr Bennett was away from Madras, particularly Mr Urquhart who became acting Assistant Rector, and Mr Watson who became acting Principal Teacher of Guidance.

Holiday Dates

Autumn

Monday 15th October 2001
to Friday 26th October 2001

Christmas

Monday 24th December 2001
to Friday 4th January 2002

February

Thursday 14th February 2002
and Friday 15th February 2002

Easter

Monday 1st April 2002
to Friday 12th April 2002

After Hours

The annual staff v pupils Badminton match had left the staff 8-7 up but Graeme Hood (S4) for the pupils had been unbeaten before his forced early departure to play tennis in Edinburgh. Consequently, an honourable draw was declared: staff's aching joints but cunning experience was well matched by youth, fitness and enthusiasm.

In May the pupils from Room 100 participated in a 5-a-side football and unihoc tournament held at the Fife Institute in Glenrothes. While the winners were Buckhaven High School, the boys thoroughly enjoyed their trip and the friendly competition.

Congratulations to the show jumpers Gill Erskine (former S6), Helena Bateman, Jennifer Ramsay, Amy Murphy (S4), Meredith Palmer (S3), Sophie Palmer and Mary Erskine (S5) who between them at the weekend gained first and third places in the dressage, second place in the showjumping and fourth place in the combined training at the Kilgraston Schools' Show held at Gleneagles. Their awards also included two individual dressage winners and the overall individual champion for the combined training.

The Junior Debating Society's busy term included an excellent performance by Mairi McInnes and Catriona Kay (both

S4) winning through to the regional final of the prestigious Lloyds and TSB/ESU Junior Debating Competition. The girls produced a strong performance in opposing the motion on Scottish Independence, narrowly losing to George Watson's College.

The Junior Public Speaking Competition open to S1/S2 also produced some varied and interesting talks which ranged from 'Why I like Venice' to 'My Favourite Book'. The winner was Anna Wovk (S3) who gave a funny and informative look at the world of Celebrity Fame.

Roger Carter (S3) and Ian Robertson (S5) have recently competed in the 420 Fast Handicap Fleet Scottish Schools Sailing Competition and came in first winning the Lochearn Sailing Club School Award.

Madras College pupils have achieved a significant honour with the St Andrews Scorpions 14 and Under team who have won the Fife Skater Hockey League for this season in quite impressive fashion. Ten of the team attend the school and players Paul Tulleth (S2), James Carlin, Robert Crombie and Darren Smith (S3), Michael Robertson (S4), and Michael Alexander, David Crombie, Kevan Fraser, Ben Hutchison and David Stewart (all S5) have played an important part in the team's success.

In-Service Days

Monday 20th August 2001

Thursday 15th November 2001

Friday 16th November 2001

Monday 18th February 2002

Friday 3rd May 2002

Screenplay Success

Arlene Whigham (now S4) heard just this term that she had been runner-up in a prestigious competition run by Film Education in conjunction with the release of William Nicholson's novel "Windsinger". Nicholson, famous for his screenplay in the film "Gladiator" challenged students to turn his novel chapter on The Wind Battle into a film script, offering to come into the winning school to conduct a masterclass in writing for Hollywood movies! Along with the rest of her class (armed with FE guides, model scripts and real enthusiasm) Arlene set to work, the result particularly impressing William Nicholson with its use of flashbacks. Unfortunately, although the masterclass reward fell to a joint effort by two students from a school in Cambridge, no-one informed Madras how close we had come "due to an administration error" stated FE. Arlene's success only emerged when, a full year later, with a class set of "Windsinger" now purchased by the English Department, Mrs Scott contacted FE requesting a copy of the winning script, or perhaps the return of her class original scripts, to help when repeating this exercise for the new year group. Full of apologies Film Education sent Arlene her goodies bag of books and a Film Education briefcase. Better late than never! They also included Nicholson's e-mail praising the high quality of the Madras entries, four of which made it into the final selection process. Well done, Arlene and the rest of that class.

Class by Class

A Plus For Maths: An extra Mathematics class has been running on Thursdays from 3.30 pm to 5.00 pm throughout the session in the South Street building. It was pleasing to have so many pupils from S4 to S6 making use of this facility. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, the pupils attending were well motivated and numbers reached as many as 25 at times. Attendance was according to individual need: catching up on work lost through absence; experiencing difficulty with homework and assistance being required; examinations/unit tests looming. Due to its success it is expected that the class will run again next session.

On the move with Languages: The S3 visit to France during the first week of the Easter holidays was again very successful. The number of projects submitted for the prizes on offer broke all records.

Charities Fundraising

Over the school year various activities take place to raise monies for local, national and international charity organisations. It has been a particularly busy time and we have kept you informed of events through our newsletters. As a result of the development of fundraising events we have introduced a Charities Committee, composed of both staff and pupils, to overview events and distribute funds raised.

Additional amounts raised since our last newsletter total over £800 and the following organisations have been supported:

- Disability Sport Fife
- Attention Fife
- Children's Hospice Association Scotland

Picnic Benches for Kilrymont

You may remember from our last newsletter, the 1974 Reunion Group, led by John Marini, kindly donated £400 to the school. Last month the Third Year Pupil Representative Council, through their Talent Show, raised £200. Both monies will be put towards the buying of picnic benches for the Kilrymont Road pupils.

Rotary Scholarship

Joanna Kay (S6) was awarded a Rotary Scholarship to spend a week in Strasbourg with a group of Scottish pupils. While there, she visited the European Parliament and was one of those selected to make a speech in French to an assembly of European dignitaries.

Quad Fund

Since its start in February the Quad Fund has been very well supported by former pupils and others. The total towards the target of £60,000 now stands at £18,000, which includes a generous grant from the St Andrews Common Good Fund. The committee of FPs, pupils, businessmen and staff met with 50 of the first donors at a happy informal ceremony earlier this month, marking the start to the work on the first pillar by Bill Watson. Further progress is expected over the summer. The task now will be to keep the fund topped up so that the work may continue steadily over the coming years. If you are on-line there is information on the school website at www.madras.fife.sch.uk. Pamphlets and donation forms are also available from either building. A special thanks at this stage is due to Helen Mackay and Ann Brown who sent out the best part of 1,000 letters to FPs as the first campaigning tactic.

Drama Report

The Drama Department continued its energetic run of productions with Harold Pinter's 'The Birthday Party' one of the Higher Drama Set Texts and a play that has always provoked a strong response due to its mixture of menace, banality and humour. This production directed by Patricia Esler was both highly entertaining and deeply intriguing. The performances were outstanding: Rachel Norton, Craig Kelly, Daniel Schmitz, Kirsten Talbot, Kai Hopkins and Sean Howie were as fine an ensemble of actors as you could wish to see on any stage.

Following three performances in the school studio the play transferred extremely successfully to The Crawford Centre for a further short run where the actors enjoyed the experience of performing to the general public.

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• School Begins •
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Tuesday 21st August 2001

Also In The News

Twelve senior pupils spent a day renovating and upgrading the plant tubs in the quad at South Street. The picnic benches were also given a lick of paint. Between this and the absence of chewing gum the quad is looking tidier and the process will continue to the end of this term and into next session.

For a fourteenth year a pupil exchange will take place between Madras and Great Valley High School, Malvern, Pennsylvania. Sian Inch of the new sixth year is exchanging with Ashley Greenhow who arrives in St Andrews in August and will stay until Christmas. Sian will travel to America in January.

In April a group of ten RMPS pupils accompanied Mrs Shields to Samye Buddhist Monastery where they stayed overnight. Pupils were able to speak to the monks and nuns, visited the temple and were given a teaching by Clive Holmes, a lay Buddhist. Some boys even managed to get out of bed for the 6.00 am meditation! Unbeknown to the group an undercover reporter was staying at the monastery writing a feature and two weeks later our pupils were mentioned several times in a three page article in the Scotsman.

"Check it out" (Scripture Union) held a joint meeting with the Primary 7 members of the Scripture Union at Langlands Primary School at the end of May. Pupils in attendance from Madras were Malcolm Findlay, Andrew Docherty and John Meredith from S2 and Chris McLaughlin and Stephen Butler from S3.

"They bound me with a rope, hung me from a high bar and crushed my fingers with pliers." (9 year old Firoz). The Amnesty Club has been busy this year raising awareness, both in school and out, to help abolish torture in the world today. The campaign, 'Stamp Out Torture', ran for a week and the group sold badges and issued information in the Kilrymont Road foyer. The club also conducted a survey showing that many people in the school were unaware just how widespread torture is in the world today. (Contributed by Sarah Dunn, S3).

The Hadrian's Wall excursion was very successful this year despite the closure of the wall due to FMD and the weather. A full bus load, from new S2 to S4,

visited museums in Newcastle and Carlisle, including an excellent new venue at Wallsend, with working bathhouse. On the day of the visit the Ermine Street guard was in attendance in Roman military uniform.

In the Latin Speaking Competition held at the University of St Andrews the Projects Shield for the intermediate team of Hannah Bredin, Cecily Davey, Lizzie Lawrenson and Francine Toon (all S4) was awarded for a version of Monopoly based on Ancient Rome (Arbitrium). Hannah was also a close second in the Greek Cup; the Junior team came second for the Junior Latin Play. Joe Neilson (S5) has won a certificate in the Gilbert Murray Essay Competition, organised by Glasgow and West Classical Association, for an investigation into Roman medicine.

Social Life

In the past the summer term has been rather quiet socially but this session there has been a variety of events for the pupils. The Band Night was a great success with a larger than usual number of bands taking part. This year the quality was exceptionally high and followers had a night to remember.

The third year Talent Show packed the Kilrymont Road Hall one lunchtime in May and served up a host of acts that would have graced "Stars In Their Eyes". The second years had yet another theme night: 'Mad Hair Disco'. As usual there was a selection of fine singing and dancing acts. Over 250 pupils attended. The term was rounded off with a third year traditional disco. Again this was a raging success! Every year more and more social events are organised for the pupils who appreciate the input from the staff who turn out to support their entertainment. These activities have now become a feature of the school's extra-curricular calendar.

Fast Fiction Consultants

Ten new consultants headed off to Waterstone's in Edinburgh on June 18th to meet the authors of some of the manuscripts the pupils have been 'testdriving' prior to publication. Publishers Barrington Stoke had arranged this event to build on the success of the scheme over the previous year and to show their appreciation of the pupils' valued input.

Carnegie Medal Project

Firstly, an update on last year's project. The pupils in S1 - S3 of Madras College voted as follows:

- 1st "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" - J K Rowling
- 2nd "Kit's Wilderness" - David Almond
- 3rd "The Rinaldi Ring" - Jenny Nimmo

In its second year, the Carnegie Medal project has encouraged over 60 pupils and staff to get on their reading trainers for this year's "Octathalon". Once again pupils and staff throughout the school were challenged to read as many of the 8 short-listed titles as they could before the 22nd of June: remembering of course that the short-list was not released until 1st May.

The "*Don't just read the books, tell us about them!*" slogan has been posted around the school to build on last year's project. Not only have participants been asked to read the books, they have also been encouraged to post their reviews on The Carnegie Medal website: www.la-hq.org.uk/shadowing

As we go to print Heather Barnes, Hamish Findlay (S4), Malcolm Findlay (S2), Claire Povey, Jenny Rae and Sarah Smith (S3), Joseph Smith (S2) and Mrs Robertson (Biology Department) have completed the challenge, but there are still a few weeks for the project to run to boost this total!

The winner of the oldest prize in children's literature will be announced sometime in July. Check the national press for details!

SPORTS NEWS

Scottish Schools' Track and Field

At the Scottish Schools' Track and Field Championships at Grangemouth last weekend, Keith Dempster (S3) struck gold winning the 14-15 boys shot putt with a throw of 10.82 metres. Nony Mordi, also S3, took silver in the 14-15 girls' 75 metres hurdles clocking 12.59 seconds and came fourth in the 100 metres final in 13.63 seconds.

Fife Schools' Multi Event

Boys won the C and G Shield at the Fife Schools' Multi Event. Ben Anderson (S6) won Senior Boys' age group. Rory Scott (S4) won S3 Boys' age group.

Fife Schools' Track and Field

Jamie Watson (S6) won the Group B 100 metres Challenge Cup. S1 Boys' relay, S2 girls' relay and Senior Boys' Group A relay won cups.

Football

Twenty-eight first year teams from across the region participated in the Buchhaven High School Seven-a-Side Tournament.

Both Madras teams performed well with the 'A' Team reaching the semi-final and the 'B' Team winning the shield competition beating St Andrews High School in the final.

Congratulations must be given to Douglas Rowe and Elliot Husband Powton who were both selected for the Fife Region Development Squad.

Scott Gates (S2) became Dundee Football Club's latest schoolboy signing. He will play for the Den's Park Club in the U13 SPL Initiative League.

Tennis

This term has been very positive for the school tennis players. In May Euan Forbes and Timmy Weir beat Chris Birrell and Ross Carstairs in the final of the Midlands U15 Boys' Schools' Tennis Championships at Kilgraston School. Led by European ranked Graeme Hood the Boys' School Team were 3rd in the Scottish Schools' Team Championships

- a commendable effort given the standard at this level.

The girls' team just failed to qualify for the quarter-finals of the Scottish Schools' competition but must be complimented for their efforts on court. A successful match against St Leonards in May and involvement with the Tennis Scotland development programme at the Scottish Championships at Craiglockart by 1st and 2nd year tennis players proves that tennis is enjoyed by Madras College pupils at many levels.

Fife Primary Care

The School Immunisation Programme has now finished. Any school children who were not immunised can now go to their GP, by appointment, where supplies of vaccine are available.

The School Doctor and Nurse would like to thank all parents and children for their help in ensuring that the immunisation campaign went so smoothly. The uptake in the school was excellent.

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PTA

• Question Time, April 23rd

This PTA meeting took the format of a question time concerned with educational matters. The panel of participants invited were Councillor H Law, Chair of the Education Committee, Fife Council; Councillor E Riches; Professor P McKiernan, Chair of the School Board and Mr A McKay, Head of Education for Fife Council.

Parents and senior pupils put a wide range of questions, raising such topics as SQA examinations, uniform, school building repairs and facilities, overcrowding due to the ever-rising role and school transport. A lighter note was introduced when panel members were asked to name a desert island book and piece of music. Lively and varied responses to all the questions ensured an enjoyable and informative evening.

• 50/50 Club Winners

April

£50 Mrs N Christie, St Andrews

£25 Mrs C Wallace, Kincaple

May

£25 Mrs M Watters, St Andrews

£25 Mrs Tucker, Leuchars

June

£50 Mrs H Hagan, Tayport

£25 Mr & Mrs Caithness, Newport

Strictly Classroom

Tuesday, 5th and Wednesday, 6th June saw a dazzling display of choreography, dance, drama and music in the school production 'Strictly Classroom'. The plot of the show followed the tale of a young girl starting a new school, experiencing the difficulties that can occur when trying to establish oneself in a new environment. As with all good tales, there lies a happy ending when the star of the show soars in popularity as the other pupils realise her dancing talents.

The production involved about 50 pupils who were not only responsible for spectacular stage performances, but who were also involved in the planning and choreographing of the event. A fantastic £671 was raised over the 2 nights, and all funds have been donated to the Madras College Parent Teachers Association.

A massive 'well done' to all pupils and staff involved in the show which left the audience dancing in the aisles!



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26 June 2001

Dear Parents

The Madras School Board has had another busy year fighting an array of problems with its limited resources. During the year it altered its structure and formed four sub-groups to enable it to focus on these problems in greater detail. The groups are Teaching and Learning, Transport, Health and Property.

Teaching and Learning

This group have concentrated on standards of pupil performance in examinations and how these might be improved. Initially, the focus was upon the more able pupils but the principles apply to all. It has been in close correspondence with Bill Morton, Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, seeking reassurance over this year's examination marking systems for Madras pupils. It has also explored the fate of the target setting initiative that the Scottish Executive promoted heavily in 1997. This was meant to set 'stretching but realistic' targets for all Scottish schools but nothing has happened. The group has tried to establish whether this is still a viable initiative or whether it has been replaced by a new scheme.

Transport

School transport or rather difficulties with school transport, are a frequent topic at the School Board Meetings. The Board has been in frequent correspondence with Fife Council and bus contractors stating the concerns of parents and pupils. The group looked at the wide range of behavioural, safety and responsibility issues. They found that many of the problems are common in other geographic areas, and that although there are a variety of advisory booklets, such as 'Get to School!' (Fife Council) and 'Safe School Travel' (Scottish School Board Association), many of the recommendations are difficult to enforce, since they are reliant on voluntary good behaviour from school pupils.

The group aims to continue its dialogue with Fife Council, contractors and other relevant parties to lobby for improvements – in particular the desirability of introducing single decker transport. It also aims to keep safety high on its agenda. The education of school pupils about their responsibility and behaviour with regard to transport is an ongoing activity. In partnership with our pupils, and with other Boards elsewhere in Scotland, this group will focus on the development of best practice in the North East Fife area.

Health

In general, health issues at Madras fall into two areas:

Physical Health - the group have examined the case for a school nurse. At present, three clerical staff, trained in first aid have to bear the burden of direct treatments on top of their existing administrative duties. They may deal with 20 to 30 pupils a week. The various illness/injuries include twisted ankles; staved fingers; sickness; nosebleeds, to name but a few. The group gathered data on other Fife schools and other/...



L.S.G. Matheson, M.A., M.Litt., Rector
L.A. Brown, B.A., Depute Rector

organisations with upwards of 2000 people on their premises. However, these cases did not provide fruitful evidence for the appointment of a professional medic. The group will persist in this matter.

Mental Health - the group feels that adolescent problems (some exacerbated by society) appear to be more common in their occurrence within the school. They aim to develop a strategy, alongside the Guidance teachers, that will provide more resources and training for the increased demands involved and the treatments required.

Property

Two problems have vexed this group over the year, namely the quantity and quality of the current accommodation.

Overcrowding – Kilrymont Road was built in 1967 for about 750 pupils. Its current roll is 1050. South Street was designed on a much smaller scale and has been extended several times especially in the 50's and 60's to cope with the rising roll. There is no playground apart from the Quad and in good weather the lawn. Six huts now fill the only playground. The roll of both buildings combined is 1850, far too many pupils in far too little space. The roll may rise further as the town continues to expand.

Maintenance and Replacement of worn out resources – the suitability of repair of the present accommodation is a very serious concern. The greater the number of pupils who use the premises, the greater the repair bill. The inadequate state of the buildings has been highlighted by recent condition surveys performed by Fife Council. The Board have had some success, for instance, in proving the case for coating the windows at the Kilrymont site and by forcing the issue whenever health and safety is threatened. However, much remains to be done.

The group agrees that the current state of Madras College is unacceptable and recommends that Madras School Board does everything within its power to communicate this to all key stakeholders. As part of this process, the Board was addressed during the year by members of Fife's Property Department. In addition, the Board has made strong statements to relevant Councillors and the Head of Fife's Education Department. None of them are in any doubt as to our strength of feeling and to the evidence for our case. In these deliberations, the issue of a new-build school elsewhere in North East Fife has been raised several times. The Board is hopeful that, during the next session, this debate will be enriched by the gathering of new and detailed data. In addition, the Board aims to bring together key people within North East Fife, to debate education and health needs in a single forum.

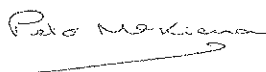
The Board have worked closely with the PTA, the teachers and the pupils (both the elected representatives and the Year Councils), the School Boards and the Rector in seeking advice and solutions to its problems. We offer our sincere thanks to them all.

Next year will be another tough one. We need help. There are elections for membership in the autumn and we urge folk to stand, especially if you have tenacity and persistence!

On behalf of all Board members, we wish you a productive and enjoyable summer break.

Our next School Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 11th September in Kilrymont Road Meeting Room at 7 pm, you are more than welcome to attend.

Yours sincerely



Peter McKiernan
Chairman