

Primary School Council Meeting held on 4th November 2014

MINUTES.

Session opened at 18:20hrs

1. Round the table introduction of the School Council 2014-2015
2. Nomination of the Secretary for the session:
 - Jean Baptiste Ruzindana and Katy Aktuna (teachers)
3. Approval of the minutes from the Third School Council held on June ... 2014
 - Lack of transcribed or archived minutes. At that time, Secretary of the session had not been nominated.
4. Approval of the agenda for the First Primary School Council Meeting:
 - Members of the Primary School Council will have a week to review the report, which shall be displayed and sent to the parents of primary school (nursery and elementary) by Friday 14th November
 - The email addresses need to be updated so that all the parents' representatives and all the teachers can receive the emails that are relevant to them.
 - The issue of translation of the minutes into English shall be brought to the attention of the Management Committee so that they allocate a financial budget.
 - For this instance, Mr Patrick Muwowo main representative of the parents of MS B, has offered to translate the minutes from the first meeting.
5. School life

I Salient points regarding Head of School assuming the role:

The handover from the previous management to the current had severe shortfalls and several problems were encountered by the new Head of School, including:

- Lack of proper organisation and proper record of documents essential to the running of the school

- A delicate and unacceptable situation with regards to new recruits (cases of missing recruitment certificates and missing contracts, various useful information that is either partially available (?) or just inaccurate)

Last minute resignations: the previous secretary responsible for HR; and a teacher recruited at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year.

Lack of a secretary at the Msasani campus (recruitment for the role is planned.)

Meanwhile/Until someone is hired for this position, the link book will continue to be the method of communication between the teachers and parents, to be used preferably as opposed to calling the school telephone line of Msasani. Otherwise contact the administration office of Oysterbay on headoffice@frenchschooltanzania.org or +255 783 206 672.

II Communication

.1. Between families and the School:

Means of communication and privacy: it is the school's responsibility to ensure the privacy of the parents' personal details (email address, telephone numbers etc.)

The parents must communicate the questions and/or information requests to their elected representatives, whose emails are accessible as they have been formally circulated.

As a last resort, the parents who wish to send an email, can send it to the Management (K. A-A, secretary) who, after vetting the content, will be able to pass it on to the relevant class.

When sending the emails, the Management will exercise due care, to ensure that the parents' email addresses are in blind copy.

The information regarding the exchange rate (updated every week) will no longer be circulated by email. This will be posted on the school's internet website, as soon as possible.

The school's administration expresses surprise as to collecting school fees. The Management has sent several emails to parents, but to no avail. Although the emails and letters are very specific in terms of dates and deadlines, warning against the penalties for late payment as defined in the financial regulations, despite all this the parents concerned do not seem to take any of these into account.

Parents have unavoidable financial obligations that they have to honor, but up till now around 30 families have not done so..

For everybody's information, the financial regulations shall be applied to take effect from this first term of 2014-2015, in line with the explicit procedures that are laid out therein.

2. Teacher- Parent meetings and handover of the school reports to families:

Parents are notified of the dates for handing over the school reports (schedules). They can also make an appointment with the teachers, if need be.

This direct communication is important and promotes mutual understanding and an educational partnership that is critical for the pupils to develop their full potential. For this reason, this Council discussed the necessity to think of a proper mode of communication among adults with and for the children, but also in front of them within the school.

III Primary and School life

1. School internal rules

The main official change is that the marks for school life have been cancelled and the reports will only reflect remarks of the student behavior.

The parents discussed the paragraph concerning absences, and the need for re-registering following unjustified absence.

However, they wondered what the consequences of absenteeism were, underlining the fact that there is a lot of absenteeism over the Christmas period.

The School Council found out and took note of the fact that the current internal rules that are in place should no longer have been published. In the period 2012-2013, a commission had finished reviewing this rule, which should have been voted out at the previous Council meeting of June 2013.

A new commission was set up: three parents and three teachers representing the nursery, primary, secondary school, as well as the Head of School, will effectively review the internal rules between now and Christmas.

Absences:

The teaching team mentioned cases of pupils (being) taken out of school for several weeks (even in CP and even at the beginning of the year) as well as the failure to communicate anything at all to the administration and the teachers, regarding these absences (neither apology nor explanation for the absence).

Meanwhile, the very same parents ask the teachers to prepare, in their spare time, extra homework to mitigate their decision to miss school; they demand that the teachers adapt to a specific case by giving out marks and reports in advance and even remedial classes for the absent pupils.

In the interest of balanced (?) learning over the school year for all the pupils, the teaching team, though willing to assist, wishes to underline the risk of “pick and mix” approach to school attendance. The team would like to emphasize that this behaviour is absolutely unacceptable for the whole class, which is invariably impacted by an individual’s decision.

As instructed by the Primary School Council, it is compulsory that the teachers will no longer respond to any compensatory requests caused by a pupil’s absence; and the parents will have to communicate in writing to Head of School the reason for their absence.

The number of absent days that the pupil accumulates will be indicated in their school report.

It may well be the case that nursery school is not compulsory, but once a child is registered to attend the French school system, there is an obligation to ensure attendance in the interest of the pupil and his/her development within the class and the school.

It is emphasized that good communication from the representative parents to the rest of school community is essential on this topic.

For the good running of the school, it has to be understood that paying school fees does not give parents the right to make any demand they choose.

Within any school, each adult commits to convey an educational message to the children: it is therefore necessary to respect the established and known rules but also generally, simply to use common sense in speech and action, again for the benefit of the children/pupils who see every adult as a role model.

2. Oysterbay Campus: supervision after school and when no extra curricular activities.

If the pupils are neither in Remedial/Extra Classes, nor homework supervision/extra curricular activities, they must be picked up by 1300hrs by their family.

It has been noticed that this has not always been the case; this creates safety issues (in case of an accident) since the children are no longer under adult supervision (teacher or instructor)

Some parents are impossible to get hold of, even disrespectful and avoid speaking with the School in order to find a solution. There is no formal supervision service in place for the children that are no longer meant to be on campus.

The Head of School shall request that the Management Committee implements a paying nursery service. After 1310hrs, the children will be sent there immediately, in instances where the parents have not arrived to pick them up.

3. Safety/General Conduct in the school perimeters

At the end of class, parents will be asked to park their vehicles and enter the School in order to wait and pick up their children in front of the administrative building. The area will be marked out by paint on the ground, with a clear "IN/OUT" sign.

This will avoid potential risks of children crossing the road alone or being hit (?) by moving vehicles, as well as some inappropriate behaviour towards some members of staff located near the entrance.

From now on, Andrew Mshandete shall resume the role of manning the gate, to control the safety around the school perimeters as well as preventing potential intruders.

4. Msasani: School access road

Some steps have been taken with the relevant authorities to improve the access road to the Nursery. In case of lack of response, further steps will be taken.

With regard to having a guard on the beach side, this request will be made to the Management Committee.

5. PPMS (Emergency Contingency Plan)

The PPMS is an official document that was filled in by the families and the personnel working at the school, as an inventory of the whole school community. It has been reconsidered for review/modification by the Embassy before being sent to the AEFÉ Paris (Agency for French Education Abroad) where there is a specific unit for managing crises,

should the need arise. We are reminded of the importance of keeping this document up to date, should there be any changes in the contacts.

6. Uniform/sports kit with school logo

In French schools, wearing school uniforms is not part of the culture, that rule will not change.

Having said that, for the purpose of Physical Education and competitive sports, a uniform with school logo could very well be considered.

Plastic flip flops/sandals will not be allowed in the school for obvious safety reasons. On the other hand, pupils going to the swimming pool can have them in their bag, and wear them specifically for that occasion.

IV Educational approach 2014-2015/outlook 2015-2016

Outlook/Project 2015-2016

In line with the intention to create a French/French as a Second Language department, the school has requested the AEFÉ to open a position for another qualified French teacher that would also possibly have a degree in French as a Foreign Language. To be continued.

In collaboration with the Alliance Française (AF) the School is looking to implement French lessons for complete beginners from Nursery's MS to CE2 based on the numbers reported by the teachers. A timetable with the various remedial groups has been handed over to the AF and they are working on it. But for now, the AF is short staffed to meet the demand. The French as a Foreign Language AF interns will be able to take on this role, but not before January 2015.

For the newcomers who do not speak any French, the French as a Foreign Language department will be a real asset. The parents will understandably be reassured when they register their children to attend the French School.

The School also needs to get the message out that French is not the only language in the School. The English department has three entry (and learning) levels and it should be pointed out that the overall level of teaching in English is acknowledged as being at an excellent standard.

Food for thought: putting together a booklet on "Language Policy"; information on the website; Open Day ... as well as communicating on the cosmopolitan nature of the students (many nationalities / multicultural presence at Arthur Rimbaud).

2. Delegation visits: School Inspection and Education Counselor

Mrs Sandra Charpentier (Inspector of National Education for the Southern and Eastern Africa, based in Addis Abeba) noted that the overall level of Primary School students was excellent. In addition, she recognised non Francophone children participate well in class.

Mr Herve Clootens (Educational Counsellor, Inspector of National Education) shall be on educational mission at Arthur Rimbaud between February and March 2015.

3. Key Projects for the School: 2015-2018

The new School project is under review. It shall be presented to the two Councils (Primary and Secondary School Councils) when it is finalised. It will most likely focus on:

The policy of languages (French, English, other languages, and language certification); developing the school (Arthur Rimbaud)'s IT and digital resources; taking into account the host country in the learning contents; artistic development of the pupil.

4. Educational trips and School outings (with overnight stays): updates and means of financing.

The educational trips have been postponed. This has no bearing on the quality of the project, but rather, is based on the Embassy's guidance to exercise caution. The feasibility of these educational trips shall be discussed again, as of January 2015.

These school trips will continue to be financed as follows: 50% by the parents and 50% from the School's budget.

5. Educational material/ordered material.

The School orders and supplies all of the pupils' school material. Parents are wondering why their children are using photocopied books and not originals. These books have been photocopied to address an error made when ordering. It is a temporary setback. Text books have already been ordered since the beginning of term and we hope, should arrive very soon.

6. Calendar/Schedule Arthur Rimbaud First term.

The schedule containing the most important dates of the first term, shall be communicated to the parents after the Councils have met.

Calendar for Academic Year 2015-2016

A committee will be tasked with the responsibility for preparing the calendar and it shall consist of 7 people:

- 3 elected parents (nursery, primary and secondary)
- 3 elected teachers (nursery, primary and secondary)
- 1 administrative representative (K. A-A)

The three parties will have up to the beginning of February 2015 to prepare and propose said calendar.

The same committee will also evaluate the possibility of staggering the start of term time between Nursery and Primary school, for the 2015-2016 academic year.

V. Extra curricular activities

A huge number of activities have been proposed for the First Period. Having said that, some have had few (or even no) registered students, and therefore had to be canceled. The planning has thus been subscription based; to be specific, there have to be 8 names for an activity to take place.

Some activities, on the other hand, have been kept on despite low subscriptions because they are new activities (yoga, jewelry making) in order to settle in and offer variety.

For the Second Period, pupils will be asked for their wishes and preferences. The extra curricular activities coordinators have tried to find serious and reliable instructors, who are always instructed so that the activities go on smoothly.

Parents have also been asked to bring whatever skills/activities that can benefit the School.

In team sports, CE2 pupils will shift to the CM1/CM2 groups of pupils because there is too big a physical difference between CP and CE2 pupils.

All homework supervisions are given by teachers who maintain a dialogue with the class core teacher and they communicate whatever difficulties that the pupils might encounter.

Supervised study is a time devoted for pupils' homework/studying.

Session was closed at 20:30hrs.