

# Blackhall Primary School Parent Council Newsletter

## January 2010

**Happy New Year and welcome** to our first newsletter of the 2009/10 school session. We welcome parents of all children new to our school whether P1 or in other years. We hope that everybody is enjoying being back at school and new pupils are settling in well and having a fun time at Blackhall Primary. The Parent Council firmly believes that the staff, children and parents all do a great job in making it one of the best schools in Edinburgh.

All parents/carers of children at the school are automatically members of the Parent Forum. The Parent Council acts as a representative body for the Parent Forum and ensures good communication between the school and parents/carers. We are consulted on and represent parents' views on matters such as budgets, appointment of head and senior teachers and educational matters affecting the school such as changes to the curriculum or class sizes. If you have any issues you want to raise please contact us.

Parent Council posts have two-year tenure. We currently have a vacancy for the Vice Chair and the following posts will become vacant at the end of this school year - Chair, Treasurer, Primary 2 Representative (next year P3) and Primary 4 Representative (next year P5).

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Parent Council, please contact Pauline Lindsay or your Year Representative. The school office will happily put you in touch with your Year Representative or you can speak to them at the school gate at drop-off/ pick-up times.

### YOUR PARENT COUNCIL

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Chair                           | Pauline Lindsay |
| Vice Chair                      | Vacancy         |
| Head Teacher                    | Margaret Scott  |
| Teaching Staff Rep              | Karen Morris    |
| Support Staff Rep               | June Cameron    |
| Clerk                           | Frances Fyvie   |
| Primary 1 Rep                   | Elaine Walker   |
| Primary 2 Rep                   | Janice MacInnes |
| Primary 3 Rep                   | Shirley Ireland |
| Primary 4 Rep/Treasurer         | Lisa Erskine    |
| Primary 5 Rep                   | Fiona Marsden   |
| Primary 6 Rep                   | Anne MacDonald  |
| Primary 7 Rep                   | Linda Laughland |
| Sports Rep                      | Angeli Mehta    |
| All Years/ Community Rep        | Xinhua Shu      |
| PSA Rep                         | Bec Ringer      |
| Community Association Rep/ CCWP | Tina Woolnough  |

### SPORTS NEWS

Angeli Mehta our Sports Rep has been busy. Our Primary 5 to 7 girls netball teams are now up and running successfully. The coaches are PE students from Edinburgh University who play for the university team and have coaching experience. There are now over 40 girls playing and the P7s took part in the Edinburgh Schools Sports Association competitions last year.

The next venture will be gymnastics which will target some of the younger children. Also coming soon will be a lunchtime yoga class for the P1's and 2's.

Finally thanks to the Blackhall Sports Committee who have donated money to the school. This will be used to purchase some outdoor table tennis tables.

**Wishing everyone best wishes for a happy 2010**

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

### Parent Involvement Questionnaire

At Blackhall we want to make sure that parents/carers are involved with the school and their children's learning as much as they want to be.

Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire attached on page 2. Give us your views and allow us to identify any barriers to your involvement with the school. You are free to remain anonymous if you wish.

### School Budget Cuts

As reported in the last Parent Council newsletter Edinburgh schools are facing an enormous challenge with budget cuts and therefore the ability to meet pupil needs over the next few years. Presently Blackhall Primary has a 1.5% embedded cut to the budget which will continue for the 2010/11 school session, but an additional cut is also being proposed which will mean a 4% cut in 2010/11 (amounting to approx £40,000), a 6.5% cut in 2011/12, and a 9% cut in the following year. To bring this into perspective, fixed costs make up approximately 91% of the devolved school budget. The proposed cuts will reduce not only the learning materials and services used to support pupil education but also staffing and the school improvement agenda.

The Parent Council are writing to Councillors, MSPs and MPs, asking for their support against these cuts - we do not believe that our children's education should suffer. While we all appreciate that City of Edinburgh Council have a very serious financial deficit, we have asked that they look elsewhere to save money and protect education. Parent Councils all over the city are writing to their Councillors and we hope to apply sufficient pressure on our Council to make the right decision for children.

At our Parent Council AGM, parents were asked for ideas on how money could be saved - a number of great ideas were gathered and have been submitted to City Council.

**Together we have the power to change this - don't hesitate to lobby/write to your Councillors in support of this effort and if you have any council money saving ideas please let them know.**

### Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aims to provide a coherent learning experience for pupils and develop rounded individuals who are equipped to participate fully in both their working and wider life. Blackhall Primary has previously held workshops on the topic and informed parents on how the Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented in school. Whilst there has been a phased implementation of the concepts in schools over recent years there are some major changes being introduced from August 2010 which will impact children moving into their Secondary Education. Our current Primary 7 pupils will start their Secondary Education at the point where a different approach is being taken to how they are taught and their progress assessed. This includes a change from the current method of A-F level assessment and also the exams they will sit at and beyond S3. Until this group of children has reached the last year of Secondary Education, High Schools will be operating two assessment systems.

A leaflet, with further information, has recently been distributed by your Parent Council year rep via email. Watch out for news of a P7 parent meeting at the Royal High School later this term.

### Communication

You may be receiving this newsletter by email, or on paper via the 'schoolbag' distribution the school uses. Most of us have discovered that as well as being wasteful of paper, the 'schoolbag' system isn't faultless – often pieces of paper never make it home. We are trying to move to email communication – particularly for Parent Council news - and would be grateful, if you haven't already done so, if you would provide your Year Rep with your email address.

If you are concerned about privacy, please be assured that all Year Reps know to use a simple methodology that ensures no recipient email addresses are seen.

### AGM

The school council AGM was held on November 16<sup>th</sup> and the topics mentioned in this newsletter were discussed. We are grateful to the Conservative Ward Councillor Iain Whyte for his attendance and contribution to the debate, in particular those on the Budget and School Hall issues.

We continue to work with Iain and all Ward Councillors to ensure the best outcome for our school and our children.

### School Hall

In November we had a visit from Councillor Marilyn MacLaren and also Anne Crawford of Property and Asset Management. They looked round the school and agreed that our hall is too small for the current school roll. As expected they confirmed that there is no money in the budget for a new hall for at least 3 years. Councillor MacLaren suggested a feasibility study could benefit our request. The Parent Council is currently researching funding options to support its preparation. If you have any suggestions please contact either Pauline Lindsay, Angeli Mehta, Elaine Walker or see your Year Representative.

### Blackhall Primary School Parent Council Parental Involvement Questionnaire 2010

Responses to be handed into the school office and will be treated in confidence.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Children in Blackhall Primary years... (e.g. P1; P4; P1 and P3; etc): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you feel involved in your child's/children's learning? Yes/No

If yes, in what way are you involved? e.g. reading support, brainybags, school fairs, snack-attack, sports coaching, school outings support?

If No, what stops you being involved?

2. If you want to be more involved, what can be done to help you?

3. Is there anything that you would like to raise with us?

4. Can you suggest how communication with the school, Parent Council and PSA be improved?

**Thank you for your participation and we look forward to reading your views.**