

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 3rd DECEMBER 2009

Present:

Management : Jeannine Maradini, Florence Romain

Teacher Representatives: Silvana Spagnoli, Eleonora Pozzi, Letizia Levati, Annamaria Bottarini, Julie Biscarros, Jenny Leask, Barbara Casadoro, Veronique Cristophel, Marlou Bronneberg

Parent Representatives: Lesley Koschel, Roberta Mingori, Lucilla Gregoretti, Ana Rincon, Katherine Morris, Jean Yannick Thebaut, Maria Giovanna Incerti, H el ene Bock, Emanuela Baistrocchi, Cristina Von Felten.

The meeting started at 4.30pm and finished at 7pm.

1) BACCALAUREAT

The dates set by Brussels for the written examinations are 31st May to 12th June.

For the oral tests, the school will align itself with Varese so that the inspectors are not required to visit more than once.

For the resolutions, the date proposed is the afternoon of Friday 2nd July, and the announcement of results is scheduled for Saturday 3rd July, which would be postponed until Monday 5th July in the event of any problems.

2) SCHOOL TRIPS – CULTURAL EXCHANGES FOR THE SECONDARY

The cultural exchanges this year will be with the school of Manosque for the 2nd year pupils and with that of Strasbourg for 3rd year pupils. The trips should take place in April and May; in both cases the exchanges are with European schools.

For the 4th, 5th and 6th years, there will not be a cultural exchange, but a trip to a destination yet to be set. Last year the students visited Berlin.

The Parents' Association suggested that a town should be chosen which has a European School.

For the French section, the Parents' Association requested that the town chosen is not French.

Contacts have already been established with schools in Ireland and Finland.

The classes of the 1st to the 3rd years will participate in a skiing week organised by the sports' association (CUS) of Parma. The Parents' Association asked whether it would be possible to advance or delay the February holiday week in order to organise a skiing week for all the students of the secondary and for our school alone.

Florence Romain indicated that, in the European schools, the skiing week is reserved for the first three years of the secondary cycle.

It was also noted that it is impossible to move the February holiday because it is fixed at the European level; for the other holidays, some changes can be made.

The Parents' Association suggested that a skiing week be organised uniquely for our school in order to create a sense of belonging and cohesion which is currently missing.

3) PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE SECONDARY

The proposed excursions are related to the curriculum.

The pupils from the art classes went to an international show for visual arts, cinema, architecture, dance, music, and theatre in Venice and to G ene in the context of the science programme.

There are constantly suggestions to link these outings to the curriculum.

The Parents' Association requested that pupils with learning problems (dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.) receive more attention. It proposed that measures should be implemented that are already in place in Italian schools.

It was noted that parents do not always understand the role of guided study and that these are hours which are important for the students. The parents would like these periods to be more organised and on specific projects.

In addition, the parents would like to be informed of days when certain teachers are absent and when pupils will have guided study.

The Parents' Association requested more generally that things are well organised in the case of absence of teachers, not only during guided study periods.

The parents must know that if a teacher is absent, the pupils are followed and not just left to themselves.

When teachers take holiday, they should ensure that they leave a work programme (and homework) that the pupils must follow in their absence.

If there was a library available, it would make this easier because the pupils would be able to go there in their free time.

From the students' timetables, distributed at the beginning of the year, parents can see when there are guided study periods. During these periods, students should study diligently and, equally, the teachers must explain the way in which the students should work.

4) SECONDARY LIBRARY

Many books have arrived; however, it is necessary for there to be a physical place to put them and for them to be used to further the pupils' knowledge.

The Parents' Association underlined the importance of having this space available as quickly as possible in order not to deprive the pupils of this opportunity.

5) "PROVE DI VOLO" ('TEST FLIGHT')

This is a project which was undertaken last year in collaboration with psychologists and is organised by the Comune for all schools.

A psychologist will come to train the teachers who have requested assistance with classes in which behavioural problems have been encountered. The psychologist spends time with the class on one or two occasions to observe its daily life. The teachers and the psychologists meet afterwards and support is provided.

The teachers who took part in this project last year indicated that the experience had proved very useful.

This year, the project will take place in the first three years of the secondary cycle and the entire primary cycle.

6) THEATRE

The 4th secondary will put on a show in collaboration with a psychologist; this is a project being realised at the level of the Comune and will lead to a performance in the theatre of Parco Ducale.

For the 5th, there is a project of Scene d'occidente, which is a theatrical training project. The actors of Teatro 2 come to the school and work on a subject with the students.

The 6th continues the pilot project started last year, again with Teatro 2, on a dramatic text. It is a complex project, covering the rewriting and updating of the text through to its staging.

This theatre project carries with it a progression for the 4th to 6th years.

This project is a great success with the students.

7) LIBRARY

The Nursery Library is operational and the children can borrow one book per week.

There are a good number of books for each of the sections, although fewer for the French section because the numbers are quite small.

In January, the teachers will have some training to manage the borrowing of books.

For the Secondary, the situation is more difficult because there are not sufficient books in Italian. For via Toscana, the dictionaries and the encyclopaedias have arrived and all the books ordered from last year's budget are already classified. The school has requested the Comune to assist with the transfer to Via Toscana (transport of books and shelves...).

The pupils can only consult the books in school; they cannot take them home.

Books have been ordered in all languages (including Portuguese, Dutch, German, etc...).

This year, the school has not yet approved the budget for the library; this was postponed to the agenda of the next Administrative Board.

8) CHRISTMAS MARKET

Destination for the money raised: the proposal is to create a fund for school trips, aimed to assist families who have economical problems in each cycle.

The Parents' Association asked the school how it would regulate the use of these funds.

Normally, the money raised would be around 2,000 €.

The contribution of the Comune to school trips generally only concerns the amount for transport.

In order to respect the privacy of families, the Parents' Association does not wish to be involved in the operation of this fund.

The school will create a committee of teachers in order to decide upon the beneficiaries of this assistance.

9) PROJECT ON CONTINUITY FROM NURSERY TO PRIMARY

In order to ensure a smooth transition from the Nursery to the Primary cycle, a project has been put in place so that the older children in the Nursery can discover what it's like in the Primary.

Last year, there was a project which involved correspondence with artists.

This year the work will be centred on beehives and bees, and will involve the older children in the Nursery and the children in the 1st Primary. There will be an outing and a visiting speaker in class.

The contacts between these two levels will take place once a month.

10) SWIMMING POOL - NURSERY

This pedagogical project was agreed by all the teachers and approved by management.

For the teachers, it is a very valuable experience and, for the children, an opportunity to learn to be more autonomous.

Children who are not participating stay at school and are divided between the other classes.

The funds raised at last year's Nursery Spring Fete are being used to reduce the cost of the swimming sessions.

11) LATE ARRIVALS - NURSERY

Children in the Nursery section arriving late must always be accompanied into the classroom by their parents, who must sign a late note with the teacher.

12) NURSERY CLASSES

The Parents' Association asked for information about the maximum number of pupils permitted in the classrooms, as there is a serious problem in the school in relation to space.

In the English section, in addition to the large number in the class, there is also a problem of language because only a small percentage of children are mother tongue English and this hinders the progression of the children. The Parents' Association asked whether it would be possible for the class to have some form of 'learning support' to ease the situation.

The Parents' Association underlined that there was a problem at the registration level and stressed the importance of ensuring that an evaluation of the dominant language is done at the moment of registration (NB dominant language and not mother tongue).

This is also an important issue for the SWALS (Students Without A Language Section, eg German, Spanish...). However, according to the rules, they can choose their language section so the school does not have a say in this.

It was requested that the Administrative Board establish precise admission criteria relating to the choice of linguistic section for the first registration.

One teacher also indicated that it would be desirable to set a deadline for the arrival of children who are not Category 1. In effect, in the Nursery, new arrivals continue throughout the academic year which disrupts the class as a group and hinders the progression of the teaching programme.

In addition, there is also a problem with periods of absence (the class follows and builds upon its programme throughout the year); it is therefore necessary to apply the rules concerning absence and discipline.

13) DISCIPLINE

It was requested that the existing rules be applied in the area of discipline (including sanctions).

14) PROJECT ON CONTINUITY BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

This consists of encouraging interaction between the classes by working on continuity between the different cycles, with the students of the 5th Primary joining with those of the 1st Secondary.

Students from the 1st Secondary come to the class of the 5th Primary and answer questions from the younger students.

15) EDUCATIONAL TRIPS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES - PRIMARY

Exchanges with the Munich school

Only the 5th Primary will participate in the trip to Munich; the two schools are working together in parallel on the same programme.

The trip will last from 15th to 18th June; the students from Munich are not able to come to Parma because they are already going to Vivara (Ud) .

The cost of the trip is 375 € (all inclusive) with hotel accommodation (compared to 370 € in a youth hostel) as requested by the parents.

The 4th Primary of the French section will also go as it is a class at the double level (4th and 5th).

Those who do not participate in the trip will go into another class.

The Parents' Association requested that all coaches used for excursions and trips be equipped with seatbelts and that it is ensured that they are used.

The 2nd French will go to Cattolica, with a micro-circus Eurocamp the first day, and then make 'piadina' typical sandwiches from this area and blue fish (pesce azzuro) the following day. The total cost is 100 €, which includes the train trip and two days all inclusive (also called 'blue week').

This trip will take place at the end of May / beginning of June.

The Parents' Association unanimously approved this project, whilst expressing disappointment that other classes were not able to participate.

16) CANTEEN - PRIMARY

The teachers and management have found ways for encouraging the pupils to improve their discipline in the canteen: a roll of honour has been put in place (the 'Golden Book').

17) SWALS

The Parents' Association requested that the school offers Italian language lessons to non-Italian children at the school. This demand will be made to the Administrative Board, normally, only Category 1 may benefit from this from this rule.

18) ADVANCE NOTICE OF EXAMINATION DATES - SECONDARY

The Parents' Association would like to know in advance (at the beginning of the year), the dates of exams for the 4th and 5th Secondary.

19) PARENT / TEACHER MEETINGS - SECONDARY

It was requested that the school fix the maximum duration of each interview and that a list of time slots is made available so that parents can sign up, as is done in the Nursery section. This will ensure that not too much time is lost waiting to see teachers.

20) PROJECT ON BILINGUALISM

A project on bilingualism will soon be launched in collaboration with Professor Mezzadri of Parma University.

Two meetings with teachers and parents are foreseen.