



Bombay Scottish School, Mahim

Parent-Teacher Association

Minutes of 3rd PTA Executive Committee Meeting held on October 22, 2024

Start Time: 09:00 AM

End Time: 11:30 AM

Location: Bombay Scottish School Mahim, Board Room

Notice & Agenda dated: October 3, 2024

Members Present:

1. Ms. Sunita George (Principal / Chairperson)
2. Ms. Pavamani (Vice Principal/ Secretary)
3. Mr. Malcolm Ovichegan (Coordinator XI & XII) - online
4. Ms. Shefali Lulla (Coordinator IX & X)
5. Ms. Florence Haeems (Coordinator VII & VIII)
6. Ms. Deepika Pingulkar (Coordinator V & VI)
7. Ms. Rachel Kirubaharan (Coordinator III & IV)
8. Ms. Ayesha Mascarenhas (Coordinator I & II)
9. Ms. Meeta Thakker (Coordinator KG Section)
10. Ms. Hetal Lakhota (Sr. KG representative)
11. Ms. Ankita Jain (Grade 1 PTA EC member)
12. Ms. Abhishek Dalvi (Grade 2 PTA EC member)
13. Ms. Varshaa Kamra (Grade 3 PTA EC member)
14. Ms. Diksha Bedi (Grade 4 PTA EC member)
15. Ms. Riddhi Hinduja (Grade 5 PTA EC member)
16. Ms. Anuradha Shah (Grade 7 PTA EC member)
17. Ms. Devanshi Thakkar (Grade 8 PTA EC member)
18. Ms. Natasha Fernandes (Grade 9 PTA EC member)
19. Ms. Sonal Shreeram (Grade 10 PTA EC member)
20. Ms. Naaznin Dutta (Grade 11 PTA EC member)

Proceedings:

The Chairperson commenced the meeting with a moment of silent prayer. The minutes from the previous meeting held on August 23, 2024, were reviewed and acknowledged.

Update on the Construction Work Progress

The Chairperson reiterated that updates to the PTA members regarding the construction status have been regularly taking place on various occasions.

Mr. Abhishek Dalvi mentioned that an update on the construction progress to parents was given by the Principal during musical afternoons and at the ISC orientation.

Ms. Varshaa Kamra from the PTA suggested that sending a positive email to all parents addressing their queries regarding the construction would be beneficial in response. The Chairperson emphasised that to the best of her knowledge, every parent who had emailed the school with specific queries had received a response on each occasion. The school has also been providing all relevant updates during the parent orientations and other parent meets.

The Chairperson further clarified that discussions occurring in unofficial WhatsApp groups among parents would not be acknowledged or addressed by the school and that emails must be sent in case of any grievance or query. However, it was noted that queries raised in many unofficial groups had been clearly answered during the musical afternoon for parents of students from KG to Grade 4, which included questions related to the construction.

The Chairperson further explained that the school cannot provide real-time updates regarding approvals or information from regulatory authorities. The construction of the front Heritage side of the school is nearing completion, while the rear side requires about six more months. The current heritage structure does not allow for additional classrooms; it only permits the realignment of spaces in accordance with heritage structure regulations. The plans include enhanced facilities, such as a state-of-the-art library, music and innovation labs, as well as office spaces.

The Chairperson informed the parents that the project was being managed by a board of distinguished experts and consultants, each a leader in their field which includes SNK, esteemed heritage architects designing the project. CBRE, a globally recognised organisation, was handling the project management, and a professional BMC consultant specialising in this area was on board.

She further explained that during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Academic Year 2019–2020, the design architect presented detailed plans to the parents, ensuring they were well-informed about the project's goals and the developments of the future building.

The Chairperson stressed the importance of meeting all compliance and safety requirements, highlighting strict restrictions on the renovation of the heritage structure. Construction activities had to be as per the approved plans without any modifications, as authorities conduct regular inspections to ensure adherence to these regulations and approvals.

The Chairperson continued to emphasize that the school shift system is being implemented solely out of necessity, not as a measure to increase enrolment or the number of students as this was found to be the only viable solution.

The Chairperson reported that various options for alternative spaces were considered, including the use of available BMC school premises; however, none met the specific needs of the school. She acknowledged the efforts of Ex-PTA committee members in the search but noted that a suitable location for all classroom requirements was not found. A project consultant, Ms. Ghosh, was also engaged to assist in identifying alternative spaces that fulfill classroom and infrastructural needs, however, she too was unsuccessful. Mr. Abhishek Dalvi remarked that commercial spaces were unsuitable, as parents would be uncomfortable with the school operating in such areas. Mr. Abhishek Dalvi emphasised that, despite ongoing renovations, the school continued to provide all essential facilities, including air-conditioned classrooms, without raising fees.

In response to the issue of the academic instructional hours brought up in Ms. Lotlikar's letter, the Chairperson mentioned that the calculations of Instructional Hours were incorrectly done by Ms. Lotlikar as the total number of hours cannot be done on actuals disregarding time that included assemblies, outdoor activity, online classes, and other non-instructional days. She pointed out that the last academic year was a shortened year but this year the calendar was streamlined and more hours were added to the overall time and that the school shared the schedule with the parents before the beginning of the academic year. She pointed out that a lot of thought and

discussion goes into the making of an academic calendar: this year the school ensured that the planning was done in such a way that the students had stress-free breaks after exams; that all the changes were made with the PTA being kept informed and, in terms of all the timelines and planned changes. She further stated that the schedule in the calendar had been designed with a lot of thought and deliberation of the team. The Chairperson read out the minutes of the PTA meeting of June 2021, that resulted in a decision to disperse students 10 minutes earlier to ease traffic to emphasize her point.

Mr. Abhishek Dalvi, representing the current bus committee, emphasised the importance of releasing students by 5 PM to ensure reasonable drop-off times. The Chairperson acknowledged his concerns but reiterated that adjusting school hours is challenging due to ongoing traffic conditions and other logistical constraints.

Ms. Varshaa Kamra noted that many schools manage later dismissal times effectively without significant parent complaints. However, the Chairperson maintained that frequent changes to the schedule cannot be done, since the arrivals and dispersals are seamless and all students and teachers are aligned to it. The Principal explained that the school has consistently made adjustments to accommodate unforeseen events, such as heavy rain and political rallies, while also ensuring that most PTMs are now scheduled on weekends to suit working parents and save on the school instructional hours. She emphasised that the focus is on maximising productive instructional hours rather than increasing the total time spent in school.

The Chairperson emphasised that senior students benefited from the current schedule, allowing ample time for self-study and that the school has effectively transitioned many group discussions and club activities online, saving significant time on the whole. She further discussed how the school's blended learning approach prepares students for the future amid changing circumstances. She also mentioned that parents had expressed appreciation for the school's performance during Covid, which is a testament to the school's proactive and forward-thinking approach. She pointed out that learning is not measured by hours spent in school but by the quality of learning experiences.

The Chairperson informed the members that the current schedule, featuring two breaks to enhance student well-being, effectively meets the needs of various age groups and she also emphasised that academic plans and schedules were thoughtfully crafted with students' well-being in mind, particularly in light of post-COVID adjustments.

The Chairperson clarified that the school had developed customised worksheets aimed at enhancing time management and several changes have been made to accommodate extra instructional hours, such as the school shifted to online method during rainy days, festivals, and political rallies. The PTMs had been switched to Saturdays, so as not to disturb the academic schedules and to accommodate working parents.

The Chairperson referred to previous emails from Ms. Lotlikar commending the school's activities and wondered about the abrupt change in Ms. Lotlikar's perspective within a space of one and a half months, especially considering that Ms. Lotlikar was aware that her earlier concerns had been effectively addressed.

In response to the concern of Ms. Lotlikar, Ms. Anuradha Shah said that Ms. Lotlikar was complaining that the PTA was not following the required norms and wanted to know if there was any substance to her point. The Chairperson replied saying that as far as her understanding goes, she felt that the school had made all efforts to follow all required mandates.

On the issue of the working of the PTA committee, the Chairperson reiterated that the PTA was a bridge between the school and the parent community and that they were representatives of the parent body. She complimented them, saying that the BSS PTA Committee was the most active PTA she had come across in her career.

The Chairperson addressed a concern raised by Ms. Varshaa Kamra regarding STEM learning classes (OMOTEC), which are optional. She clarified that while STEM is an elective subject and some parents have not paid the fee, no child has been excluded from participating. All students have been included, ensuring they complete the full academic curriculum alongside their peers who have paid. The Chairperson reaffirmed her commitment to inclusivity, emphasising that STEM education is vital for the future. She urged Ms. Kamra to provide the names of any students who felt excluded, expressing confidence that all students are actively participating in the program, with teachers ensuring full inclusion.

The Chairperson further underscored the importance of STEM, pointing out that the school already offers related subjects from Grades 9 to 12, and early exposure prepares students for advanced learning. The recently introduced AI and Robotics course reflects the school's forward-thinking approach. The Principal added that this initiative aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) and will remain a core component of the curriculum.

Ms. Kamra noted that while parents generally appreciate the STEM program, many would prefer it to be scheduled as an extracurricular activity, either before or after school hours. In response, the Chairperson explained that the program's current structure was approved during a previous PTA meeting with full consensus, and therefore, it cannot be adjusted each time the PTA composition changes.

At this point, the Chairperson also mentioned that the school had opened the new WhatsApp community channel for all parents to ensure ease of communication with the parents. The school pays for this facility to ensure convenience to parents but it is important that media hygiene is maintained.

The Chairperson also mentioned about the **APAAR card form** sent by the Education Department and that parents are required to fill this form.

Continued Matters arising related to Ms. Lotlikar's letter.

The PTA informed the Chairperson that they are in receipt of a letter via an email from Ms. Pallavi Lotlikar dated 30th September, 2024. The PTA shared their concerns with the Principal on the issues raised by Ms. Lotlikar.

The Chairperson stated that the school received a similar letter in August directed to various regulatory bodies, which included several exhibits. Due to the document's nature, the school needed to seek legal counsel. The Chairperson pointed out that Ms. Lotlikar had met with her in April 2024 to raise concerns, which the Principal clarified and addressed to her satisfaction at that point.

The Chairperson noted that on July 4, 2024 she received an email from Ms. Lotlikar regarding her NGO, Society for the Child, in which she invited her to be a guest writer.

Ms. Natasha Fernandes questioned the validity of the NGO, Society for Child, and sought to understand its connection to Bombay Scottish School, expressing concerns about a potential hidden agenda. Ms. Anuradha Shah noted that she could not find the NGO listed as a registered organisation while checking it up and was sure that it was not a registered NGO.

Ms. Nazneen Dutta raised a query about whether the school could accept letters from individuals affiliated with organisations that may or may not be officially registered. In response, the Principal explained that, as Ms. Lotlikar is a parent, and since the school values constructive engagement with parents, it was appropriate to address her concerns and reminded everyone that we are all working together for the improvement of the school and the well-being of our children.

Ms. Natasha Fernandes brought to everyone's attention a concern about parents from different sections being contacted by those supporting Ms. Lotlikar, inquiring about their stance on the issues she raised.

The Chairperson replied, saying that she was aware of such calls being made, as she was also informed by another parent who had received similar calls.

Ms. Sonal Shreeram raised the point that, while parents have the right to question school-related issues, there should be clear protocol that should be followed. The PTA member Ms. Sonal Shreeram along with the other PTA Executive Committee members formally expressed their objection to Ms. Pallavi Lotlikar's decision to escalate her concerns to various regulatory authorities without first bringing them to the attention of the PTA Executive Committee. They believed that such issues should have initially been addressed within the PTA forum.

The PTA member expressed her concern regarding the reputational damage these developments may cause to the school, especially given that many of our students aspire to gain admission to top national and international universities. Publicised news of this nature could have serious, lasting repercussions. The Chairperson agreed to the statement and reiterated that such actions were demoralising for teachers and cast doubts on the school's operations.

Addressing Ms. Lotlikar's concern about the time allocated to events like Sports Day and the Annual Concert, the Chairperson stated that these events had been an integral part of the school's educational program for almost a century, and played a crucial role in students' overall personal development. The school thoughtfully schedules these activities within its calendar, recognising their essential contribution to students' learning and growth and that the process and the team spirit taught through the concert creates holistic individuals.

She emphasised that such productions require a fixed time to be allocated for it and that the yearly academic planners are designed accordingly.

Ms. Diksha added that these events bring tremendous joy to both parents and students. Ms. Varshaa Kamra highlighted that students build self-confidence through their participation in such activities. Ms. Anuradha Shah emphasised that, as with any institution, the school may not always meet every parent's expectations. She encouraged parents to focus on the many positive aspects of the school and appreciate the broader benefits these events provide to the students.

Ms. Anuradha Shah then suggested that the PTA Executive Committee should meet Ms. Lotlikar, to discuss the concerns being raised and if there are some practical suggestions, it can be presented to the school administration. The Chairperson expressed support for this suggestion and encouraged them to move forward with the meeting.

The Chairperson continued to state that the school calendar includes all events and are shared with the parent body before the academic session begins and that the school also explains the plan for the academic year during the parent orientations which are conducted for all parents before the academic year begins. Most often, unless necessary, the planners are followed, but, due to unforeseen circumstances some dates/events might change.

The Chairperson mentioned that during her meeting with Ms. Lotlikar in April 2024, she had invited Ms. Lotlikar to be a part of the PTA Executive Committee. However, Ms. Lotlikar did not apply for the position despite an open invitation to do so.

At this point, Ms. Anuradha Shah acknowledged that every school faces challenges. She emphasised the importance of recognising that the school was doing its best. In case of any issues, she highlighted the need to initiate and improve dialogue on a one-on-one basis rather than allowing people to jump on the bandwagon using social media, which can create an unhealthy environment of mistrust. The Chairperson then mentioned that individuals who may have concerns are encouraged to either email or seek appointment with the school authorities one on one to resolve their concerns.

Ms. Varshaa Kamra brought up the point of unclean bathrooms as a concern. The Chairperson acknowledged the concern and that there were changes in the facility and housekeeping supervisor. She invited the PTA Executive Committee members to come for a surprise inspection of the washrooms.

To the concern raised by the Jr. KG parents regarding the classroom furniture, which they felt was designed for older children, the Chairperson clarified that the furniture was custom-made based on measurements to suit students of all ages. Special provisions were included to support the frames of even the youngest and smallest children. A complete replacement of the furniture was not feasible as it is used across both shifts. However, for the smallest students, specially designed smaller furniture is still in use.

Concerns regarding the functioning of the air conditioning system were also discussed. It was clarified that the temperature is consistently set at 24 degrees throughout the school.

The PTA also raised concerns about the structure of meetings during PTMs. The Chairperson explained that it is not feasible for all teachers to meet every parent of all classes they teach individually. Since this would mean a teacher would be required to meet 200 parents on one day which is not feasible. Hence, the class teachers have review meetings with all the subject teachers and their inputs are collated and discussed during her meeting with the parents which ensures that every parent gets enough time to discuss the progress of their ward holistically with the class teacher. She emphasised that if a parent has a specific concern that they need to discuss with the subject teachers, they could seek appointments in the week and meetings were scheduled with the subject teachers to address it.

Another concern was related to the difficulty parents face in regularly printing worksheets. Parents suggested finding an alternate vendor to handle the photocopying and printing needs. The Chairperson agreed that an external agency could be engaged by the PTA Executive Committee to provide this service, making it more convenient for everyone since the school shares the soft copies with the parents in advance. The PTA Executive Committee will review the proposition and revert.

The parents confirmed that they had no other items to discuss, whether on the Agenda or otherwise, and the meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.



Ms. S. Pavamani
Secretary
PTA Executive Committee