

Consortium of Gujarati Schools

Notes of the Biennial General Meeting held on Sunday 22nd April 2018 at 2.30pm at Shree Kutch Swaminarayan Satsang Mandir, Kenton

Members present: Jayantbhai Tanna (Chair), Vijyaben Bhanderi (Secretary), Rekhaben Patel (Treasurer), Heenaben Patel, Rekhaben Shah, Sonalben Shah, Shaileshbhai Pujara, Archanaben Dave, Chandubhai Hirani, Gopalbhai Pindoria, Induben Mehta, Jasuben Jesani, Prabhaven Jivan, Padmaben Mistry, Premjibhai Bhudia, Ritanben Kamdar and Tusharbhai Shah

Apologies received: Premjibhai Patel, Rashmibhai Shah, Bhartiben Shah, Madhuben Kalaria, Vibhaben Rawal, Nirmalbhahi Shah and Alpeshbhai Patel

Guests from Gujarati Literary Academy (UK):

President, Vipoolbhai Kalyani and Treasurer, Laljibhai Bhanderi

1. Welcome

The Chairman, Jayantbhai Tanna welcomed all members present.

Jayantbhai introduced the CGS committee members present and requested everyone present to introduce themselves.

2 Notes of the last meeting – 30th October 2015 (Circulated in advance)

Jayantbhai briefly went through the notes of the last General meeting and asked if they were accurate. Everyone agreed. The notes were unanimously approved and proposed by Shaileshbhai Pujara and seconded by Heenaben Patel.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Report for 2015 – 2018 (Circulated in advance)

Jayantbhai went through the report outlining the various activities undertaken by CGS.

1) OCR Examination Board and GCSE/A Level Examinations

He talked about the huge effort made through the DfE, Ofqual, MPs, Councillors, OCR, NCGO, community organisations, Gujarati schools, parents, teachers, well wishers and the petition that collected nearly 10,000 signatures for the continuation of the GCSE and A level examinations in Gujarati.

We were finally rewarded when the government announced that Edexcel/Pearson Examination Board (in place of OCR) will continue to offer GCSE and A Level examinations from 2020.

2) Training for Gujarati Teachers

- a) On 2nd April 2016 at the EKTA Centre in Kingsbury. We had 90 teachers who participated and we received very positive feedback from them.
- b) On 12th November 2016 at the EKTA Centre. We received very positive feedback from the 50 teachers who attended.
- c) On 17th December 2016 at the EKTA Centre to review the new Content and Assessment arrangements for A Level courses

d) On 2nd Sept 2017, a meeting with all the Gujarati school Head teachers and co-ordinators

e) In Spring 2018, supported 6 candidates to enter A Level examinations in Gujarati

3) CGS Membership and School Information Forms

We have 22 registered organisational schools and 4 Individual Members. However in 2017, only 16 schools returned their information. We respectfully urge all schools to persevere and complete this information for us.

4) Training for the new GCSEs and A Levels

It is our intention at CGS to carry out training sessions for our teachers in the near future. CGS will also be organising Leadership and Management training in the near future.

5) GCSE and A Level Examination Centres

We have worked with Shree Kutch Swaminarayan Satsang Mandir in Kenton and they have agreed to be a Centre for our GCSE and A Level Gujarati candidates.

6) GCSE and A Level Examination Entries

We are deeply concerned about the drop in the number of entries in 2017. We also have a huge challenge that we have to meet by making our Gujarati lessons more interesting and enjoyable using more 'mainstream' teaching strategies and resources including IT.

7) Appreciation and Thanks

We are most grateful to all our committee members; to the Trustees of Shree Kadwa Patidar Sanstha; to the Oshwal Community for the use of the EKTA Centre. And finally our thanks go to Shree Kutch Swaminarayan Satsang Mandir for giving us the use of their Computer Room and for being an examination centre.

The report was unanimously accepted.

Following the Report, suggestions and opinions expressed by attendees included:

- CGS should send the School Information form Gujarati organisations to identify number of students learning Gujarati and sitting for OCR GCSE in summer 2019 and the new GCSE 2020.
- Chandubhai Hirani expressed his opinion that teaching of Gujarati in supplementary is too exam focused and this discourages students from learning Gujarati.
- Tusharbhai suggested that teachers need to make lessons interesting and introduce Fun School as Oshwal has done.
- He also suggested that it may be a good idea to consider offering classes for other subjects like English and Maths revision to increase the intake of students.
- He also suggested an annual cultural event for all Gujarati school children to participate in plays, singing, dance drama, debate or discussion could be arranged.
- Ritaben suggested that schools teaching Gujarati should encourage and support more able and less able students by running both Foundation or Higher tiers courses.
- Jayantbhai explained the new structure and added that it should be made clear to students that the new Grade 5, equivalent to current graded C is a good grade. For Higher level, new Grade 9 is higher than current A* and is equivalent to A** grade.

5. Amendment of CGS Rules (Circulated in advance)

Jayantbhai explained that since there were no other Consortia in the UK, CGS should provide a nationwide service to all Gujarati schools and teachers. In order to do so, he suggested the name of the CGS should be changed to reflect this by removing 'South East England' from our name.

Secondly, he proposed that the conditions of operating the CGS bank account should be slightly adjusted. Instead of the signatories being 'Treasurer + either Chair or Secretary', it should be changed to 'Any two of Chair, Secretary or Treasurer'.

Both the changes and other minor alterations were accepted unanimously.

6. Treasurer's Report (Circulated in advance)

The Report was presented to the meeting. The total receipts were £2285 mainly from Membership fees and training courses. The expenditure was £979 mainly for training course materials and A Level examination entrance subsidy. The current balance was £1306 of which £500 had been set aside for the website. The Report was approved unanimously.

7. Election of the new CGS Committee for 2018 - 2020

Only one nomination for each of the posts of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer were received. These were Jayantibhai Tanna for Chair, Vijyaben Bhanderi for Secretary and Rekhaben Patel for Treasurer. They were all duly elected.

For the seven committee positions, only five nominations were received – from Heenaben Patel, Padmaben Mistry, Rekhaben Shah, Sonalben R Shah and Vibhaben Rawal. As there were no other nominations received, the above were elected unopposed.

8. Planning for the Future

Jayantbhai introduced Vipoolbhai Kalyani from Gujarati Literary Academy and briefed the meeting about his contribution to the Gujarati Language and Literature.

Vipoolbhai briefly explained the activities of the GLA and the national examinations held by the GLA some years ago and why they had to be discontinued with particular emphasis on the

decreasing number of candidates.

He also reflected on the current situation of supplementary schools and made the following points:

- Gujarati teachers are not all qualified teachers. Many use traditional teaching practices. They need to train themselves, learn and adopt new practices.
- Some teachers teach at weekends for economic reasons and often lack dedication and commitment as they work elsewhere during the week. Teachers should be more dedicated and committed and spend some time thinking about and preparing their teaching.
- As children are used to more progressive ways of teaching in their mainstream schools, teaching methods used should be on par with how languages are taught in mainstream schools.
- Gujarati is not always the **mother tongue** of children born and brought up in this country. It is often their **heritage language** and therefore teachers need to adopt bilingual teaching approaches using English as well.
- Teachers need to make teaching interesting to motivate children to continue learning Gujarati.
- Teachers should utilise the allocated teaching time effectively.

Additional suggestions were made by the attendees as follows:

- Prepare and use more classroom activities and games.
- Engage involve students during the lessons.
- Teaching should not be limited to text books only; it should be made interesting and fun to learn.
- Teachers should develop and share resources with other teachers.
- Use resources for developing all four skills.
- Teaching of the language in earlier years should not be exam orientated, but should be wider and maybe culturally based incorporating different topics/subjects.
- If possible, visit and observe mainstream school language lessons and adopt teaching methods similar to those in mainstream schools.
- Access other languages websites i.e. French and German for teaching strategies
- Standardise scheme of work. If possible, invite other language curriculum writers from mainstream school to assist us in writing one for teaching Gujarati.

If the above suggested practices are adopted, there is a possibility of encouraging more children to continue learning Gujarati and the future of Gujarati could be more secure.

Jayantbhai thanked Vipoolbhai Kalyani for sparing time and giving us his valuable ideas and suggestions to inspire us to continue to teach Gujarati to our children with renewed vigour and vitality.

Jayantbhai thanked everyone present for their participation and attendance on a lovely Sunday afternoon! He hoped to get their dedication and support in the same way in the future.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Close

The meeting closed at approximately 5.00 pm.

