



**Minutes of a meeting of the full Governing Body
of William Fletcher Primary School
on Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 6.30 pm**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this meeting was held online using Microsoft Teams

Present:

Trish Amesbury (TA) (Co-opted) (Chair)
Vicky Ball (VB) (Vice Chair) (Co-opted)
Kate Hopcraft (KH) (Parent)
Anna Isles (AI) (Co-opted)
Andrew Lister (AL) (Co-opted)
Deborah Nind (DN) (Headteacher)
Oliver Petter (OP) (Local Authority)
Charlotte Rayner (CR) (Co-opted)
Neil Shewry (NS) (Parent)
Rosie Staniland (RS) (Staff)
Kate Thorpe (KT) (Parent)
Daniel Wickham-Jones (DWJ) (Parent)

In attendance:

Karen Chambers (KC) (SENCo) (*until 6.47 pm*)
Clare Saunders (CS) (Clerk)

The meeting was opened by **TA** at 6.35 pm. The meeting was **quorate**.

1. Welcome

TA welcomed everyone to the meeting saying how good it was to have all governors present again. She welcomed **NS** to his first meeting and introduced him to governors, reminding them that he had been elected as the new Parent Governor at the start of November. She asked **NS** to email her with any questions he had about the work of the governing body or anything arising from the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

All governors were present online – there were no apologies.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

TA thanked all governors for having returned their Declarations so quickly this year to enable the Register to be updated. There were no further updates.

4. Urgent Additional Items

There were no items.

6. SEN Report

This item was moved up the Agenda to enable **KC** to leave at the end of her report.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Report to Governors 2019-20 had been circulated in advance. **KC** began by telling governors that the last academic year had been the first time she had worked with **KH** as the Link Governor, and that she found her to be very supportive, both then and now in the present year.

Referring to her report, **KC** emphasised what a very unusual year it had been due to the pandemic, saying that this had affected the systems normally used for identifying and tracking children. In addition, there were more children than usual on the SEND register. She explained that the challenge had been tracking SEND children and vulnerable families in lockdown, and she spoke about the “reasonable endeavours” which had been required of her by the local authority, saying that she had written risk assessments for the children with an EHCP and had had to show how the school was attempting to engage with the families and support them.

KC told governors that it had also been a challenge to engage with the support services eg Speech and Language, as some of their staff were redeployed during lockdown. She commented that it had taken until now to get all the support back on track.

KC added that one good thing about lockdown had been that, with parents at home more than usual, it had been easier to contact people and to get essential paperwork signed.

KC referred to the *Future Work* section of her report, saying that this is the work which is in progress this autumn, getting children settled back into school and ensuring that they are happy. She commented that the disruption earlier this year was difficult for children who rely on receiving daily intervention, and she reported that she is now focussing on children in KS1 and FS1, and on providing emotional support.

NS observed that the report showed that there are nearly twice as many boys as girls on register, and asked whether this was consistent with the average numbers elsewhere; **KC** replied that generally there are always more boys than girls on the register but added that the difference is particularly high this year.

KT said that, last year, **KC** had indicated that she would be focussing on children with EAL, and she asked whether this had had to be postponed because of the pandemic. **KC** replied that she had tracked children in FS1 and KS1, and that she had just managed to complete the work before lockdown.

KT asked whether the school had noticed any increase in the numbers of special educational needs since the start of the pandemic, and **KC** answered that it was too early to judge this at the moment, and that the children’s emotional needs were being addressed first, but that she would then assess the gaps in their learning.

DWJ referred to the time when the children returned to school, asking to what degree **KC** had had to tailor her usual interventions. She responded that some of the work was

running as it would normally do, but that in individual cases she had had to adapt her interventions to the current situation.

DN thanked **KC** for her work putting together the report and also for her tireless efforts with the children on the register. **TA** agreed, recording the thanks of the governors to **KC** for her work and for having attended this evening.

(6.47 pm – **KC** left.)

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from the meeting held on 13 October 2020

This item had been moved down the Agenda.

item 4: all Declarations have been returned. Action completed.

item 7: the SEN Report is on the Agenda for this meeting. Action completed.

item 8: **TA** confirmed that the Headteacher's appraisal had been completed and that Mary Burr had been involved in the process. She said that all targets previously set had been met and she encouraged governors to do the appraisal training. Action completed.

Action: **all governors** to consider doing the appraisal training and to sign up for it if interested.

The Parent Governor election took place on 2 November and **NS** was elected. Action completed.

AI wrote an article for the *Yarnton News* which was published. Action completed. So far, there has been no one asking to join the governing body as a Co-opted Governor. **NS** asked whether there were any specific requirements sought in terms of skills or experience; **TA** replied that the opportunity is open to anyone who is interested and willing to engage with the work of the governing body, and that everyone could have something to offer. **Action:** **all governors** to let **TA** know if they hear of anyone who would be interested in being co-opted.

TA explained the governors' committee structure to **NS** and suggested that he attend the next meeting of each, if possible, so that he can decide which to join. **NS** confirmed that he intended to do this. **Action:** **committee Chairs** to ensure that **NS** has the online invitations for the next meetings, and **NS** to let **TA** know in due course which committee he would like to join.

item 9: **TA** reported that she had looked at the single central register with Sandra and noted that most governors had done the generalist safeguarding training 2 or 3 years ago, which is sufficient. She added that there is safeguarding training available on The Key in case any governors would like to do the training again – **DN** posted a link to this on the meeting chat. **Action:** **all governors** to let **VB** know of any courses they complete and to tell Sandra Morris if they have had safeguarding training in their own workplaces, so that the details can be recorded in the register.

item 10: Link Governors will be discussed later under item 9.

item 11: Action: **all governors** to check whether they have read *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and to tick the Declaration on Governor Hub when they have done so.

item 13: VB sent the link to all governors. Action completed. The Clerk has shared details of Governor Services' spring training programme on Governor Hub.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were **approved** by governors, and signed by **TA**.

7. Chair's Items

TA said that she had no items other than the safeguarding training, which had already been discussed at item 5 above.

8. Headteacher's Report

A written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

DN began by saying what a strange time this year had been and emphasising the importance of recognising the difficulties faced by everyone. She highlighted the attendance figure of 98.29% (to 20 November), commenting on how remarkable this is, and said that even today there had been 270 children in school and only three absent. She confirmed that so far there had been no cases of COVID-19 at school.

Referring to her report, **DN** told governors that she had outlined the difficulties of leading a school through a pandemic, and she reported that the key skills of maths and English are currently being focussed on, adding that Mrs McDonnell, who had needed to have significant time away from school, had worked extremely hard on the RE curriculum while at home. **DN** invited questions on her report.

KH commented on the number of training courses which had been undertaken by staff and asked what the financial implications of this was for the school. **DN** agreed that there had been a lot of training undertaken; some of this had been necessary because staff had moved from teaching one stage to another. She said that the costs of training had reduced significantly during the pandemic as the courses are online, the highest cost of a course undertaken was around £50. She added that as the courses are done after school time, the school has not had to pay for supply teachers. She said that some of the training courses had been done because the staff members were interested in the subject matter and felt it would be useful for their careers, some were linked to targets in their appraisals, and others were necessary for staff in their role as Curriculum Leads.

KT asked how easy it was for staff to disseminate training to other staff members now that they have returned to school, and also how were the staff feeling about being back; **DN** answered that it was very difficult to share training with colleagues as the courses were currently online and so there could be no discussions or questions. She said that she had seen some information picked up on courses being shared within small staff groups – at the Inset day this term, there had been staff working together in groups looking at different subjects and some of the training had been shared then because, with people in

the same room as each other – although socially distanced – it was easier to do. **RS** agreed, saying that being there in person as part of a small team, she could pass on information from her training and they could work through what they needed to do with the geography curriculum for the whole school.

In reply to the second part of **KT**'s question, **DN** said that it had been a challenging time, and that the last few weeks before Christmas are always difficult as the children are excited and everyone is tired, but that this year had been particularly tough. She said that the staff worked as a team and were encouraged to say when they needed a break.

CR mentioned the recent news of a break through in developing a vaccine and asked what **DN** was most looking forward to in the new year; **DN** replied that she wanted to be able to be in the same room with her staff all together and she commented that people do not realise how important contact with others is until they are unable to have it. She said that the older children missed being able to mix with friends in other classes and that they looked forward to being able to play on the field and do regular activities together.

NS asked whether each teacher had a plan of the training they needed to do, and **DN** replied that the training needs came from a number of different directions eg the SDP highlights the need to improve KS1 boys' reading skills, so the staff had looked at what training could help with this target. She commented that teachers all have very individual training needs as they are at different stages eg some are aiming to be senior leaders, and that she has always believed in the importance of supporting career development. She concluded by saying that other training needs arise out of lesson observations.

AL added that training is very much a part of the annual appraisal process, and that a training plan is made for each teacher. Some training will focus on an interest in a specific area which will further their career while some has to be done in any event eg safeguarding.

OP remarked on how well everyone in the staff team had adapted to the situation, asking whether **DN** felt that facing another term of restrictions would be more straightforward as the school had now got into a new rhythm, and also whether there were any Covid-safe ways in which the governors might show their appreciation to the staff. **DN** replied that, as a leader, she is always very conscious of the pressure on the staff and that she takes time to check in with them regularly. She noted that things have got easier as term has gone on, that the children now come in to school much more quickly, parents know to leave swiftly and lessons can be started promptly, so there are lots of positives at the moment. She added that she hopes never to receive a call saying that a child has tested positive for the virus; this would mean closing one of the "bubbles".

RS agreed, saying that the staff and children are all now much more used to the new way of working and have adapted quickly. She noted that the emotional impact of wondering what will happen next is very tiring.

AL added that while the children have got used to new routines, it is their emotional needs which are now noticeable. He commented that the staff are all aware that there is a gap

where children have not made the progress they usually do in the year, and that it is important not to try and fix this too quickly, and to stay with a broad-based curriculum.

Answering **OP**'s second question concerning appreciation, **DN** said that the PTA had bought the school an online pantomime which the children would be watching and enjoying, but that this would also be of benefit to the teachers as it would be time which they would not have to plan for. She suggested that a thank you card was always very welcome. **Action: RS** to report back to the staff that the governors are very appreciative of their work and wish to thank them for everything they do.

TA agreed, and added her thanks to governors for helping with the stewarding at the start of each school day. She commented that this would have to continue for the time being but said that it was good to be able to help with something even in a small way like this. She emphasised that heartfelt thanks from the governors should be passed back to the staff for all their work and she thanked **DN** for her report.

9. School Development Plan

DN invited **AL** to update governors on progress with the SDP.

Quality of Education

Target 1.a.

AL reported that Emma Brown had been working very hard on this target, organising training with staff, putting together a survey, identifying children whose reading needs to be focussed on, working with Pupil Premium children, obtaining extra books and other literacy resources and meeting with **CR** as the Link Governor. He emphasised that reading is a very important priority for the school this year.

Target 1.b.

AL reminded governors that a lot of work had been done last year on reviewing history in the curriculum. He spoke of the whole day which the staff had recently spent thinking about the curriculum and said that it had been very good to work in the same room as colleagues, with each group looking at a different subject area – geography, DT and art – and considering what the children will be learning, how it will happen and how they will be assessed on their work. He added that he would be meeting **OP** as Link Governor before the end of term.

Target 1.c.

AL explained that **DN** had a group of staff working on this area and thinking about how to enrich the children's experience of art. Because of the pandemic, some plans had to be put on hold eg visiting Blenheim Palace for an art exhibition, but teachers remained determined to take the children away from school to look at art and to bring people in to school for art lessons.

He emphasised that although reading is very important, the staff wanted to keep a broad curriculum because foundation subjects remain as important as they ever were.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Target 2.a.

AL told governors that the staff had been very impressed with the children’s behaviour and attitudes since their return to school, and that the children had risen to the challenge.

Personal Development

Target 3.a.

AL confirmed that Pupil Voice is running and that the various groups are meeting again. He said that there is a new arts group and that all groups are very active.

Target 3.c.

AL told governors that the Rights Respecting School group had been very busy and that they were working hard towards the renewal of the award.

Leadership and Management

Target 4.a.

AL confirmed that CPOMS is working well across the school and proving very useful.

Target 4.b.

AL reported that Paul Austin was reviewing the teachers’ workload, physical and mental health, and that he had received training which covered the wellbeing of staff and how they could look after their health.

KT asked whether the school had decided how to spend the COVID catch up money and whether the governors could help in any way. **DN** replied she was required to state on the school website how the money was spent; she said that some would be focussed on the KS1 children and especially those in Y2, using the National Tutoring Programme up to Easter, and then deciding whether any of the Y1 children needed to be included. She explained that some children can close the gap very quickly so then the money would be diverted to others who needed help. She added that they would also be using the National Tutoring Programme for maths with Year 6, and that if there was any money left, she might buy additional TA hours, using existing staff to work with small groups. She informed governors that the money is spread across two financial years.

NS asked whether the government would require an itemised list of expenditure. **DN** replied that she would not be asked to provide a high level of detail.

TA asked that when Link Governors have met with their Priority Leads they feed back all observations to **DN** and **KH**, whether or not these are directly related to the area of the SDP for which they are responsible. She reminded governors that **KH** had produced a useful document with suggestions to help them with their discussions. **KH** thanked governors who had already had meetings with staff and asked that she be notified when a meeting is booked. She reminded governors that the meetings are about getting to know the teacher and the subject and suggested that, as the first meeting should be setting the scene, the crib sheet she had produced was a guide as to what to discuss. **Action: Link**

Governors to ensure that **KH** is told when meetings are arranged; and to provide feedback afterwards to **KH** and **DN**.

KH suggested that **NS** could be given one or two areas currently held by other governors who have been allocated several responsibilities, and she clarified that anything which is a target in the SDP needs three meetings per year, whereas other areas have only one.

10. **Safeguarding**

TA reported that **DN** had been through the auditing document and that **TA** had checked what had been done. She commented that it is a very long document but that the process is now all done online. She added that potential issues had been highlighted.

DN explained the categories used in child protection, saying that the highest category is a Child Protection Plan; in this category a social worker is involved to support the family, and she or **AL** meet with the social worker every six weeks to go through the plan, and with an independent officer every two or three months to discuss whether the child can be taken off the plan or needs to remain on it.

Referring to the second category, Child in Need, **DN** said that this is a lower level but still means that there are significant concerns, and that she meets the social worker every six weeks to assess the plan. She emphasised that the work is focussed on support for the family.

DN explained that the third category is Early Help. She emphasised that using the Early Help framework can make a big difference and have a significant impact on the outcomes for children's lives.

TA thanked **DN** for her explanation and commented that the amount of **DN** and **AL**'s time taken up by this work is considerable.

11. **Health and Safety**

VB asked whether the lane to the nursing home had been repaired yet. **DN** confirmed that it had not, and that there was still a hole in the tarmac but that the nursing home were trying to find a contractor to repair it. **NS** asked whether there had been any incidents as a result of the hole, and **DN** replied that a parent had tripped but not been badly injured.

12. **Governor Training**

VB thanked all governors who had told her about the training courses they had completed, and in particular recognised **KT** for doing the school budget monitoring course, **NS** for having already done the governor induction training, and **TA** for having undertaken a great number of courses.

13. **Resources Committee**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 November 2020 had been uploaded to GovernorHub.

VB told governors that the committee had gone through a benchmarking exercise and had found that the school is on a par with similar schools, but that they are lower on donations because it is usually Church schools who benefit from these. She added that the Co-op, however, had given the school a donation of £2,000 which was very welcome. **NS** asked whether the school had requested donations, and **DN** replied that a parent works for the Co-op, and that the money would be used for the planned running track.

VB recorded the committee's thanks to Sandra Morris, **DM** and the staff team for their hard work in keeping the school clean and doing all the Covid risk assessments. She commented that the school is very fortunate to have such an amazing team of people.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 21 January 2021.

14. Performance and Standards Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 20 November 2020 had been uploaded to Governor Hub.

AI commented that she had been overwhelmed by hearing about how much work had done by staff since March in dealing with the effects of the pandemic on children's progress.

There were no questions for the committee.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 14 January 2021 at 9.15 am.

15. Curriculum Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 November 2020 had been uploaded to Governor Hub.

CR reported that the meeting on the RE curriculum had been fascinating, saying that Liz McDonnell had spoken about the requirements of the curriculum, explained what was statutory, what progress had been made and what needed to be done. She said that she looked forward to hearing about PE and maths at future meetings, and confirmed that she had already invited the Link Governors for those subjects, adding that any other governors were of course very welcome to join and that the meetings were online.

CR noted that at the end of the meeting, the committee had reflected on how the Link Governor meetings feel to the staff, and had agreed that they must not feel like an interrogation but should be supportive. She said that it was particularly important to be mindful of how questions from governors might come across to the teacher at a time when meetings are being held remotely rather than in person.

There were no questions for the committee.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 14 January 2021 at 3.15 pm.

16. Any Other Business

TA referred to the mornings when she had spent time standing at the front of the school to help with stewarding, saying that she had been horrified by the amount of traffic, and the speed of some of the passing cars. She had written to a number of people at the Council in September but had received only one response, from Layla Moran MP. She then wrote to other people and a Technical Officer came one morning to observe the problem. She said she had hoped that he would recommend the addition of double yellow lines outside school; although he had agreed that the situation was dangerous and chaotic, however, double yellow lines would not be permitted, partly because there is a long and costly consultation process, but the Technical Officer had said that it might be possible to reinstate the yellow zigzag lines outside the pre-school, which prevent traffic stopping at that point during school hours. She said that she would be chasing the matter up as it was important to act as soon as possible to try and prevent a serious incident.

CR added that, while stewarding, she had been very impressed by the number of children who came up to greet her very politely and she asked that this be passed on to the children. **DN** thanked her for raising it and said that she had been working on skills like this with the children, encouraging them to do nice things for people.

TA concluded the meeting by asking **DN** to pass on to the rest of the staff the thanks of the governors for everything they have done this year in difficult circumstances, and for what they continue to do, and she wished everyone a very happy Christmas.

17. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 6.30 pm online

Items for inclusion on the Agenda should be sent to the Clerk a fortnight in advance.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

CS 03.12.2020