



**Minutes of a meeting of the full Governing Body
held at William Fletcher Primary School
on Tuesday 17 March 2020 at 6.30 pm**

Present:

Trish Amesbury (TA) (Co-opted) (Chair)
Vicky Ball (VB) (Vice Chair) (Co-opted)
Kate Hopcraft (KH) (Parent) (*via video link*)
Anna Isles (AI) (Co-opted)
Andrew Lister (AL) (Co-opted)
Deborah Nind (DN) (Headteacher)
Charlotte Rayner (CR) (Co-opted) (*via video link*)
Rosie Staniland (RS) (Staff)
Kate Thorpe (KT) (Parent)
Daniel Wickham-Jones (DWJ) (Parent)

In attendance:

Clare Saunders (CS) (Clerk)

Absent – apologies received and accepted:

Oliver Petter (OP) (Local Authority)

Absent – no apologies received:

David Hinde (DH) (Parent)

This meeting took place while the Coronavirus pandemic was in progress.

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 6.35 pm. The meeting was **quorate**.

1. Welcome

TA thanked governors for coming, and welcomed **CR** and **KH** who joined the meeting via video link.

2. Apologies for Absence

OP had sent his apologies for absence, in advance. These were accepted. **DH** was absent and had not sent his apologies.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

The Clerk confirmed that all governors except for **DH** had provided Declarations for this year. She confirmed that she had requested it several times from him. **Action: DH** to complete his Declaration and email it to the Clerk.

There were no further Declarations to be made and no updates to the Register.

4. Urgent additional items

TA explained that the meeting would need to discuss the latest official advice on Coronavirus and that **DN** would speak about the plans being made by the school. **TA** would also be talking to governors about the draft policy on virtual meeting attendance.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 21 January 2020

Matters Arising:

item 3: this item had already been discussed at item 3 above.

item 6 (8): Most governors had confirmed on the Declarations tab of Governor Hub that they had read *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. **AL** reported that he was having difficulty accessing Governor Hub. **Action:** **DH** and **AL** to ensure that their profile on Governor Hub shows their confirmation that they have read the document.

DN said that she had still not found any staff willing to become a Co-opted Governor.

item 9: **DWJ** has joined the Performance and Standards committee. Action completed.

item 16: the running track will be discussed at item 16.

item 8: the question of fines for unauthorised absence will be discussed at item 6.

item 10: **KH** has updated the list of Priority Leads. Action completed.

item 13: **VB** sent out the link for the online Safeguarding course. Courses which have to be attended in person have been suspended due to the Coronavirus. **Action:** **KT** to book on the training when it is available again.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2020 were approved, and signed by **TA**.

6. Headteacher's Report

Referring to her post on Governor Hub, **TA** explained that she had recently attended training on Governor Monitoring and Accountability. She said that she was asking governors to be proactive in reading **DN's** reports in advance of the meeting and coming prepared to ask questions. She reminded governors of the need for them to act as "critical friends", to support but also challenge rather than passively accept what they were told.

DN had circulated a written report in advance of the meeting, together with the Note of Visit by the System Leader. **TA** asked whether she had any comments to make on the report before governors began asking questions. **DN** referred governors to the attendance figures, commenting that these are currently very good and that she is concerned to ensure that these are maintained once life returns to normal after the current pandemic. She added that she remains worried that some reasons why children are missing school are inadequate and she expressed her concern that there is no mechanism in school for managing absence eg fines. She explained that she understood the reluctance of governors to impose fines on families and asked whether the governors felt a letter from them setting out the consequences of children missing school, could be useful. It was agreed that this would be an appropriate measure. **Action:** **TA** to draft a letter to parents,

incorporating information about the long-term effects of absence on children's education. A governor suggested that the letter include a list of authorised absences, to clarify the school's position. It was agreed that fines should not be mentioned unless there was an intention to levy these, and that before fines could be imposed, the school would need a clear policy on what would trigger a fine. Governors agreed that the letter should make it clear that teachers are under no obligation to set extra work for children who have missed school. **Action: CR** to ensure that the issue is on the Agenda of the next Curriculum Committee meeting. **CR** commented that it was important to emphasise the long term, as absences at primary school stage can affect children's performance in GCSEs. A governor asked whether it was always the same families who constituted the 10.11% figure for persistent absence; **DN** replied that it fluctuates between different families and that the school puts measures in place to provide a family with a lot of support but then issues arise with a different family. She commented that the staff know the children and their families very well and provide support specific to them.

Involvement with outside agencies

Governors agreed that the involvement with outside agencies was impressive.

Music provision

DN commented that there is a waiting list for brass tuition.

Headteacher peer to peer review outcomes

TA said that these reviews appear to have been very useful. A governor asked whether the reviews had always been with the same schools; **DN** replied that Kirtlington School had always been involved, and that originally Stonesfield had been the other school but that Tackley was now involved. She added that at present it was just the Heads of each school who were involved but that, within school, teachers were already learning from each other eg the FS1 and Y1 teachers had spent time observing each other's lessons to increase continuity of learning for children moving from one class to the next. She emphasised that the peer reviews had been valuable and that it was useful to see other learning environments. A governor asked whether the teaching staff could become involved in a similar peer review, and **DN** answered that it had been discussed but that the difficulty could be financial for smaller schools. She added that at William Fletcher she was always keen to say yes to any member of staff asking to spend time in other classes or at other schools, but she appreciated that it could be difficult for other schools.

A governor asked about staff disseminating the training which they had attended. **DN** replied that everyone who attended training had the opportunity to feed back to the others. She referred to **RS**, who had attended a history course and then led a staff training session on what she had learned, showing how it could be implemented in school, demonstrating how knowledge organisers could be used etc. **DN** added that it was a real challenge for a member of staff to speak to their peers about training they had been on and that **RS** had done a superb job of leading the training session.

System leader visit:

DN referred to the report which she had circulated in advance, explaining that every school has an annual visit from a System Leader appointed by OCC – in this case, the Head at Woodstock Primary School.

Teaching and Learning:

A governor asked whether there were any further events planned at Blenheim Palace. **DN** responded that the school would be hosting the Rights Respecting Schools' children's conference there in the summer. The school had also been invited to learn about the items found under the lake when it is dredged, and another artist holding an exhibition at Blenheim would like to get the children involved, as they were with the Catellan exhibition.

A governor asked **DN** to explain what she would say to a parent about the impact of art on the curriculum; in reply, **DN** said that there are a number of important ways in which involvement in the creative arts can help children: enabling an exploration of their thoughts and feelings which does not involve writing; problem-solving and planning skills eg choreographing a dance, painting a picture; some children who struggle with academic subjects find that they excel in the arts and have something that they can be proud of.

Staffing:

DN told governors that the school has one member of staff away on long-term sick leave but that all other staff are currently working.

PE and sports:

The planned running track will be 1.2 m wide and will be sited in front of the back fence.

Notable events and staff training:

TA commented on how many opportunities are afforded to the children. She congratulated **DN** and the staff for providing access to so many different events and activities for the pupils, and she also noted how much valuable training is given to staff.

Rights Respecting Schools work:

DN said that the school is the only one in Oxfordshire to have the Gold award for the RRS work, adding that Woodstock School are working towards RRS status.

PTA:

TA reiterated that the appointment of a new Chair and committee was wonderful news and she encouraged governors to attend the PTA meetings if at all possible. It was noted that the recent disco had made a profit of around £400.

Safeguarding:

DN said that she and **TA** had discussed how to share safeguarding information about the school with governors, while still maintaining confidentiality.

Complaints:

A governor asked whether there had been any informal complaints. **DN** replied that people often raise issues of concern with her while she is in the playground in the morning – eg whether absence will be authorised, the width of the school gates etc. She said that the issues can often be dealt with on the spot, in an informal way. A governor commented that the content of an issue raised by a parent determines whether it is seen as a complaint, not the way in which it is brought up eg informally or by phone call, letter etc.

Conclusion:

DN referred to her conclusion, emphasising that it is vital to offer a broad curriculum experience for the children by giving them the chance to attend workshops, exhibitions and other events. She explained that although this does mean additional work for the teachers, she is keen that the school continues to do this and she encourages the staff team to provide these varied opportunities. She added that she feels lucky to have a supportive and enthusiastic team of staff. **TA** agreed, noting that the school is very fortunate to have such a hard-working and committed staff team.

At the end of the report, governors agreed that, in future, the Head's Report could be briefly introduced and then questions invited from governors.

- 7. **School Development Plan**
 - 8. **Priority Leads and Link Governors**
- } These two items were taken together.

DN told governors that the school was working its way through the SDP but that she had noticed several governors had not yet met with their Priority Leads or completed their own sections of the Plan. **Action: Link Governors** to arrange to meet with their Leads, and then to complete the relevant sections. **DN** suggested that at the end of this school year, the governors discuss whether to continue with this format of the Plan in future.

9. **Governor Appointments and Terms of Office**

TA reported that Sharone Parnes' term of office had expired on 14 March and that he had decided not to continue as a governor in the light of his other commitments in the community. She added that she had written to thank him for his service to the school and his input to the work of the governing body. Governors recorded their sincere thanks to Sharone for the work he has done as a governor over many years, and noted his kind offer to be contacted if he could be of assistance in the future.

TA told governors that **DH's** term of office would expire on 7 June, and that she had been attempting to contact him to find out whether he wished to stand again. She explained that as he is a Parent Governor, an election would need to be held in any event. Reminding governors that at the last elections there had been several candidates, she commented that it was good to know so many parents were keen to get involved. She said that she needed to contact **DH** but that at the moment he had not responded to her emails, and that as he had only attended one FGB meeting and one committee meeting in this school year, she felt it was important to find out whether he was still committed to remaining a governor until the end of his term. **Action: TA** to try to contact **DH** again.

10. **Chair's Items**

TA referred to the recent training session she had attended, saying that she had met with **DN** to discuss points which came out of it. She reminded governors of the need to act as critical friends to the school, being able to challenge and support the Head as appropriate, and she emphasised that the governors had to be able to demonstrate that they understood the issues. A review of governance monitoring was going to be carried out by Rachel Caseby, to establish what was being done well and what could be done better.

11. **Safeguarding**

This item had already been covered under item 6 above.

12. Health and Safety

Health and safety audits have been cancelled for the time being due to the Coronavirus.

13. Governor Training

VB informed told governors that all training courses have been cancelled up to the end of April. The following governors have recently attended training:

TA – Governor Monitoring and Governor Accountability

CR – Complaints

KH – had booked for Safer Recruitment, but this has been cancelled

DWJ – Induction, Governor Monitoring and Governor Accountability, Understanding and Using External Data

Action: **VB** to send out the links to online training so that governors can access this while there is no face to face training available.

14. Curriculum Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 had been circulated in advance.

There were no questions from governors.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 23 April 2020 at 3.15 pm.

15. Performance and Standards Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2020 had been circulated in advance.

AI highlighted that the meeting had discussed teacher workload, and commented that it was sad to see teachers leaving the profession a very short time after qualifying. She added that the school was very fortunate with its staff retention.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 23 April 2020.

16. Resources Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5 March 2020 had been uploaded to Governor Hub but not all governors had seen them so **VB** summarised the main points.

VB referred to the plans for a running track, highlighting that Blenheim Palace will donate £5,000 towards the cost; she added that additional money will come from a carry over from this year's sports money and from next year. It was also hoped that the PTA would be able to make a contribution. Grants4Schools is also being contacted.

VB reported that Sandra is preparing the budget based on an intake of 40. The information about numbers will be available on 16 April.

The guarantee for the flat roof will be considered at the next meeting of the committee as this has been outstanding for some time.

VB concluded her summary by saying that Sandra has now had training on Parent Pay.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 23 April 2020.

17. Any Other Business

Covid-19 – Coronavirus

DN told governors that they needed to be informed about the school situation and the plans that were being made. She reminded them that she had sent a letter home to parents and that it was also on the website, on the app and on the Facebook page.

She reported that attendance has started to be impacted by the virus, saying that on Monday there were 36 children absent, but that today there had been 46, with another 2 sent home during the day. On Monday, the attendance was at 85%. The absences were due to a combination of reasons – tummy bugs, some children at a competition and some at home in self-isolation as recommended for anyone showing symptoms of the coronavirus or in a household with others suffering from them.

DN reported that there had been a staff meeting earlier in the day at which the staff had discussed making the time in school fun for the children because it had become clear that there was an issue around anxiety about the virus; children were picking up on the general fear among the adults around them. She added that the staff would be encouraging children to talk about their feelings and getting them to do things which would help them to relax and enjoy themselves at school.

As it seemed likely that at some point the school would need to temporarily close, **DN** informed governors that the staff had been preparing for distance learning via Google Classroom. As some children would not have access to technology, she suggested that the school lend out Chromebooks, and support families with the cost of getting the internet at home. One possible source of finance could be Pupil Premium. She said that she had asked all teaching staff to put together packs of items which could be taken home to help with the children’s school work – an exercise book, a reading book, pencils, sharpener etc.

DN commented that if children were to start learning at home, it would be important for a regular timetable to be followed to keep them focussed.

Another aspect of the school closing which needed to be addressed, **DN** explained, was the responsibility for the welfare of vulnerable children. She said that she had asked the school lunches provider to consider supplementing the food bank with the food which the children will not be eating at school, although it was also likely that staff would have to take lunches to some children at home.

Earlier in the day, **DN** had attended a meeting of Heads in Oxford to discuss steps to be taken in the event of school closure; the need to visit vulnerable children had been discussed, and it was clear that a detailed risk assessment would have to be prepared.

DN said that she had also given thought to what would happen if there was a lot of staff off sick at the same time, as ratios in classrooms had to be maintained. Even without government closure of schools, low staff numbers could mean the school had to close or enforce a partial closure.

She reported that the children would be practising Google Classroom the next day, and that the school's IT consultant would be giving staff a lesson in video conferencing.

DN told governors that she would be at a meeting of Heads from the partnership this week, and that staff wellbeing was a very real concern, as is looking after key workers' children in the event of the school closing.

DN said that she was considering making a mobile phone available to children who might need it if the school was shut. A governor asked whether the school had a legal – as well as a moral – responsibility to look after the vulnerable children if it was closed; **TA** pointed out that in recent times there had been a shift towards schools fulfilling a social work role.

A governor asked whether the IT consultant also provided support while teaching was ongoing, not just for the unusual situation of a closure. **DN** replied that he is paid for one morning a week. At the moment, he is looking into the possibility of setting up a helpline for problems with Google Classroom. Teachers will need to contact children if they haven't been on Google Classroom for a day or two.

DN confirmed that she had been told the SATs would still take place.

A governor asked how parents would be able to support their children with their learning if they themselves are working from home, and would not have time. **DN** answered that the school could not force parents to support their children. She added that teachers would get a record of what the children had done as the work would be submitted online. For FS children, the school would be using What's App to send pictures of activities home.

A governor asked whether there was any office back up in case Sandra was unable to work; **DN** answered that Rachel would take over the office duties eg website, office emails.

Governors agreed that there are issues around parents working from home eg there may only be one computer at home. A governor asked how many hours the children would be expected to work, and **DN** replied that three hours for older children would be suggested.

TA thanked **DN** for her input and asked that governors try to maintain a presence in the playground at the start and end of each day, in case parents need to ask questions, and to reassure people that the school is doing what it can. Governors agreed that many children find uncertainty difficult to deal with – school can represent stability and consistency.

Governors Virtual Meeting Attendance policy

TA introduced this policy, summarised its terms, and explained that it had been sent from OCC that day. She explained that it covered situations where governors could not meet in person, so that meetings could continue. Governors agreed to adopt the policy. **TA** commented that it was likely that the next governors' meetings would be held virtually.

18. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 28 April 2020 at 6.30 pm

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

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

CS 18.03.2020

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Signed

Dated