



**Minutes of a meeting of the full Governing Body
of William Fletcher Primary School
on Monday 21 March 2022 at 6.30 pm**

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

Present:

Trish Amesbury (TA) (Co-opted) (Chair)
Kirsty Colquhoun (KC) (Parent)
Stephanie Delargy (SD) (Co-opted) (from 6.34 pm)
Kate Hopcraft (KH) (Co-opted)
Anna Isles (AI) (Co-opted)
Andrew Lister (AL) (Co-opted)
Julia Merchant (JM) (Parent) (from 6.35 pm)
Deborah Nind (DN) (Headteacher)
Oliver Petter (OP) (Local Authority)
Charlotte Rayner (CR) (Co-opted)
Neil Shewry (NS) (Parent)
Rosie Staniland (RS) (Staff)
Daniel Wickham-Jones (DWJ) (Parent)

Absent – apologies received in advance and accepted:

Vicky Ball (VB) (Vice Chair) (Co-opted)

In attendance:

Clare Saunders (CS) (Clerk)

The meeting was opened by **TA** at 6.32 pm. The meeting was **quorate**.

1. Welcome

TA welcomed governors to the meeting and introduced **KC** as a new Parent Governor. She thanked her for being willing to serve on the governing body, noted that she had already completed induction training and encouraged her to ask questions during the meeting. She referred to the other new Governor, **JM**, saying that she expected she would join the meeting soon.

(6.34 pm – **SD** joined the meeting.)

2. Apologies for Absence

VB had sent her apologies. These were accepted.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

The **Clerk** confirmed that the Register had been completed and was on the website.
(6.35 pm – **JM** joined the meeting.)

4. Urgent Additional Items

There were no items.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from the meeting held on 11 January 2022

item 3: Declarations of Pecuniary Interests had already been discussed. Action completed.

item 7: elections for two Parent Governors had been held; two parents had been appointed. Action completed.

item 9: the SDP would be discussed later at item 9.

item 10: the safeguarding audit took place, and **TA** was able to attend. Action completed.

item 12: **VB** had sent out the link for the training programme via GovernorHub. Action completed. **TA** encouraged all governors to look at the available training courses, commenting that the link had been updated to include further courses. **Action:** **TA** to send the link again.

item 15: the **Clerk** had looked into the reviewing/approving of policies by governors but had not got a final answer for **CR**. **Action:** the **Clerk** to email **CR** with a response as soon as possible.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 were **approved** by governors, and signed by **TA**.

6. Chair's Items

There were no items.

7. Governor Appointments and Terms of Office

TA welcomed **JM** to the meeting and thanked her for being prepared to serve on the governing body. She suggested that **JM** undertake induction training when she has time, and confirmed that the governors' term of office is nominally four years.

The **Clerk** said that there would be only one further term of office expiring this year, namely **RS** on 31 August. There would be several terms coming to an end in 2023.

8. Headteacher's Report

DN apologised to governors for the fact that her report was later than usual; this was due to her recent illness. She invited questions from governors, on a page-by-page basis.

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Signed



Dated May 3, 2022

CR: Looking at the numbers of pupils with EAL, and Pupil Premium children, do you see these being on an upward or downward trend? And how do they compare with other schools in the area – are the numbers at our school typical of those at others?

DN: The number of pupils with Pupil Premium is higher at William Fletcher than at other schools in the partnership. These numbers have stayed fairly static, partly because it is more challenging to get the grant now than it used to be. The percentage of children with EAL is also higher than at other schools in our partnership.

NS: The figure for persistent absence is clearly higher than usual – do you think this is entirely due to the effect of Covid-19 or are there other reasons underlying this figure? Also, you refer to the work you do with families of children with persistent absence – is this just to encourage them to send the children back to school or do you mean you set work for the children to do at home?

DN: Before I was off school, I analysed the figures of persistent absence in columns, to differentiate between Covid and non-Covid related absences. But some absences start for one thing eg a stomach ache, and then become Covid. There is a feeling among teachers that the usual winter bugs have been more prevalent this year. But it is important to recognise that some children are absent because their families are taking them out of school for holidays, and I will not authorise those absences. It is a very difficult situation around attendance – I work closely with families to encourage them to send their children to school and have never been keen on going down the legal route; however, I might need to revisit with governors the possibility of imposing fines if the situation does not improve.

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CR: How much of a time commitment has it been for teachers to switch to the new reading scheme?

DN: The teachers in KS1 are still teaching phonics, as they have been used to doing in the past – the difference is that they have had to learn a new system of when to introduce certain sounds to the children. There was a training day in January which focussed on the new scheme, and teachers have also spent considerable time getting up to speed with the mechanics of the new scheme. During classroom observations it was clear that the lessons were being run very effectively, that the children have learnt the routines really well and that they are engaging with the scheme and enjoying the lessons.

RS: The Inset day in January helped staff to get confident with the new scheme, and the lesson observations have been very helpful in allowing teachers to talk to senior staff about how the scheme is working. We all felt more confident after those observations.

KH: Are the staff team well at the moment? We know that some of them have had Covid. Also, is the cost of supply teachers to cover absences, manageable?

DN: It has been very tricky since the start of January – firstly it was mainly the children who were getting ill, but recently there have been a number of staff off with Covid (three today, for instance). It is difficult to get supply teachers because all schools have the same problem. I am extremely grateful to the staff team for stepping in to help in such difficult circumstances. I am very conscious that they have coped with a lot of extra work

as a result of my and my colleagues' illnesses, and I ensure that I speak with each of them and check how they are feeling.

As far as the cost of supply is concerned, teaching assistants get additional money if they cover a class for a teacher. Our staff insurance policy is now paying out.

TA: On behalf of the other governors, I would like to record the sincere thanks of the governing body to the staff team for their constant dedication and hard work, in extremely difficult circumstances.

JM: What is the perceived improvement of the new phonics system over the previous one?

DN: We had to change systems to comply with DfE requirements around synthetic phonics. Our previous system was not considered to be sufficiently systematic.

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DN: Governors may be familiar with the findings of a report which assessed children in 2009 and 2012, trying to measure the impact of school visits on their exam results. The report was unable to find any correlation between the two.

CR: Education goes way beyond exams. Exams are not what education is all about and the school has always provided so many of these additional opportunities for the children.

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TA: It is amazing to see how much staff training has been done. Online training is so accessible.

DWJ: How do you align training with the SDP? How do you decide who does what training in order to achieve the school's aims in the plan?

DN: Some staff development occurs because of outside courses that teachers do, and can share with colleagues: Paul Austin, for instance, is doing a Masters course which is extremely useful for the school as he shares information with us, and he is developing as a school leader. Emma White has been undertaking training in the teaching of computing, and sharing that. Other training comes up that is not planned – for instance, the Mental Health Lead. This was not in the SDP but is extremely valuable, so I am doing that training. Then there is training which is directly relevant to aims in the SDP, for instance Developing Greater Depth Writers, and we constantly look out for training possibilities like this. Finally, some staff have particular interests that they would like to develop, for instance Rosie is doing the extensive Forest School training, and I am very grateful to her for doing this as it will provide extra opportunities for our children.

Conclusion:

DN: It was a very strange experience for me to be away from school for a while, and at that time the dreadful events in Ukraine began to unfold. There was a strong feeling that the school wanted to do something to help the people of Ukraine, and a collection of clothes and other things was arranged. Although I was not able to be in school when this was happening, one of my team walked around the school filming the piles of donated items – they were everywhere. It was very moving to see how the school had come

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together to try and help. Two full van loads were driven to the collection centre in Carterton. The generosity of the families was overwhelming.

9. School Development Plan

AL took governors through the updated plan, highlighting the progress which had been made with the targets in each section:

1(a): There has been a lot of work done around the arts including the involvement of the Oxford Playhouse, and arts projects including the River of Hope for the Platinum Jubilee.

1(b): NELI (Nuffield Early Learning Intervention) training is being done – together with the new phonics scheme, *Essential Letters and Sounds*, there is a lot of work going on around the new EYFS curriculum.

1(c): The staff have been doing considerable work around comprehension. (This target overlaps with 1(b).) Children need to be able to talk about what they have read but also have to be able to write down answers to questions.

1(f): Work continues to focus on maths fluency, mental maths and number bonds.

TA asked that the most up to date version of the SDP be uploaded to GovernorHub before the next meeting of the full governing body. **Action: DN/AL** to ensure that the updated SDP is shared via GovernorHub.

TA thanked **AL** for his update on the SDP, saying it was impressive to hear how much had been done, and that it was a continuous rolling programme of work around the plan's objectives.

10. Safeguarding

DN referred to the recent Safeguarding Audit by the local authority, saying that she would be chasing up the report as this had not yet been received. She informed governors that there had been no issues raised at the review.

DN updated governors on the numbers of children in the safeguarding categories. **TA** asked whether there was any training planned which the newer governors could attend; **DN** replied that no training was scheduled at the moment but that there might be online training via Governor Services.

11. Health and Safety

There was nothing to report.

12. Governor Training

TA encouraged governors to sign up for training courses which interested them or which could be useful to their role as governors, commenting that these courses are included in the package which the school buys from Governor Services. She congratulated **SD** on the many training courses which she had so far attended. **Action: all governors** to consider undertaking more training sessions, and to notify **TA** and **VB** of courses which they attend.

13. Resources Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2022 had been uploaded to GovernorHub and circulated in advance of the meeting.

DWJ asked whether, with all prices currently rising sharply, the school was protected against financial shocks. **DN** replied that the school was in the same position as other schools, and that it has a carry-over which is a good buffer but that this is intended to pay for staffing needs. She added that she was hoping for guidance from OCC. The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 28 April 2022.

14. Performance and Standards Committee

It had not been possible to hold a committee meeting due to illness – there had been insufficient committee members available to form a quorum.

AI commented that there was nothing to report now as the committee's business would roll over to the next meeting, and **DN** agreed, adding that at the next meeting the committee would be able to review the spring assessments.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Wednesday 27 April 2022.

15. Curriculum Committee

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 had been uploaded to GovernorHub and circulated in advance of the meeting.

CR commented that the committee had thoroughly enjoyed hearing from **AL** about the teaching of music at the school.

KH asked whether it was too soon to resume the governors' learning walks. **DN** replied that she was hopeful that these could restart after Easter, adding that she was going to attend a Heads' meeting with OCC the next day, and that guidance on visitors to school might be given then. **CR** commented that governors were keen to resume learning walks, to see the work going on in school and to talk to the pupils, and that they would come back when told it was possible to do so. **DN** agreed, saying that the staff were equally keen for the visits to resume, and that it was possible that the better weather would help facilitate this as meetings with pupils could be held outside. For the benefit of the newer governors, she explained that each learning walk had a specific focus. **TA** encouraged governors to sign up for these walks when they could resume, emphasising how valuable it was for governors to be able to see first-hand what was actually happening in school; she added that **DN** was flexible with dates, if governors were unable to come on the days suggested.

CR confirmed that **SD** would be joining the Curriculum Committee. **TA** asked **KC** and **JM** to attend the next meeting of each committee if possible, explaining that all governors needed to be a member of a committee; once they had seen what work the committees each did, they would be in a good position to choose which to join. **JM** asked whether there were any particular gaps in the membership of any of the committees; **TA** replied that the Performance and Standards Committee was short of members, which was why

they had been unable to meet this time, but that it was important that governors chose a committee whose work they felt suited them. **Action: Committee Chairs** to invite **JM** and **KC** to their next meetings.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 7 April 2022.

16. Any Other Business

(i) *Oxfordshire SEND Consultation*

KH informed governors that there had been an ongoing consultation about suggested changes to SEND provision. This had closed on 10 March, and, along with Karen Chambers, **KH** had attended workshops and put forward views from the school as part of the consultation. **DN** recorded her thanks to **KH** for having collated notes of discussions and sent these off.

(ii) *One way system: stewarding rota*

TA asked governors for their thoughts on how long they wanted to continue their morning stewarding rota. She expressed her gratitude to those governors who had been able to assist with the stewarding over the past two years, and said that she personally enjoyed being able to talk to parents and children as they arrived at school. She added that whether the one-way system continued was an operational issue for the school to decide.

DN commented that she liked the one-way system as it helped with the previous difficulty of the gate being small; if it was stopped too soon, it would be problematic to restart it as, for instance, the nursing home would have to be approached again about the use of the lane. She said that the stewarding by governors had been a very good way of parents finding out who the governors were. **TA** agreed, saying that she would like to continue the stewarding rota until the end of the summer term. **NS** commented that he felt the stewarding helped to make the governors known to parents, and asked whether the stewards should be strict about packing up at 8.45 am. **KH** noted that there were several parents who did not use the crossing and **DWJ** agreed, adding that they were likely to rush across the road if they were late. Governors noted that there were road safety concerns but that they were limited in what they could do outside school. **OP** asked whether there had been any feedback from parents about the stewarding, and whether governors felt that, if there were safety concerns about the road, it might help to slow the traffic down if motorists saw a person in a high-vis jacket at the side of the road. **DN** answered that she had not received any feedback but that she felt it was good for the children to be greeted as they arrived at school. It was agreed that the stewarding rota would continue, and that stewards would remain at the lane until 8.50 am, but that the gate would be locked at 8.45 am; parents and children arriving after that would be directed to the school office. **Action: TA** to begin a rota for the first half of the summer term.

KH asked that a discussion of Priority Leads and Link Governors be included in the next meeting. **Action: the Clerk** to ensure that this item is on the agenda for the next meeting.

Following a request by the **Clerk, TA** confirmed that the date of the final meeting of the school year would be brought forward to **Tuesday 21 June 2022**.

17. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 3 May 2022

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

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm
CS 22.03.2022