



**Minutes of a meeting of the full Governing Body
of William Fletcher Primary School
held via Teams
on Tuesday 21 March 2023 at 6.30 pm**

Present:

Trish Amesbury (TA) (Co-opted) (Chair)
Vicky Ball (VB) (Vice Chair) (Co-opted)
Kirsty Colquhoun (KC) (Parent)
Kate Hopcraft (KH) (Co-opted)
Andrew Lister (AL) (Co-opted)
Julia Merchant (JM) (Parent)
Deborah Nind (DN) (Headteacher)
Oliver Petter (OP) (Local Authority)
Charlotte Rayner (CR) (Co-opted)
Rosie Staniland (RS) (Staff)
Neil Shewry (NS) (Parent)
Daniel Wickham-Jones (DWJ) (Parent)

In attendance:

Clare Saunders (CS) (Clerk)

The meeting was opened by **TA** at 6.31 pm. The meeting was **quorate**.

1. Welcome

TA welcomed governors to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no new declarations to be made.

KC referred to the closing down of the preschool, and confirmed that she is no longer the Chair. **Action:** the **Clerk** to amend the Register.

4. Urgent Additional Items

There were no additional items.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from the meetings held on:

17 January 2023

item 4: TA told governors that the prospective new governor referred to at the last meeting had decided against joining the governing body, possibly because he had also been looking to join the board of a school more local to him. She added that she would notify *Governors for Schools* that the school is still actively seeking new governors; she encouraged governors to let her know if they knew anyone who would be interested.

item 5 (9): TA reported that all Link Governors had made contact with their Priority Leads and urged them to get meetings arranged if they had not already done so. **Action:** **Link Governors** to arrange meetings with Priority Leads as soon as possible.

item 5 (13): VB has received only three replies to the governing body skills audit. **Action:** **VB** to send the link again; **non-staff governors** to complete the audit as soon as possible.

item 8: the length of the school day has been included on the agenda. Action completed.

item 9: the SDP is on the agenda and will be discussed later.

item 10: preparing for Ofsted is on the agenda and will be discussed later.

item 17: the prospective governor withdrew his application. Action completed.

Referring to her post on GovernorHub about the prospective governor, TA asked that in future governors ensure that they respond to a question posted on GovernorHub to confirm that they have read the post and whether or not they agree with it.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 were **approved** by governors and signed by TA.

7 March 2023 (EGM)

item 5: this item is on the agenda and will be discussed later.

The Minutes of the EGM held on 7 March 2023 were **approved** by governors and signed by TA.

6. Chair's Items

Governor Terms and Appointments

TA asked AL whether he had come to a decision about remaining on the governing body for a further term as Co-opted Governor; AL confirmed that he was happy to do so.

(6.40 pm – AL left the meeting.)

TA asked the governors to vote on whether to reappoint AL as Co-opted Governor.

Governors **agreed** to reappoint AL as Co-opted Governor for a further term of 4 years beginning on 1 May 2023.

(6.41 pm – **AL** rejoined the meeting.)

TA thanked **AL** for his willingness to serve for a further term and confirmed his reappointment.

The **Clerk** confirmed that there were three vacancies for Co-opted Governors on the governing body, and that the next two governors whose terms would end in 2023 were **CR** (13 October 2023) and **DWJ** (20 November 2023). She added that as **DWJ** was a Parent Governor, there would need to be an election in the autumn term; **TA** suggested that **DWJ** could, if he wished to remain a governor, become a Co-opted Governor which would mean an additional person could join the governing body as a Parent Governor.

7. **Headteacher's Report**

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

Attendance

DN spoke about attendance, referring to the data in the report and explaining that the school's figure for absence compares favourably with the national percentage, although the level is still not back to pre-Covid levels. She commented that, as was the case in other schools, there had been a lot of illness, not just Covid but also chicken pox and winter viruses, and that these have also affected the staff.

Teaching and Learning

DN highlighted the work which Caeron Phillips had been doing with sports and PE, getting children to be as active as possible. She said that the focus had been on less active children, working hard to include them in extra-curricular clubs and activities.

Staffing

DN said that it had been good to welcome Amy Lancaster back from maternity leave, and she also referred to the teaching assistant post supporting children with an EHCP, which had been proving difficult to fill when she reported to the governors in January. She confirmed that the post had been filled at the last moment, but that she was now trying to recruit another teaching assistant as maternity leave cover.

DN commented that she wanted to recognise the work of her team who, despite the pressure of their jobs, continued to put the children at the centre of their work, and she asked that the staff governors pass this on to the rest of the staff. **Action: AL and RS** to pass on **DN**'s thanks and appreciation to their colleagues.

DN invited questions on her report.

TA reiterated **DN**'s recognition of the staff, commenting that, on top of everything else they had to deal with, there was additional work and uncertainty caused by the ongoing headteacher recruitment; nevertheless, the staff had been incredibly supportive of the process and welcoming to the candidates.



CR agreed that the staff put the children at the heart of everything they did, and that this was apparent from the weekly newsletters and **DN**'s report. Referring to the sport and PE work, she asked whether the staff had seen other benefits for the children besides increased physical activity. **DN** replied that there were a number of other benefits including co-operating in a team, learning to observe rules and to deal with disappointment when losing. She gave a specific example of an obstacle course constructed as a team effort by the sports leaders and play leaders, under direction from Caeron Phillips, and how one child in particular had benefitted from playing a significant role in the activity.

Referring to the difficulties which the school was having with recruitment, **CR** asked whether the problem was that the applications were not of high enough quality, or whether there were no applications at all. **DN** replied that there had initially been very little interest in the earlier teaching assistant post but that at the last minute she had received a very good application; this applicant was now in post and already making a great contribution to the school. For the current maternity leave cover, she had got one applicant who is an experienced FS teacher but no applicants at all for the other, KS2, part of the job. She commented that other headteachers are experiencing the same difficulty recruiting to vacant posts, adding that she uses the County Council website to advertise as she always has done. **CR** offered to talk to **DN** about recruitment as she has recent experience of this.

OP noted that eight children are currently on the waiting list for CAMHS, and that this is a higher figure than has previously been reported. He asked whether this presents a challenge for teachers. **DN** agreed that it did, saying that the waiting list is extremely long – around two years – and that some children will be in secondary school before they get an appointment. She explained that the school tried to help where possible – the family support worker, the SENCo, a teaching assistant with ELSA training and **DN** herself have all been involved with the children and their families. She commented that the waiting list is a problem everywhere, but that the school was at least fortunate to have a family support worker. **OP** remarked that it was important to acknowledge the additional work done by **DN** and her colleagues to support these children, and **TA** agreed, adding that the impact of a long waiting list for support with mental health should not be underestimated.

8. Length of the School Day

DN told governors that she had spoken to class teachers about the possibility of lengthening the school day; many of them were opposed to it. The majority said that, if it were to happen, they would prefer the time to be added to the afternoon session.

NS asked whether the change was mandatory, and **DN** confirmed that it was not; the White Paper had been withdrawn; she added that most of the other primary schools in the partnership already had longer hours, and she suggested that governors should consider whether they wanted the children to be in school for the same amount of time as children are in other partnership schools. **TA** remarked that this should be a decision for the incoming headteacher and that it would be discussed again when they were in post.

9. School Development Plan



AL had uploaded the updated SDP to GovernorHub in advance of the meeting, along with a summary on the work done this term. **AL** talked governors through the summary, highlighting the actions taken and the progress made.

Priority One: Quality of Education

Target 1.1: Writing

AL explained that the purpose of the competition was to give children a reason for writing.

Target 1.2: Essential Letters and Sounds Phonics

AL commented that although the programme is partly online there are also a lot of phonics books and resources, and that it is being well received.

Target 1.3: Maths

AL confirmed that the visit by the adviser was useful, providing the staff with ideas to think about eg not following the White Rose scheme slavishly, ensuring that every lesson has challenge, and that lesson plans are flexible and can be adapted if necessary.

Target 1.4: Reading

AL told governors that the way in which Y3/4 phonics is taught has been changed, and that this is now working better. He commented that it was very positive that children had left the ELS group.

Priority Two: Behaviour and Attitudes

Target 2.1: Attendance

AL referred to the fact that illness including chicken pox and other viruses had affected the attendance rate but added that persistent absence had fallen. He emphasised that the school had to constantly promote the importance of attending every day, adding that some families had parenting contracts with the school, which could be helpful.

Priority Three: Personal Development

Target 3.1: Wellbeing

AL said that the *Make me Smile* project was being used to promote positive mental health, led by Sarah Buchanan; work was going on every day to help children feel supported.

Priority Four: Leadership and Management

Target 4.1

AL explained that this target had been left for the new headteacher, so there was no update on this.

KH asked whether the school would achieve all the targets in the SDP by the end of the year; **AL** replied that it was hard to say, but that the targets for maths, for instance, should be attainable because he could already see an increase in the number of children working at greater depth. Phonics, too, was going well, but attendance would always be an issue in any school. He added that there were no set targets for wellbeing as this is a priority which will always exist.

NS asked whether the staff could see the children putting into practice the things they had been taught to ensure their own and others' wellbeing, for instance checking in with each other, knowing where to go for help. **AL** answered that it is difficult to get children to take ownership of their own mental health and that they need to be reminded of things which they can do to help themselves. **DN** added that Sarah Buchanan has done a lot of work with the children around wellbeing and mental health, and that all the children get input from their teacher. She commented that there should be a reduction in the number of children needing support at a high level, the further in the past the pandemic becomes.

TA thanked **AL** for his report and for having provided a written update.

10. **Preparing for Ofsted**

TA referred to the news that a headteacher in Caversham had taken her own life after receiving an unfavourable Ofsted rating, commenting that this had resulted in a backlash against Ofsted inspections. She added that she wanted to ensure that, although governors were mindful that an inspection could happen at any time, nevertheless they were confident about the strength of the school and what it does for its pupils. She emphasised that governors should do everything possible to support the staff in the run-up to an inspection. **KH** agreed, saying that it was a school to be proud of, as evidenced by comments received from the headship candidates and the local authority representative.

NS asked whether the fact that a headteacher is leaving the school would make a difference to the timing of an inspection – would it make it more or less likely to happen at this time? **DN** replied that it would not make any difference. She explained that there is always tension among staff in the build-up to an inspection but that the recent news had deeply affected everyone, including her headteacher colleagues. She asked that, when an inspection date is known, governors encourage parents to complete the questionnaire which is sent out at that time, and to talk to the inspectors when they see them around. She commented that schools are judged in a very short space of time, and that for staff for whom teaching is a vocation, this can be a very stressful experience; she said that the unions were clear about the need to review Ofsted inspections to make the process more humane and meaningful. **JM** remarked that governors needed to support the staff through the process as much as possible.

11. **Safeguarding**

DN confirmed that all staff are up to date with their training, and that the single central register is up to date.

12. **Health and Safety**

VB reported that there had been only one issue: although there had recently been a deep clean, there was a build up of a deposit on the fire alarm sensors and this had triggered the alarms to go off; the sensors have now been cleaned again.

VB confirmed that she completed fire safety training earlier in the day.

13. **Governor Training**

NS has signed up for two courses.

VB told governors that details of the training they have done via OCC or The Key in the last two or three years would be automatically shown on their profiles on GovernorHub. **Action: all governors** to check their profiles on GovernorHub to ensure that their training courses are shown there.

14. **Resources Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023 had been uploaded to GovernorHub and circulated in advance of the meeting.

There were no questions.

VB reminded governors that, at the next meeting of the full governing body, they would be asked to ratify the budget, which would be presented at the next meeting of the committee.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Tuesday 18 April 2023 at 10.30 am, via Teams.

15. **Performance and Standards Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 had been uploaded to GovernorHub and circulated in advance of the meeting.

There were no questions.

KC informed governors that she had met with Hannah Haynes, been shown the phonics materials and how they were used in school, and had had the chance to see classes in progress. She commented that it had been fascinating and very worthwhile to see the teaching in action. **TA** recorded governors' thanks to Paul Austin and Hannah Haynes for their very informative input to the committee.

DN told governors that the next Rights Respecting Schools conference would be held at Blenheim Palace on 23 June 2023; she asked that any governor wishing to attend should contact her. She recorded her thanks to Blenheim Palace for allowing the conference to take place there. **Action: all governors** wishing to attend the conference to email **DN**.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Wednesday 19 April 2023, via Teams.

16. **Curriculum Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023 had been uploaded to GovernorHub and circulated in advance of the meeting.

There were no questions.

The next meeting of the committee will be held at 4 pm on Wednesday 19 April 2023.

17. **Any Other Business**

VB commented that the children who were involved in the interview day yesterday did an amazing job, and asked that the governors' thanks be passed on to them. **Action: DN** to ensure that the children are told of the governors' appreciation.

- 18. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 2 May at 6.30 pm – in school**
Items for inclusion on the agenda should be sent to the Clerk a fortnight in advance.

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm
CS 22.03.2023

