

**Local Governing Body Meeting
Tuesday 2nd February 2021 at 1.00pm (Virtual)
Minutes**

Present:

Beverley Burrows	Headteacher
Matt Whitehead	Executive Headteacher
Lee Jamieson	(Chair) Co-opted Governor
Sam Collins	Parent Governor
Janet Hodgson	Parent Governor
Debbie Bradley	Staff Governor
Kate Dean	Foundation Governor
Ruth Gent	Foundation Governor
Rev A Stanton	Foundation Governor
Rev A Mitchell	Foundation Governor

Apologies:

Ms K Dean	Foundation Governor
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In attendance

Danielle Wood	Clerk
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Any text in red bold italics represents a Governor question (Q); challenge (C); Governor and/or clerk support (S). Black bold upright represents decisions and actions.

1. Welcome, Introductions & Opening Prayer

- Ms J Hodgson, new parent governor was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made by all those present.
- The opening prayer was led by Rev A Stanton.

Apologies for Absence

Post meeting apologies were received from Ms K Dean

2. Declaration of Non/Pecuniary Interest

- There were no declarations made.
- The clerk advised governors how to complete the declaration of interests form on their GovernorHub profile.

3. Presentations – History, Geography, Mathematics

The Chair explained that due to the current Covid-19 restrictions and the current situation in school, it was not possible for the planned subject presentations to take place.

4. Approval of minutes of Previous Meeting held 11.11.20

- ACTION: Risk assessments have been reviewed and would be circulated to all governors.

The Chair confirmed that the risk assessments continue to be reviewed and have been updated to reflect the new Covid-19 guidelines with increased number of children attending school during the current lockdown compared to the last lockdown. Governors noted that the government guidelines for which families are eligible for places at school are very broad and this has resulted in a significant number of families requesting school places for their children during the current lockdown.

- ACTION: Mrs R Gent agreed to share the PowerPoint presentation from the SIAMS training.

Mrs R Gent to confirm that this was sent.

- ACTION: The Headteacher agreed to amend the Governor Visits Form for governors to complete when they hold meetings with their link departments.

This action was completed.

- ACTION: Mrs R Gent advised that a model policy for children's mental wellbeing has been produced by the Mental Wellbeing Co-Ordinator at the Diocese. Mrs Gent agreed to send the policy to the Headteacher for consideration.

This action was completed.

- ACTION: The Headteacher agreed to consult with parents and members or staff about the possibility of changing the Whitsun holiday to one week in line with other schools in the Trust. The change would come into effect in 2022/23.

The Headteacher advised that a consultation was held with members of staff and the outcome was that they wanted to continue with the current school holiday arrangement.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Headteacher's Report including

- Covid-19 Risk Assessment and safety protocols update
- Admissions update and numbers of children in school
- Plans for "catch-up" and remote learning plans (if needed)
- Vulnerable children and safeguarding

The Headteacher's report was circulated to governors ahead of the meeting.

The Headteacher discussed the late notification from the government regarding the current lockdown and the challenges the school faced with preparing for this.

The original risk assessment was sent to Mr D Brazil, CSS Senior Officer, to be reviewed. The school building restricts the number of children that can be accommodated safely in school as

the classroom sizes are small. The school had implemented 2 meter social distancing measures for members of staff and children to protect the school community. The risk assessment continues to be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Headteacher reported on the tier system which the Executive Headteacher introduced to support with the challenges the school was facing with allocating families places at the school. Additional notes were added to run alongside the tier system as the government guidance was not very clear and therefore the school received a high number of applications.

Governors heard that during the last lockdown the school was required to provide activities for children focusing on wellbeing and keeping them occupied. During this lockdown the expectations are that the school provide a set number of hours of learning per day and the members of staff should provide videos and online learning activities.

The Headteacher explained that a third of the pupils that attend the school are eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant, however the school had only received 24 laptops from the Department for Education (DfE) to distribute to these families. The school had purchased 15 Amazon Kindles using the Covid-19 catch up fund and had allocated iPads from school to enable children to access online resources whilst working at home.

The Headteacher explained that the school is providing the resources for children to learn from home however families are facing different challenges and it may not be possible to access the learning.

Members of staff have a system to record communication that they have with families and how the school is reaching out to vulnerable families.

Teachers have been provided with laptops to enable them to work remotely as they are required to respond to children and comment on their work throughout the day. The Headteacher explained that Teaching Assistants have been covering lessons in school, with no more than 8 pupils in each class and 10 in reception. A rota system is in place for Teaching Assistants and this is working well so far.

Teaching Assistants are carrying out duties whilst working from home which includes preparing enrichment activities for children.

The school continues to use the online facility SeeSaw with mixed feedback from parents on the accessibility of this.

Years 2 and 6 would be able to access the Third Space Maths Tuition with all children able to access a laptop and log in details received. Data was included in the report for how many children have accessed the online tuition so far.

The Headteacher proceeded to discuss the challenges the school faces with maintaining contact with families who are not returning phone calls. Home visits have been made with work packs delivered to families. The school continues to work with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable families.

Maintaining the Curriculum and Continuity of Learning for all pupils.

The Headteacher explained that teachers were using Oak Academy resources online as advocated by the DfE and in line with other schools within the Trust. The videos are pre-recorded and allow children to pause and look back at sections. Other online resources included Whiterose Maths, BBC Bitesize and Purple Mash.

Q – How is the timetable working that the school has sent home for families to follow?

We have tried to offer support and work with families to offer lots of flexibility in how and when children access the learning. Members of staff have been calling to talk with children. Parent governors were asked to share their feedback on the remote learning in place.

Governors spoke positively about the flexibility as the work can be completed at a convenient time for families. The communication with teachers was also highlighted as valued by parents, with teachers responding and providing support.

The Headteacher confirmed that all pupils with an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have been offered a place in school however not all parents wanted to take up the place. Mrs Charlesworth, SENDCO, continues to communicate with these parents.

Staff Wellbeing

The Headteacher reported that the feedback from members of staff has been positive towards the rota that has been implemented. The amount of time members of staff spend in school has been reduced with no staff meetings being held this term.

Team Around the School (TAS) meetings continue to be held remotely.

The school continues to celebrate children's achievements with praise postcards sent home and certificates circulated electronically.

Rev A Stanton continues to lead weekly worship sessions for children.

Staffing

The Headteacher provide an update on staffing.

The Executive Headteacher explained the current situation with regards to Maternity Leave Insurance. The school previously purchased the cover from the local authority, however when the school converted to an academy the local authority would not renew the service. The school has missed the deadline to buyback the insurance from Manchester Authority however this will be purchased from 1st April 2021. In the meantime, the school will be required to fund any staff maternity leaves between now and 1st April 2021.

The Executive Headteacher referred to earlier discussions regarding the tier system which he created to support schools with allocating school places during the recent lockdown. He explained that the system was produced because the critical worker list published by the government was extensive and the vulnerable children list was unclear and to be determined by the school. He explained that children's eligibility for school places was different to it being safe for the school to offer them a place.

The risk assessment was completed with the support of Mr D Brazil to ensure that the school had clear guidance on the safe number of children that could attend. Due to the current situation in the community with Covid-19, the Trust felt that it was essential to keep the number of children in school as low as possible to keep children and members of staff safe. The priority was for the school to provide a place for children of critical workers that were required to leave the home to work and vulnerable children, the tier system was in place for all other school place enquiries.

The Executive Headteacher reported that around 20% of the school population were currently

attending school, with other schools in the Trust having between 20% and 30% of children attending. Governors noted the building restrictions at St Elisabeth's.

Q – What provision is being offered to children that are attending school? We have heard a lot of information about the remote learning offer, are children attending school receiving more or less than the children at home? Is there an incentive for parents to want their children to be educated in school? The Headteacher explained children that are attending school are completing the same activities, worksheets and watching the same videos as children that are working at home. The Headteacher added that children working at home will benefit from the additional enrichment activities that can be provided and therefore Teaching Assistants have been asked to arrange arts and crafts activities for the children in school.

Q – Are teachers undertaking two lots of lesson planning to cover both in school learning and remote learning? The rota system in place allows teachers to spend a week planning the lessons and a week leading the lessons. Teaching Assistants follow this rota and it is working well.

7. Behaviour and safety of pupils (Safeguarding) – update

Governors were referred to the safeguarding section in the Headteacher's report.

The Headteacher reported on the number of Encompass notifications that the school has received, with the increasing number highlighting the challenges families are currently facing. The school works to ensure the relevant support is in place for families.

Q – You have mentioned at length the issues that families are currently facing and have these families been offered school places as a result of this? The Headteacher replied yes the school has offered school places to families that are struggling and all communication is documented.

Lateral flow testing has commenced for members of staff who were given the choice to opt in or opt out. The Headteacher reported that there have been no positive Covid-19 cases amongst members of staff since the start of the term.

The Headteacher reported on the increasing safeguarding workload and how this has been a priority at the moment in school. As a result, the data was not ready to be presented but would be circulated at the earliest opportunity.

Work on the Governing Board Development Plan had started and would hopefully be completed by Easter.

The meeting moved on to discuss Free School Meals.

Q – I have seen the recent media coverage regarding the quality of the food boxes at some schools and wanted to ask about the quality of the boxes at St Elisabeth's. The Headteacher reassured governors that the food boxes were large and contained plenty of food for families. The school would challenge this if they were not acceptable.

Rev A Stanton commented that she feels that the school is managing the current situation amazing and the children and families are receiving a lot of support.

The Chair of Governors thanked the Headteacher and all members of staff on behalf of the governing board for the wonderful job that they are doing.

8. Executive Headteacher updates

The budget report was circulated to governors ahead of the meeting and the Executive Headteacher presented it on the screen for governors to read.

The Executive Headteacher explained that the budget ran from September and therefore the school was currently 4 months into the year.

The 2020/2021 budget was set in June 2020 and the predicted income was based on figures received from the Department for Education. Other figures included were predictions.

The forecast budget predicted a £21,964 credit, the capital income was predicted to be zero however the school was successful in securing a condition improvement fund bid.

The Executive Headteacher explained the adjustment made to the budget following the audit, each year the company funds are audited and the school has to send financial statements to the DfE and companies house. The auditors stated that some of the expenditure needed to be allocated to the previous year and this reduced the carry forward figure. The revised in year budget was £24,500 in credit.

School roof works would likely commence over the school holidays and this would be funded by the capital funding budget.

Governors heard about the number of unexpected staffing costs during the autumn term due to members of staff isolating and recovering from Covid-19. Supply costs were therefore higher than anticipated.

Staffing pay increases were also higher than predicted and this is why the budget shows more staffing costs at this point in the year.

The Executive Headteacher moved on to discuss the income. The school receives a high amount of Pupil Premium Grant income and this is received quarterly throughout the year. Income will be updated when this is received in January and the budget will be circulated to governors. Non staffing costs was currently at 29%.

Governors were advised that the school was on track for a slight in year deficit budget, and the Executive Headteacher stated that he did not think there would be a carry forward budget due to the financial pressures of teaching during a pandemic. Ensuring safe staffing numbers in school to provide high quality provision and ensuring that the school remains open is a remarkable achievement and this has resulted in increasing supply staff costs.

The Executive Headteacher referred to earlier discussions regarding the maternity leave cover and commented on the impact this would have on the school budget this year. The Executive Headteacher predicted an in year deficit and added that whilst less will be carried forward to 2021/22 the budget should still be in credit. The indicative budget for next year includes a public sector pay freeze and therefore the staffing costs impact will be limited to members of staff career progression pay increases.

To summarise, the Executive Headteacher stated that the school budget was in a strong position however it was not as strong as the forecast.

Q – The government are stating that they are ploughing money into education however are they meeting the increased staffing costs that schools are facing? Covid-19 grants are available however schools have to meet specific eligibility criteria and one of the criteria is that the school must have a carry forward budget of less than 3%. Therefore because the school has carefully budgeted we are not able to access the support.

The Executive Headteacher added that the school has also been unable to claim for additional costs related to Covid-19 such as hand sanitizer as they are not eligible.

The Headteacher updated governors on staffing in school and how the school is hoping to reduce the amount of supply cover required.

Governors heard details of the grants which the Executive Headteacher has successfully secured to support with school building works, with £90,000 so far raised towards the school roof and £40,000 for the electrical work.

Governors heard that capital bids for buildings works equate to over £100,000 however the school is required to contribute towards the work, when applications are made to the DfE they look more favourably towards applications where the school is offering to contribute. Whilst the contribution costs were not expected at the time the budget was set, the work would commence as the capital funding was significant.

The Chair thanked Mr Whitehead for his work to secure the funding.

9. Governing Body Matters including:

➤ Any training (online) undertaken

Ms J Hodgson and Mr L Jamieson attended SIAMS training
Ms J Hodgson attended New Governor Training Part 1

Ms G Davenport recommended training made available by Governors for Schools.

➤ Link Governor Report

10. Policy approval

There were no policies to be reviewed.

11. AOB

Manchester Diocese Governors Conference

Mrs R Gent shared details of the event which would take place on Wednesday 30th June 2021, 9:30am – 1pm. The cost was £30 per person if the school brought back into the SLA.

12. Date & Times of future meetings:

Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 4pm *PSHE Lead and Writing Lead and History, Geography, Mathematics*

Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 1pm

Wednesday 30th June 2021, 4pm

13. Closing Prayer

Governors said Grace at the close of the meeting.

Signed..... Date.....

Mr L Jamieson (Chair)

Meeting closed at 2:33pm

Summary of actions