

Minutes of the meeting of the governing body of St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School held at the school on Thursday 5 February 2015

**Present:** Anna Brown, Chair (ABr)  
Helen Frostick, Headteacher (HF)  
Amanda Barrett (ABa)  
Clare Chance (CC)  
Nick Gardner (NG)  
Chris Hopkins (CH)  
Paul Kenny (PK)  
Serena Sexton (SS)  
Tricia Shields (TS)  
Fr. Richard Whinder (RW)

**Apologies:** Liam O'Connell (LO)  
Hannah Richardson (HR)

**Also attended:** Jan Hopkins, Clerk to the Governors (JH)

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## 1. OPENING PRAYER

1.1 The meeting opened at 7.35pm with a prayer led by RW.

## 2. APOLOGIES AND OPENING REMARKS

2.1 Apologies were received from LO and HR.

## 3. DECLARATIONS OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of financial interest.

## 4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1 The draft minutes of the governing body meeting held on 23 October 2014 had previously been circulated. ABr asked if there were any comments to these and, there being none, she signed and dated them.

## 5. CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 Governors noted that ABr and HF regularly communicated and that they implemented policies as and when necessary, e.g. the Staff Absence Policy.

5.2 Governors also noted that ABr had attended the meeting for Chairs of governing bodies in Richmond and Kingston on 26 November 2014.

Signed: Anna Brown

Date: 25th June 2015

## 6. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

6.1 The Headteacher's Report had previously been circulated and the following points were highlighted:-

6.1.1 **Free School Meals (FSM) – Page 2:** The number of pupils on Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) includes children who might not still be on FSM but are still deemed to be vulnerable.

6.1.2 **Assessments – Page 4:** Assessments were held during the week commencing 12 January 2015 and teachers put the results of these assessments to good use. CC then gave an illustration of this:

The recent assessments had uncovered the fact that some children do not make the progress expected of them. A discussion had then taken place with individual coordinators - one of whom was Marion McDonnell, the Literacy Coordinator, who was keen to raise writing achievements - regarding those children in each class who had a differentiation between their reading and writing skills and why this was. Provision was then put in place to address this. The main, generalised reason appeared to be spelling, which plays a key role for the new Year 6. In KS1 the focus was on phonics, where it is well established. However in KS2, a weekly spelling sheet was given out which CC felt was not enough. It had been noted that the standard of spelling in spelling tests was fine but problems with spelling still existed in written work so it had been decided to go back to teaching spelling patterns.

Governors noted that the assessment in Year 6 included a grammar and punctuation test. However, it also included spelling test of twenty words, and if a bad mark was achieved in this spelling test, this could dramatically reduce a pupil's overall mark.

A governor asked how long it was considered that this course of action might take to show any effect and it was pointed out that although VCOP (vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation) quickly becomes embedded, it might take a year or so to take effect. However, it was pointed out to governors that spelling was a life skill and that it was wonderful that the staff have identified a common area to work on in the whole school.

6.1.3 **Staff – Page 4:** Governors noted that staff attendance records were high.

6.1.4 **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – Page 5:** Governors were advised that the school is committed to teachers being trained. Highlights included:-

a) *Visualiser training:* Governors were advised that these are high technology cameras in class for which there is training in how to use them. They can video a teacher teaching a class and can home in on individual children.

Signed: *Anna Brann*.....

Date: *25th June 2015*.....

- b) Governors were also advised that Marion McDonnell had received training through Waldegrave School for Girls (a teaching school) in the National Professional Qualification of Middle Leadership, and also for children with EAL (English as an Additional Language).
- c) Governors were informed that attendance at the recent BETT Show at the ExCel Centre is helping to formulate the action plan for ICT. A governor asked how the C-boards benefitted teachers and was informed that they were good to use, being more interactive, unlike the old white boards, which were just basically screens for projecting on from laptops.

**6.1.5 Community Cohesion – Page 7:** Governors were given the example of the heritage project being carried out by local parishioners, Dominic Lindsay-Bethune and Kate McGregor, with Year 6 children. RW explained that there was a plaque in church commemorating those parishioners who had died in the Great War. Dominic and Kate had researched these people, particularly their lives in Mortlake, and had been keen to involve the children. Kate was currently working in school and had discussed William Farrell – the person they had most information about – and had explored ways to present this. Year 6 had been to the WW1 trenches so, from their own personal experiences, they found the project very relevant. They wrote a series of letters from different people to William, and also from William writing back, for example to and from his parents, and also from other members of his family. One letter was written from the War Office to his parents to say that their son was reported missing in action. Linda Brennan, one of the school’s Teaching Assistants, intended to dress some of the children in period costumes and take some, hopefully sepia, photos of them, so the project will become a living display. Governors agreed that this was a good link with the church, and RW will ensure that the school display will be publicised within the church community so that those parishioners who do not have any links with the school could come into school to see it.

**Action: RW**

**6.1.6 Appendices**

- a) *Attendance:* Governors were advised that the government floor target for attendance was 96% and that the school attendance level was 97.68% up to end December 2014; Year 4 attendance being 99.09%. However some Reception class children’s attendance was below 90% which was a cause for concern and HF planned to have one-to-one discussions with three Reception class families, regarding their child’s attendance, during the forthcoming parent evening appointments. The Education Welfare Officer was in school yesterday and went through each child’s attendance record that was less than 90%. This exercise would normally be carried out for children with a less than 85% attendance record but HF extends this to include all those children with a less than 90% attendance record. A governor commented that the ‘maximum number of possible attendances’ figures look as though they are incorrect in the report as Year 3 should have twice as many attendances as Year 4, for example, and this would be referred back to the school office for clarification.

**Action: HF**

Signed: Anna Brown

Date: 25th June 2015

- b) *School comparisons:* Overall this is extremely positive; the school is top of the league tables. A governor asked if the school was where it should be for Level 6 and it was explained that last year the school was moderated for writing. It was felt that one aspect of writing that precluded reaching Level 6 was “impersonal writing”, which really made the difference between a Level 5 and a Level 6. An example of this was that pupils were given a reduced version of the Parable of the Good Shepherd which they were then asked to re-write as a newspaper report. Other issues were that the pass mark had been increased last year by four marks, and the reading comprehension booklet, which previously contained three related texts, now contained three discrete pieces of text. Governors were reminded that there was a lot of which they should be proud, although it was expected that the KS2 SATs results would reflect the fact that this year’s cohort standard is not as high as last year. However it was important to recognise that, though the overall result may be lower, individual pupils will still have made great personal progress, helped by the fact that there were four adults in the class. A governor asked if there were a higher number of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) children in Year 6 when compared to the rest of the school and it was noted that there were but, according to the January assessment, our PPG children attain higher than non-PPG children nationally. A governor asked whether we dis-apply statemented children and the reply was yes, but not across the board.
- c) *School Improvement Partner Report (Chris Byrne):* Governors were advised that one of the shared lesson observations did not score as highly as HF had expected yet when the lesson was repeated the next day its score was outstanding. A governor commented that Chris Byrne’s report often says that no improvement is needed, which is a reflection of the high standard already being achieved.

A governor asked if the extra class was being managed well and was advised that the school was acclimatising to staggering playtimes, which the children like; lunch was now from 12noon to 1.30pm so the day was different. Governors were advised that, unlike before, there was no capacity for break out rooms, and that it would be helpful to have a few more rooms; the library having to be multi-functional most of the time. HF advised the governors that a summer house would be a particularly useful additional feature in the school, e.g. for staff PPA time and group work, and that she had put in a bid for funding for this.

A governor commented about the success of the buddy system, which created close relationships between children at either end of the school, and another governor commented that it was pleasing to see that these relationships often extended into the wider local community, sometimes continuing even after buddies had left the school. Governors were advised that the buddy system gave the KS2 buddies an added level of responsibility, and that with the additional Reception class this meant that some Year 6 pupils were buddies to more than one Reception pupil, and that some Year 5 pupils were also Reception buddies. Governors noted that the buddy system also helped to alleviate any potential bullying issues.

Signed: Anna Brown

Date: 25th June 2015

*CC then left the meeting*

## 7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 7.1 Curriculum Committee

7.1.1 Governors were advised that the Curriculum Committee had met on 27 January 2015 and that the minutes would be circulated in due course. They were also advised that it was planned to reduce the agenda of the next Curriculum Committee meeting in order to better accommodate presentations to the committee by teaching staff, for example presentations by Deborah O’Gorman (Y6) and Marion McDonnell (Y5) on Big Writing and the 6UP Project.

**Action: HR**

7.1.2 Wendy Burns (the school’s SENCO) had been involved in the review of the draft Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy which was agreed at the curriculum meeting and was being presented later in this meeting to the governing body for their approval. A committee member explained that new rules had been introduced across the board to have an SEN information report on school websites in a Q&A format, the uniformity making it easy to understand the information being presented and helping to make cross-comparisons with other schools’ websites regarding SEN.

7.1.3 Governors were also advised of the new statutory requirement for schools to have a Medical Needs Policy. JH had forwarded the LA model Medical Needs Policy to AB, who will forward this onto HF to progress, possibly involving consultation with staff and parents, with a view to bringing a draft school Medical Needs Policy to the governing body meeting in June 2015 for their consideration.

**Action: AB/HF**

### 7.2 Finance Committee

7.2.1 The draft Finance Committee meeting minutes of 23 October 2014 had previously been circulated.

7.2.2 Governors were advised that the committee had met just before this governing body meeting where they had gone through the current state of the budget as at end December 2014. The current projection is that the school will be £2,251 under budget for this current financial year, which ends on 31 March 2015. This will give the school a projected revenue carryover into the financial year 2015-16 of £25,951 which is healthy. However, there are some amounts of income expected to be received but not currently in the budget and, therefore, the revenue carryover figure is on the conservative side. The committee will meet to set the draft budget for the financial year 2015-16 at the end of March 2015 and will report to the governing body at the end of June 2015 where governors will be asked to approve the final budget.

**Action: CH**

Signed: Anna Bram

Date: 25th June 2015

### 7.3 Personnel Committee

7.3.1 Governors were advised that the Personnel Committee meets as and when, the number of attendees being kept intentionally low in order to preserve a pool of governors with no prior knowledge upon which to draw should any Appeals Committees need to be formed.

### 7.4 Premises Committee

7.4.1 Governors were advised that it is the intention of the Premises Committee to meet sometime in early March 2015, at which meeting one objective would be for the committee to review the previously circulated draft Health & Safety Policy.

**Action: LO**

### 7.5 Admissions Committee

7.5.1. Governors were advised that the Admissions Committee had not met since the last governing body meeting but were planning to meet on either 24 or 25 February 2015, and it was also noted that the school's Admissions Procedure will have to be changed.

**Action: NG**

### 7.6 Pay Committee

7.6.1 Governors were advised that the Pay Committee had met on 4 November 2014 to discuss confidential pay-related matters.

## 8. RECONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY/INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT

8.1 The minutes of the Reconstitution of the Governing Body Working Party meeting held on 9 January 2015 had previously been circulated, along with a draft Instrument of Government.

8.2 Governors were advised that, according to The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012, all governing bodies had to reconstitute by 1 September 2015. The fundamental change needed is to the composition of the governing body, which currently comprises of twelve governors (seven Foundation Governors, a Teacher Governor, a Staff Governor, one LA Governor, one Parent Governor, and the Headteacher as an ex officio Governor). The regulations state that there must be a minimum of two Parent Governors, and a maximum of one Staff Governor. Therefore, the draft Instrument of Government reflected that change. The implications were that the current vacancy for a Staff Governor would disappear and there would be a vacancy for an additional Parent Governor. Governors were also advised that both a majority of governors had to approve this change, and, separately, a majority of Foundation Governors, and that the numbers and composition of governors attending this meeting fulfilled the potential for both these criteria to be met.

Signed: Anna Branl

Date: 25th June 2015

8.3 With a further Parent Governor needing to be recruited, a discussion then ensued as to when would be the optimum time for recruiting this Parent Governor. Governors agreed that this should happen in the autumn term 2015, once the new Instrument of Government was officially in place on 1 September 2015. A governor made the point that it would be prudent to conduct another skills audit of the governing body in advance of this recruitment process in order to try and identify any potential skills deficiency in the governing body, which could then be conveyed to the parent community in order to try and attract any candidates possessing these skills to put themselves forward for election.

8.4 Governors voted to approve the draft Instrument of Government.

8.5 Foundation Governors voted to approve the draft Instrument of Government.

8.6 Governors noted that the draft Instrument of Government would now be sent to the Education Commission for the Trustees to approve, after which it will be sent to the LA to be 'made', and then a copy of the 'made' version will be forwarded to the Education Commission.

**Action: JH**

## **9. POLICY REVIEW**

9.1 The draft Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy had previously been circulated. Governors voted to approve this draft policy.

## **10. GOVERNORS' TRAINING**

10.1 A schedule of LA governor training attendance since the last governing body meeting had previously been circulated:-

*Chris Hopkins:*

Guidance on the Reconstitution of Maintained School Governing Bodies - 4/11/14

School Financial Management Part 1 – 14/1/15

School Financial Management Part 2 – 21/1/15

*Paul Kenny:*

Interpreting Data – What do Governors Need to Know? – 10/11/14

10.2 ABa advised that she was attending the LA training session "Getting to Grips with Governance (Intensive)" on 7/2/15.

10.3 PK advised that he was attending the LA training session "Children Looked After: A Governor's Role" on 12/2/15.

Signed: *Anne Brown*

Date: *25th June 2015*

## 11. GOOD GOVERNANCE

11.1 *Newsletter:* Governors were reminded that the original idea for a Governors' Newsletter had been emailed to them before Christmas. A general discussion then ensued during which it was noted that such a newsletter could give an update on what governors were focussing on and also raise their profile and highlight any interesting news, though there was a concern as to whether there would be enough material and whether it might run out of steam in the medium to long term. Governors acknowledged that it might all depend on how it was presented and that one way might be for it to be framed as a letter from the Chair of Governors, perhaps termly or annually, rather in the style of the Headteacher's termly letters to parents. Governors voted in favour of a governors' newsletter, with a view to the first edition coming out at the end of the spring term 2015.

11.2 *Publication of governing body meeting minutes:* A general discussion took place as to whether to publish signed copies of governing body meeting minutes on the school website, after which governors voted in favour of doing so.

## 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 There was no other business.

## 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The date of the next governing body meeting was as previously agreed, that being 25 June 2015.

*HF and TS then left the meeting*

## 14. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

14.1 Governors discussed a confidential item (Appendix 1).

The meeting ended at 9.15pm with a prayer led by RW

Signed: Anna Bram

Date: 25th June 2015