

Minutes of the meeting of the governing body of St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School held at the school on Thursday 25 June 2015

Present: Anna Brown, Chair (ABr)
Helen Frostick, Headteacher (HF)
Amanda Barrett (ABa)
Nick Gardner (NG)
Paul Kenny (PK)
Hannah Richardson (HR)
Serena Sexton (SS)
Tricia Shields (TS)
Fr. Richard Whinder (RW)

Apologies: Chris Hopkins (CH)
Liam O'Connell (LO)
Jan Hopkins, Clerk to the Governors (JH)

1. OPENING PRAYER

1.1 The meeting opened at 6.35pm with a prayer led by RW.

2. APOLOGIES AND OPENING REMARKS

2.1 Apologies were received from Chris Hopkins, Jan Hopkins and Liam O'Connell.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST


3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1 The draft minutes of the governing body meeting held on 5 February 2015 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

RW had to temporarily leave the meeting so was not present for this item.

Signed: 

Date: 15-10-15

5.1 Referral to the Office of Schools Adjudicator

Governors were advised that the school had received an email on 25 March 2015 enclosing a letter from the Office of Schools Adjudicator (OSA) of the same date advising that an anonymous individual had raised objections regarding the Admissions Policy 2016-17 and associated documentation. A reply was sent from the Chair of Governors on 14 April 2015 and a meeting between ABr, NG, RW and the schools' adjudicator took place on 5 May 2015. A Determination was given on 24 June 2015 in which the OSA stated that it upheld all of the objections. The school has two months to respond or rectify.

These complaints were raised despite the fact that governors are very diligent in carefully reviewing the school's Admissions Policy on an annual basis. The policy is also sent to the Diocese for its guidance.

An admissions meeting will be held on 1 July 2015 to obtain RW's views on the matter and to discuss the governors' response to these complaints. NG to circulate agenda and to obtain admissions policies for St. Osmund's and St. Elizabeth's schools before this meeting.

Action: NG

6. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

6.1 The Headteacher's Report had previously been circulated to all governors. Highlights include:

Page 4 – Curriculum: A Science day is to be held in school on 26 June 2015. All children will be involved in investigative work, making Science more hands-on for pupils.

Page 4 – Behaviour and Safety: As stated in the report, the school will be having a full health and safety review next year as part of its internal self-evaluation process. HF reported that in reviewing our health and safety policy, extra plans are now required to cover additional areas such as disaster planning (eg. for terrorism, people falling from aeroplanes etc), female genital mutilation (in Child Protection Policy) etc. The review of our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will take place at the full governing body meeting in October to incorporate these new areas.

Page 4 – Secondary transfer: Parents were in general pleased with the offers they had received.

Page 5 – Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education: The teaching of British values will now be incorporated into our PSHE policy.

Page 5 – Attendance: The Government's previous level for persistent absenteeism was less than 85% attendance. This has now been raised to 90% and is in line with HF's own targets.

Page 6 – Community Cohesion: HF's outreach work continues to flourish. Chris Byrne, our school improvement partner, recommended her to Stanley School to talk about the work being done for our pupil premium children. HF met with the Chair of Governors of Stanley School to discuss this and share effective practice.

Page 6 – Community Cohesion: HF reported that she had been invited by Archbishop Peter to become a member of the Educational Excellence Board, set up by the Education Commission's Excellence Strategy, with the aim of helping schools and their pupils to be 'The best you can be'. The school will be hosting Continuing Professional Development training for the Diocese in February 2016, showing our commitment to outreach work.

Page 7 – Achievements and standards: The results are not yet out for the Y6 assessments, but HF is hopeful that the results may be better than expected. Exceptional progress is now defined as 3 sub-levels of progress. Our SENCO, Wendy Burns, analysed the progress in Maths and English of pupils in Year 6 and found that only one child made 2 sub-levels of progress, the rest of the class making 3 sub-levels of progress. HF commented on how pleased she was with these results. Y2 were set challenging Level 3 targets for writing – this produced a great response with 75% gaining Level 2a+.

Page 8 – Leadership and Management: Book scrutinies are part of the school's monitoring process. In the past, HF has asked teachers to provide books giving evidence of children's below average, average and above average performance on a particular subject. However, books are now selected on a random basis, in addition to talking to the learners. This provides much more of a thorough check as all books need to be kept up-to-date at all times.

RE report

TS, the RE Coordinator, gave a verbal report to governors as an older version of her written annual report was included in the Headteacher's Report by mistake. The correct version will be circulated as soon as possible to Governors.

TS reported that lesson observations had taken place in March 2015. It was found that most of the lessons were good, with some outstanding. Book scrutinies had also been carried out.

TS reported that the Diocese is keeping the levels system of assessing pupils – so RE results would be based on level descriptors.

Since the last OFSTED inspection, the school has incorporated more learning about new faiths into its curriculum. KS2 visits to various places of worship e.g. mosques and Sikh temples, have been arranged for July 2015. These will involve looking around the buildings but will not include being present for any services. The intended aim of such work and visits is to help prepare our pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

Signed: 

Date: 15-10-15

Ethos visit – since it is two years since the school’s last OFSTED inspection, an ethos visit by Sharon Docherty has been arranged. She will meet with TS to look at RE assessment levels and to discuss ways of further embedding the ‘Come and See’ curriculum.

ABr expressed her huge thanks to all the staff involved for their hard work in providing information for the Headteacher’s report. Several of the governors commented on how useful and comprehensive the report was. Governors were happy to keep the report in its present format. However, with regard to the report by Chris Byrne, our SIP (see below), one governor suggested that it would be helpful if this report could be presented as an executive summary.

Section 48 Inspection of Catholic Schools – Self Evaluation Form

Page 3 – first table (continuation of pupil data) should show ‘Total teaching time per *day* (hrs)’, not *week* as it is currently showing.

School Improvement Partner (SIP) Report

Page 2 - School’s self-evaluation of the Early Years Foundation Stage - has moved from Good to Outstanding.

Pupil Premium - There are currently 22 children on our pupil premium roll. This year HF and Chris Byrne have undertaken in-depth case studies of 19 of these children (excluding children in Reception) and tracked what extra support they may require in September. As a result, an experienced peripatetic SENCO - Kathy Moore Stanley – is to be employed for one day per week from September 2015. She will work on a 2:1 basis with children.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1 Curriculum Committee

7.1.1 The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meetings of 27 January 2015 and 11 June 2015 had been circulated to all governors. Governors’ attention was drawn to the following highlights:

Assessments - It was noted that substantial changes to KS1 and KS2 assessment are being introduced nationally. Assessment levels are being scrapped with no new system currently in place to supersede them. The school has researched several assessment tools and has chosen to trial the STAT Sheffield system, a system which has been accredited by Ofsted, HMI, amongst others. It allows the opportunity to assess children’s work over time, rather than assessing what they can do on a particular day, with the aim of providing a wider assessment of a child’s ability. It will cover reading, writing, grammar, punctuation, spelling and maths. SATs for Y2 and Y6 will remain, with results being given as standardised scores (moderated by birth dates).

Signed: 

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HF explained that the school had been working with other Catholic schools in the borough on this and staff would attend a training session on how to use the new system.

Draft Behaviour Policy - The committee had prepared a draft School Behaviour Policy which has been circulated to all governors for their consideration. Governors voted to approve this policy.

Singing - At the end of the sub-committee meeting, HF invited HR and SS to an impromptu performance by KS2 children of a song they had sung at the recent 'Night of the Proms'. Governors commented on the excellent singing, and how enthusiastic and committed all the children were.

7.2 Finance Committee

7.2.1 The minutes of the Finance Committee meetings of 5 February 2015 and 24 March 2015 had been circulated to all governors.

7.2.2. The committee had prepared a draft Charging and Remissions Policy which has been circulated to all governors for their consideration. Governors voted to approve this policy.

The Finance Committee had approved the budget for financial year 2016-17 and asked the full governing body to approve it for submission to the Borough which it did.

A governor asked what the big spending plans were in the School Development Plan for next year.

- (i) Based on the success of the 'Big Writing scheme', which has been a school project over the past 3 years and has produced excellent results, HF said that the school was now going to use funds to undertake a 'Big Maths' programme.
- (ii) HF also reported that the school was hoping to buy more 'Learnpads' (sixteen already purchased) this year. There followed a more general discussion about ICT provision in the school with a governor raising concerns about the need to update equipment on such a regular basis. Another governor said that as technology is moving so fast these days, this was to be expected. It was suggested that it might be worth considering leasing rather than buying some IT items so that they could be upgraded as part of the leasing contract. In response to this, HF said that the school followed a 3 year plan for ICT. She reported that the school has a service contract with a company called Clickonit who have an educational rather than commercial basis and who assist us with our ICT plan.
- (iii) The Governors were informed that a new boiler would be required in one year's time.

Action: LO to put 'New Boiler' as an agenda item for the next Premises Committee, to include discussion about the various boilers available on the market, boiler contracts, implications for heating etc.

Governors' gift aid revenue - ABr reported that Sharon Barrett has been working with her in reclaiming the school's gift aid from the past four years. The monies are due to arrive into the school's building society account within the next fifteen days.

A huge thank you to Sharon Barrett for her tireless work on this.

7.3 Personnel Committee

7.3.1 ABr reported that although there had been no meetings, discussions do occur on an ad-hoc basis. She said that she and HF were currently looking into the attendance of a non-teaching member of staff.

HF said that there was a vacancy for a classroom assistant and interviewing would take place in July.

7.4 Premises Committee

7.4.1 The minutes of the Premises Committee meeting of 9 June 2015 had been circulated to all governors.

The committee had prepared a draft Health and Safety Policy which has been circulated to all governors for their consideration. Governors voted to approve this policy.

The Accessibility plan was also approved.

School playground - NG described the difficulties that had been experienced with work to the school playground. Problems had arisen in that EB Play (project managers appointed by Sport England) were not good project managers and DCM (contractors responsible for completion of the works) were not good contractors. Meetings between NG and Gleedes (Sport England's appointed representatives) had been arranged. NG described the whole process as a "shambles", with workmanship being shoddy. EB Play/Gleedes have appointed an expert contractor, Oliver Shaw, to write a report for Sport England regarding the many failings in the workmanship of DCM, as supervised by EB Play. These include the fact that the netball pitch is not evenly spaced as DCM did not use measurements, the incorrect positioning of the foursquare pitch and the failure to complete the works to the trim trail. Although some of the work has been completed, there is still some outstanding. The expected date of completion is Wednesday 1 July 2015, and our priority now is to ensure that the work is finished. To date, and as far as we are aware, no payment has been made by Sport England to either company.

The potential need to write a strongly worded letter to Sport England detailing our dissatisfaction with the workmanship and asking for action to be taken to remedy the works was discussed at the Premises Committee meeting.

Governors expressed their huge thanks to Sharon Barrett for her considerable input in this, especially her hard work on documenting missed appointments, failed promises, work not done and maintaining photographic evidence.

On a more positive note, HF reported that the new playground is being used beautifully by the children who are really enjoying it – this was verified by several of the governors who are also parents at the school.

Bob Froyd
Action: NG to chase ~~Oliver Shaw~~ to ascertain what he has said in his report and Sharon Barrett to chase the companies undertaking the work, both with a view to bringing this situation to an acceptable conclusion.

Diocesan Bids - HF informed the Governors that she had submitted 2 bids to the Diocese this year – one for refurbishment of the ground floor WCs in the main school building (£68,000) and the other for a security holding area at the main school entrance (£32,000). She was pleased to announce that both bids had been successful. Work on the WCs will be carried out and completed over the summer holidays.

ABr expressed her sincere thanks to HF for all her hard work in securing this considerable amount of funding for the school.

Air conditioning - HF further reported that air-conditioning will now be installed in 2 classrooms. This led to a question by a governor about the possibility of providing air-conditioning at the Year 6 productions, as the hall is known to get very hot during the shows.

Action: ABr to investigate the possibility of renting air-cooling units for the production.

7.5 Admissions Committee

7.5.1. Governors were advised that the Admissions Committee had met on 24 February 2015 and 25 February 2015 to consider admissions for September 2015 and to discuss the admissions procedure for 2016-2017, the latter now rendered null and void by the OSA referral.

- a) All 30 Reception places have been allocated for this coming academic year. There are 20 Catholic siblings. There were no appeals.
- b) There were 137 applications in total, with 32 applications listing St. Mary Magdalen's as their first preference.

ABr expressed her thanks to NG for all his hard work during the consultations with the OSA.

7.6 Pay Committee

7.6.1 Governors were advised that the Pay Committee had met, but that the Minutes of this meeting were confidential. Another committee meeting is planned for early July, relating to performance related pay.

Signed: 

Date: *15-10-15*

8. RECONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY/INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT

- 8.1 Governors were advised that the Reconstitution of the Governing Body had taken place, and reminded that, after consultation with governors, the new Instrument of Government had been implemented as of 1 April 2015 and a copy had been circulated to all governors.
- 8.2 Governors were reminded that an additional Parent Governor now needed to be recruited and that this election would take place in the autumn term 2015.

9. SKILLS AUDIT

- 9.1 Blank skills audit forms had been circulated before the meeting, with governors invited to complete them. Governors were advised that this was an important part of the process to recruit a new governor, as it helped identify any skills gaps in the governing body that could then potentially be sought in a new incumbent. Governors were, therefore, advised to return these forms to ABr as soon as possible.

10. GOVERNORS' TRAINING

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

Amanda Barrett:

Getting to Grips with Governance (Intensive) – 7/2/15

Serena Sexton:

How to challenge effectively – 11/2/15

Paul Kenny:

Children Looked After: A Governor's Role – 12/2/15

Jan Hopkins:

Clerk's Briefing – 16/6/15

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 11.1 A governor commented on how the school website was considerably out-of-date, with several other governors in agreement. NG reported that this had been discussed in another sub-committee - £4,000 had been earmarked towards updating the school website.
- 11.2 A governor asked whether there was a criterion in the admissions policy which would give preference to applicants whose sibling had attended St. Mary Magdalen's, but whose age difference was such that they were no longer at the school. The Governors agreed to put this on the agenda for the Admissions Committee meeting in July, for consideration.

Signed: 

Date: 15-10-15

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The dates of future full governing body meetings are:


- 15 October 2015

- 4 February 2016

- 23 June 2016

Action: ABr and JH

The meeting ended at 8.50pm with a prayer led by RW

Signed: 

Date: 15-10-15