

Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body of St Mark's C of E Primary School to be held on Monday 8th February 2021 at 5.30pm, online (via Zoom)

Foundation Governors

Mr S Barber
Mrs M Cammack
Mr T Ward – Chair
Mrs S Miller
Mr G Day
Vacancy

Headteacher and Governor

Mr P Barfoot
School Staff Governor
Mrs J Grant

Ex-Officio

Canon A Whittaker

Local Authority Governor

Vacancy

Clerk to the Governing Body

Mrs Jennifer Gregory

Parent Governors

Mrs S Brooke - Vice Chair
Mr K Robson - (*joined meeting at point 46*)

20/21 38. Apologies for Absence

- No absentees.

20/21 39. Declarations of Interest

- None declared.

20/21 40. Welcome and Prayers

- TW as Chair opened meeting in prayer.

20/21 41. Chair's Comments

- Chair gave general housekeeping information for the Zoom meeting and checked all members of the GB had received all relevant documents in advance.

20/21 42. Minutes of the meeting held in November 2020

- Approved and accepted as a true record. No changes to be made.
 - **January 2021 briefing notes 2021**
 - Approved and accepted as a true record. No changes to be made.

20/21 43. Matters Arising

- **From FGB meeting held on 30th November 2020**
 - Declarations of staff business interests in hand and with Mary (SBM) to chase.
 - Clerk and SBM to keep record of Governor training. Members of the Governing Body to book via SBM and to confirm with SBM attendance.
 - Admissions Policy – to be referred to in this meeting.
 - Teacher Appraisal report has been sent to all members of the GB.
 - HT shared that the Christmas gifts sent from the GB were greatly appreciated. The Chair thanked Sarah Brooke on behalf of the GB for organising the staff gifts at Christmas.
 - Teacher Appraisal objectives and review documents have been sent to all teachers.
 - In reference to Governor vacancies, HT believes that now is not a good time to recruit for new Governors due to COVID19 pandemic and the idea is to wait for some form of normality. This idea was accepted by the GB.
 - HT received MOSAICS report although MOSAICS activities are currently suspended
ACTION: Clerk/HT to check KC's MOSAICS report has been sent to all members of the GB and if not to send this out as soon as possible.
 - Child Protection Policy and Procedures document read and agreed to by all members of the GB.
 - In response to Governor training feedback, questions on FGB minutes are now recorded anonymously.
 - Draft job description for SBM has been developed. PB to meet with MI to finalise draft, this will be approved at the L&M committee on the 22.02.2021.
- **Notes from the Governor briefing on 11th January 2021**
 - This FGB briefing replaced the L&M committee originally scheduled for this day.
 - HT asked members of GB if they agreed their questions and answers had been accurately recorded.
 - HT explained that the Operations and Premises RAs which are based on a model provided by LA have been reviewed. HT has updated these and they are now on the website. All COVID19 related documents now on the front page of the website.
 - Remote Education Offer – document detailing the school's offer which meets mandatory standards - on the website since Tuesday 26th January. HT explained that OFSTED could be looking at school websites and schools' Remote Learning Offer and using this triangulated with comments from parent

change and adapt work plans to make them compatible with remote learning. There was concern raised about this extra work and the additional hours the teaching staff were working. There was also concern raised over the TAs and the HLTAs who have taken on a lot more responsibility. Teaching staff had been able to come in to school for one day a week to work from school, now able to work more days in school if they prefer. The lateral flow device testing is making staff feel more reassured about coming into school. HT is holding weekly meetings with TAs and also with the teaching staff team. This is an opportunity to share and support one another.

- HT referred to “live events” with the school children and since week three children have had weekly class Zoom sessions. These started out with the intention of being more social but are now being used for more teaching and learning. Teaching staff are happily engaging with these sessions and the take up from children at home has been very good. It has been useful to see who is not attending and to be able to follow this up with calls home.
- Chair opened meeting up for questions.

20/21 44. Correspondence

- Chair highlighted the letter from Dan Barton (Cumbria LA) and the Governing Body’s duty of care to school staff. Chair highlighted that working from home is a new thing and a new challenge for many of the teaching staff.
- HT noted that the LA have made money (up to £1500) available which schools can bid for to support remote learning. In response the HT contacted staff and asked what would be most useful, they suggested headsets and webcams to improve the quality of their online teaching material and the confidentiality of their communications when at home. The school has been successful in this bid and has been allocated £1034. MI has now ordered the headsets and webcam. The webcam will come with a tripod to help teachers when filming teaching clips.
- School to receive 8 laptops from Government scheme. These are with System IT (the school’s contracted IT consultants) and will enable the school to help out families who need extra devices to support remote learning.

20/21 45. Headteacher's Report

- HT highlighted key points from the brief report which had been sent out in advance and read by all members of the GB prior to the meeting.
- Positive pupil numbers – school funding dependent on the number of pupils on school roll. A number of children have joined since September. 171 is a relatively large number on roll. Average in recent years in the mid 160’s.
- The most recent pupil to join in January 2021 and has not yet actually been in school physically, due to COVID19
- Year 5 now as 31 children which is the largest cohort in school.
- Attendance in the Autumn term was really pleasing and remained consistent at 98%. There were 7 persistent absentees (attendance below 90%), HT has responded to these, 3 out of the 7 absence issues have been resolved, 4 remain a slight concern, but HT is following these up.
- HT explained about the music service provision which was not on the HT report. Last summer term the music service received Arts Council funding to continue to offer online lessons at no additional cost to the school. However, this term the school is having to pay for the music service and their online music offer even if parents have decided not to take up these lessons. The school has not passed on the cost to the parents who are not taking up the offer. This means there will be a small financial loss on this (paying for lessons that are not happening) but the school needs to meet its contractual agreements.
- (Q) A member of the GB asked HT if he had a plan for children returning to school.
- (A) It is hard to know what the government will decide to do about schools in England. Schools have been promised two weeks’ notice before school re-opening and no earlier than the 8th March (two weeks after half term). The Government has said they will outline their plans for easing lockdown on 22nd February and will hopefully provide more information about school re-opening then.
- (Q) A member of the GB asked if the parents are eager to send their children back.
- (A) A parent governor said yes! Speaking personally, and from talking to those she knows, everything is harder this time round (weather is ‘rubbish’, children lacking motivation, missing social aspects of school).
- (A) HT noted that there was a fear among parents which grew up to Christmas in line with growing case numbers of COVID-19 nationally. Now, 6 weeks in, the reality of remote learning and the impact on children means majority of parents are keen for their children to return to school. School is as much about socialisation as it is about formal learning. HT noted that he knows of one family who may decide to keep children away from school initially should it re-open.
- (Q) A member of the GB asked about the vaccination offer, and if and when it is offered if any of the school staff would have any reservations about it. The impression is that the majority of staff would have the vaccination.

20/21 46. Committee related items

- **Leadership and Management**
 - Sarah Brooke updated the members of the GB, and referred to the minutes from this meeting which all received in advance. The key points highlighted were:
 - The school finances, which are in a healthy position.
 - The LA finance team has accepted our three year financial forecast.
 - The committee has agreed the SFVS and will submit this this month
 - The recruitment for the post of School Business Manager (referred to at the start of the meeting)

- Rachel Esposito Primary Programme Lead (PPL) for School Direct has handed in her notice with effect from September 2020.
 - HT working with other local heads to recruit a new PPL for School Direct.
 - HT explained that St. Mark's is the lead school for the Kendal Primary Partnership (KPP) School Direct programme. Rachel Esposito has worked as PPL for 7 years. Heads from local schools have formed a small working group and they have everything ready to go for the advert (PPL P/T 2 days a week). They are waiting for advice from the University as to where to advertise the post.
 - School Direct finances are very healthy (noted that school funds are ring-fenced)
 - Clerk to the GB role – Jenny Gregory has agreed to continue for the rest of the school year.
 - Another two year contract with Orian, the school's current caterer, has been signed. There was some reluctance to do this (due to some concerns with the quality of service) but there is currently no realistic, immediate, alternative provider.
 - HT explained how a few local Headteachers have had a face to face meeting with the Executive Director of Orian and there has been a slight change in their attitudes and practice once certain issues were raised.
 - HT highlighted the SFVS and explained that there had been a form change, meaning all financial information had to be given in a certain way. The information provided is then used to benchmark the school against a family of similar schools across the country. This provides a dashboard for members of the GB to use to spot any outliers, areas in which the school is spending significantly more or less than other schools.
 - Current dashboard highlights two main areas– staffing costs and school numbers which provide adequate funding for 6 classes while St. Mark's is structured to run 7 classes.
 - SBM has asked all members of the L&M committee to complete the financial competence checklist.
ACTION: Chair will come into school and sign a copy of the completed SFVS on Friday 12.02.21
 - **ACTION: members of L&M committee to return the financial competencies matrix to SBM.**
 - HT explained that one of the original 1960s single glazed door and window units (to the front left of the school) will be replaced with blue aluminium frame to match the front door, using some money left over from previous government allocation (2019) which needs to be spent by March. This work will be done by the same company who fitted the main door. This means the school's current AFC bid to the Diocese will be slightly reduced, and hopefully more likely to be successful.
 - (Q) JG asked if the Year 1 classroom door to the playground could be replaced.
 - (A) HT said that this has been included in the AFC bid for the project in the summer.
- **Teaching, Learning and Assessment**
 - HT provided verbal update.
 - The plan is for the Parents' Forum to meet twice a term. This forum has been very successful so far. The parents involved are taking it very seriously and are gathering responses to key questions and then able to represent a wider group of parents, which provides a rich conversation in Forum meetings.
 - The Government funded catch-up programme will continue once schools re-open, to address the impact the lockdown has had on certain children and their learning. The Government has announced a further £300 million funding for schools, but we need to wait and assess the need before we can make detailed plans for the specific catch-up programme in school.
 - (Q) A member of the GB asked about the Dealing with Allegations against Staff document.
 - (A) HT explained that the LA and the unions have put this policy together which the school is strongly advised to adopt. HT has looked at the most recent version they have provided and noted that it refers to many other documents/policies which are now out of date.
ACTION: HT to contact LA to ask for updated version to be produced for all schools to adopt.
- **Community and Welfare**
 - AW referred to the minutes from the C&W meeting, asked HT if there was anything he wanted to highlight.
 - HT asked all members of the GB if they should repeat the Staff Wellbeing survey over the February half-term break. After discussion it was agreed to repeat at end of the Spring term (following return to school) and again possibly at the end of Summer term. It was noted that wellbeing is covered within the weekly staff meetings, where teaching staff and classroom support staff have an opportunity to raise any issues.
 - HT told the members of the GB about the Anna Freud Foundation and MindEd who have worked with the DFE to prepare Wellbeing and Resilience training to be rolled out to all schools in England. HT has taken part in two half days of this training (provided by the LA) which were helpful in providing useful resources and structured ways to talk about wellbeing issues. The training has helped him feel more equipped to talk to staff about mental health/wellbeing.
 - AW highlighted the collective worship sessions on Zoom which families and governors are invited to join and expressed her view that these have worked really well.
 - HT has enjoyed the collective worship sessions via Zoom. Within his CE peer support network, which meets every half term, this was seen as a really positive idea. He highlighted that the offer was made to all schools in the network to join the sessions. The offer is also there for all

- The Admission Policy includes the criteria used if the school is oversubscribed.
- Changes had previously been made to make the school more inclusive and open (i.e. 2018 removal of the faith and church membership criteria)
- HT highlighted the changes to the Admission Policy 2022 (in the "Waiting List" paragraph a change made to the date, now reads: 31st December, which is the technical end of the Autumn term in any year)
- Sarah Brooke proposed, Angela Whittaker seconded. **The members of GB agreed to accept to adopt Admissions Policy 2022 unanimously.**

20/21 48. Safeguarding

- June Grant updated the members of the GB.
- Current COVID-19 related risk assessments have been updated (based on models provided by the LA).
- Reviewed version of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures has been read and accepted by all members of staff and the GB.
- Monthly NSPCC serious case review summaries are distributed to all members of staff and the GB.
- A member of the GB raised concerns over schools being shut over this period, and the impact this may have on children as many safeguarding issues are usually picked up in schools.
- HT shared that he has no particular, specific, serious concerns about any families in school, but agreed that nationally this will be a significant issue.
- HT expressed his view that the NSPCC case studies are the best resource for on-going training and keep staff and GB training refreshed. He emphasised the importance of getting key safeguarding messages across regularly.
- A member of the GB expressed concern over issues of consistency and access to support, there are long waiting lists for children to be seen by professionals.
- HT noted that online working has worked well for the GB but might have negative impact for other meetings, such as supporting children with needs. HT expressed general concerns about this.

20/21 49. Staff Wellbeing

- HT referred to the update from the C&W committee.
- HT talked about the school's current staff absence insurers, Class Insurance. The current policy offers extras, for example staff were able to do a health audit online, and staff have access to counselling and physiotherapy (powerful resource from wellbeing point of view).
- (Q) A member of the GB asked if JG is picking up any trends from the teaching team.
- (A) JG said she found it helpful being a part of the TA weekly meetings and working with some of them in one of the childcare bubbles once a week in school, she is able to keep in touch with colleagues.

20/21 50. Governor Training

- A member of the GB updated about SIAMS training, the governor emphasised how the thread of Christianity is to run through everything, and that the website is important in doing this. Governors to be aware about things school is doing in readiness for SIAMS inspection.
- Suggestion that in readiness governors have a crib sheet for inspection.
- **ACTION: HT and member of the Governing Body who attended to have meeting to talk about SIAMS and feedback from training.**
- Training details updated for AW. (12th November: SIAMS and 26th November: Collective Worship)
 - AW mentioned the upcoming LA training about RE in school. She is interested in attending this.
 - (Q) A member of the GB asked about the Carlisle (RE) schemes of work.
 - (A) These have recently been removed from the Diocese's website to be re-written.

20/21 51. Time and Date of Next Meeting: 22nd March @ 6.00pm

Closing Remarks:

- (Q) A member of the GB asked about term dates for the year 2021 – 2022, as they are not on the school website.
- **ACTION: PB to ensure 2021 – 2022 term dates are on website.**
- (Q) A member of the GB asked if the pattern of school holidays could change due to the need to run COVID-19 catch up programmes.
- HT: school waiting for official decision and notification from DfE.

Meeting finished at 7.05pm