

Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body of St Mark's C of E Primary School held on Monday 22nd March 2021 at 6.00pm, online (via Zoom)

Present: Mr Tim Ward (Foundation Governor and Chair)
Mr Peter Barfoot (Headteacher)
Mrs June Grant (Staff Governor)
Canon Angela Whittaker (Ex-officio)
Mrs Sarah Brooke (Parent Governor)
Mr Keith Robson (Parent Governor)
Mrs Shirley Miller (Foundation Governor)
Mrs Mary Cammack (Foundation Governor)
Mr Graham Day (Foundation Governor)

Clerk: Mrs Jennifer Gregory

Vacancies:

- Local Authority Vacancy
- Foundation Governor Vacancy

20/21 52. Apologies for Absence

- Apologies received from Steve Barber who was unable to attend for personal reasons. Apologies accepted.

20/21 53. Declarations of Interest

- None declared.

20/21 54. Welcome and Prayers

- TW as Chair welcomed all members of the GB present and opened the meeting in prayer.

20/21 55. Chair's Comments

- TW highlighted the Governor vacancies, and emphasised the important role all members of the Governing Body have. The role of members of the GB is to question and challenge; to advise and encourage. The members of the GB need to consider the current vacancies and think about who might be interested and suitable to fill them. TW asked members of the GB to think how they can step up, as the school staff have, which has been very impressive. The GB role is vital to the school. TW explained how there will be decisions to be made, and all members of the GB will be called upon to make these and we will need to be quorate at meetings to do so.

20/21 56. Minutes of the meeting held in February 2021

- Amendment made to paragraph 46. "this position" removed.
- Accepted as true record by all members of the GB present.

20/21 57. Matters Arising

- PB gave verbal update.
- The advert for the School Direct PPL position has been sent to all the KCP schools, as well as to other schools which have been used as placement schools in the past. Mentors from these schools know and understand the programme and are therefore more likely to be interested in this role. The advert has also been sent to the Primary Heads Association (PHA) in Cumbria and onto all primary schools in Cumbria. Pippa Lesley (UoC) has passed it on to some university colleagues. As this is an unusual job the decision was made not to post the advert on the Cumbria County Council website. There has already been some interest shown by potentially strong candidates.
- The SFVS was signed and sent off at the end of the spring half term. St Mark's data will now be processed with the rest of data collected, and from this the government will create a dashboard and enable St. Mark's to compare its expenditure with other similar schools.
- Everyone has sent their financial competencies matrix to Mary Illingworth - the School Business Manager (SBM).
- PB referred to the Allegations Against Staff Policy and procedures document and explained how he is trying to work out who has responsibility for this in the LA. This action is outstanding.
- The Admissions Policy and Procedures agreed at the last meeting, have been sent to the LA and Diocese.
- Two members of the GB (SM and AW) met with PB to compare notes, share information and give feedback from SIAMS training which they recently attended. This information sharing session was very helpful and it has formed the basis of the training session planned for this meeting.
- (Q): A member of the GB asked about the school term dates for school year 2021/2022 and whether or not these were now on the website. (A) This is in hand and Clerk will follow this up with MI (SBM).
ACTION: Clerk to follow up and check dates are on website.

20/21 58. Correspondence

- PB received a copy of a letter addressed to Steve Barber from the Diocese, thanking him for his service as a Foundation Governor.
- TW had received an email from Steve Barber and read it to the GB.

20/21 59. Headteacher's Report

- PB gave verbal update.

- PB explained the brevity of the HT report: COVID restrictions still impact on the life of the school but core activities continue.
- School attendance continues to be good (97.5%)
- There have been no cases of COVID-19 among staff or children at St. Mark's.
- The school has been provided with lateral flow device testing kits for the staff. PB expressed his relief that primary schools do not need to provide testing for children (as in secondary schools).
- Through assessment of reading, writing and maths this term, each class teacher will identify the pupils with the greatest level of need arising from the school closure.
- There has been a really positive attitude among staff and children with the re-opening of school. Children have returned to school keen and excited and have been engaging with learning from the start. It has been a lovely couple of weeks.
- JG expressed her gladness at being back to "COVID normal" and being back together again.
- PB referred to the school roll and the pupil numbers which have steadily crept up since September 2020. Another two children have joined St. Mark's. Their family relocated from Oman five months ago. One child has joined Reception and although the child has had no previous experience in a school environment they have made a positive start. The other child has joined Year 3. The parents are very positive about the school.
- Another child joined Year 5 in January. However, due to school closures and remote learning, 8th March was her first physical day in school. She is settling well. Year 5 is now the largest cohort with 31 children.
- PB talked about allocations of secondary school places for the current Year 6 cohort. PB highlighted that this is an unusual year. (88%) to KKS is the highest proportion for many years, with the remaining children going to alternative local secondary schools.
- PB highlighted staffing changes. Sam Roberts has resigned her post as MDS from April 2021. Lisa Parkin has been appointed as MDS for 2 days a week from April 2021. She has a background in childcare, college qualifications and experience in nursery settings. She has lots of experience and PB is confident she will be a good fit for this role.
- Q: A member of the GB asked if any children had not returned to school since it re-opened to all children.
- A: (PB) One parent did not want to send their child back to school until they themselves had received the vaccine. This parent has now had their vaccine and the children returned to school on 15.03.21. A child in Year 5 is shielding on medical advice. Class teachers are preparing packs of work to support the learning of those children who are unable to attend school in person.

20/21 60. Committee related items

- **Leadership and Management** (Finance meeting held on 15th March)
 - PB explained the structure of FGB and Committee meetings and how there is not necessarily a meeting of each committee in the second half of a term. This should allow time for training in the FGB meetings held in the second half of term.
 - L & M Committee met this half term because of financial Year End. The committee received final budget figures from MI (SBM).
Reporting back from this committee meeting PB highlighted:
 - Education Mutual, a provider of staff absence protection which was established around 18 months ago. It works in a similar way to a staff absence insurance company. Claims are reviewed by a board and then approved. Educational Mutual has received good press from schools. They have made a competitive quote and have matched the quote provided by the school's current insurers. Some local schools have had negative experiences of the current insurer e.g. long delays before payments. The committee agreed to signing the contract with Education Mutual for 12 months. They provide the same package as all other offers, including the same provision of occupational health services.
 - Q: A member of the GB asked about COVID-19 related illness cover.
 - A: (PB) This year, all companies quoting were all offering cover for Covid-19 illness related absence. PB clarified that they do not all members of staff are insured against absence as some roles can be covered more easily than others.
 - Grounds Maintenance. New contract with D and C Atkinson of Milnthorpe rather than continuing with Orian. The quote is more expensive compared to previous years', but offers more and are highly recommended. PB has asked for a slight reduction.
 - Q: A member of the GB asked what they would do if they will not reduce the price of their offer.
 - A: (PB): As agreed by the committee, they would still sign with D and C Atkinson.
 - PB highlighted staffing as there are key posts to fill and the decision has been made not to recruit for all of these posts at the same time. The SBM post is currently being advertised with a closing date for applications of 30.03.21. The appointee will then have the opportunity to be involved in the recruitment of the Administrative Assistant, who they will line manage. The appointee for the SBM post will also be able to input on the specific role, responsibilities and hours of the Administrative Assistant position. There will be time to do this as it can be done over the summer term.
 - PB is putting together a recruitment pack for the Cleaner in Charge post during the Easter break and hopes to advertise this post as soon as possible.

- PB referred to the current school structure of 7 classes and explained that, as the finances are currently looking strong, this structure will continue for next 12 months.
- PB explained how MOSAICS provision is currently not covering staffing costs as it would normally because of the current COVID-19 government restrictions on the types of bookings it can make and the school budget is currently subsidising MOSAICS staffing costs. It was agreed by the committee that it was important not to lose this provision.
- Sports Premium Grant money is being used to support children's physical development in the EYFS with new equipment for the outside area.
- The door and window unit replacement by Cumbria Window Services is planned for the first week of the Easter break.
- **ACTION: PB to seek competitive quotes for water safety remedial works**
- PB opened floor for questions.
- Q: A member of the GB asked if there had been progress with the music service and also asked about the new outdoor picnic seating area.
- A: (PB) The picnic seating has been purchased using Sports Premium Grant money as they provide opportunity for physical development as part of outside learning.
- Q: A member of the GB questioned whether this would fall into the ring-fenced parameters of the Sports Premium Grant.
- A: (PB) The money has been creatively used. It has been difficult to spend the money because of Covid-19 restrictions this year. Sports Premium Grant money has also been used for equipment in the Hidden Haven. Gardening and forest schools activities are good forms of physical activity.
- **Community and Welfare**
 - PB gave a verbal update
 - A discussion about the Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire took place. It was suggested that a like for like questionnaire would be ready for the end of the week for staff to complete over the holidays which could then be used to compare with the answers from the previous questionnaire. However, this idea was questioned by a member of the GB who referred to the minutes from the last FGB meeting where it had been decided to postpone the questionnaire to the summer to reduce the pressure on the staff team.
 - Following a brief discussion, it was confirmed that the Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire will be carried out in the summer half term.
Action: PB to prepare and distribute Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire to staff in w/c 24.05.21
- **Teaching, Learning and Assessment**
 - PB gave verbal update and gave apologies that this document had not been circulated to all members of the GB prior to the meeting.
 - **ACTION: Clerk to send out TLA document to all members of the GB.**
 - PB highlighted the current government advice to schools which is that the school curriculum should focus on the core subjects as these have been the most impacted by school closure. The government advice is for schools to focus on reading, writing and maths within the context of all the other subjects the staff are teaching.
 - PB explained that he is not so worried about PE provision this term. This had been a concern in the autumn because of limited space and weather constraints. Going forward the outdoors is more regularly available to teachers for PE lessons.
 - KH is completing an MSc with Lancaster University through an apprenticeship scheme, and as part of her research she conducted a survey of Key Stage 2 pupils about their lockdown experiences. The survey asked how much time the pupils spent on screens outside of learning and how much time they were spending outside. The results have caused concern. There are general concerns over returning pupils' physical health and fitness and therefore teachers are keen to get every child outside as often as possible, and more active.
 - PB referred to the new curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage being introduced in September. He suggested asking Dorothy Thorne (DT) to attend the next T, L & A committee meeting to provide an update on the curriculum changes and the implications for our Reception Class and the Pre-School provision.
 - PB explained that there had been a teaching staff meeting to review the introduction of the new PSHE Education curriculum. Feedback had been overwhelmingly positive. As is often the case there are issues around accessing resources. This is a new programme of work and so work is needed initially to plan units of work in detail and find and create resources.
 - PB referred to the new Education Inspection Framework and the current focus on the curriculum. Inspectors will look at the intention, implementation and impact of the curriculum. Leaders need a clearly expressed 'intention' for each subject. Class teachers have been working on writing this for the subjects they each lead.
 - **ACTION: PB will collate the intention statements and write an overarching curriculum statement during the Easter break.**
 - PB, JG and Rachel Shone (RS) (Literacy Subject Lead) met to discuss reading, and an OFSTED 'deep dive' into reading in March 2020. Research has shown that reading is the most important skill taught and developed in a primary school. RS is currently carrying out an audit of school's current provision of the notional 'Big Five' for reading (phonemic awareness,

phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension). PB highlighted that vocabulary is an issue nationally with primary aged children. He also highlighted that research shows that children who enjoy reading for pleasure do better academically and this in turn impacts on their life chances. This will be an ongoing project over the coming year and will be referred back to in future meetings.

- PB commented on the success of remote learning provision via the Seesaw and Tapestry platforms during the recent school closure.
- PB explained that the weekly Zoom sessions run for each class enabled social time for the children. Live lessons were not part of the offer as it is problematic to differentiate learning in such a context.
- PB commented that as every child now has accounts and login details for Seesaw, it would be interesting to see how we might use and develop use of the platform either for homework, or in school for activities in the classroom. Seesaw is now a resource all teachers and children from Year 1 to year 6 can use confidently. PB acknowledged the challenge it had been to get to this position, but that now children and teachers are happy to use it as necessary.
- PB referred to Assessment. Teachers have been asked to carry out assessment of all children in reading, writing and maths and to make lists of those who need help, using three levels of priority. They will use these priority lists to develop the funded recovery plan in the summer term.
- Although the national programme of assessments in primary schools has been cancelled this year, the Year 6 teaching team will be running a full 'SATs' style assessment week in late May. PB explained that they believed it important that the children have this experience to prepare them for secondary school and it will also provide the school with attainment and progress data. This will be used to inform the comments made in the annual reports on pupil progress and to pass on to secondary schools.
- Q: A member of the GB asked if the assessments would just be for Year 6. Would there be mock phonics assessments for Key Stage 1?
- A: (PB) No, assessments are just for Year 6, the end of KS 2. It will provide an important marker and focus for children in their final year.
- Q: A member of the GB asked what other schools are doing about assessment.
- A: (PB) Unknown, but will find out what KCP schools are doing.
- PB explained that the provision of an annual report on pupil progress is a statutory duty. They will be sent to parents in July 2021 as usual.
- PB talked about the recovery programme, which will follow a similar pattern to the one in the autumn. Several part-time teaching staff will provide one to one or small group support to children using the hall as a space for learning. School has been given approx. £13,000 for their recovery plan. They used between £3000 and £4000 last term, £4000 this term and £5000 next term. This money is ring-fenced.
- Q: A member of the GB asked about whether PB had heard anything from the Government about extending the summer term.
 - A: (PB) He hasn't heard anything official about it. The Government will provide money to the LA to run some form of summer schools for certain children. Tim Farron MP has argued that in Cumbria they could offer outdoor education which would be good for children's wellbeing. Money from the Government to fund and subsidise summer schools in the area would be very beneficial.

20/21 61. SFVS

- This item was addressed in paragraph 57 'Matters Arising'.

20/21 62. Safeguarding

- JG gave verbal update.
- SB and JG due to carry out a Safeguarding audit in the summer term. A couple of policies need to be sent out to members of staff. There are no updates since the last FGB meeting.
- There are no new cases.

20/21 63. Staff Wellbeing

- PB gave verbal update
- PB highlighted that small things can be important and referred to the staff room allocations. This term the meeting room has been temporarily set up as the second staff room.
- The Staff Wellbeing Questionnaire will be given out in the week before the summer half term break.

20/21 64. SIAMS Training and Update

- PB led training for all members of the GB on the SIAMS framework. The aim of this training was to make all members of the GB fully aware of the SIAMS framework and to identify any gaps in knowledge. A document was sent in advance of the meeting and all members of the GB have been asked to read and engage with it to aid future discussion.
- At the start of this training session PB gave a virtual tour of the school, giving all members of the GB a sense of the school as a church school enabling all members of the GB to see what is displayed in and around the school building and how each physical artefact represents actions and behaviours in the life of the school. This was particularly useful because, due to COVID-19 restrictions, members of the GB are not able to visit the school in person. A discussion about the school's vision and values followed.
- Please see additional appendix for detailed notes from this training.

- GB and school need to work through the SIAMS framework document which PB sent in advance of the meeting. All members of the GB need to be involved with this preparation.
- PB suggested making this an agenda item for each FGB meeting and work through it over the coming year.
- A member of the GB agreed that it would be a good idea to break it down and work through a section (or 'strand') at a time.
- TW asked if all members could work through each allocated before each meeting, so as to be prepared for meaningful discussion at each meeting.
- PB suggested members of the GB isolate the things they are most lacking in confidence and understanding as this could flag up some good priorities for the training. He suggested RE teaching would be an aspect the members of the GB would not know much about. He thought it important that all members of the GB develop a good working knowledge of this.
- TW agreed that all members of the GB need to work together on creating a vision for the school that can be clearly expressed and understood by everyone involved in the life of the school.
- PB asked if this training had met its aim of giving a sense of the SIAMS framework.
- A member of the GB expressed how it had been really helpful. His initial response to PB's document was that he didn't know very much at all. He found the photos and virtual tour particularly helpful.
- PB highlighted the need for everyone to be honest about their understanding of the elements covered in the SIAMS framework. This year members of the GB have been unable to come into school or take part in school events. There is no real alternative to experiencing the school in person and it is not easy to put many of these things into words as the ethos of a school is intangible.
- A member of the GB expressed concern over the younger children not feeling part of the wider school community because each class is in their own bubble and there is no mixing between bubbles.
- PB explained that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the SIAMS process mirrors OFSTED. They are currently suspending their inspection programme. PB noted that SIAMS used to be nationally set but locally worked through. However this is now being nationalised. The Church of England has appointed someone to oversee the whole process and training of SIAMS inspectors is now done centrally.
- Q: A member of the GB asked if the number of inspections would increase or if the inspections would be pushed back to a later date.
- A: A member of the GB referred to recent training which had suggested it would be later than planned. Some schools might have to wait up to 7 years.
- PB explained that the previous SIAMS inspection was in March 2017. Inspections normally run in a five year cycle. St Mark's was judged as 'outstanding' in 2017, so he suspects we would not expect the next inspection until at least 2023.
- TW argued that members of the GB should not put off this work.
- PB expressed how he is feeling energised by it and sees this as an opportunity to see things in a different way, to refresh and to improve on what the school does.
- Q: A member of the GB asked if it would be a mistake to concentrate on OFSTED and see SIAMS as a bolt on.
- A (PB): The new OFSTED framework is encouraging, with a focus on the curriculum and what is being done to improve the learning experience. Personal development and wellbeing are now in the spotlight because of Covid-19 and so OFSTED now links much better with SIAMS. In terms of preparation, church schools could be seen to have double the work.

20/21 65. Governor Training

- GD's training courses have been postponed to May.
- SM did not find recent National College training helpful but was very positive about the Diocesan training from Morven Anson. She asked about Instrument of Governance and suggested the idea of a GB skills audits. TW referred SM to the School's website.

20/21 66. Time and Date of next meeting: Wednesday 26th May @ 6.00 p.m.

Additional Comments:

- In reference to the vacancies on the GB, AW suggested parents may be more interested in this role in the summer and said that the St Mark's PCC would be happy to recruit parents to the Foundation Governor roles.
- TW thanked SB for organising the gift for Steve Barber which she had delivered to him.
- AW expressed her thanks to Steve Barber, saying that "Steve worked with us and the school with wisdom, grace, gentleness and professionalism, all of which are incorporated in our Christian values." His involvement has been much appreciated.
- TW echoed AW's sentiments.

Meeting finished at 8:13pm