

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body
held in the school at 6.30 p.m.
on Thursday 27 April 2017

No. 2016/2017 - 5

Present: Lia Campos (LC), Patrick Coughlin (PC), Jo Coward (JC, chair), Graham Hughes (GH), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), William Merrick (WM), Janet Muir (JMu), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies for absence: Mark Broadbent, Canon Eugene Harkness, Sally Livesey

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 8 February 2017

Confirmed.

2. Matters arising

Ideas for afternoon masses to engage parents are currently on hold while Fr Peter gets into the swing of his new chaplaincy to the school. Class masses will be happening this term, on Mondays.

3. MAT update

JC summarised the main points and outcomes of the MAT meeting held with Flavio Vettese and Jonathon Lewis the previous week.

JMcC provided a further update on events subsequent to that meeting. FV and Julie O'Connor have agreed that FV will visit all Peterborough heads, and request that by May half-term governors have to have decided either to become part of a Cambridge-Peterborough MAT (the Diocese's preference), or two separate Cambridge or Peterborough MATs, or an "empty" MAT. This timescale is quite tight.

ACTION: JMcC to confirm with Flavio that this understanding is correct.

JC asked governors what their preferences would be of these three options. JMcC said that if none of the head teachers in Peterborough would agree to go into a MAT, St Alban's by default might need to take on that role in order to put forward the Peterborough bids. JC said that a Cambridge MAT could include St Alban's and St Laurence's, and later the 3 nearby free schools, if bids were successful; in terms of the critical mass that Jonathon Lewis recommended, this would be adequate. JMcC said that the structure could be replicated in Peterborough and still sit under the same MAT. When national funding comes in, the funding issues will disappear. JC said that for St Alban's, funding is a key issue.

In terms of the two working parties, all agreed that this was a good way forward. WM and LC volunteered for the detailed working party; MB (in absentia) had said that he would be willing to be on the St Laurence's liaison group.

PC asked about the timeline implications; JMcC thought that the outcomes of the other schools' deliberations would be meaningful for St Alban's. Getting the NSN in

to scrutinise the bids would be the next step. JC said that St Alban's would need to begin the consultation process; JMcC said that the Diocese would be able to support this.

JMcC also told the GB that Tim Coulson, Regional School Commissioner, is stepping down in June to lead a MAT in Suffolk.

4. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

No subcommittee meetings have taken place since the last meeting. JC and MB attended the annual governors' conference. The chair of Morley Memorial gave an interesting presentation on the role of governors; she had used her work to set up a small network of governing bodies to share good practice.

JW and LC have signed up for the termly briefings on 9 May.

5. Headteacher's report

JMcC presented this. 7 criteria 2 (siblings) children were to be admitted in Reception, and 16 criteria 3 (Catholic children in the parish); an additional 13 criteria 3 did not have the school down as their first choice, and therefore did not take up the offer of a place. The intake also includes 4 criteria 4 children (Catholic children outside the parish) and 4 non-Catholics. This is the first time since JMcC has joined the school that offers have been made to non-Catholic children. JMcC will be sending out a survey to the parents that did not place the school as first choice to try to uncover the reasons.

96.2% is the attendance target; the school was slightly under this in the last half-term. Anne Fisher's visit focused mainly on vulnerable groups; her report will be circulated, and discussed at Performance & Standards.

Three new teachers have been appointed for September. JMcC will be passing on the governing body's sincere thanks to Miss Swindell and Mrs Sewell for their excellent work during their time at the school

The budget for next year shows a carry-forward of 37k, and no increase in funding; 87% is staffing costs. The carry-forward will be used to support the budget, leaving a contingency of 8k.

The Catholic Cluster schools will come together for a pilgrimage to Walsingham.

JMcC proposes that first holy communion classes be taught after school next year, as the Year 3 teacher is not a Catholic. JC suggested this might mean that fewer children will make their first holy communion as a result; JMcC agreed, but said that the staffing structure was unable to support the preparation taking place during school hours.

JMcC is representing the Cambridge and Peterborough Catholic heads at a sub-group of the Diocesan Schools Commission.

6. Budget

JMcC presented the budget. The same LA toolkit as last year has been used, because this year's was not pre-populated. GH has scrutinised the preparation of the budgets, as has the financial advisor. It is based on accurate figures for BCR13 (the month

end). The school's carry-forward last year was £44,367; this year it will be £34,000. Next year's is £12k.

Funding is virtually the same. SEN funding has dropped, a little extra is coming in from the pupil premium, and funding from Sacred Heart is ceasing. No income from the PFA has been budgeted for. The figure for teaching staff has come down; the extra work has been reduced, and the employment of three new teachers, one of whom is an NQT, is also reflected. The contract for the Y5 teacher comes out of supply teaching. A TA left and was not replaced with a full-time equivalent, saving a further small amount; caution for the future is needed.

Uncapped reserves of £12,759 are projected for 2017/18. Supply teacher insurance has been budgeted for, to cover the cost of longer-term sickness (over 10 days).

£36,895 is the school's predicted balance for 2018/19; this is a concern because it is so sizeable. Discussions have been held over economies of scale and staffing. GH has suggested that the budget be reviewed in the autumn; at that point, more will be known about national funding, where the LA is in terms of service provision, and about the MATs. LC asked if this was taking into account the potential drop of £40k? JMcC said it did not. The financial advisor said that some schools have had to make drastic cuts. More money may be going into schools, but the costs are also going up steeply.

JMcC said that the school might need to look at generating additional income. LC asked if the school had considered taking over the afterschool club, which does make money? JW suggested renting out the hall space might be another possible income stream. GH said that the budget had been scrutinised very closely, but that some time needs to be spent in the autumn term in resources initially, thinking about what the options are. The difficulty might potentially come next year in trying to set a budget for 18/19. Although the picture is likely to be better than this slightly pessimistic approach, if the school does end up with a deficit, it is extremely difficult to redress. Contingency planning will need to happen as early as possible; the more this affects staffing allocation, the further ahead planning needs to happen. BCR will be monitored as it goes through. This is not easy at all when 87% of the budget is staff; many of the other cost lines have very little wiggle room in them. JC said even if the school does become a MAT, it's not going to make cost savings for some time. GH wondered where the cost savings were going to come from under academies; JC said that the GB did have a degree of scepticism about this. GH felt that the potential for income generation was limited, and against competition, but that nonetheless he would very confidently recommend the budget. It was resolved to approve the School Budget Plan for the financial year 2016-17, comprising a total income and expenditure of £820K. PC proposed, LC seconded, all approved.

7. AOB

Bishop Alan is celebrating the 1030 mass on 18 May and governors would be extremely welcome to attend.

The next meeting date for the performance & standards subcommittee is proposed to be Monday 8 May.

Miss Swindell and Mrs Sewell will be attending the meeting on 6 July; a small presentation should be made.