

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 11 July 2019

No. 2018/2019 - 5

Present: Gregory Burke (GB), Lia Campos (LC, chair), Michael Birdsall (MB), Joseph McCrossan (JMCC), Sarah Smith (SS), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies for lateness: María Goodall (MG), Janet Muir (JMu)

Apologies: Patrick Coughlin

Absent: Canon Eugene Harkness, Graham Hughes, Jo Wager

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 24 April 2019

A governor noted that he had queried whether a conflict of interest arose, and although this was shown not to be the case, he would still like this to be minuted to demonstrate scrutiny.

ACTION: RB to amend minutes.

2. Matters arising

None.

3. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

The Performance and Standards committee had held a meeting recently and evaluated data; more will be said under this agenda item. The accuracy of the predictions was very impressive.

The Resources committee had checked that the budget was progressing smoothly, and discussed the Vision Evening and the relationship with the PFA. Two columns are to be added to the capital plan: source and initiator (who). It is also desirable to add immediate priorities to this; this money should be spent before the school joins the MAT. The server needs updating; the iPads could potentially be refreshed; and staff room refurbishment is also a possibility. The school is currently investigating whether iPads are the best devices to support the curriculum, and may expand laptop purchases. This could be a joint priority for the PFA and the governors. The Devolved Formula Capital sum has been reducing over recent years. Might there be other issues that the money is needed for? It is believed there is nothing significant. It was suggested that Raspberry Pis could be of interest, and a governor offered to test one of the newest devices out with a view to evaluating its suitability. The school is also considering a computing curriculum from Rising Stars. More science experiments cannot come from this money.

4. Updates on curriculum areas

English, Science and Maths reports were circulated ahead of time. The need for more activity in KS1 in the PE curriculum was raised. The school is restricted particularly

in winter because of the demands on the hall. More activity is possible in spring and summer, with the support of professional coaches. Provision for KS2 is more robust because the playground is more clearly defined. PE for Years 5 and 6 is timetabled, usually one outdoor and one indoor session. The school will continue to offer netball regardless of any possible change in staffing. Gaelic football and ball skills are not directly chargeable to families. Pupil premium children are given an opportunity to attend paid afterschool activities through subsidy from the school. Cases where children are on the cusp but do not qualify for pupil premium would be discussed sensitively with the parents, and discretion used to support this too where possible.

On Science, the Ofsted report had requested parity with maths and English. The school is not there yet, but well on the way. It was asked what was meant by parity? Equal curriculum time is impossible – a maximum of 2 hours a week are available at KS2. This is more in terms of outcomes, which are down to teacher assessments, not externally assessed. Mr Wright is putting in place structures to ensure rigour.

The Writer of the Month cup was commented on positively as a good initiative. It was felt that the English report showed particular strength. Music is particularly strong; Cambridgeshire Music is at risk of closure, so anything the school can do to make use of their services would be welcomed.

On R&SE, will the school be using the materials from the Diocese? The materials the school has used in the past have been acknowledged as sufficient by the Diocese and so will continue to be used. The curriculum has changed, and now starts from reception class; this will continue to evolve. The programme that has been devised includes the materials the school has used.

5. Link governor reports

The MFL teacher would like to invest in a digital platform to stimulate French learning, and also in some new dictionaries. She had also been asked to explore culture as well as the language; this cross-curricular approach has been well received.

The Science lead looked at all the books and how the classes were progressing through the curriculum; there is a lot of variation between teachers on how they deliver this. Most of the classes in KS2 have dedicated books for science; Mr Wright is working on implementing this to get everyone to do more science. Could the pond and wooded area be used in KS1? One governor commented that parental concerns are more around scientific thinking, and wondered if there was a way of incorporating that more into teaching? Good critical thinking can be applied across subjects. The skills development associated with topics is a focus.

ACTION: SS and PC's link reports to be forwarded on.

6. Headteacher's report

We will no longer be paying for appeals directly because the LA is no longer providing the service.

Attendance has been very good; only 5 children are classed as persistent absence. It was asked whether the EAL percentage had changed? It has got a bit higher; the information comes from the census, and the office providing advice on how to complete this may have had an impact.

Anne Fisher conducted her monitoring visit this week, and focused strongly on data rather than talking about the curriculum. Results at KS2 were outstanding. The only

child that did not reach the expected level for reading was only one mark away from the cutoff. There were good levels of pupils working at greater depth also. The school is well above LA and English averages; some children got scaled scores of 120, which means they must have got everything bar one or two small questions right. Writing has recovered a lot from the initial years of teacher-assessed marking, demonstrated by the statistics. This also confirms that the predictions are very accurate; there have been a lot of interventions in writing. The difference between girls' and boys' achievements will also be scrutinised. All disadvantaged children achieved expected level, and several greater depth. How is the school showing its appreciation to teachers for these excellent results? It is celebrated collectively by the staff; English and maths teachers received results at the same time. Could the governing body write a personally-signed letter to each teacher thanking them for their effort?

ACTION: GB to draft a letter for LC to review.

How are results communicated to parents? Usually the school waits until September; the headlines go on the website and parents are directed to them. The governors' letter could be circulated to parents also. The children are rewarded for their efforts with an ice cream at the end of SATs. ASP was recommended as a good resource for data scrutiny; results are released on this around October.

The silver ArtsMark is a great achievement.

The child protection audit was carried out on 10 July. Action points are expected in due course from the LA. The Pupil Premium will be updated by the next Performance & Standards meeting. The Diocesan monitoring visit was successful.

Thanks to Miss McEwan and Mrs Overend, who will be leaving. New teachers have been successfully recruited.

The LA asked for the school's assessment of the impact of Brexit; there has been little directly on the school, but parents are concerned.

The playground plans are on hold at present, and will be revisited in the new academic year.

JMcC will be sitting on the Schools Forum. Miss Waterson attended an OLW MAT meeting and did not have a high opinion of proceedings. Mrs Overend has attended Diocesan RE meetings, but commented that there had been poor turnout. JM joined the pilgrimage to Italy (JMcC was unable to attend).

JMcC is staying in touch with the Church Schools of Cambridge. The PFA has had no chair; the three executive functions are not renewing in the new year. There is a suggestion to tie the PFA AGM to the Vision Evening to improve attendance.

Last year's reception class could not be accommodated at City Kids; Alliance Française is currently taking 10 children, mostly from reception class, for an afterschool club. However, they can only take children after school and can't cover the mornings. JMcC was approached by a provider and had conversations with them; he has also discussed the issue with City Kids to get their views. Perhaps the governing body should consider the school taking over City Kids as a possible source of income - this should be investigated in the autumn term, along with a number of options. Taking over completely could be very expensive because of TUPE regulations; the school could also investigate running it as it is, but with greater involvement from the school. Cambridge Kids taking it over could also be considered, but this would mean losing the profits. Space limitations are a big issue - there are 40

children on the waiting list on a Monday, for example. Hiring out the hall is not an option because of its use for afterschool clubs. Could it be communicated clearly to parents that this isn't going to be resolved quickly, to manage expectations? Additional recruitment has meant that they are able to accommodate more pupils in the morning. There would be places for an additional 24 children in the school in the afternoon if CK extended to the school premises.

The school will be getting a new chaplain from September, who will be ordained over the summer, which is excellent news. Canon John has been a great support recently. There were 26 communicants in Y3, of whom 20 were prepared at OLEM.

JMcC has been approached by the MAT to become the Public Relations Officer, providing an opportunity to get to know all the schools in the MAT and how they are all performing. There is no budget for the post, but JMcC is willing to take it on. Governors have all received the letter outlining the steps necessary to begin joining the MAT; the Diocese is keen to meet. Dates in late September or early October should be discussed; it would be ideal for all governors to be involved, not just the working party. Could we present a vision of joining the MAT that represents what would make the school eager to join and enthusiastic about it, rather than merely accepting it? It is unlikely the school will see much impact for 4-5 years as a result of joining. The curricular subject network has started, but experiences of it so far have not been good. The Diocese is not in favour of a hub approach for organising this; this is a concern for the school and should be discussed at the autumn meeting. It might be helpful to provide a precis of the issues to all governors.

ACTION: LC to provide RB with working party precis for circulation.

Wednesday 2 October will be proposed as the date to meet.

The Diocese was unsuccessful in winning the bid for the new school in Northstowe, but has managed to keep Sacred Heart in Swaffham open.

The school is anticipating an Ofsted inspection next academic year.

Thanks on behalf of the governing body to all the staff for an excellent year.

7. Key Stage results

Discussed as part of the Headteacher's report.

8. Complaints procedure – updated guidance

This was circulated; governors are happy to approve this once customised for St Alban's.

9. Preparation for Headteacher's performance review

The advisor has already been in touch proposing dates. LC, WM and SS are proposed as the panel - only two are needed but there is one in reserve in case someone can't make the date. All governors are encouraged to take up the training so the task can be rotated. It would be good practice to make this happen as early as possible (before half term) as it helps to drive the setting of overall priorities.

ACTION: JMcC to circulate dates

10. Governing Body self-evaluation

We have used the NGA tool to do this in the past, and it is worthwhile. MG is happy to give it a try; LC and WM are also willing. Monday 9 September, at 7pm, was proposed for a date to meet. The results can be circulated to governors for their interest.

11. Child protection review

The audit has been completed, from which action points will be received; for example, the Keeping Children Safe document should be signed and dated.

12. MAT update

Discussed under the Headteacher's report.

13. Vision Evening

MB's documents had been circulated ahead of the meeting. There was a lot of conversation about mission and vision when governors met to discuss outputs, with the result of a proposed mission statement. The mission statements of the MAT and other faith schools were also considered; approaches were very different, from the very simple to the extremely detailed. The mission statement can be of great help as a point of reflection when needing to make an intuitive decision. There were some differences of opinion as to how measurable the statement is or ought to be. It was commented that the emphasis on love was very important.

Is the growth in faith sufficiently clear from the statement as currently worded? It was felt it might be necessary to add something specifically about the Catholic faith. Suggested amendment: 'our children love God and grow in the Catholic faith', and splitting the opening portion of the statement into two clear sentences. It was agreed to approve this.

Key themes in the consultation were Community, Transparency, Communication, Education and Financial Responsibility.

It was proposed that any additional comments from the governing body should be removed, to make it a true reflection of the discussion on the evening itself. One statement about 'promoting the use of English in the school' had proved particularly controversial; might it be better to remove a comment regarding this never previously having been an issue? It was noted that this is to do with community rather than the children, referring to conversations amongst parents. Could the phrasing of the controversial point be softened, perhaps? 'A preference for parents to speak English in the playground' could be a potentially better phrasing. However, it was felt that we should also make it clear that as a governing body, we should be prepared to express our disagreement with this, if it comes up for further discussion. It is important for the process to acknowledge that this was brought up, regardless of how we feel about it. It was agreed to change the title to 'Comments from Vision Evening'.

The heading of 'Weaknesses' was rephrased as Areas of Improvement, with Weaknesses in parentheses. It was proposed to add Leadership and leadership development, and High quality of teaching and learning to the strengths; Length of time to recruit teachers was removed as a weakness because it had no noticeable negative impact on the school. A qualification to the title of 'as discussed by the governing body' was added.

It was agreed to remove short tenures as a threat, and add high costs of living in Cambridge and increasing commuting times; in opportunities, the point about relationships with other schools was rephrased. Formalising channels of communication relates to greater transparency around the function of the governing body (for example).

These elements can then feed into strategy development - for example, greater community participation. It was commented that it is very important that there should be greater governor visibility at school events; the calendar should be shared around so that the GB can agree to cover and share it around.

Priorities:

- building community
- working towards the MAT

It was clarified that participating more in community was primarily about parental participation, but it was also relevant for teachers, who need a teacher community to support them. It's about overlapping networks of community. If parents could engage, how would they do it? Ideas can be invited from the audience at the feedback evening. LC's document fits in very well with this work and could be combined with this. This can be used as an input for the school development plan.

15. AOB

Termly briefings in September have not yet been advertised, but it will be important to ensure governor attendance.

Date for first meeting of next year: **Wednesday 11 September, 6.30 p.m.**

The policy review cycle continues.

Meeting closed 21.17