

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 7 February 2019

No. 2018/2019 - 3

Present: Lia Campos (LC, chair), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), Michael Birdsall (MB), Patrick Coughlin (PC, observer), María Goodall (MG), Bill Merrick (WM), Janet Muir (JMu), Sarah Smith (SS), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies: Gregory Burke, Canon Eugene Harkness, Graham Hughes

The new parent governors were welcomed. One of the new parent governors asked that for future elections it might be made clear that the statements that are submitted on application will be shared with the parent community. Governors all introduced themselves.

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 7 November 2018

Confirmed.

2. Matters arising

A further amendment to the behaviour flowchart was suggested, and some clarifications supplied for the benefit of new governors. The policy was approved subject to these amendments being made.

ACTION: any governors with additional feedback to supply directly to JMcC for incorporation.

Governors agreed that the new draft of the November minutes could be approved.

JW had made further amendments to the proposed letter from the governing body to the Bishop regarding the changes to the first holy communion preparation programme. It was agreed that LC would sign on behalf of the governing body.

The head teacher's report had been omitted from the circulated agenda, and was therefore delivered at this point in the meeting. Admissions data for this year is significant in that the school has received at least 56 applications from Catholic children (enough for 2 classes). Expansion at Northstowe is very significant, however, and the Diocese is focusing its attention on a bid for a school in that area. It might be possible in future to work more closely with St Laurence's in order to ensure that all Catholic pupils that want places are able to get one at a Catholic school.

The school is required now to focus in particular on persistent absences (attendance below 90%), following new guidance from the local authority. Parents receive one letter of warning, followed by a meeting with the head. St Alban's does not issue fixed penalty notices for absence, and attendance overall is very good. If a child is out of school for 6 weeks or more, they are removed from the register. The percentage of EAL children has dropped, which has an impact on funding. It was asked whether perhaps parents were under-declaring this figure due to a misunderstanding when

completing pupil record forms, and suggested that clearer guidance could be provided as to how to describe pupils' language abilities.

The school was in the top 1% of schools for maths results, and governors commented on this as a fantastic achievement. There is currently an issue with writing; staffing arrangements in KS1 are being considered in order to deploy teachers most effectively to bring up the standard at KS1.

Mrs Rackham will be leaving at the end of term, and after half term will be released one day a week for her new post. Mrs McCrossan will be covering the day-release PPA time. It was asked how the line management would be handled? It is only a temporary post for 6 weeks and it was felt this wouldn't be an issue. One TA has resigned for personal reasons; the post has been advertised internally and the school hopes to appoint rapidly.

The kitchen is going well; one governor commented he had received excellent feedback from parents. Some parents would like the menus to be more healthy and sustainable; 'meatless Monday' was suggested as a possibility. The school is hosting a taster day for other schools later this term; JMcC will discuss how this works for Ridgefield.

There has been no further update on the drains issue. The school will be responsible for providing 10% of the funding for resolving the problem; DFC funding will cover the rest. The Diocese is responsible for the property and should therefore be liable for any fine that might arise from the continued delay to rectifying the problem. There was some concern that this might not have been formalised.

ACTION: JMcC to ask Helen Bates for documentation that confirms the school is not liable for any delay in resolving the issue.

City Kids have funded new lights for the KS2 playground. 230 responses in support of a new Catholic school at Northstowe had been received. It is not known what the breakdown of responses was in terms of new families etc. The new Diocesan attendance policy was sent out for consultation, and a few families expressed concern that the sibling category had been removed. JMcC recommended that the sibling category should be reinstated. No communication has been received from the MAT of Our Lady of Walsingham. JMcC has begun talking to the Church Schools of Cambridge to look at developing a partnership. It was noted that this was a very important initiative in terms of how the school might be able to handle external pressures towards secularisation.

The PFA is doing very well and is planning several fundraising events. They are making the KS2 playground a focus for their fundraising. They have consulted the school community and are now looking at creating a design. They would welcome support from the governing body. It was suggested that PFA plans might be shown to the Resources subcommittee to ensure good co-ordination. JMcC's support of St Luke's is coming to an end. An interim head teacher has been appointed that can cover 4 days a week until the Easter holiday and JMcC will continue to offer a day's support until that point. This will continue to be paid. Mrs Muir and Mrs Rackham have managed the school very well in JMcC's absence.

Next year is likely to bring an Ofsted inspection, and governors were encouraged to begin thinking about preparation for this.

3. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

The Resources subcommittee met and discussed the drain issue, as well as undertaking the head teacher's performance management. At the recent termly briefing, key stage results were presented for the county in general, and Jonathon Lewis's strategy at the county level. PowerPoint presentations were circulated which could be made available if governors are interested. The new parent governors had attended their induction training sessions, and had been given a tour of the school led by pupils.

4. Sub-committee meeting dates

Performance & Standards: Thursday 28 February, 6.30 p.m.

Resources: Wednesday 20 March, 6.30 p.m.

It was suggested that the new parent governors should attend both subcommittee meetings in the first instance to get a feel for how they operate, but ultimately be formally a member of only one each.

From the point of view of succession planning, it would be useful to have another governor to volunteer to become familiar with the new budget planning tool; both new parent governors were willing to do this. LC is also interested.

ACTION: JMcC to arrange a session with Graham Hughes, new governors and LC to prepare the budget.

5. Review of link governors and subcommittee memberships (to include new governors)

MG - Performing Arts

MB - Computing

JMcC proposed a new calendar in order to formally schedule governor monitoring visits. It was suggested that it might be useful to create it as a Doodle poll. Guidance on governor visits will also be circulated. It was suggested that two visits (one before Easter and one in the summer term) would be appropriate if possible.

ACTIONS:

JMcC to circulate calendar.

JMu to circulate entitlement documents.

Link governor memberships in full are now as follows:

- English - JW
- Maths - PC
- Science - LC
- Child Protection - SS
- Inclusion – Gregory Burke
- Early Years - SS
- Assessment & Planning - WM
- Environmental Studies - PC
- PE - GH
- MFL - LC
- Computing - MB
- Performing Arts/Art/DT - MG

- RE - JW
- PSHE - JW

6. School improvement plan

This was circulated ahead of the meeting to provide an insight into what will be focused on this year. The plan will be discussed in detail at Performance & Standards committee meetings, and is derived from curriculum priorities. JMcC recommended that governors should consider a three-year development plan, possibly involving a Vision Evening to bring in more complete representation from the community. It was asked whether it was possible to get more information on the Diocesan strategic plan and the MAT development in order to support and inform this.

ACTION: JMcC to ensure that more information on the Diocesan strategic plan and MAT plans is provided.

It was noted that the column headings should be adjusted to read 'Target' and 'Action' rather than 'Action' and 'Steps to Meet Target'. It was suggested that the Performance & Standards committee meeting should consider setting some provisional dates for a Vision Evening.

It was requested that fewer acronyms could perhaps be used to make documents more readily comprehensible.

7. Approval of admissions policy

An objection was raised to the deciding date for sibling eligibility being the date of enrolment, but a counter-objection was raised that extending the sibling rule in this way would lead by default to a reduction of the size of the catchment area, causing problems with widening participation in the school, which seems very unfair. It was proposed that a distance limit might be imposed which, if a parent chose to move beyond it, they would then become ineligible to apply. It was pointed out that this sort of movement might be involuntary, and as a result of financial need, for example, if parents separated. It was estimated that the long-run average was around 40% of pupils being eligible as a result of the sibling rule.

It was asked whether it was known how many families had been affected by this - how many families had moved once they had a child in the school? It was unclear whether this data could be readily obtained. Anecdotally, only three families in recent years had been affected by this rule. It was pointed out that from a purely practical point of view, the rule makes sense: if the older sibling will have left by the time the younger sibling starts, there is no longer the consideration of needing to make life easier picking up and dropping off from the same location. The Diocese wants to drop the rule because it will never come in to play at most schools because they are not full; however, if it does not have an impact in other schools, surely it would be better to retain this rule. It was commented that not having this rule might cause people not to apply to the school because of concerns that they might end up with very difficult family circumstances because of having children at different schools. Family cohesion is very important. Primarily, the issue arises because St Alban's is not big enough, and there is not another Catholic school on this side of Cambridge. It was recognised that whichever rules were adopted, there would be problems, and that it would be desirable to re-adopt Category 2 regarding siblings as part of the Diocesan-wide policy.

Parents should be made aware that this has been discussed seriously at the governing body level. Is there a possibility the Diocese might insist that we need to remove it?

JMcC will refer back to the Diocese, and if they confirm we can reinstate it, this can then be communicated to parents.

8. Health & Safety policy

The school requires a health & safety policy. A draft policy was circulated ahead of the meeting, and delegated to the Resources committee for detailed discussion.

9. Schools Financial Value Standard

It was proposed that in future, elements of the SFVS should be considered in detail at the Resources committee meeting, and then ratified by the full governing body. The immediate March deadline can be met by convening the headteacher, chair of governors and finance officer. It was requested that the child protection audit and the SFVS review should be added to the policy review calendar. It was also suggested that the SFVS could be useful in constructing the budget.

10. Safer recruitment training

No parent or foundation governor is currently trained in safer recruitment. WM and SS are both willing to attend this.

ACTION: RB to forward training programme again along with booking details.

11. AOB

Section 128 checks now need to be done by all governors, but it is unclear how this can be done from the website provided by the LA.

ACTION: JMcC to follow up with Rosemarie Sadler.

There were concerns about differing country rules regarding DBS, because of a potentially exploitable loophole that had in the past led to children suffering. It was noted that English law doesn't require more than a DBS, and that the NHS is similar. Safeguarding is a high priority, and vigilance is the most important point. Ofsted priorities seem to be moving in the other direction in order to reduce paperwork.

It is recommended that governors use St Alban's email addresses. However, there are practical issues with this to do with people not checking mail etc. The critical issue is that personal data should not be exchanged via email. There is a document storage area on the website for governors that could potentially be used for sensitive data, but there were some concerns that this might not be secure enough. If data is anonymised, the existing arrangements should be sufficient. The school may conduct a formal risk assessment to ratify this.

ACTION: RB to circulate the pecuniary interests register again to ensure that all those who need to have declared.

A small working party had been set up to consider the MAT issues, and had looked at evaluating the potential impact on the school, in terms of budget and finances, and any impact on performance. St Laurence's is also doing something similar, and a meeting has been set up with them. They have similar concerns regarding budget deficit. St Laurence's will have a meeting with the MAT's financial officer soon, but has not yet sent its 3-year predictions to be analysed by him. St Alban's has also been asked to send this, and have requested more details as to why this is necessary. LC

proposes to write to Flavio and Mark Wilkinson regarding what they expect St Alban's to do over meeting to discuss it.

Meeting closed 21.46