

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body
held in the school at 6.30 p.m.
on Monday 3 February 2020

No. 2019/2020 – 3

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

Apologies: Michael Birdsall

Absent: Canon Eugene Harkness

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Thursday 14 November 2019

Confirmed.

2. Matters arising

The safeguarding policy needs to be signed by all governors, and has been brought to the meeting for this purpose.

The new complaints policy was uploaded to the Google Documents area. It was agreed to accept this with the standard changes required (name of school etc)

3. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

- Risk Assessment of security and safety in the school

MG and JMcC did two walkthroughs in December with Steve Ostler, which was circulated to governors. Most actions involve basic maintenance, which has already commenced; other items related to risk assessment need to be carried out by the head or delegated. There were some things that may need review in conjunction with the capital development plan as they might need funding, so prioritisation needs to be considered. Could those items that were real risks be highlighted? Larger items that needed consideration for funding were: blinds in the hall, to increase functional use, as the curtains aren't entirely suitable (in an ideal world, they would be blinds that could be pulled up or down according to light requirements; these are also more fire-safe; however, these might be expensive given the size of the windows); switching the lights around in the hall; otherwise small items. At the FGB meeting in July, this could be reviewed to see how much progress has been made against the list.

- Resources

A lot of things were discussed at this meeting: the Terms of Reference for the committee, dating from 2013, need to be refreshed; Orrovia was discussed, but for the time being cannot be circumvented; the budget report was reviewed, with no significant variances identified (it will be very tight); the redundancies plan (in the future, the school might require TAs, but it was decided that this was not a significant risk, and the plan should therefore go ahead, with the understanding that if extra

funding comes in, this could be ceased; 76 hours of work currently); the sources of revenue for the school, in particular City Kids (which may make a contribution to improvements in the playground, lighting and KS1) and the St Alban's Foundation (it was proposed that the governing body should revive it); wraparound care, but this is still under discussion (a pilot scheme for a year with 24 children, employing 3 more people, to see if it works. Discussions are still ongoing. Costs need to be balanced against benefits – however, there is no cost to the school. JMcC will talk to the working group and Premier Sport and find out more about contracts and SLAs). There was discussion of how the PFA might engage with the GB when they want to do a more sizeable piece of fundraising than usual, and a threshold was set at £2000, to support communication between the two groups. Sources of expenses: the pension fund had already been discussed and cannot be influenced; under capital expenses, possible expenses on the school grounds were discussed. The priorities of what needs to be done were assessed. This might need to be modified as a result of the maintenance report. The Premises Plan is available on the website and was circulated to parents. The school needs to replace 30 computers; 3 quotes each for the computers and the servers were received. JMcC and Flower recommended ????; a governor noted that the speed of booting up the computers was important, and also that a large hard drive was not a necessity as most data could be stored in the cloud, trading off hard drive space for faster processors. JMcC will get the spec; at least i5 is recommended. The meeting recommended that JMcC & Flower should go ahead and make the purchase. Information on current services and prices as compared to the MAT have not yet been acquired. Discussion of the SFVS was deferred to another meeting.

- Performance & Standards

Curriculum coverage was discussed; JMcC provided a 2-week sample update for each year group, which was then averaged out to produce some overall figures. By and large, coverage is fine; geography and art both have very little coverage, and history in some years is also light. The particular sample weeks may not have been ideal; the hypothesis has been formed that these three subjects should be the focus of a 'learning walk' in the near future to flesh this out; there is confidence that the ultimate picture will be a good one. The art link governor visit took place recently and a report will be available soon; the subject lead feels that art isn't given sufficient time. How does this compare with the ideal picture? Favourably - this will be covered in more detail in discussion of the new Ofsted framework.

Anne Fisher's KIT visit was discussed. This was an additional, deep-dive visit, using science as a focus. The subject lead was able to show that what was in the books matched up with what was in the planning and what was being assessed. A similar exercise will be undertaken with geography and history in a month or so's time.

The new Ofsted schedule to be considered entails a shift away from the 'scores on the doors' to what the children are studying and how it is being taught; the focus is around the three concepts of intent, implementation, impact. Teaching content is being monitored closely over the next year to identify any gaps and their causes. Schools' recent focus on scores has to a certain extent subverted the curriculum, hence the governors' intentions to rebalance things, and to be able to demonstrate this. Programmes are being put together, and a very detailed job is being done to get 'Ofsted ready'. Should link governors be reviewing these as part of their work? They are on the website, and could form the basis of monitoring visits (for example, looking through books to see how they match up to the 'intent' in the curriculum plan). Achieving outstanding will be very difficult nowadays; standards have to be high, but the curriculum also needs to be thoroughly embedded. Will Ofsted be expecting breadth and depth across the curriculum, or are certain aspects more

important? Maths and English, reading, and two more areas at the inspectors' discretion will receive particular focus. Do inspectors take into account the fact that increased curriculum time for RE may mean less time for other subjects? St Alban's actually offers what is required, and not more; in terms of the curriculum time that is counted, this isn't more than what is state-mandated. It has been heard that lately, science has not been being selected as a focus in Ofsted inspections nearby. St Alban's won't achieve the depth required overnight, but it's looking good.

A rundown of the data was provided, looking specifically at certain aspects likely to be considered important by Ofsted. Outcomes are predicted to be as good as last year. There are some cases of underperformance in vulnerable groups, but the progress the children are making is very good.

4. Schools Financial Value Standard

Deferred to next resources meeting.

Finance

5. Implications of LA top-slice for high needs

Educational psychologist services have been suspended as part of the underfunding of high needs; visits are being postponed until a decision is made. St Alban's does have some hours of education psychology services so will be affected by this. Schools Forum (reps from schools with council officers and the local authority) discussed the budget, which then needs to be referred to the Children & Young People's board. Overwhelmingly, the Schools Forum said it would not support a 1.8% cut. This would cover the current deficit, but the problem would arise again. The additional government funding is needed instead to cover the deficit. The forum agreed that Jonathon Lewis would wait on a response from the secretary of state, who needs to be consulted on anything over 0.5%. The CYP however said it would support the 1.8% topslice. A verdict from the minister is awaited. Any budget surplus that St Alban's might have anticipated next year is now gone, and this definitely has an impact on the MAT. The minimum funding guarantee is set at 1.5%. 1.8% comes to around £15k. Will this become a standing deduction, every year? That is one key concern; this may well not be sustainable in the future. If St Alban's goes into the MAT, the finances will look very bad, and will cause concern for the MAT. Only 1 school in Cambridge had a deficit budget last year. Is the current 0.5% already built into the budget? No – we will have **211 not 209** this time around **not sure exactly what this means**. What about the discrepancy between the slice taken from different schools? Likely this is due to the minimum funding guarantee and SEN factors. This is why the redundancy plan at St Alban's is going ahead; when the budget is set, the staffing structure will need to be reviewed. This needs to be concluded by March to allow for the building of budgets. There are a couple of children currently being assessed for an EHCP, but it is unlikely that they will receive as much support as the current children. There is no indication as to the likely needs of the forthcoming intake; this may become clearer in April.

Standards

6. Headteacher's report

This was circulated ahead of the meeting. A letter from Nick Gibb praising the school for its excellent results had been received; the governors congratulated the school on its achievements. Security concerns were highlighted, in particular regarding the passageway between the church and the school. JMcC will liaise with some members

of the parish committee to try to determine a way forward. It has been suggested that food bank visitors should use the alleyway from Hills Road instead. In the evening, at pickup times, it is very difficult to balance security with parents' needs to come in and out for collection. Could church activities use the entrance on Union Road? That goes through the kitchen and the hall; the food bank uses the music room. The car park is to be discussed at a future parish council meeting. It would be good if the school could be considered in any discussions around this. These concerns could be raised with the parish council chair. The impact on City Kids should also be mentioned. An eye is being kept on attendance, although it is still within the school's target.

9 children are making their First Holy Communion this year at OLEM. Fisher House first holy communions are happening because a parent with connections has organised it this year, but it is unlikely to happen again next year. A programme is also being run at St Philip Howard. Classes at SPH are less frequent but longer. The 8am start on a Sunday at OLEM is very challenging for some parents. Perhaps all relevant local options could be mentioned to parents at the start of the academic year, and information provided? The 8am start may have arisen as a result of availability of facilities and catechists; however, classes used to happen in school after school hours, delivered by teachers, but this was ended. 17 children are attending the sessions at Fisher House, but some of them are from other schools. Only one child from St Albans regularly goes to Fisher House, but 9 others have joined her. 4 children are not making their FHC. Although it is felt that there isn't high mass attendance amongst the school body, this surely makes it even more important that FHCs should be taking place. Fr Paul is keen to be involved with the school and has been taking confessions and class masses.

7. Ofsted readiness

Slides concerning this were circulated, providing in particular an understanding of what a 'deep dive' constitutes. Governors are actively preparing for an Ofsted visit. The recent 'Ofsted ready' training attended by a governor was shared with the GB, and school priorities and key data distributed on handy cards for governors' ready reference. JMcC talked through the usual process of setting up an inspection visit. A governor will usually be requested, to spend 15-20 minutes with the inspector. It's likely this will be the chair, but it's possible that a 'backup' might step in instead, particularly with reference to a link subject chosen for a 'deep dive'. A briefing will also be delivered at the end of the inspection visit. Governors may be interviewed independently now, according to the recent training.

8. Update on the SDP

This has been progressed, and was circulated before the meeting; some of the reds in particular have changed. Some 'not happening' statements have been added (e.g. working with the Church Schools of Cambridge). The development of an additional EYFS lead has been dropped, as the new teachers employed proved to be very competent. This could be made green as this has effectively been resolved. Monitoring visits still need to take place – these might be marked amber, as meetings have been set up but have not yet taken place. The monitoring of Year 5 children 'on the cusp' is still marked as red. Wraparound care should be marked amber; it is hoped that there will be a pilot of a possible solution to the current capacity constraints. The school is exploring all possibilities to try to meet the current demand. Staff at Cambridge Kids are suggesting that demand may actually drop due to economic instability. The school has also worked with the out-of-school provision at St Paul's. Anecdotally, there may have been an increase in commuting parents, who are working outside Cambridge. There are a lot of afterschool activities already being provided by the school free or at a very low cost, which complicates the ability

to provide a 'standard' afterschool club. It would be useful to have a full timetable of all afterschool clubs on the school website (including age ranges and prices).

9. Safeguarding update

A presentation was circulated to governors ahead of the meeting; there is a presentation pack available in the governors' secure area (governors were reminded of how to access this, and a discussion of how best to organise this area took place), which was then shown to governors at the meeting. JMcC and Mrs Richardson are dedicated leads for safeguarding; this is displayed at the school door, the noticeboards, newsletters and the website. The school's whistleblowing and Acceptable Use policies are due for review and potential update. There are currently no children at the school on the child protection register, although occasionally an entry might be made on a 'logging concern' plan, which will then be followed up as appropriate, with the parents if necessary. Feedback will be given to the teacher or person making the disclosure. Most schools will have children on a child protection plan; numbers are generally on an upward trend, at private schools as well as state schools.

Vision

10. MAT update – discuss the passing of a resolution

Flavio Vettese at the Diocese had asked the GB to discuss the resolution he had drafted, which was circulated ahead of the meeting and read out as a reminder. The wording acknowledges governors' desire to see the data before making a firm decision. Could the wording be changed to 'resolve to consider' applying rather than 'resolve to apply'? 'Are minded' is another possible formulation, but the word 'resolution' might prove to be necessary. There was some discussion about the current evolution of the educational system and the decline in interest in MATs more generally. It was suggested that a new sentence should be inserted in between the current two, outlining what the governors require in the way of data: 'Having made this resolution, the Governing Body understands that the MAT will now make available all the documents and information required for due diligence' and the first clause of the last sentence be deleted, while 'Our Lady of Walsingham' should be specified in the last sentence. It was agreed that this would be sent to Flavio.

11. AOB

There are three link governor gaps at present. PC volunteered to take on PE as the member of staff is the same. Environmental studies needs to be split into history (Miss Waterson) and geography (Miss Binnie). A governor is also required for inclusion, which MG volunteered for. WM volunteered to cover geography; SS agreed to take on history.

A governor raised a proposal from the NGA that suggested the removal of sub-committees and moving to just having full GB meetings. This would make the same amount of meeting commitments, roughly, for governors, although it would increase the requirements for the clerk; it would save on reporting time back to the full GB meeting, and creates more diversity in decision-making. In going through the due diligence process regarding the joining of the MAT, this could be helpful. However, having more people involved could prolong the decision-making process even further. It was agreed to consider this again at a later date.

There are two potential candidates to fill foundation governor vacancies. One was a chair of a governing body at one of the schools in the St John the Baptist MAT, who

moved to Cambridge recently. The other candidate is a retired judge. It was noted that our recruitment processes ought to be more transparent - how are vacancies advertised? We don't know the quality of other candidates who don't know that there is a vacancy available to be interested in. However, 'advertising' the position may result in too many applicants. The skills matrix process ought to be used to narrow down the skills required by the GB; could we apply it to these candidates? Does the candidate have to be resident within the Diocese? It doesn't seem to be specified on the form. At present only two governors have completed the skills matrix, so it is difficult to use this for screening. A note could be inserted in the school newsletter to broaden awareness. The GB currently has two vacancies: one foundation governor and the local authority governor. A third person had made themselves known to LC as having an interest in the LA governor post.

Action: LC to write a paragraph for the newsletter. It was agreed to invite Fr Paul to the next meeting as an observer. Governor candidates can meet other governors who are interested.

Meeting closed 2148