

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the full Governing Body
held remotely at 6.30 p.m.
on Tuesday 8 December 2020

No. 2020/2021 – 3

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 No apologies were received.

1.2 Present: Lia Campos (LC, chair), Edward Acton (EA), Cristina Alves Martins (CAM), Patrick Coughlin (PC), Fr Alan Hodgson (AH), Tanatsa Jingura (TJ), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), Keith Menary (KM), Janet Muir (JMu), Jo Wager (JW), Michael Yelton (MY), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

1.3 Absent: Sarah Smith

2. Welcome of new governors

2.1 Two new governors, Fr Alan Hodgson and Keith Menary, were welcomed to the governing body by the chair, who noted this now brings the board to full complement.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 7 October 2020

3.1 Confirmed.

4. Matters arising

4.1 The minutes of the April meeting have yet to be reviewed for consideration of reservation of an item relating to the MAT; however, the urgency of this is diminished owing to the MAT joining process currently being on hold.

4.2 One governor asked whether the school places discussed in paragraph 11.3 of the last minutes had yet been filled? Two places currently remain; JMcC is in contact with several families regarding possible places, but cannot formally offer them until the children in question have actually left the school.

4.3 Two governors had completed PREVENT training and sent their certificates to Mrs Monument as confirmation. Other governors had reported some computer issues with the training crashing; it is also necessary to allow more time than advised to complete the course.

5. Reports from termly briefings/training/sub-committees

5.1 No one had been able to attend the termly briefings.

5.2 The Performance and Standards subcommittee met on 16 November. They discussed safeguarding and child protection; they were awaiting the results of the audit, which has now taken place. Performance was discussed, but the new School

Improvement Partner's meeting hadn't yet happened; this will now take place next term.

5.3 Data on performance had only just arrived, so will need further analysis, but certain points had already been flagged as areas of concern: Maths in Year 6, the numerical dominance of boys in Year 2; Year 5's need for a strong teacher; and Year 3's need for support given a disruptive year 2019-20 because of staffing issues. Monitoring a shortage of class time as a result of the pandemic was also discussed. This was particularly noticeable in foundation and KS1, but all teachers are aware.

5.4 Parental engagement was discussed; the results of the parent survey have been circulated to governors. These seemed very positive on the whole, although there were some comments that need to be taken into account, particularly around the assumption of good access to IT.

5.5 The admissions policy was reviewed, and its adoption recommended at this meeting. However, the Diocese has appointed someone to look at all the Diocesan policies and the CES model policies, in order to ensure they are consistent and in good legal standing. School priorities were reviewed. The usual deep-dive approach is difficult because of Covid-19 restrictions. The catchup plan, and staff and pupil wellbeing were also discussed. The revival of the chaplaincy was noted, with thanks to Fr Alan. The link governors' entitlement document needed updating; this has now been done. Link meetings are ongoing.

5.6 Discussion of the pupil premium was deferred to this meeting. St Alban's has a very low pupil premium (about 22k), but it is desirable to agree how the governing body should be monitoring its use. Over the course of the year, it is intended to present data demonstrating how the vulnerable groups are progressing, so that governors are able to scrutinise this progress. The baseline goal is for all children that attract a pupil premium to be at the expected level. It was agreed that this should take place at the full governing body meetings rather than a sub-committee. JMcC offered to share the plan for the coming year with governors; questions could be sent via email. This should allow for a more informed discussion.

5.7 ACTION: JMcC to share the pupil premium plan for 2020-21 with governors.

5.8 A Resources meeting took place, which reviewed the budget report, showing that all is in hand. The resources side of the Covid-19 catchup plan was discussed (how the school would spend the money it will receive for this). The committee decided to support the EPM pay awards.

5.9 The condition survey (everything that needs to be done inside the buildings) was reviewed, which shows many very small things in need of repair. It was decided that JMcC and PC would go through the priorities and decide how to approach them. Some small things can be fixed by the caretaker, but some larger things will need support from the Diocese. The Diocese has agreed to use some LCVAP money for some plumbing and heating issues.

5.10 The behaviour policy, data protection, lettings, child protection and remote education policies were approved. The admissions policy changes needed approval from the Diocese.

5.11 A risk assessment of the school playground is needed. A meeting should take place between some governors, the head and some pupils to cover this. The staffing structure was discussed. The question of the relationship with City Kids was raised

but the future plans are on standby because of the pandemic. The child protection audit had taken place, and was discussed.

5.12 The capital plan had been circulated by JMcC. There are some things that need doing immediately (plumbing); others that are for the next school year (lighting and teachers' laptops); and finally, some areas that are longer term (building infrastructure). Pupils are not in danger, and there is no health and safety risk, but the windows in the KS2 playground are showing signs of age, with gaps in the brickwork around the lintel. The general wear and tear of the building, and its age, raises concern about its general fitness for purpose. This can be discussed under AOB. It is expected a structural engineer may be brought in in future to review the school fabric. Engineers are likely to attend the school 15-17 December to renew the water heaters.

6. Headteacher's report

6.1 This was circulated before the meeting. Attendance is excellent - well above Cambridge City, East Cambs and South Cambs averages. KS1 SATs and the SPAG test will not be taking place this year. 90% of the previous Year 1 cohort passed the delayed phonics assessment, as expected.

6.2 Mrs Muir has sent out a planning document, focusing on three specific weeks in the last half term. Next half term this will be co-ordinated through scrutiny of planning and of books.

6.3 TA capacity is a concern; any TA absence (through illness, for example) makes it very hard to meet pupils' needs, especially as one or two pupils require a lot of support. Governors have already been made aware of the need to find a sustainable solution for TA staffing from a financial point of view.

6.4 The drains are causing problems again; there has been a blockage that has accumulated, possibly as a result of an old drain collapsing.

6.5 Nothing has been heard from the MAT. The headteacher representative was asked not to attend the Schools Commission meeting concerning the OLWMAT review. St Alban's has been told that in early January there will be an indication of the outcomes of the review.

6.6 The PFA has a new chair, Jane Birk, and Fr Alan's chaplaincy has got underway. Staff and pupils alike are really appreciating this.

6.7 KS1 pupils now have a very long afternoon (1230 to 315, with only very short breaks to allow everyone to rotate and make use of the playground while remaining Covid-safe) which is having an impact on pupils and teachers. Covid plans are constantly under review to address this sort of issue.

7. Ofsted expectations during pandemic

7.1 There will be no Ofsted until the autumn term. Only schools that are 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' will be visited.

8. Covid-19 update

8.1 There have been no cases at the school. Regular briefings from the director include information such as the Winter Grant for vulnerable families (vouchers). A significant number of schools in Cambridge City itself have had classes isolating; it is

a relief to be breaking up at this point. The school does have test kits, and pupil results are all returning as negative. One teacher has been absent for three days awaiting a test result which still has not arrived, despite having taken both an NHS test and one of the school's own tests. The head's risk assessment supported the decision for her to return to school.

9. School Financial Value Standard – plans for the year

9.1 A copy of this was circulated ahead of the meeting. Certain aspects will be reviewed at governing body meetings over the course of the year to ensure the whole document is reviewed over the course of an academic year.

9.2 It was decided to review 'value for money', 'staffing' and 'setting the annual budget' in the first meeting of the spring term; 'school strategy' and 'governance' in the summer term; and 'protecting public money' and 'dashboard' in the autumn term.

9.3 ACTION: JMcC to invite Mrs Monument to attend next meeting so that governors can ask questions.

10. School Development Plan update

10.1 JMcC presented his draft of the SDP, with RAG-ratings as follows:

10.1.1 Developing an effective governing body: amber, as the governing body is so new.

10.1.2 Support the MAT: red; progress is currently stalled. It might be necessary to set up a briefing for new governors to bring them up to speed on the MAT progress to date.

10.1.3 Community cohesion: there has been positive feedback from parents, but this will always be an ongoing process; rated amber.

10.1.4 Links with the parish: now green, since the welcome establishment of the chaplaincy.

10.1.5 Wraparound care: also on hold, rated amber.

10.1.6 Finance: requires monitoring and therefore amber. Success criteria are for there to be a substantial 3-year plan in place.

10.1.7 Staffing: amber; KS1 is a particular concern.

10.1.8 Staff wellbeing: amber; a survey has recently been sent out, and results should be back by next week.

10.1.9 Teaching and learning: red; the catchup plan has not yet been put in place, but this should be implemented from January.

10.1.10 Bespoke curriculum development: amber; has started, but is still in progress.

10.1.11 Home Learning strategy: green; this has been a success. Parents are satisfied, and although there are some tweaks possibly needed, overall this has been achieved.

10.1.12 Standards and Assessment: amber; can only be assessed by outcome at the end of the year.

10.1.13 Wellbeing: green; the parents' survey was mainly positive, and a Year 5 and 6 survey currently taking place will also give a view.

10.2 This year's targets are mostly 'soft', based around protection and nurturing of pupils. Targets will filter into staff performance management.

10.3 On remote learning, teachers and pupils are expected to be online for 3 hours a day if classes close down – not necessarily actively teaching, but in terms of effort. This could mean a significant piece returned every few days, rather than daily upload. Subjects covered will be maths, English, and one other (e.g. topic or RE).

10.4 There were a number of comments in the parent survey asking for a bit more seeing the teacher over video link if possible. Could a plan be made to look at parent survey feedback? LC also noticed some parents complaining that it was taken for granted that there would be enough devices, and a printer. Laptops were offered to parents originally, and schemes for printing work also discussed. The amount of work that had to be downloaded was perhaps an issue, however. It is to be hoped that the school will not need to revert to this approach soon.

10.5 One governor commented that as a parent, it's not just downloading the work that takes the effort but understanding what the activity is so that it can be effectively supported. ClassDojo unfortunately restricted video time to 8 minutes. Paid tiers haven't yet been investigated, but could be should the need arise.

11. Headteacher's performance review

11.1 This will be completed in the next week or so.

12. AOB

Admissions

12.1 A document was presented explaining why the school was being asked to reconsider its catchment area. There are unrealistic expectations in the current policy that St Alban's can effectively serve the three parishes; most families come from CB1 and CB2, and even in this area, not all families can be served. Families south of CB1 and CB2 will find it very difficult to obtain a place in the school. Some parts of Trumpington (CB2), Romsey (CB1) and Coleridge (CB1) are also very unlikely to obtain places.

12.2 Three options were proposed for discussion:

12.2.1 A straight-line priority system (risks clashing with St Laurence's).

12.2.2 Random allocation within existing criteria (may not be satisfying for parents, and causes problems for families with siblings)

12.2.3 Prioritise parents in CB1 and CB2 (straight line distance would be needed within these areas; this would make the catchment of the school very narrow in terms of demographic composition)

12.3 CB1 and CB2 looks likely to be the realistic catchment area of St Alban's, but the school needs to be aware that Sawston and Cambourne families could challenge this. The policy needs to be consulted on over the next year.

12.4 Restricting catchment to just the parish of OLEM would leave out a lot of children.

12.5 ACTION: Fr Alan to find a map of the parish boundaries.

12.6 Parents that are interested in their children attending the school are currently asked to stay in contact with the school and LA because places might come up during the year. However, if such parents are outside the 'catchment' as newly defined, they won't apply, and then the school will not know that they might be interested in places (if places come up during the school year).

St Alban's expansion possibilities

12.7 It is time to look at preparing St Alban's for the future. Cambridge is expanding exponentially, and there are many Catholic families that can't get school places. The school has a moral duty to its community. A third of places typically go to siblings, which means only 20 new Catholic pupils each year. Work has been done in the past to investigate the possibility of expansion but at the time it was felt it was important to stay on the current site right beside the church. In the same period, St Laurence's has had lots of new facilities and upgraded to one and a half-form entry.

12.8 Post-Covid, there may be significant impact in families not returning to the church. Families do not retain their interest in the school if they don't get a place at first.

12.9 Possible options might be building on the current site or moving elsewhere. Funding will not come from the LA or central government, but would need to be Diocesan money, using Diocesan land.

12.10 One governor commented that they had been impressed by what was achieved at St Matthew's, which expanded to 3-form entry on the same site by building on the playground space and then knocking down the old school. Something similar could potentially be done on Union Road. Other buildings around the Union Road playground are very tall so it would not be out of keeping with the area.

12.11 The school would need to present a business case to the Diocese, taking in projected numbers, a condition survey of the existing site and so on. This could factor in the admission consultation policy; the school would like to be able to continue to serve the parishes that, under the current proposals, might have to be taken out of the admissions policy.

12.12 Any business case should also consider how the facilities of a new building could be used for the community, and to bring in revenue. The present location is ideal to allow for earning money at evenings and on weekends.

12.13 In Ditton, there is a church, land and housing controlled by the Diocese; a school on that site would also serve new development on the airport site.

12.13 In principle, it needs to be established whether the Diocese would support expansion, either through moving or construction.

12.14 JMcC proposed tabling a document ahead of the next meeting outlining the rationale for doing this. Governors could then consider it for discussion at the meeting.

12.15 TJ and EA volunteered to support the development of this document.

Meeting closed: 8.43 p.m.