

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the full Governing Body
held **in the school** at 6.30 p.m.
on Tuesday 26 April 2022

No. 2021/2022 – 4

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Tanatsa Jingura.

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from Sarah Smith (SS).

1.2 Present: Lia Campos (LC, chair), Edward Acton (EA), Cristina Alves Martins (CAM), Ruth Burrows (RBU), Patrick Coughlin (PC) (via Zoom), Fr Alan Hodgson (AH), Tanatsa Jingura (TJ), Keith Menary (KM) (via Zoom), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), Sarah Smith (SS), Jo Wager (JW), Michael Yelton (MY), Rachael Beale (RBe, clerk)

1.4 The chair welcomed Ruth Burrows as the new staff governor, and all the other governors who had not previously attended in person, as this was the first in-person meeting since February 2020.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 1 February 2022

2.1 A comment from the LA review of governing documents was to make it clearer when questions had been asked by highlighting them in a different colour. Action points also should be collected at the end of the minutes in a separate box for clarity.

2.2 Statutory policies were reviewed in September, but this might not have been clear from the meeting minutes.

2.3 **Is it necessary to declare interests at every meeting?** In general, this is felt only to be necessary if it is relevant to particular issues under discussion. There should be a standing agenda item to declare any conflicts of interest; none were identified relevant to this meeting.

2.4 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising

3.1 ACTION: SS and MY still need to arrange their safeguarding visit with JMcC.

3.2 LC had circulated the minutes from the Resources meetings. No comments had been received.

3.3 ACTION: TJ still needs to complete the internal control statement for the SFVS.

3.4 These actions should be completed before half-term if at all possible.

3.5 The chair felt that the SFVS should be adopted; reviewing and signing it off is not delayed by the lack of the internal control statement.

3.6 The succession planning strategy will commence from today, based on the documents to be discussed at this meeting.

3.7 The 'Plan B' for recruitment was circulated.

3.8 The updated SFVS had also been circulated.

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

4.1 The minutes of the P&S committee meeting on 9 March had been circulated to the committee members, but will be circulated to the full governing body after this meeting. Terms of reference of the P&S committee still need to be established. The chair had been unable to download the generic terms of reference from the NGA site due to password issues. The meeting with the LA had picked up on a lot of things that governors felt had been done, but it is necessary to provide clearer evidence of this having happened. The LA advisor also highlighted the need to provide evidence of impact; extra tuition is still ongoing. This will be worth considering in the summer term, looking specifically at the progress of pupils who have had targeted extra provision. Policy reviews were also discussed; the review dates on the policies were all in need of updating.

4.2 Safeguarding and child protection were discussed, as well as performance data and assessment data for spring; Venn diagrams were presented showing pupils in need of extra help. Year 6 are in a good position; Years 3-5 needed more intense help, which was underway. There had been concerns about attendance due to Covid, but JMcC was able to confirm that there had been an improvement since January-February, although it has yet to return fully to expected levels.

4.3 Admissions for September are showing a full class of Catholic children, but with lower numbers on the waiting list. JMcC still has concerns about admissions; 2.5 miles from the school is the furthest away. **Does the school need to be more visible?** St Paul's has a large banner advertising the school on the church. It is unlikely, as a single-form entry school, that St Alban's will be unable to fill its quota; doing so with Catholic children is not so certain, because of issues with travelling into the city. 8 children left in the summer; their places were filled, but not all with Catholic pupils. The Diocese Schools Commission has it on the agenda, but other things are taking priority. Most schools in the Diocese do not fill their classes with Catholic pupils; levels are more around 50-60%. **A governor commented that there are a lot of Catholic pupils in private schools also. Perhaps St Alban's should advertise more broadly the amazing things that it does really well, including the excellence of the Catholic provision.** Parents pay for primary sector places in order to ease the transition to private secondary places. Also, some may not be able to get places at St Alban's because they live too far from the school. In the current intake, there are 15 siblings, 8 pupils live within a mile of the school, and the rest a mile to 2.5 miles away. The housing market is driving people out of the city. The school's current location is not ideal for serving the widest possible Catholic community. **Perhaps the school could be advertised more via the University?** There is no longer a board in the church promoting the school. There were a lot of people new to Cambridge over Easter, and there is going to be a mass in Chinese in Sawston. **Could the headteacher give an address at one of the Sunday masses?** This has been done before. **A governor commented that Catholic parents would look for a Catholic school first; how many come to an introductory evening and then don't apply? Do parents think they live too far away? There also might be a paucity of understanding as to**

how the UK education system works as there is such a high level of international families. Outreach to nurseries was also not as standard because of Covid. A governor stressed the way in which the warmth and the school's values came across on the open day. Parents like small for primary. All visits have been virtual for the last two years.

4.4 Entitlements and link governor meetings were also discussed; the governance review picked up that these had fallen behind, and proposed that at least one, if not two, per subject should take place this term, taking in meetings with subject leaders and learning walks. RBU will take on the role of collating these reports; a synopsis of these visits should be provided at P&S meetings. The entitlement document was circulated to governors, based on a template provided by The Key. These need to be updated to reflect changes in materials and practice. These visits should also be logged on a calendar to show that they had taken place.

4.5 ACTION: all governors to ensure that they have completed a link governor meeting and a school visit.

4.6 At the next P&S meeting (4 May, online) link governor reports to date can be discussed; it looks as if there are 5 of them at present.

4.7 At the Resources meeting, personnel and recruitment, and property/premises (boiler and fire audit) were discussed. The fire department are due to visit on 5 May to ensure that the school has implemented the recommendations. The visit was very detailed, taking in items such as the need for compliant safety glass in a number of places, doors and windowframes. Some of the doors labelled as fire doors are not in fact fire doors. There are also some issues with alarms and emergency lights. Initial quotes received were extremely high, so a second audit was requested to ensure that changes to be made were appropriate. A donation from the PFA will free up DFC money to support this work. Problems with the boiler and a leak were being followed up at the Diocese level, with a view to securing money from the Schools Condition Allocation held by the Diocese of Salford. However, this might not be a high enough priority compared to the needs of other schools in the Diocese. The fire audit, if unaddressed, might trigger an Ofsted visit, so it is important to demonstrate that the identified items are being addressed.

4.8 The budget was also discussed extensively. Training was discussed at the meeting, and this also came up in the governance review. The list of what training has been taken could be presented more publicly to demonstrate that governors are undertaking this. It would be a good idea to identify courses that would be useful to the wider governing body that have not been undertaken by anyone. Termly briefings are also good and not very long; one governor had been due to attend one the night before the meeting, but it had been postponed for a more suitable date. JW attended the 10:10 CPT training on theology of the body (mostly designed for teachers of RSE and PSHE) and found it very good, and would recommend it to any teachers involved in delivering this in school. Presenters were very good at putting this into straightforward language. The Diocese recommends and endorses 10:10, but when it comes to RSE it might not be satisfactory for Ofsted. It will be interesting to see what is reported from other Ofsteds within the Diocese; it might be necessary to identify something to complement the programme.

5. Budget

5.1 The budget was presented at the resources meeting, having been constructed with the input of the financial advisor. **There were a lot of questions about the likely impact of inflation on the school's cost base.** It is balanced and comments and

questions had been requested. Some things are dependent on the Orrovia software which makes certain predictions. The headline is that the school has a good carry-forward of 37k, combining savings from changing personnel, supply, and careful management of invoices. There is a 42k in-year overspend; some of this money is ringfenced for invoices and other commitments. Neither Ray Byford nor our temporary finance office is alarmed by this; having drilled down into the cost centres, they believe the budget is sustainable. Fireproofing will come from the DFC money; the 10% surcharge expectation is included in the budget. The boiler will not attract a 10% charge. **A governor was surprised by the expenditure on French?** This was a software purchase. The new teacher might need new resources. This was the case about 2 years ago, with the investment of a large sum in a significant piece of software to support science. Predictions for the following 2 years do not look so positive, but the school's experience is usually that savings are able to be made before this point is reached. The budget was discussed in a lot of detail at the Resources committee meeting and extensively challenged.

5.2 The governing body unanimously approved the school budget plan for the financial year 2022–23 with total spend of £1,041,280.

6. SFVS review and signoff

6.1 This had been circulated to governors; it was agreed to approve this.

7. Headteacher's report

7.1 This has been reformatted to follow the Ofsted framework. Attendance is at 94%, against an expected level of 95-96%. **Is there a specific reason for this?** There is no particular 'persistent offender' problem family; most requested absences are unauthorised. Sickness accounts for quite a lot. A lot of parents have been requesting to take their children out of school in order to visit grandparents because of the long time during which that was not possible, and during term time it has been too expensive. Those on persistent absence (below 70%) are monitored and letters sent.

7.2 Leadership and management is a category in which we should have some concern; raised by the governance check, there is no substantive deputy head in post, and work is needed to strengthen the SLT. Sue Blythe has met key leads to support their development and ability to disseminate their experience and learning. Their development in the last year has been carefully documented, so there will be evidence for future reference. Sue Blythe had a very good impression of the teachers. KS2 and KS1 leadership needs examining. KS2 is vulnerable, with ECTs; KS1 has teachers who are job-sharing and a teacher who may be moving. The school needs to be confident that there is a plan to address this. **Is there any sense of when the school's Ofsted might take place?** JMcC's previous school has still not been inspected since he joined St Alban's; outstanding schools have been largely left alone. Ofsted is now beginning to turn its attention to these again, however. The school's last Ofsted was in 2014. However, Ofsted is very low on capacity.

7.3 JMcC will update the SEF for each meeting.

7.4 Curriculum priorities are all amber-rated as it will only be possible to assess their performance at the end of the year.

7.5 It has been great to re-open the school to more visits and events; there has been a lot going on. Ms Olivia Nye, an early career teacher, has been appointed now that her references have been received. Mrs Leung and Mrs Richardson are job sharing this term. Mr Wright should go into Y6 longer term. Thank you to Fr Alan for

the Easter celebrations. Having St Andrew's chapel set out for the smaller classes works very well. Some City Kids children will be moving into the hall; a quote has been received for partitioning the canteen to store equipment so that a larger number of children can be accommodated. This is scenario planning to allow City Kids to increase their numbers to address demand and make the club more financially viable. The afterschool club needs to run effectively because without wraparound care the school is a much less appealing prospect. City Kids want to maintain dialogue with the governing body by submitting a short regular report.

7.6 Overall priorities are amber or green; governors are welcome to challenge these.

7.7 **Have any schools in the MAT had an Ofsted inspection?** St Louis was inspected in 2019 and received a 'good' rating. Most schools in the Diocese are good. Flavio Vettese would like to come to a future governing body meeting, to meet the new governors and update the GB about their plans. Nothing significant has changed since the last meeting in financial terms. **A governor commented that there is no point in a further meeting until there is a proper update on this.** There is no significant pressure coming from the MAT. It is now necessary for every school to have a headteacher; the executive head model will only be used if a school is in need of specific support.

7.8 A new Diocesan director of education has been appointed; Julie O'Connor will retire in the summer, and the new person arrives from Brentwood Diocese. It is unclear what Helen Bates's role will be (she is also an assistant director). **CAM attended a leadership training day in 2018; could something like this be run in school?** The MAT should be building this capacity so that teachers rise through the ranks. Aspiring heads courses are run jointly by Westminster and other dioceses. Regular courses come from the Diocese also; Mr Wright is attending the deputy head pilgrimage in the summer despite not being a deputy head. JMcC is looking for opportunities to support Catholic teachers. **A governor commented that it is very important not to demotivate teachers that are not Catholics. There needs to be an open dialogue maintained about this.**

7.9 New staff and changes in roles are a big challenge.

8. Succession planning

8.1 Only 2 ECTs have been appointed at present: Mr Scarr last year and Ms Nye this year; JMcC anticipates that the third appointment will also be an ECT because of the likely tightness of time in which to recruit them.

8.2 **Could a table be provided for all teachers showing the likely projection of their likely continuing and leaving dates, to clarify the actual position of likely gaps in staffing?**

8.3 ECT teachers are included in the staffing overview presented because it is a point of vulnerability due to the inexperience. **A governor commented that despite this, they have energy due to their age, which is a positive asset. Young teachers will be enthusiastic, keen to be trained, and this is an opportunity to build capacity.** As they finish their ECT, they can be offered additional experience. After being an ECT, they are simply 'teachers'.

8.4 Getting a Catholic head into the city centre will be a challenge because of the expense. **Are there other development opportunities on the school site to address this?**

8.5 **If the school cannot recruit, what would the MAT do?** The Diocese would intervene and ask the MAT to re-deploy staff. **If Mrs Richardson could be retained in post for longer to cover the transition, that would be ideal.** It might be possible to create a post.

8.6 Governors also need to have an honest conversation with themselves about their intentions with regard to the school. The succession planning subgroup needs to have a good plan in place by the summer.

9. Ofsted readiness update

9.1 The LA carried out a comprehensive governance check which was circulated to governors. Work had already begun on addressing many of the points raised by the report, as noted elsewhere in this meeting; it will be really important to ensure that the clear evidence of the work being done is being provided. The website has come up at a number of training courses recently as a first stop for Ofsted. **One governor suggested that each governor could be given responsibility for maintaining one area of the website, as this had worked well at a previous school.** There is a website checklist in the governance report. This will be divided up by the head and the chair. It is very important to change the dates on policies to indicate review even if the policy itself is unchanged.

10. Revised letting policy

10.1 Several model policies had been circulated; MY recommended that The Key's policy should be adopted, as the most comprehensive and liability-proof. The chair thought there were some points in the St Augustine policy that should be incorporated. Lettings is the wrong word - it should be 'licences'. Someone should be responsible for this, and should not be circumscribed as to what they can do. One governor agreed that it would be safer to stick with the Key policy without modification. MY would recommend that this be named as a 'hiring policy', as the premises are actually never 'let'. **A governor pointed out that there will be charges associated with out of hours use, and public liability requirements that may require insurance.** It was agreed to adopt the Key policy once personalised to St Alban's. **Has there been a risk assessment conducted for the recent procession?** Yes - this should be sent to the school. Thanks were offered to MY for his input on this.

11. Code of conduct for governors

11.1 The NGA code of conduct had been distributed. It was agreed that this seemed appropriate, so could be personalised and uploaded.

12. Governing body skill matrix

12.1 The chair had circulated a simple, anonymised framework from the NGA for completion by governors. A few had been returned to the clerk. Could this be re-sent to governors so that they can complete it?

12.2 ACTION: RBe to re-circulate matrix document.

13. AOB

13.1 Statutory policies are all present (16) on the website, although a couple had been uploaded to the wrong location.

13.2 **What is the status of the governor school visits policy that was distributed before the meeting?** The requirements on governors for school visits were not happening during Covid. However, even before Covid there were not termly visits happening. One governor thought the termly frequency was to compensate from the previous gap. It is important to make it absolutely clear what governors should be doing so that there is not a gap between expectations and action. Dates for what is happening are circulated in advance in the newsletter; governors need to adjust to the concept of attending events. **A governor felt that it was very important that there should not be a gap between practice and policy. Will governors start visiting seven times a year? Or change the policy?** Realistically, there should be 2 subject visits from a governor a year; any other visits to any other events are also welcome. A learning walk should be included in one of those visits. The policy will be re-worded and distributed for approval.

13.3 The school will be closing on 21 July in lieu of the Queen's Jubilee bank holiday occurring during half term.

Meeting closed 8.38 p.m.

ACTIONS:

- **SS and MY to arrange their safeguarding visit with JMcC**
- **TJ to complete the internal control statement for the SFVS**
- **All governors to ensure that they have completed a link governor meeting and a school visit**
- **RBe to re-circulate NGA skills matrix document**