

MINUTES

Present:

Mark Phillips (MP)- Chair of Governors
Sally Leese (SL) – Head Teacher
Aimee Hartley (AH) – Staff Governor
Kerri Treasure (KT) – Parent Governor
Kirstie McElroy-Stringer (KMS) – Co-Opted Governor
Carli McCallin– Co-Opted Governor
Sue Martin – Co-Opted Governor

In Attendance:

Debra Norman (DN) – Deputy Head Teacher
Niamh McCorriston (NP) - Clerk
Jackie McCorriston (JAMC) - Clerk

Apologies

Kelly Berry (KB) – Parent Governor

The Apologies were accepted

Absent

Tracey Quirk (TQ) – Co-Opted Governor

1) Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

SL welcomed everyone and introductions were made around the table

2) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk asked for nominations for Chair of Governors.

Mark Phillips – Proposed by SL

Seconded by KMS

There were no other nominations and Mark Phillips was elected as Chair by a unanimous decision.

Election of Vice Chair

Kelly Berry - Proposed by SL

Seconded by MP

There were no other nominations and Kelly Berry was elected as Vice Chair by a unanimous decision.

The following roles were also agreed:-

Head Teacher Appraisal Panel:-

Mark Phillips and Carli McCallin

Finance Committee

It was agreed there will be no change to the current membership.
Carli McCallin has been elected as Chair of the Committee.

Governor Links

Kirsty McElroy – Stringer - Safeguarding and SEND
 Aimee Hartley – EYPP and LAC
 Tracey Quirk – Prevent
 Kerry Treasure - Health & Safety

3) Written Declaration of Business Interests Forms

Forms were distributed and signed by all.

SL reported that she is a Governor at Topcliffe and The Firs Academy.

4) Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th July have been uploaded to the Portal and were approved with the following amendment:-

Elaine Dupree is School Forum Rep.

Matters Arising.

- CMcC was given a pecuniary Interest form to complete.
- SL will report on the outcome of the Innovate to Save application during this meeting.
- NL uploaded the Condition Survey to the Portal and is seeking further clarification as to the content.
- Analysis of the Summer Term Assessments was added to the Portal and also covered in the Head Teachers Report.
- The criteria so that some full time places can be set aside each year for the most vulnerable children was discussed and SL produced a set criteria which was added to the Portal.
- The UNICEF Rights Respecting Award will be discussed at this meeting under AOB.

5) Annual Approval of Policies**Approval of the LA Staffing Policies on the HR Portal**

The School Staffing Regulations say that Governing Bodies must establish procedures for the regulation of the conduct and discipline of school staff. Governors are advised to adopt or re-adopt such procedures annually, so that a relatively recent minute of the GB is readily available as a record of the adoption.

The Birmingham HR Service for Schools has produced model policies and procedures that enable schools and Governing Bodies to discharge their responsibilities under general employment legislation. The model policies can be accessed through the Schools HR Portal.

Governing bodies considering the adoption of different policies or procedures or making changes to models recommended by the Local Authority must take responsibility for consulting the recognised unions on the contents of those policies and procedures.

The Birmingham model policies and procedures can be accessed through its Schools HR Portal, for which the main user in school is usually the Bursar or Office Manager

This includes policies such as:-

Pay policy for schools - *reviewed annually*-

Performance management/Appraisal policy for teachers

Disciplinary procedure

Grievance procedure

Capability procedure (teachers)
 Competence procedure (support staff)
 Managing Attendance Procedure
 Procedure for dismissal for some other substantial reason

This list is not exhaustive and there are a number of other policies that can be obtained from the HR portal.

The procedures are updated from time to time. To ensure that our school is always using the most up to date versions, the Governors agreed to recommend adopt the personnel procedures approved by the LA on the schools HR Portal.

The version used will be that which is current on their website when the relevant procedure needs to be used. Where there is no separate procedure for non-teaching staff, the procedure for teachers will be used and in that procedure, where appropriate, the word 'teacher' will be read as 'member of staff'.

As the authority reviews its model policies on other HR matters from time to time Governors will need to check each year whether any new models have been recommended to schools during the previous twelve months.

It is also recommended that Governors agree to approve and accept the policies on the Birmingham Safeguarding Board Website.

The Governors agreed to adhere to the recommended model policies on the Birmingham HR Portal and the Safeguarding Board Website.

6) Feedback from the Finance & Personnel Committee.

The Committee have just met and MP gave a verbal update.

The following policies were reviewed and recommended for approval:-

- Terms of Reference
- Delegation Statement for the Head teacher
- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Best Value Statement
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Governor Expenses Policy
- Business Continuity Policy
- Division of Duty
- Income Handling Policies
- Purchase Card Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Register
- Teachers Code of Conduct
- Support staff Code of Conduct

The Governing Board approved the above policies.

The Finance Report and Budget Update was discussed by MP
 The Finance Committee were given a finance update from the SFS Officer.

Since the budget plan there has been an adjustment of £26,942 additional funding relating to the previous financial year.

A cumulative surplus balance of £74,097 is now predicted to remain at the end of 2019/20, this equates to 11.15% of the schools in-year funding.

The Committee approved the information presented and there are no areas of concerns.

The Governing Body approved the report and recommendations.

In addition to the Monitoring Report, the Committee were informed that the bid for Innovate to Save Fund has been successful.

As Governors are aware, we put in a bid for money to run a project or pilot for SEND. It was a joint bid with Weoley Castle Nursery School to provide sessions at the Children's Centre (CC) to identify and support children with SEND. Initially we were expecting to share £100,000 with Weoley Castle Nursery, but SL has been informed the allocation is for £200,000.

SL said that as part of the fund we will pilot universal Stay and Plays at the CC with qualified staff who can identify children with additional needs. For example, if there is a Speech and Language concern then children can be supported through targeted Stay and Play sessions and this will lead to less pressure on the S&L services.

SL met with the new Assistant Director for SEND last night (Nichola Jones) and Birmingham LA are reforming SEND provision, the main focus is on Primary and Secondary but SL Spoke about the need for support in Early Years. As a result we have been given permission to be a Pilot school for a 15 place pilot for Assessment Provision for SEND.

SL said that there is a plan to use SCERTS as an assessment package. This is similar to Welcomm and assesses where the children are at and gives set targets on what is appropriate support for children.

The Committee had discussed how the children would be allocated to the pilot and SL said that this is not clear, there may be sessions at the Children's Centre who identify the children who need targeted support or we may need to rebrand some of the children who are in Nursery at present as Assessment for Provision

Governors noted that this will have a positive impact on improving waiting times for children to get appropriate support and also free up appointments in the CDC. It will also be positive for professionals to come together in one place locally and it will reduce travelling time and DNA appointments. It will be positive to take the service to the child.

Governors are concerned that this may impact on the capacity of current staff to be part of the pilot and also ensure the Nursery remains Outstanding. MP said that the Committee have asked SL to work with some Governors to look at what an ideal staffing structure would look like and also to ensure the funding allocated is appropriate.

The Governors approved the feedback from the Finance Committee.

There are finance reports that the LA want to be presented to Governors and these are currently being worked on by the SFS officer and it was agreed these will be presented at the next meeting.

7) Head Teachers Report.

This had been distributed and the content was discussed.

SL reported that the supplementary Funding for Nursery Schools has been extended to 2020/2021 financial year and the Governors thanked her for all of her hard work in the campaign to ensure funding for Nursery Schools.

Governors noted that the Pupil Numbers are high and this will also have a positive impact on the Budget.

Peer Review

Feedback from the Peer Review were discussed and the review was very positive and feedback has formed part of Performance Management reviews.

General points:

- Outdoor space and forest school provide a creative learning environment that energises the children
- 'Bucket Time' provides 'awe and wonder' – this is well understood and well delivered by all practitioners
- Clear routines in place
- Visual prompts/staff signing good
- Tapestry showed some evidence of quality observations that are parent friendly and give suggestions on how to extend learning at home

Areas for Development:

- Develop use of open ended questions to ensure consistency across all staff
- Transition to dinner needs to be re-organised so that group time is not disturbed
- Further develop consistency in the quality and quantity of Tapestry observations

SL said that the November training day will focus on Interactions, open and closed questioning.

There has also been training during staff meetings on Tapestry.

Governors asked about Bucket Time

AH said that staff have a bucket full of motivating and exciting toys and gadgets which are of high interest to the children. She described an activity and explained it helps the children to develop communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities

SL discussed Staff development

In the staff team we have varied levels of experience and so have developed our coaching method.

Most staff are also completing additional training or qualifications.

The September training day focussed on Safeguarding and Home visits.

There have been a series of Staff meetings dealing with the following:-

Feedback from EY Conference, Tapestry Learning Stories and Tapestry Moderation, SEND, Downs Syndrome, Listening and attention - 'Bucket time' training.

Each week we have looked at the development of skills and learning in a different area of learning. So far: The stages of block play, construction, malleable play and creative.

The SDP is being rewritten to reflect the new Ofsted framework. SL said that the staff team looked at the Assessment Data and identified the areas of focus, the outcomes from the summer assessment and Autumn Assessments show the same areas of focus.

Data.

Governors asked for the reasons that the outcomes for writing are lower than in other aspects that are assessed?

SL said that the statements are hard for the children to get and she also reported that the outcomes for moving and handling are not as strong. Some children do not have the muscle strength and finger dexterity required to hold a pencil correctly

There are a lot of things that has been put in place to ensure that writing is being addressed.

When the children come in there is a focus on speaking and listening and taking turns etc and there are lots of opportunities to write. At the start of each session, staff plan skills activities around what the children need.

We start to focus on writing skills immediately, but initially the children develop Gross Motor Skills first, e.g by carrying buckets of sand or water, digging in the sand or soil, carrying blocks etc. They then move on to fine motor skills

At snack-time, we encourage the children to build hand and finger strength by cutting up foods. Playdough is used for squashing and squishing activities to help build up lots of strength in the hands. The next stage is to move onto dexterity.

It was noted that in the SEND numbers for Summer 2019 – writing is at 89% of the children make 3 points progress, which is higher than the Nursery overall.

SL said that some of the children on the SEND were baselined on entry as below 16 months and writing prior to 16-20 months is not assessed. Therefore the children have gone from no assessment making 3 steps progress within one band.

The whole school outcomes are there to show the overview, but there is too much variation. We have assessment outcomes for the SEND children who have been here for 2 years, SEND children who have been here for 1 year, 2 year olds who cannot be assessed on entry, and 30 hour children who came in at ARE.

This is why the outcomes are further broken down into groups

One of the Governors commented that the increase in the use of Ipads and other touchscreen devices means more children are starting Nursery not ready to learn handwriting. In her working role she has noticed a big decline in fine motor skills and declining dexterity because children are holding crayons and scissors less and making fewer things with their hands, e.g. threading beads etc.

Sometimes children are not sure how to hold a pencil or turn the pages on a book.

EYPP Update

AH reported that there needs to be a decision made regarding EYPP funding, It was agreed that PSED and PD will remain areas of focus and the Governors agreed to use the EYPP funding to support Forest School

SEND Update

SL reported there are 34 children on the SEND register

SL said that there are 34 children on the Register, this is 23% of the school which is higher than Birmingham and National and the children are mainly on there for S&L issues. We support these children using Wellcomm and staff have had interaction training and know to give the children thinking time before they expect them to answer.

We have 2 with children with an EHC, 3 we are working towards with another 2 to start afterwards.

We have put in for ISEY referrals but 2 x children with high level needs were refused due to lack of funding.

SL explained that ISEY (Inclusion Support for Early Years) funding is £60 per week and we need to have had the children for 6 weeks and show what has been in place for the 6 weeks.

The vast majority of children in the SEND register are for S&L and communication needs, many of whom are supported by Catherine Steele (speech and language therapist) and the rest are supported using the Wellcomm programme

There is one on the SEND Register for SEMH and the support plan is mainly at home as school are not seeing the same issues

We have some children who need additional support but parents can sometimes find it difficult to acknowledge this and we are continuing to work with them.

8) Chairs Action/ Correspondence/ Training

No Chairs Action since the last meeting.

Governor Training information has been disseminated.

SL said that there is some training we need to do as a FGB, for Safeguarding and Prevent and she asked if Governors would prefer to do this online or to come in for training?

All agreed they would prefer to do it online

Action: - SL to arrange for access to online training for Governors.

Governor information/ All about Me forms.

These were handed out and Governors were asked to complete them.

Action:- SL to also email out the Governor information/ All About Me forms to enable Governors to complete electronically.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

All Governors acknowledged that they have accessed the document that has been uploaded to the Portal

Safeguarding Policy 2019

SL has uploaded the Safeguarding Policy to the Portal and it was approved.

As a school we always approve the Safeguarding Policy on the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) and historically, Governors have agreed for the Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor to approve the Policy so it can be implemented immediately. They have also agreed that if there are any subsequent changes required that the policy will be approved.

Governors have also agreed the approval of any codicils recommended by the BCBB by the Chair and Safeguarding Lead. This means schools can avoid having to reprint and ratify the whole policy, the codicil insert that can be included in any existing policy.

Model Code of Conduct

The Birmingham City Council (BCC) Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards has been uploaded onto the Portal, along with the details of any changes that have been made. The Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards has been updated for the academic year 2018/19. BCC commends the model Code of Conduct for adoption by maintained school and academy Governing Boards. The Code of Conduct is worded in such a way that it becomes a corporate code that is signed by the Governing Board and not individual governors. This enforces the principle that, first and foremost, responsibility for good governance rests with schools themselves. The Governing Board reviewed and agreed to adopt the Code of Conduct for the 2019/2020 academic year.

The Friday Update from Governor Support is sent to Governors on a fortnightly basis

9) Any Other Business

Audit Report

This was added to the Portal and it was noted that the Risk rating is medium

The top issues for management are:

- To maintain a close eye of the schools finances to ensure expenditure remains in line with the funds allocated each year.
- To ensure financial reports are provided to the Governing Board in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Finance & Personnel Committee.
- To seek assurance through self-assessment that there is compliance in the ordering process and that the process in place for verbal orders and receipt of goods are being followed.

Governors noted that it was generally a strong report and most areas were mainly met or met.

The only area of concern is that we had introduced a new finance system at the start of the year and Audit could not do all of the testing they would normally do.

The Governors noted the content of the report and acknowledged that there are no issues to address immediately

Strategic Risk Register

This has been added to the Portal and it was noted that the biggest risk is relating to finances and lack of pupil numbers

Action:- The Governors noted that there will need to be a future focus on staffing and succession planning as the DHT will be relocating to Australia

Rights Respecting Schools

DN reported that we are a Silver Rights Respecting School and we are looking at going for Gold.

She has attended training but it is difficult to get bespoke training relevant to Nursery schools and she will continue to look at this.

The Governors discussed the UNICEF rights and DN said that the steering group meet once a half term and look at events and celebrations throughout the year and map it to the rights and focus and plan each week. She said that we need to have a representative from the cohort from this year.

Staff ensure that they use the language of rights in an age appropriate way and the children like to hear about this each week.

It was agreed to have feedback on the Rights Respecting School Award at each meeting.

Vulnerable children Criteria

This was discussed

SL showed the Governors the evidence that showed offering a full time place to vulnerable children is making a difference

- In the first year when the places were funded there were 55 vulnerable children (43% of the cohort)
- The following year when funding was withdrawn there were 11 children.
- Last year the Governors agreed to allocate some full time places when the children meet one or more criteria and where a full time place will benefit the child and we had 21 children given places.
- This year we have 18 (12% of the current cohort)

Governors asked what the cost of the 18 places are to the school budget?

SL said that for one academic year the cost is £43,000. Wherever possible, funding is sought to pay for a child's additional hours.

Governors asked if the 15 place assessment provision will be funded full time?

SL said that this has not been made clear

Following discussion, governors agreed to the criteria and to fund up to 18 places. This will be reviewed each year.

Health and Safety

KT came in and spoke to NL about Health and Safety.

There was a H&S inspection 17th October and KT said she checked the paperwork, for example, she looked at the statutory testing, business continuity plan, Asbestos Plan etc and all was fine.

NL said that KT can come and speak to her at any time which is positive.

SCR.

KMS agreed to check the SCR

10) Date of the next Meeting

Tuesday 11th February 2020

9.30 – 10.30 – Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting

10.30 – 12.30 – Full Governing Body Meeting