

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

FULL GOVERNING BOARD		DATE:	27th February 2023
CHAired BY: John Clements (JC)		CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)	
GOVERNORS PRESENT:		Also Present:	
John Clements (JC) Russ Green (RG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Brian Gravenor (BG)		Brigid Thompson (BT) - part	
APOLOGIES:			
Absent without apology:			

Governor questions are highlighted in grey

Agenda Items	
1.	<p><u>Opening Prayer & Welcome</u></p> <p>1. Opening Prayer taken by BG. JC welcomed all to the meeting, especially BG who has just been appointed as a Foundation Governor.</p>
2.	<p><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></p> <p>1. None</p>
3.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest & Correspondence</u></p> <p>1. No declarations of interest.</p> <p>2. JB advised that the GB has received an application from Ruth Marsh (RM) and shared her supporting statement with governors. The GB discussed RM's application and felt that she would bring a wealth of relevant skills and experience to the Board.</p> <p>Decision: The GB agreed to approve RM's application. Action: JB to send RM's application to the LA for their consideration.</p>
4.	<p><u>Approval of minutes from last meeting (6.2.23) and update on actions</u></p> <p>1. Agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair.</p>

2. Update on actions:

- **Action 1.** In process. JC and GTH met with the staff team on 24.2.23 to discuss next steps. JC is liaising with the Diocese to obtain a model structure for the process to ensure all steps are covered, as the school looks at the different options for partnership working in the future. JE raised that she thought that the GB was exploring whether the school should enter partnership working. JC advised that it was very likely this would be what would happen. JC will be sending a dojo to parents and carers to explain this process. **Action: JC to share message to parents with the GB.**
- **Action 2.** AH shared the most recent revision of the Behaviour Principles, known as ‘SHINE’ (see below). Behaviour principles underpin the Behaviour policy. AH has discussed the latest working version with the Learning Ambassadors, who gave positive feedback. The plan is for them to take the proposed principles back to classes to share and discuss with the other children. There will be a visual representation of the principles that staff can wear for ease of using them with the children. JE asked whether the language of choice and ‘being the best we can be’ will be retained. AH confirmed that they would be and explained that ‘Being the Best we can be’ is the overarching ethos, and the SHINE principles sit underneath it. RG advised that the previous principles were very lengthy – SHINE is briefer and will be easier for the children to remember.

We **Show** we care through what we say and do

We are **Honest** and take responsibility

We are **Inquisitive** learners

We **Never** give up, even when learning is tricky

Everyone matters

Action: Item for 20.3.23 GB Meeting agenda – revisit and approve the Behaviour Principles

- **Actions 3 – 6.** Not due to be completed until March.
- **Action 7.** JC will circulate the model GB self-evaluation this week.
- **Action 8. Decision: JE to join the Admissions Committee, along with AH and JC. JE and GTH will join the L&T Pay Committee (GTH on a temporary basis until new governors to be recruited). Actions: JB to email BG ref joining the Pay Committee. Item for 20.3.23 Meeting agenda: Election of Vice-Chair. JB to update Committee Terms of Reference.**
- **Action 9.** A new One Minute Guide is due to be sent to staff this week. JB will share the others when the new one is received.
- **Action 10.** Safeguarding scenarios will be led by AH at the second and fourth GB meetings of the term. **Action: JB to add dates of safeguarding scenarios to GB Cycle of Work.**
- **Action 11.** JB has confirmed the determination of the 24-25 Admissions policy with the Diocese and DCC. When the finalised policy is received from DCC this will be published on the website.

Termly Lead Governor Reports and SIP Monitoring Reports

- **Lead Governor reports circulated prior to the meeting via GovernorHub**
- **SIP Monitoring reports added directly to the central SIP Monitoring Records**

5. Finance

1. The most recent figure for this year’s carryforward is £80,000. This may rise as final end of year figures are confirmed. The draft 23-24 budget is predicted to use nearly the entire carryforward and leave the school with £1000 at the end of March 2024. This will create an overspend in Year 2 of the budget. This is not sustainable.

BG asked what the 22-23 school budget share had been and whether this included the government contribution to staff pay rises. BT advised £1,700,750. The staff pay rise funding will not be received until the next financial year. The GB discussed that the issue of school budgets being unsustainable is affecting schools nationally.

RG asked whether it is increased staffing costs that are having the main impact on the budget. BT advised it was a combination of increased staffing and utilities costs. JC explained that Eon, the local utility supplier, gives a fixed annual rate and no one in Cranbrook has the option of being able to move supplier.

2. Policies

Decision: The GB reviewed and approved the Finance policy. It was noted it has been updated to include the Deputy Head role and responsibilities.

6. Health & Safety and Premises

1. BT advised that with regards to the expiration of the lease of the Promethean Boards this July, the decision has been made to take a one-year lease extension, after which the boards will belong to the school.

JH asked for an update on the issues with school alarm working. BT advised that this is still being addressed – problems are intermittent.

BT advised that Capital project has been signed off. There had been £38,000 available to use against capital projects. Governors will sign off 10% of the £8,000 required to replace the hot water system pump which is not fit for purpose.

JE asked whether letting rates had been increased since this was discussed last term, and given the increases in utility bills etc. BT advised that she has reviewed standard rates, and these are still in line with other premises, and are sufficient to cover school costs. BT is planning a review of designated users and private users (currently FISH are the only private user). **Action: BT to feedback to the GB on outcomes of rates review at 12.6.23 Full GB meeting.**

7. Staffing

1. AH advised that she is meeting with an HR Advisor this week to discuss potential flexible working applications from staff returning from maternity leave.

The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss staffing planning in more detail.
The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

The draft 23-24 Budget is based on 'knowns' but there are a number of complexities around potential arrangements for staff returning from maternity leave.

JE referred to the current pupil numbers and asked if the population of Cranbrook was no longer expanding. BT advised that the town continues to grow. Reception and KS 1 numbers are higher than previous years. Most schools are seeing a decrease in numbers due to a drop in the birth rate but at St. Martin's, the reception year for September 23 is full for the first time since the school opened.

JE asked what procedures are in place if the School Business Manager is absent for a significant period. BT advised that the Finance Officer from DCC would be able to cover a large amount of the work, and that members of the Admin team would also be able to cover some tasks.

JC asked whether, given the current situation, delivering the Great Model of Teaching is still sustainable. AH advised that further training is continuing, but that there is less capacity for some of the more informal drop-in aspects.

JE asked about potential ways that an evaluation of staff well-being could be facilitated. The GB discussed that further to a survey, it might also be possible that during governor visits, governors could ask after staff well-being. The latter would very much depend on how open the staff feel they could be with governors. It was agreed that the GB wished to ensure that AH feels supported during this difficult staffing period. JC advised that he is in school frequently and is available for AH to speak with him if she wishes.

JH proposed that in line with his community pastoral role, he could also be available in school for staff to speak with him, if they wished to do so. This could create space for staff to be able to express any feelings. BG agreed that this was a good idea and advised that a similar arrangement in his previous school had worked well and had been especially helpful to the Headteacher. The GB agreed this should go ahead. RG commented that this would help embed JH further within the school community and may help support people with their feelings of being unsettled since SH left. RG has noticed that some of the children have picked up on staff feeling unsettled and that in turn has made them unsettled. Teachers are supporting as needed.

AH commented that there had been no support from DCC since SH left, which has not helped. A recent leadership day off-site had worked very well though and had enabled SLT members to be very productive as there were no interruptions.

2. Policies

Decision: The GB noted that an updated version of the Disciplinary policy had been published and agreed to adopt this.

(BT left the meeting)

8. Leadership and Management SIP Report

1. The GB noted the following:

- Coaching of subject leaders - this will be happening shortly
- E. Devon Church Schools Partnership – Headteachers are meeting, governors will only be meeting if needed. AH is having a meeting with the Withycombe HT as peer support.
- Developing visibility of governors – this will be easier to progress when there are more members of the GB.
- Attendance – the increased focus on improving attendance is continuing
- Year 3 attainment/progress – reports on focus and provision for this year group have been received and discussed at the last two GB meetings.
- E-Safety – work for this priority will be undertaken when there is sufficient capacity.

AH advised the GB that she wished to expand Pupil Voice e.g. around Safeguarding, and extra-curricular activities.

JE asked which attendance strategies were in use and what outcomes these were having. AH advised that there is more direct engagement now – it is no longer just about sending a letter. Staff are focusing on how they can support families to improve their child's attendance and continue to have a good relationship with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

BG asked if there have been any incidents of children being absent without parental knowledge. AH advised there had not been. There are some children who have significant absence, but parents are aware.

The GB noted that attendance at St. Martin's is on par with national and Devon rates. EHCP attendance is lower than national and Devon EHCP rates but there are significant numbers of EHCPs at St. Martin's.

The GB also noted that there has only been one suspension this term – this was at the beginning of term and there have been none since.

<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Data and Curriculum</u></p> <p>1. GTH noted that the plans for potential KS2 day trips but queried that some trips had not gone ahead. AH advised that staffing changes had impacted upon the trips being planned in time to happen in the autumn term. Staff have discussed that more advance planning is required to ensure all can go ahead in the future.</p> <p>JC referred to the number of Year 4 children not going on the residential and asked if it was the cost that was the reason for this. AH had explored whether cost had been a factor but had found it was generally parents being unsure their children would cope with being away. Staff had offered to facilitate pre-trip visits and increased in-trip contact, but a number of parents had still decided to not send their children. The school is planning a one-night sleepover to help children to start feeling comfortable with being away from home. RG observed that he felt that the pandemic has had a significant impact on children being used to being away from home.</p> <p>RG asked whether cost of trips was a particular issue for families who had multiple children in school. AH advised that cheaper trip options had been available for this reason, and specific conversations had been held with parents to offer support if higher costs because of multiple children had been identified as an issue.</p> <p>BG advised that he was happy to support any residentials if needed.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>Quality of Education SIP Report</u></p> <p>1. GTH advised all actions are moving forwards. The GB noted that leadership changes have not impacted upon the capacity of subject leaders. Subject leaders have been able to work pro-actively and have needed little support.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>Parent & Christian Community Links</u></p> <p>1. RG suggested that when governors complete their Lead Governor visit reports, they could also record the sense of the ethos and values they have when in school and consider whether these are tangible.</p> <p>JC confirmed that he will often comment on the calm atmosphere, and the good behaviour and friendliness of the children he observes when in school.</p> <p>RG suggested that governors also record whether they hear the language of choice being used and whether they observe children being the best they can be.</p> <p>JC shared that when RM (prospective governor) visited, she had been very impressed by how the children were happily working in a calm and productive way. It was noted that many visitors comment on the warmth and welcome they receive.</p> <p>BG observed that he has found that CofE schools often have a different feel – it may not always be tangible, but it is present.</p> <p>JC asked whether recent staffing changes and the proposed exploration of partnership working had affected the school ethos. RG advised that he believes that it has. RG feels that where staff are worried about the future direction of the school and the potential impact on their jobs, they are struggling to exhibit the school values as much as they may previously have done. RG feels it would be beneficial to plan some whole school opportunities to revisit the ethos and the love and warmth that is so representative of the St. Martin's approach.</p> <p>AH advised that there are plans to use part of a staff meeting as a chance for the team to come together. AH is sharing with other members of the team that all staff (including SLT) are experiencing the same concerns.</p>

GTH asked whether staff feel supported by the community, given the PTFA has disbanded and the difficulties there have been in recruiting governors. RG advised that he feels that parents are supportive, and generally have been awesome. This has been evidenced by there being good support and turnouts at school events.

BG asked what governors can do to assist/support. JC offered to come into school to answer any questions staff may have. RG advised that he thinks staff knew that it was likely to be inevitable that the school would explore partnership working, given the direction of schools nationally. RG feels that the concerns lie around whether if the school joined a MAT or Federation, it would be able to retain the full St. Martin's ethos, and its creative, caring, and warm feel. Staff want to hear that SLT and the GB are working together to find the right pathway that will match St. Martin's well. BG noted that given St. Martin's is a VA school, he felt that the Diocese would not want the school to lose its individuality or ethos.

JC advised that as the GB explores future options for the school, part of that work will be exploring how individuality is maintained in Trusts.

AH raised that that the most important thing that the GB can do is to move forward promptly with exploring options and putting a plan into place, so staff understand timescales for this work and have a better picture of future plans.

The GB noted that AH, BT and RG have reviewed the Complaints policy and that there is now a standalone Complaints against Governors policy.

Action: JB to share the Complaints against Governors policy and the updated 'I Have A Concern' leaflet with the GB.

12. Personal Development SIP Report

1. The Governor SIP Monitoring report is yet to be completed, but the GB noted the following:
 - JH's role is being supported and developed
 - Residential trips are being developed
 - Bespoke support for identified groups is on hold for now

13. SEND and Inclusion

1. Ali H has reviewed how the SEND threshold is being applied and numbers of children on the SEND register have been amended. Those children who have been removed from the SEN register will continue to be monitored. More active monitoring and benchmarking of SEND children is being undertaken. With regards to the 5-6 children who had previously been identified as needing specialist provision, this has now been reviewed and there are less eligible. The Lead Governor will continue to monitor this.

RG advised that there are several children in the Hub who will not be able to manage mainstream, and these pathways are being explored. One now has a specialist place for September 2023, and another family is exploring this. One Hub child is now back in their class full time. Others are partially accessing their classes, with a plan in place to build up the amount of time they are doing so. RG raised that it can be difficult to support access to mainstream classes sometimes due to a lack of staff capacity.

AH advised that DCC has raised the possibility of a Resource Base being located in school and an initial information gathering session has been planned to explore this. This would involve admitting some children from other schools, but funding would be received. RG raised the issue of whether the school should be inviting children of greater need into the school or if it should be focusing on those children who need support in school but are not in the Hub.

	<p>Ali H has raised the need to ensure quality of provision on the lower end of SEND and not just be focused on those with very high needs.</p>
14.	<p><u>Behaviour and Attitudes SIP Report</u></p> <p>1. The development of the enrichment programme is on hold. The level of need currently means there is no capacity to do so. It is hoped that there may be future opportunities.</p> <p>AH has been developing the use of the Language Flowers and has been linking Celebration assemblies and certificates to the language in the flowers.</p>
15.	<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>1. The GB noted that the use of CPOMS is going to be reviewed, and categories are to be re-organised. The review will consider how much information is being recorded, and how much information needs to be recorded. TA time could be freed up if less detailed summaries were recorded. Work is also being undertaken to ensure staff understand that CPOMS is a recording mechanism and should not be used as a way of alerting staff to an issue or incident that needs a prompt response.</p> <p>There will be safeguarding training scenarios delivered by AH for governors at the second and fourth GB meetings of each term.</p>
16.	<p><u>Early Years</u></p> <p>1. The GB agreed that the development of visual cues for non-verbal pupils was very beneficial. JC noted that he has seen excellent examples of TA practice in school in the EYFS when he has been in school, and particularly in how they have supported and worked with children when they have been distressed or finding the day challenging. Ali H has identified that there is good/strong practice within Early Years for children with high needs. Having resources such as the climbing frame has helped develop children's fine/gross motor skills.</p>
17.	<p><u>Discussion: 'How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school?'</u></p> <p>1. Prior to the final meeting discussion, GTH raised that a group of parents are raising again with Cranbrook Council the significant concerns families have about the lack of a safe road crossing from the school to the Younghayes Centre. The need to address this has been highlighted further now that FISH are based at the Younghayes Centre, and FISH staff will be walking the children there from the school, which includes crossing the road. If a crossing cannot be provided, then the parent group are campaigning for slower speed limits and other traffic slowing measures. The GB agreed that they supported this campaign and would be happy to assist if needed in the future.</p> <p>2. It was identified that this meeting had benefited the children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BG – plans for JH to support the welfare of the staff team are very Christian. • JC – the focus on staff well-being and ensuring all children with additional needs are supported in the right way is very much in line with the school's ethos. • GTH – the GB's support of developing residential trips and encouraging as many as possible to attend will benefit the children. • RG – understanding the work that Ali H has been doing in refining the SEND register and creating lists of children to be monitored means the GB is better informed about SEND provision in school.

<u>ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING</u>		
<u>Action</u>	<u>Person responsible</u>	<u>Date to be completed by</u>
1. Send RM's application to the LA for their consideration	JB	1.3.23
2. Share message sent to parents ref next steps for the school with the GB.	JC	1.3.23
3. Liaise with BG ref joining the L&T Pay Committee	JB	8.3.23
4. Update Committee Terms of Reference to show changes in membership	JB	31.3.23
5. Add 'Undertake Safeguarding scenarios' to GB meetings 2 and 4 in Cycle of Work.	JB	31.3.23
6. Share the Complaints against Governors policy and the updated 'I Have A Concern' leaflet with the GB.	JB	31.3.23

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FULL GB MEETING 20.3.23

- Revisit and approve the revised Behaviour Principles
- Election of Vice-Chair

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB agreed to approve RM's application to be LA Governor
- The GB agreed that JE would join the Admissions Committee
- The GB agreed that JE and (temporarily) GTH would join the L&T Pay Committee
- The GB reviewed and agreed to approve the following policies: Finance, Disciplinary

Next meeting: Monday, 20th March at 6.00-8.00pm – to be held in school

Signed as accurate by the Chair:

Name of Chair:

Date: