

**ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL**

**GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES**

<b>FULL GOVERNING BOARD</b>		<b>DATE:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> December 2023</b>
<b>CHAired BY: Brian Gravenor (BG)</b>		<b>CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)</b>	
<b>GOVERNORS PRESENT:</b>		<b>Also Present:</b>	
Brian Gravenor (BG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Phil Wales (PW) Lynette Bickers (LB)		Mel Turl (MT) – Acting Deputy Headteacher Brigid Thompson (BT) – School Business Manager	
<b>APOLOGIES:</b> Ruth Marsh (RM)			
<b>Absent without apology: None</b>			

***Governor questions are highlighted in grey***

<b>Agenda Items</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>Opening Prayer &amp; Welcome</u></b> 1. Opening Prayer taken by JH.
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></b> 1. Apologies were received from RM – these were sanctioned by the GB.
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Declarations of Interest &amp; Correspondence</u></b> 1. No declarations of interest.  2. Correspondence received from the Diocese to confirm that it approved the proposed amendments to the Instrument of Government. JB confirmed that the other appointing bodies had also confirmed their approval.
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>Finance</u></b>  <b><u>1. Lead Governor Termly Report &amp; Budget Monitor</u></b> The report and monitor had been shared with the GB prior to the meeting. Governors noted that the budget is looking healthier than previously anticipated as final costs for pay awards had been less than the estimates set previously. BT explained that schools had not been given a calculation to determine costs accurately and had also been notified of these pay awards with very little notice, so it had been difficult to estimate what costs would be.

The end of year carryforward is currently projected to be £154,315.00. BT reported that the Capital budget is also looking healthy. There are a number of projects being costed, which are:

- Improvements to hall acoustics. Noise levels are extremely high during lunch sessions now that the school is full. Previous acoustic treatments were costed at around £8000 but BT will be seeking up to date quotes.
- Lighting replacements across the school. New lighting has been identified as more environmentally friendly and cheaper to run. Research is also showing that the original lighting can be detrimental to children's learning, with the new lighting being more akin to natural daylight.

PW asked why there was a need for two property damage policies. BT advised that the school is required to hold the Diocesan policy but this does not cover all risks so the Zurich policy is to extend that cover to all risks identified.

BT informed the GB that DCC will be carrying out an audit of finance and governance areas this term, but it covers a smaller area than the last more in-depth audit. BT will report back on any findings.

#### 2. Approval of costing of residential trip June 2024

The financial quote and accompanying information had been shared with the GB prior to the meeting. Governors noted that all but one child in the year group will be attending this trip.

**Decision: The GB approved the quote of £18,428.00 for the Year 6 residential trip to London in June 2024.**

#### **5. Health & Safety and Premises**

1. Governors noted that a couple of issues have been raised by the caretaker:

- Maintenance work is needed on the screws holding guttering in place. The original ones were of poor quality and need replacing.
- Consideration to be given to whether it would be more cost-effective to purchase items such as line-painting machines rather than employ companies to do these jobs for the school. JE queried if it would be useful for the school to have its own chipper for this reason. BT advised that where there is specialist training required to use machinery, it is financially better for companies to be used.

JE raised that there are some areas on the school site where branches and weeds are overgrown and could become hazardous. BT will be undertaking an external inspection shortly and this includes checking for any landscaping work required.

Discussions around developing part of the field as a play area are ongoing – the process is complex due to different ownership of different areas between the Diocese and DCC.

#### **6. Staffing**

1. Governors discussed difficulties around TA retention. Following the recent appointments to five TA posts, two have since resigned. Reasons for resignations have been varied and there is not a common theme. Having bank TA staff has helped but there are concerns around not having permanent staff in place. Costings are currently being undertaken regarding moving any TAs not already on a C grade to that grade. Previously there were more differences in the responsibilities of the TA team, hence some being on a B grade and some being on C. There is now little difference between TAs and it is therefore felt that better pay consistency is needed to ensure pay is fair.

BG asked if there could be any bonuses given to longer-standing TAs. BT advised that there is already a long-service reward system in place from DCC where staff are awarded a day in pay after five years, and then can take 1-2 days actual leave in term time at further stages of employment. BT has also ensured that all staff can now access well-being support and discount schemes provided by DCC.

BT raised that there is a potential risk in terms of recruitment as larger employers open in Cranbrook and are able to offer better pay or similar pay for less demanding roles. Governors acknowledged that work required of TAs is demanding and can be emotionally wearing.

BG asked if Ventrus could be approached for assistance with this. AH advised that she has discussed the situation, and there is not any support they can provide. Ventrus were able to confirm that they pay all their TAs at a C grade which further supports the decision to review TA pay grades at St. Martin's.

The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss some aspects of staffing in more detail.  
The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

*(BT left the meeting)*

**7. Approval of minutes from last meetings and update on actions**

1. Full GB Meetings 18.9.23 and 16.10.23

Both agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair (including Part Two). All actions due to be undertaken by this meeting had been completed.

2. Admissions Committee meeting 8.11.23

Agreed as accurate and signed by the Chair. The GB noted the decisions that had been taken during the last half term, and that under Fair Access the school can be directed to take more pupils than its PAN (published admission number).

**8. Headteacher Report**

1. This had been circulated prior to the meeting. The GB noted that AH and MT are in the process of mapping out the staff structure for 24-25 to ensure that arrangements for teachers returning from maternity leave are in place. The GB also discussed that in January, planning needs to be undertaken for the Headteacher recruitment process. This will need to be a priority to try and ensure that a substantive Headteacher is in place for September 2024. As there is a possibility that the school will join Ventrus, it was agreed that there would be some involvement from Ventrus within the recruitment process. BG outlined to the GB how the Headteacher process can be run in a VA school.

Governors discussed the report from the joint review visit from Ashley Leeson (AL), Ventrus and Helen Eversett (HE), DCC. Feedback had been extremely positive and both staff and governors were pleased to note that HE and HE had both observed and recognized the SLT's approach of 'high expectations, high accountability, high compassion'. MT feels that the SLT is improving and moving forwards every day, with increasing rigour and professionalism. LB noted the comment that the school demonstrated a 'relentless search for improvement'. PW raised that the safeguarding observations section had not been completed within the report.

**Action: AH to request HE's completed safeguarding observations and share with the GB.**

BG raised that the report reflects the need to monitor/support leadership work/life balance. PW asked what more the governors need to do regarding this, observing that SL health and well-being is very important for governance. AH advised that Headteachers are unable to do all work needed within the school day. She therefore chooses to work during weekends rather than work late into the evenings. MT and AH are supporting each other with the workload. LB asked if it was feasible for AH to work at home at times to minimize interruptions. AH advised that working from home times are discussed at the SLT weekly diary meetings, and whilst it is something she does intend to schedule more, whilst MT is still relatively new in post, she is keen to be in school to provide support.

MT informed the GB the Pupil Premium Strategy discussions prompted a plan for obtaining more parental feedback through being asked to vote via placing tokens to indicate yes/no answer to a specific question. This was used to ask the parents to answer: "My child is happy at school". Nearly 300 responses were received with 94% answering yes. The GB discussed that this approach will not

replace the formal parent questionnaire but does provide a way for parents who might not participate in the more formal process to contribute their views and feedback.

The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss a parental feedback matter in more detail.  
The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

#### 8.2. School on a Page (SOAP) findings

This summary document had been shared with the GB prior to the meeting. All the findings are already known to the school – there were no surprises.

#### 8.3. In-year admissions this half term.

Covered at item 7.2. The GB noted that where families have to move with no notice to the school, this causes a significant impact to the school's attendance figures as children have to be kept on roll for four weeks until the children's next school is known.

### **9. Lead Governor Termly Reports for Teaching & Learning and Safeguarding**

1. Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Safeguarding – governors noted that the safeguarding audit has been undertaken and that the action plan only identified minor changes to practice.

Data & Curriculum – GTH raised that some updates are needed to the website and suggested that the sentence toolkit used in school could also be added to inform the parents.

**Action: AH to arrange for website to be checked and updated so that it reflects current practice in school.**

Parent & Christian Community Links – it was noted that there is some crossover between the Cycle of Work and SIP for this area which will be addressed (see item 10.1).

SEND – BG advised that the only changes to the SEND and Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs policies had been to reflect changes in staffing.

#### 2. Policies for approval by the GB.

The GB noted that the following policies had all been reviewed by the lead member of staff and lead governor and agreed to approve all:

- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs
- Safeguarding and Child Protection (new version adopted)

### **10. School Improvement Plan**

1. Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. Governors discussed that there is some overlap between SIP priorities and the Cycle of Work which resulted in one teacher being contacted by multiple governors for discussion/updates. This related in particular to Parent & Christian Community Links and Data & Curriculum.

To address this, governors agreed that:

- Governors to be mindful before approaching staff
- Governors to raise with each other that they will be visiting/making contact with staff to allow for discussion around sharing information/combining information requests to teachers

It was agreed that all governors work needs to have a focus on impacts for the children.

	<p>AH advised that she and MT will be RAG-rating each section of the SIP and adding evaluation comments to this term's actions. This will be shared with the GB when completed.</p> <p>MT feels that the school is now in a position where it is can work/plan more strategically and is working less reactively.</p> <p>The Big Buddy project is working well – children are responding positively to having a key person in school who supports them and takes a specific interest in them and their learning. Feedback will be gathered from those in the project and reviewed in February.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><b><u>Governance</u></b></p> <p><u>1. Instrument of Government</u>  <b>Decision: The GB agreed to approve the amendments to the Instrument of Government to reflect changes to the names of the other appointing bodies.</b></p> <p>The amended Instrument of Government will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.</p> <p><u>2. Reports from governors who have attended training and review impacts from training for the GB.</u>  PW attended the recent Governance Conference. This had been an opportunity to hear from new key members of DCC Children's Services. PW reported that powerful messages/speeches had been delivered by key speakers.</p> <p><u>3. Governor impacts from previous half term</u>  RM has contributed to SLT discussions around the introduction of incremental coaching (part of SIP) by sharing feedback and experience of being involved with this within her employment, BG facilitated Parent Governor Q&amp;A sessions with AH as part of the recruitment process. Governors have undertaken visits to school and met with staff. JH reported that he saw evidence on his visit of how well staff differentiate to meet different pupils' needs in class.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p><b><u>Safeguarding</u></b></p> <p><u>1. Discuss outcomes of Safeguarding Audit</u>  Actions have been identified for the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing CPD further</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> </ul> <p>Only minor changes are required – there are no concerns.</p> <p><u>2. Safeguarding termly data update.</u>  AH updated governors on recent data. Few MASH referrals have been needed recently. The school's 6 weekly At Risk meetings are a very robust process. A key issue is around the need to encourage parent engagement with support that is offered by external services as if the parent does not engage, the case will be closed.  It is planned for SLT to review staff use of CPOMS to ensure best practice in place.</p> <p>JE asked if there is any impact on other children in school from children who are experiencing challenges at home. MT advised that there is very little impact – the risks and challenges relate more to the home rather than in school. Sometimes these children may struggle more in school, but as they are being carefully monitored and supported, this is picked up and managed quickly.</p> <p>Governors noted that the school was recently able to provide five families tickets to the local pantomime and support them being able to travel to the theatre. This enabled them to have an experience they may not otherwise have had.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p><b><u>Discussion: 'How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school?'</u></b></p>

1. PW felt that the meeting provided a space for strategic discussions and considering future decisions around leadership.  
Governors are clear in their support for developing projects such as the Big Buddy system – this is considered very much in line with the Christian ethos of the school.

**ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING**

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Person responsible</u></b>	<b><u>Date to be completed by</u></b>
1. Request HE's completed safeguarding observations and share with the GB	AH	18.3.24
2. Arrange for website to be checked and updated so that it reflects current practice in school.	AH	18.3.24

**SUMMARY OF DECISIONS**

- The GB approved the quote of £18,428.00 for the Year 6 residential trip to London in June 2024.
- The GB approved the review of the following policies:
  - Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)
  - Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection (new version adopted)
- The GB agreed to approve the amendments to the Instrument of Government to reflect changes to the names of the other appointing bodies.

**Next meeting: Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 6.00-8.00pm (training session for governors)**

Signed as accurate by the Chair: .....

Name of Chair: .....

Date: .....