



Bethersden Primary School
Minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) Meeting
held at the School on Thursday, 6 December 2018 at 0800 hrs

Present: Mrs S Buckman (Chair); Mr S Gawthorpe (Headteacher); Mrs S Carysforth; Mr R Clark; Mrs G Foley; Mrs W Grace (observing); Mrs J Read; Mr E Uebel.
Clerk: Lynne Clemitson (KCC Clerking Service)

Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting at 0802 hrs and welcomed governors.

1. Statutory Reporting

- The meeting was quorate. Mr Jones was not in attendance, and no apologies had been received. Governors referred to their code of conduct and agreed that the Chair should follow up directly with Mr Jones to establish his intentions.
- There were no business interests to declare against any item on the agenda.
- Governors undertook to sign the declaration confirming they had read and understood their responsibilities in the latest DfE guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2018). The Headteacher would retain this in school.
- Governors endorsed the Panel recommendation for the Headteacher's performance management and pay (recorded in minutes, part 2). The Chair asked that the minutes reflect the governing body's appreciation for the Headteacher's commitment and endeavours over the last year which had already had a significant impact at Bethersden.
- The closing date for Staff governor nominations was 12 December.
- The Headteacher would commence the parent governor nomination process.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes had been shared in advance, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting. However, it was noted that Mr Clark's attendance had not been recorded, and the minutes should be annotated to reflect this.

3. Chair's Report

The Chair reiterated the need for robust governor monitoring of the school plan and shared a schedule, prepared by the Vice Chair and herself, covering Terms 2 and 3. Governors agreed that monitoring would be undertaken immediately following the meeting.

4. School Plan

Governors had been able to review the plan in advance of the meeting and a number of matters were raised for discussion:

- **Stakeholder input.** Governors suggested ways in which parents might input to the plan, and agreed that the Parent Council meetings provided an excellent opportunity to seek their views. The Headteacher explained that the January Council meeting would focus on improving communications, an issue which had been highlighted at the most recent parents' consultation evening. The aim was to establish the nature of concern, and clarify expectations.
- **Safeguarding Curriculum.** Governors questioned how the Headteacher expected to achieve this, specifically in relation to online safety as no actions had been noted within the plan. Governors were advised that KCC's Education Safeguarding Adviser for Online Protection would provide a bespoke briefing session for Bethersden on 4 January. The Deputy Headteacher ('online safety' lead) would update the plan thereafter.
- **Pupil Outcomes.** Only one point had been included under this section of the plan and governors challenged this. The Headteacher explained that targets for next year had been agreed with the Improvement Adviser and the plan would now be updated to include these. Governors were advised of four elements: provision planning; curriculum of excellence; tracking systems; and developing skills continuum (e.g. progressing from guided research to independent historian).
- **Training.** The link governor highlighted training for safeguarding governors on 27 February 2019 which was covered under the school's service level agreement with the Education People. The Safeguarding Governor would attend.

There were no further points, and in response to the Chair's invitation, **governors unanimously endorsed the School Plan priorities.** They went on to review the plan's current status.

Leadership and Management

Monitoring of the September (six monthly) budget had been completed by the Chair and Vice Chair on 16 November, and was shared with Governors. Attention was drawn to the discrepancies report and how it linked to cuts discussed and agreed by governors earlier in the year. As a result of the changes, there would now be a carry forward surplus in each of the 3 years of the budget plan. The expected carry forward for 2018-19, at end September, stood at £14143.00 (Revenue) and £10937.00 (Capital).

As requested by governors during monitoring, the Headteacher had reviewed and subsequently adjusted income at I18 to include sports premium. Governors remained concerned about the take-up of school meals on census day and discussed ways in which pupils might be encouraged to try the school meal.

Governors discussed the **Benchmarking Report produced by the Department for Education.** They noted that Bethersden's pupil/teacher ratio had been 15.7 with the nearest comparator at 22.8. Support staff had been 9.5% above the national average. **They questioned why Bethersden's catering expenditure was so much higher than comparator schools and the Headteacher explained that it included breakfast club, as well as catering staff.**

The **Voluntary Fund audit** was tabled and the Chair signed this off on behalf of the Governing Body.



Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Governors were delighted to hear that **Key Stage 1 had been judged as 'outstanding' across the board** during a recent review visit from Sue Tunnicliffe (former Senior Improvement Adviser at KCC). One concern had been raised and was being managed. The Headteacher had organised visits for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools. As part of their senior and middle leadership professional qualifications, the Year 6 teacher and Reception teacher continued to develop maths vocabulary throughout the school (continuum of language) as part of their evidence based practice. They were building a bank of maths vocabulary through the year groups to establish fluency by Year 6. Governors welcomed this, especially the multi-pronged approach.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare

The Headteacher updated governors on the status of the school premises and relayed assurances received during a recent structural survey: any queries needed to be referred to KCC. The mobile classroom was about to be refurbished, and children would receive a safety briefing on 13 December, prior to work commencing. The school had been supported in other necessary works by Homewood School, for which governors noted their appreciation. The Headteacher was exploring how to manage expensive tree surgery required on site and would report back to governors.

Governors discussed the need to complete Health and Safety monitoring before the end of term. The Chair would follow up with the link governor; if he was unable to progress, the Chair and Vice Chair would take forward.

Outcomes for Pupils

Governors discussed the key foci in the 2018 Primary Inspection Data Report, shared in advance. Maths remained a key priority for the school, and when **governors asked how outcomes could be improved**, the Headteacher explained that historically, children had joined Bethersden with low maths scores and the school was now working alongside pre-school to improve children's understanding. **Governors challenged the progress scores for Key Stage 2 (KS2)** pupils and were advised of the impact of historic Key Stage 1 data (relevant phonics and KS1 percentages were relayed at the meeting) which meant that every child would have needed to achieve 'greater depth' in KS2 in order to gain a zero progress score in 2017-18. The Headteacher forewarned governors that this progress trend was likely to be repeated next year.

Governors expressed concern that moderation had not highlighted discrepancies. The Headteacher explained how moderation was managed and the choices which teachers could make if they were going to County moderation versus the more rigorous practices of internal moderation. They discussed the current practice of seeking feedback on 'borderline' books during informal moderation.

Governors sought assurances that pupils were now correctly levelled and were advised that conversion scores for Years 4 and 5 would not be available until April/May. In response to further questioning, a governor (also teacher in school) said that judgements could be subjective, and hence the importance of meaningful moderation. **The Chair asked if there was anything more governors could do to ensure reliability of data.** The Headteacher advised of the various moderation activities Bethersden would be pursuing over coming months, including with the Tenterden Rural Alliance and TKAT, as well as other potential bespoke options.

The **Outcomes Report for Term 1** was shared with governors, who discussed a number of issues:

- Results from an interim **phonics** test in Year 1 were shared with governors: **69% of pupils currently achieved the pass mark** (from last year) or higher, and **94% were predicted** to pass the test in June (i.e. 15 out of 16 children). Governors were provided with a comprehensive verbal report around context (e.g. poor attendance for one pupil) and interventions to support pupils. They asked that the minutes reflect their appreciation to all those involved in the phenomenal progress in RWI (Read Write Inc) Excellence.
- **Governors questioned how pupil premium was being invested to improve those pupils' outcomes.** The Headteacher explained that funds had been invested in training, providing language, vocabulary development and function interventions, and ensuring pupil premium children had access to extra-curricular clubs. Currently 54% were on track for reading; 46% writing and 50% for maths – all up when compared to figures for the same period last year. The school was diminishing the difference, but it would take time.
- In response to **governors questioning how children were assessed for Term 1 data**, the Headteacher advised that assessments were based on evidence in workbooks and what teachers had observed in the classroom. Those assessments were then reflected on Target Tracker denoting whether a child was 'beginning', 'working within' or 'secure'.

Governors noted data for **vulnerable groups**, and were advised of four applications for Education Health Care Plans (16 on the special needs register). They asked about the impact on outcomes for summer-born pupils, and the Headteacher said he believed the issue was more about their pre-school and access to quality first teaching, than their date of birth. **Governors also noted that girls were out-performing boys across the board, including maths. They asked if measures were in place to enhance the boys' engagement.** The Headteacher reiterated the need for interesting texts to draw in the boys, and to ensure text included aspirational language. **A governor challenged Writing data for Years 4 and 5, and the Headteacher explained that it was under review.**

Governors had read the Chair's recent Teaching and Learning monitoring report on a reciprocal reading session she attended and were pleased to note that children were also learning new skills, i.e. how to use the dictionary.

- The Headteacher explained that the demands of the curriculum jumped significantly in Year 2 which was why there were no higher achieving pupils included in the data for that year group. **One governor had expressed surprise at this and asked if anything could be done to boost progress. The Head advised that he was reviewing text choices for next term, and pupils would be performing Shakespeare.**



- **Attendance was improving at 95.93% (currently 96.02%),** but more needed to be done, especially around pupil premium families. Two referrals had been made for Early Help but the threshold had changed significantly. Project 95 letters had issued, and five penalty notice requests for unauthorised attendance had been referred to KCC. **In response to concerns raised by a governor, the Headteacher reiterated that the school acted in line with the attendance policy and highlighted again the impact of low attendance on teaching and learning. He said that he recognised the pressures caused by siblings with different school term times, but it was simply not possible for Bethersden to accommodate these. The Chair pointed out that the school should be celebrating the improvement in attendance – moving from the fifth to the second quintile in 1 year.**
- Governors were pleased to hear that children had settled very quickly, and engagement with families was good, in the 'outstanding' Early Years provision.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for the update. She took the opportunity to brief governors on the conference for rural small schools which she had attended on 3 December. She had been impressed by the holistic approach and believed there were elements which could benefit Bethersden – she undertook to circulate a report to governors, and thanked the Headteacher for inviting her.

5. Safeguarding

Link governors had completed a safeguarding review using the safeguarding self-evaluation tool kit over 2 days (18 October and 19 November). In conclusion they were satisfied that policies and procedures were in place and being followed. However, they highlighted the need for safeguarding training as the annual briefing conducted externally had not been as comprehensive as expected. It was also recommended that the new safeguarding lead governor complete training specific to their role, and had undertaken to attend the course in February. The monitoring pair talked through and explained some of the key elements from their monitoring: Designated Safeguarding Leads (4 trained, usually 3 available at any one time); Online safety and demonstration of filtering within school (to evidence its effectiveness); staff reflecting the diversity of the school population (there were no traveler members of staff).

Governors were invited to join staff on 4 January at 0900 (and lunch afterwards) for the Online Safety briefing by KCC.

The Headteacher briefed governors on the Register held in school for families receiving support from outside organisations. On 7 December the dedicated Inclusion lead for South Kent would visit to talk about challenging behavior, the Kent thresholds and what Bethersden could do; during a preliminary telephone discussion, the lead had indicated that she was impressed by the support measures already adopted.

The Headteacher took the opportunity to highlight the importance of staff wellbeing, and encouraging staff to flourish. This was endorsed by governors.

6. Policies

Policies had been shared in advance and governors unanimously endorsed the Child Protection Policy (annual review or sooner). The Headteacher provided background to the Admission out of Year Group School Statement and its ramifications for Bethersden. He explained that he had been working with the admissions team on this document, and governors unanimously endorsed.

7. Wrap-around care

A total of 17 responses had been received (9 after the deadline) in response to a questionnaire handed out at parents' evening, and a summary of the survey had been shared with governors. The Headteacher talked through the key elements which demonstrated why the cost of setting up (food hygiene and first aid training) and **running a provision until 6.00pm was not cost-effective** due to prohibitively high costs and insufficient demand. Whilst not obligated to do so, **in response to governor questioning, the Headteacher indicated that he would be prepared to review again if circumstances warranted it. After further questioning, the Headteacher assured governors that he had considered other avenues, e.g. allowing pre-school to use the hall if they were interested in delivering such a provision.** They had declined the offer; there was also no interest from existing school staff to progress this.

8. Any Other Business

- The Chair advised that Mr Keith Brannan, former governor and a stalwart of the local community, had expressed interest in re-joining the governing board and spoke of the skills and experience he would bring to the table. He was known to many of the existing governing board who indicated that they would welcome his return. The Chair suggested a vote by show of hands in support of his candidature as co-opted governor: one governor abstained; six voted in favour. Mr Brannan's appointment as co-opted governor was endorsed with immediate effect, for a four year term ending 5 December 2022.
- The link governor (GF) had completed a review of the school website and would send a report to the Headteacher.
- In response to governor questioning, the Headteacher updated them on the music provision in school. He also explained why it was not possible to participate in Young Voices this year, but hoped to link with another school next year to reintroduce this.

9. Confidentiality

Governors agreed that one item of discussion was of a confidential nature and should be recorded in minutes, part 2.

Signed: Date:
Chair of Governors
Bethersden Primary School

