

PULFORD

Church of England VA Lower School

A church school for the whole community



Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting for Pulford Lower School, held on 24th May 2023 at 6pm, in the school hall

1.	Registration, Apologies and Prayer	Action
	<p>Present: Mr D Heather (DH), Mr E Price (EP - Chair), Mother Cate Irvine (CI), Mrs R Horsfield (RH) Mr G Huskisson (GH), Mr A Perrott (AP), Mrs B Morley (BM), Mrs E Birtles (EB), Mrs S Haines (SH), Ms A Parish (APa), Mrs E Smith (ES), Mrs T Rees (TR), Mrs N Barnett (NB), Mrs M Akin-Esho (MA-E)</p> <p>Mrs J Gudgeon (JG; Clerk)</p> <p>Apologies: Mr B Webb (BW)</p> <p>Mother Cate opened in prayer.</p>	
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests	
	No new pecuniary interests were declared by board members.	
3.	Matters arising from the last meeting's minutes	
	<p>School emails have now been issued to all new governors.</p> <p>EP and JG are making good progress in updating the Governors Drive.</p> <p>NB is still happy to offer training on Google Drive and will liaise with the board to find a suitable date. It was agreed that in person training would be preferred, and this will be videoed and uploaded to the Governors Drive for anyone who is unable to attend.</p> <p>APa completed a website review, and her comments were passed to Alison Quick. She is satisfied that all statutory requirements are up to date.</p> <p>Regarding admissions, and particularly Church attendance, APa felt the consensus from the last meeting was that it was clear enough, although she would still like to see it prioritised on the website. DH reiterated that preschool leaders and members of staff speak to all parents and they are advised of the requirements to apply to the school on a 'religion' basis. There is a lot of information already available on the website. CI was comfortable that as long as the information is clearly written within the admissions policy, that is sufficient.</p> <p>EP has not yet met the new PE teacher but hopes to arrange a meeting soon.</p> <p>The Staff Pay & Performance Policy is currently under review, and being discussed by email, between EP DH and AP. Work is being done to reconcile the wording in the finance manual to the policy and ensure that both policies align. The adjustments are small, but necessary to ensure that both policies are clear and 'marry up'.</p> <p>APa advised that the subject title of 'ICT' has been replaced with 'Computing' and it would be best practice if governors use this.</p>	
4.	Agree and sign last meeting's minutes	
	The board agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the previous meeting. EP signed the hard copy of the minutes and DH will file accordingly.	DH
5.	Chair's Report	
	EP has not had to undertake any emergency action since the last board meeting.	

	<p><u>Board Effectiveness Review</u></p> <p>EP has circulated this document and would like all governors to fill it in. All governors were willing and APa volunteered to collate the responses. IT was agreed that it was preferable to fill the review in individually rather than have a round table discussion of each point, as conflicting viewpoints are more likely to be raised, and it would be beneficial to hear all points of view. APa will generate and circulate a Google form for governors to fill in. It was highlighted that this should contain a free text box, so any comments can be made, particularly to explain any strong opinions. EP would like to discuss this at the next FGB in Autumn, so ideally the forms would be completed by the end of term to allow APa time to collate the information.</p> <p><u>Governor Training</u></p> <p>EP reiterated the benefit of undertaking additional governor training, and highlighted the free resources sent to the Board by email.</p> <p><u>SIAMs Update</u></p> <p>DH, EP and NB attended training regarding the change to the SIAMs grading. The previous worded grading has been replaced with 'J1' or 'J2'. The new grades have a complicated meaning which is available on the SIAMs website. EP requested all governors to read through this. The training emphasised that inspection itself hasn't changed much, just the grading. CI is attending training in June and will feed back anything that may be helpful to the board. DH emphasised that it is key that the governors know the school's vision: 'Growing God's family through Faith, Hope and Love.'</p> <p>EP did a visit specifically in relation to the vision which he found very interesting. JG to check if the report from this is available on the Governors Drive.</p>	<p>APa</p> <p>JG</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Headteacher's Report</p>	
	<p>The area not covered by the Subcommittee reports is attendance. The number of pupils on roll is strong but attendance is still low. It is in line with the national picture, and stronger than the local average, but still lower than pre COVID levels.</p> <p>It is mainly due to an increase in term time holidays, and mostly financially driven. Despite introducing Fixed Penalty Notices, the savings achieved by holidaying during term time far outweigh the resulting fine. There have been cases where children are encouraged by parents to lie about the reason for their absence, but this is very difficult for the children and causes a large amount of stress when they are caught between their parents and teachers, both of whom they should be able to rely on. The number of FPNs issued to date is believed to be around 5, with another in progress. The difficulty is that they can only be issued in advance, not retrospectively, so if parents take their children away without advising the school nothing can be done.</p> <p>BM queried if there is a reason Year 1 attendance is lower, but it is believed to just be how the cohort falls, that term time holidays have affected that year most.</p> <p>There is a high uptake of school meals. DH reported that an anonymous individual has commenced funding school meals for a child that falls outside of the free school meals regime but is unable to otherwise afford one. Local charities have also supported children, which is a lovely, uplifting thing to report.</p> <p>BM queried how the Early Years teacher recruitment process is progressing. DH advised that they are almost there. The school are very conscious that they are restrained by budget and can therefore only afford to hire someone at the lower end of the pay scale. DH assured that there will be a new teacher in place by September. The situation regarding the TA that is resigning and there are insufficient funds to replace is under discussion and DH advised that he and RH are in the process of reaching a solution which ensures the children's learning is safeguarded.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Report</p>	
	<p>SH shadowed EB on her most recent Safeguarding visit as SH and APa look to jointly take on the role. APa was unable to attend. EB advised that there was nothing major to report on her checklist.</p> <p>EB highlighted that although there is a specific governor named as Safeguarding lead, it is the duty of all. She queried whether it is covered in the induction pack and EP advised that all</p>	

	<p>governors are required to sign to confirm they have read the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document. EB recommended adding the slides from the most recent training to the induction pack, to cover those who join part way through the year and have not yet had the opportunity to attend safeguarding training.</p> <p>CI drew the governors' attention to free Safeguarding training which is available on the Church of England website. GH recommended the third seminar as being particularly helpful.</p> <p>GH queried if DH has any additional information regarding what the school which has recently been publicised for failing OFSTED based on safeguarding was doing wrong. DH doesn't know specifics, but playtime supervision and procedural matters were key. The importance of keeping a paperwork trail to show that all matters have been considered and reviewed by governors was noted.</p> <p>EB noted that she is coming to the end of term as a governor, and it would be good to have another governor who has completed Safer Recruitment Training following her departure. SH and APa were willing to complete this.</p> <p>As part of safeguarding matters the subject of the Manual Handling Policy was raised. It was confirmed that staff have recently undertaken training run by Oakbank and the committee review the policy regularly, as with the other policies. The policy is available on the school website. DH briefly summarised the school's approach to manual handling: it is not a no touch policy, if children show affection towards staff members they are allowed to reciprocate in an appropriate manner. Staff are allowed to administer medicine providing appropriate authorities have been given. APa queried whether the policy should be amended to a 'no touch' policy to safeguard against children who don't know boundaries being open to abuse. DH advised that if there are any concerns at all, it is highlighted, and safeguarding is raised. TR advised that where there are concerns these children have their own specific policies in place. APa queried whether the board and school have fully considered the policy together and agree that the policy keeps all children safe and is not open to abuse. EP advised that the policy is regularly reviewed and signed off by the board, and these points can be discussed when the policy is next due for review.</p> <p>EP confirmed that the safeguarding training completed by governors in January is sufficient from a statutory point of view, but safeguarding is such a key issue it is always good for governors to do more if they are able.</p> <p>Drawing the agenda item to a close, EP thanked EB for all her work as designated safeguarding governor over the years and the invaluable experience she has brought to the role.</p>	
8.	<p>Committee and Subject Link Updates</p>	
	<p>Resources Committee</p> <p>The budget presented to the board results in an in-year deficit, but it is believed that with the rearrangement of staff, a decrease in hours by senior staff and the recruitment of lower paid staff this can be broken even. This is occurring in the current financial year, but not until mid-way through. Once these changes are reflected across a full year the deficit will be reduced right down. DH advised that the state of the budget is based largely on salaries and at the time of the meeting, expected pay rises are an ongoing discussion and very much subject to change. The budget has been based on the current agreement that teachers will receive a pay rise of 3%, and non-teaching staff will receive an increase of 8%. He highlighted that an additional increase of just 1% would increase costs by around £10,000 and this would dramatically change the budget. A pay increase of 6.5%, which has been proposed by some, would cost an additional £30,000 which would not be manageable. The uncertainty and resulting financial strain is causing a lot of angst and stress. There has been speculation that the government will fund a proportion of the increase, in which case the figures would look a lot more positive. It will be kept under constant review.</p> <p>Regarding additional works, in this year the Diocese has agreed to fund the hall roof, necessary work regarding the trees within the school grounds, and the replacement of guttering on the KS1 building. These works will take place over the Summer.</p> <p>The Pulford Trust is still in discussion over the outside covered area near preschool. CBC have advised that this would need to be freestanding to comply with planning rules.</p>	

	<p>Next year the flat roof will definitely need to be replaced and the cost of this is likely to run into a six-figure sum. The new roof is likely to improve fuel economy so should help lower costs going forward. DH has suggested that the Diocese and Pulford Trust may be willing to work together to fund this, but there is a specific window in which the funds will need to be applied for.</p> <p>There is also external paintwork which will need to be done, the cost of which is likely to be between £10-15,000.</p> <p>EP offered thanks to EB for chairing the Resources Committee during her term, and asked the board if anyone is willing to take on the role. AP put himself forward and was unanimously voted into the role.</p> <p>Curriculum and Standards Committee</p> <p>The most recent data pack showed children are performing well in Maths. Reading scores are lower and this is being reviewed closely by staff. Writing scores are also lower than usual, in line with the National Picture. Staff are working hard to improve this, and BM and RH reviewed what is being done in the week prior to the meeting. It is a longer-term effect of COVID and improving the accuracy and resilience of children’s writing is proving difficult despite the efforts being made.</p> <p>AP queried the removal of the end of KS1 tests. DH confirmed that this is the last year that they are taking place and highlighted the challenge of showing the progress made by pupils in lower schools without external tests. Internal tests will continue to take place and moderation, where books are taken from the school and externally reviewed, will continue.</p> <p>EP pointed out that he was pleased with the discussion within the curriculums committee, and it was key for the governors to see how the school responds to the data. He was pleased to see how the school does respond, particularly referencing the middle leaders meeting where each child is individually reviewed. DH will let EP know the dates of the middle leaders’ meetings and EP will circulate as governors are welcome to attend these.</p> <p>Subject Links</p> <p>EP thanked those who have conducted subject visits and sent their reports. In particular, thanks were offered to NB for her additional report on the Easter Trail which was very positive. CI encouraged governors to visit this and highlighted the difficulty the Church faces getting volunteers in order to run such events.</p> <p>RH queried the process for the governor subject visit reports. These should be sent to the relevant teacher before being shared with the board. They should also be sent to DH, who will confirm that no sensitive or confidential information is contained and then send a final copy to JG for filing.</p> <p>Governors are OK to use their private emails for communications but are encouraged to use their governor email for additional security, especially regarding safeguarding matters. It also makes it easier to keep track of documents as they can be sent using Google docs.</p> <p>EP highlighted that to be able to say ‘I’ve been and I’ve seen’ is an important part of effective governance so encouraged governors to continue to visit regularly.</p>	
9.	Budget Plan for 2023/24	
	The Budget was ratified by the board unanimously.	
10.	School Improvement Report	
	<p>It was felt that most of the points for improvement made in the School Improvement Report by Michelle Geddes are already undertaken but may not have been witnessed in the review. The key points were the use of sound mats, which are provided and used in Early years. Spellings in KS1 are undertaken as part of the phonics program, and Common Exception words are provided to parents for practice at home.</p> <p>It was highlighted that Michelle prefers not to use worksheets as a learning tool, but these are useful particularly in the earlier years. They decrease and move to workbooks as children move through the school. DH felt that a good balance was achieved.</p>	

	<p>The third point regarding explicit links to prior learning, staff also felt, was already incorporated within lessons, but they would continue to work to make these more explicit. Consideration is also given with students to why they are learning topics and how it fits into life e.g. telling the time and counting money.</p> <p>Overall, all agreed that the items highlighted were already in consideration by the school and this is a positive outcome, as no more severe gaps in learning were observed. The school will use the report as a prompt to continue to focus on these areas.</p>	
11.	Terms of Reference	
	<p>These have been agreed within the committee meetings and will continue to be reviewed annually in Autumn going forward.</p> <p>Clarification is to be added in the Terms of Reference that the discipline policy relates to staff.</p> <p>The policy regarding Child Exclusion was raised. A governor sits on the appeals board in the event of an exclusion and can override the decision. There is time pressure when an appeal is made as it must occur within a set time frame so governors will be called on according to availability. AP pointed out that governors need to know their role if they were to be called on for this and queried whether a committee for this should be within the finance manual, or at least list of governors with the relevant training.</p>	
12.	Governor Profiles	
	All the governors agreed that this is a good idea, NB requested an example profile to give an idea, and EP will circulate. No objections were raised to having a photo with their profile on the website.	EP
13.	Staff Survey	
	<p>EP introduced his intention to conduct a staff survey.</p> <p>ES, APa and NB agreed to work together to put this together. There are templates available but any suggestions for questions should be sent to APa before the end of half term. The purpose of the survey was queried, EP advised that it was just to obtain an overview and provide an opportunity to be made aware of any issues which would otherwise not necessarily be highlighted. Any undercurrents or recurring themes could also be picked up. The survey must be completed anonymously.</p> <p>The way the survey was distributed was discussed and agreed that careful consideration should be given to the wording. It must be done in a non-threatening way and staff should be made aware of how the information is to be used.</p>	ES, APa, NB
14.	Communications Working Group	
	EP would like to create a working group to discuss communication between school and parents as it is a recurring theme that gets highlighted. He would like it to include staff, parents and governors. EP will chair, NB, RH, SH and MA-E will join. It is a difficult issue to address as everyone has different requirements and expectations, but as the issue has been raised multiple times it is important that the governors try to address it. It is likely to start in the new Academic year.	EP
15.	Saints Alive Articles	
	EP would like governors to volunteer to write an article for Saints Alive. It can be about anything – such as being a governor and what it entails, or an event that you have attended. EP would like to put together a rota of governors who are willing to contribute.	
16.	AOB	
	DH brought to the attention of the governors that Rob Kettle, the parent of a preschool child, has been volunteering at the school doing maintenance, DIY and odd jobs where needed. His help and willingness are very much appreciated by the school and EP will ensure that he is thanked on behalf of the board.	EP

	CI offered her thanks to the school, as she moves on, for the special relationship between the Church and the school. It is rare, very special and valued on both sides. The Board wished her well with her health and her new post.	
17.	Proposed Meeting Dates	
	DH requested that the date of the April resources meeting be changed from 24 th April to 29 th April in order that both he and BW can attend. He reminded governors that on 18 th October governors are welcome into the school. JG will email upcoming dates at the beginning of each term.	JG
	Mother Cate led the Grace to close the meeting	