



## Woolhampton C of E Primary School

*Built on the rock of Christian faith, we work as a community to create an environment which enables all to flourish. Jesus welcomed all and we embrace diversity, celebrating our different gifts and successes. Like St Peter, we are motivated by our values, learn from our mistakes and strive for the best outcome for everyone.*

### **Minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.00 pm at The School**

The meeting was quorate with at least 8 governors at any one time.

*Note: Items were not necessarily discussed in agenda order.*

<b>PRESENT:</b> Nikki Jordan <b>NJ</b> (Chair, Local Authority Governor), Sarah Fenwick-Stubs <b>SFS</b> (Joint Vice Chair, Foundation Governor, PCC – Parochial Church Council), Rebecca Cox <b>RC</b> (Staff Governor & Temporary Acting Head), Kim Wyrley-Birch <b>KWB</b> (Foundation Governor, Diocese), Terry Webster <b>TW</b> (Foundation Governor, Diocese) – <i>Majority Attendance</i> (arrived at 7.20 pm), Kelly Mitchell <b>KMI</b> (Parent Governor), Kate Moir <b>KM</b> (Foundation Governor, PCC), Martin Harding <b>MH</b> (Parent Governor), Carly Madders <b>CM</b> (Foundation Governor, Diocese).		
<b>APOLOGIES:</b> Anna Partridge <b>AP</b> (Joint Vice, Foundation Governor, PCC), Kath Burns <b>KB</b> (Head Teacher, Ex-officio), Rev. Jane Manley <b>Rev.JM</b> (Ex-officio, Foundation Governor), Rachael House Gemmell <b>RHG</b> (Clerk to Governors).		
<b>ABSENT:</b> None.		
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> None.		
<b>MEETING NOTES TAKEN BY:</b> Kate Moir <b>KM</b> (Foundation Governor, PCC)		
ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION
1.1	<b>Welcome</b> NJ welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
1.2	<b>Opening Prayer</b> The governors chose to adopt the following prayer that can be used in meetings should there be no prayer leader:  <i>Dear God, As we come together in the embracing shadow of St Peter's church, we ask for guidance that we may address our discussions with wisdom, thoughtfulness and compassion, always bearing in mind that as governors we embrace diversity, learn from our mistakes, and seek the best outcome for our staff, our children and our families. Let our shared Christian values shape our debate and help us to work together to create a school where all may flourish. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, Amen.</i>	
1.3	<b>Apologies and Absences</b> Apologies received from AP, KB, Rev.JM and RHG (Clerk) – all accepted.	
1.4	<b>Any Other Business (AOB) items (urgent)</b> None.	
1.5	<b>Declarations of Interest for Agenda items or AOB</b> None.	

Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 1 of 6	Date:



<b>STRATEGIC FOCUS</b>		
2.	<b>Governing Body Priorities</b> Priority 1 – Monitoring Strategy Priority 2 – Christian Distinctiveness Priority 3 – Communication Strategy Priority 4 – Learning Environment & Resources	
3.	<b>Chair of Governors Update</b> NJ thanked SFS for updating the governor's lanyards with any changed roles and the governor's display in the school reception area. The display relating to school staff also needs to be updated. SFS will ask the school administrator to do this.  <i>Action:- SFS to ask Emma Smith (School Administrator) to update school staff display in the school reception area.</i>  The governors discussed the Severe Weather Plan which had been updated. Governor volunteers are required to clear the school grounds and car park in the case of snow and ice. Governors agreed they could not ask school staff to do this. Salt and grit are available outside the kitchen door. It was agreed that the weather needs to be closely monitored, not only relating to snow and ice, but also flooding and wind, given the school's approach roads can be dangerous at these times. When deciding whether to keep the school open, governors need to bare these in mind as they do affect travel. All governors agreed to help clear the school grounds as required, and it was felt communication for this would be best through a WhatsApp group dedicated for this purpose.  The school website is being managed by an administrative assistant, is up to date and compliant. All policies are also up to date.  <u>Discussion on the results of the Governor Self-Evaluation Survey 2023</u> NJ will upload the analysis slides to the governor's electronic drive. The governors looked at each section comparing them with the results from 2022. Those governors who had responded to the individual evaluation expressed concerns/lack of action in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping up to date with key educational initiatives and developments</li> <li>• Taking on extra responsibilities</li> <li>• Undertaking training courses that are relevant to individual roles in the governing body.</li> </ul> NJ again reiterated, the NGA is a very good resource for educational initiative and developments.  General areas for development/monitoring were identified as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambitious long-term strategy has possibly been put on hold while governors consider KB's health and wishes, but going forward this needs to be a priority.</li> <li>• Engagement in the wider regional and national education landscape. Governors felt they understood this in 2021, but the current self-evaluation reflected concerns, so this is an area for monitoring.</li> <li>• Ensuring the right mix of skills sets are in place within committees and individual roles are monitored as the succession plan evolves and new governors are recruited.</li> </ul> Positive headlines were:	SFS

Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 2 of 6	Date:



- Governors can demonstrate improvement over the last five years from self-evaluation feedback.
- The governor's responses indicate good levels of involvement, impact and improvement.
- Governors believe there is effective succession planning, and the role of link governor has improved since last year.
- There is good communication with parents, pupils and staff and surveys are in place to understand their views.

#### Progress on Reconstitution of the Governing Body

Following agreement to reconstitute on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023, approval of the new Instrument of Government has been given by the Diocese. Approval is now being awaited from West Berkshire LA to complete the process. Once this has happened, it is planned that the new constitution will begin on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024, the date of the next FGB meeting. The current chair and vice chair terms will automatically cease and elections under the new constitution will therefore need to take place.

NJ offered to stand again as Chair of Governors, believing that continuity in that role would be essential for the school at the current time. The governors were unanimously in agreement with this and thanked NJ. A formal request for nominations will be made via the Clerk ahead of the March FGB meeting.

AP, who is currently joint Vice Chair, will not be renewing her foundation governor term when this ends in March. The governors were keen to record AP's significant contribution to the governing board during her time as a governor, vice chair of governors and previously chair of the Finance & Resources Committee.

Any governor wishing to undertake the role of Vice Chair of Governors should inform the clerk so all nominations can be published on the agenda for the March FGB meeting.

#### Governing Body Membership

The Governing Body has had a good cross section of skills but the membership is due to change and with it the current succession plan. The NGA has stated governing boards should have a diverse membership. The governors felt it was more important for the governing body to have the right people in the right roles rather than trying to ensure diversity. This will be monitored closely by the link governor.

RC is currently both temporary acting head teacher and staff governor, it may be necessary to provide more differentiation between these within meetings going forward.

Current thinking is that it would be beneficial if a new governor had skills from an educational background, and would ideally not be a parent. It was agreed that nearby private schools (Bradfield College, Elstree) could be approached to see if a member of staff may be willing to join the governing body. The governors were also asked if they knew of anyone in the community who would compliment the governing body's current skill set.

NJ will arrange dates with each governor to meet with them and review their contribution to the Governing Body. The plan is for these meet ups to take place before the end of the Spring Term 2024.

#### School Development Plan (SDP) Monitoring

The SDP has been an area where the governors have been sensitive to KB's health and wishes and reticent about making decisions in her absence. However, as it was now accepted KB's absence will be long term, governors agreed it is time to move things forward and maintain momentum to ensure progress and impact across all areas. RC will communicate with staff so they will know to expect

Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 3 of 6	Date:



governors to make contact with them and an agreed focus.

#### School Leadership

KB continues to make progress towards recovery. NJ has closely followed advice from West Berkshire HR (Human Resources) but has found this to be frustrating due to time delays in actions taking place, despite believing this has been the correct process.

NJ has been conscious that decisions regarding leadership were discussed with KB, but RC and the school now need further support with leadership.

**Question:** Was RC happy with this?

**Response:** RC said originally she had not thought there would be anyone available who could do more than she had been able to. However, over time she has felt she needs support with the leadership of the school which would enable her to be released back to her teaching and SENCO (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Co-ordinator) roles.

Having agreed this route with the LA, RC and NJ have identified a candidate who could take on this leadership role temporarily. There has been a delay through employing with an agency that the LA does not use. This has been frustrating and not helpful for the school or staff wellbeing. It has now been agreed that the plan can go ahead subject to references. In line with the school's Safer Recruitment Policy, these references must all be received before appointing the candidate on a temporary basis.

It is essential that the right way is found to communicate this role to parents so it is clear that the person is not a replacement for KB, neither are they coming in because RC is not capable.

The school's SIA (School Improvement Advisor) has been coming into school offering support, which the minutes will show. The SIA has been very helpful to RC with leadership.

NJ expressed some concerns that the plan has the potential to not be helpful at this stage as it may cause stress to staff and add to the general workload.

The Diocese has also offered help, but wanted to meet face-to-face which would have delayed any decisions being made until clarification of help could be confirmed. Unfortunately the support that could be offered would not have been of a practical nature.

#### Communication Concerns

Governors understood there was negativity among some parents was having a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of certain staff members. It was acknowledged that this was an uncertain time for parents with the absence of KB and staff changes that may feel unnerving. Governors felt they needed to address any concerns and there was a long discussion regarding how best to do this as well as improving communication overall. It was agreed that a letter from the governors may be appropriate, acknowledging parental concerns but informing them of the duty of care towards KB and being unable to give details on her health or future plans. This would also explain the huge amount of work which has been done behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of the school, wellbeing of staff and that the children are safe and happy. KMI (Link Governor for Wellbeing) agreed to draft a letter on behalf of the Governing Body.

NJ was also keen to hold a forum with a closed agenda to which parents could attend. CM and NJ would look at details for how this might work.

Governors who are parents felt the day to day communication could be improved, informing parents what was happening each week and which kit the children should bring in might relieve some of the issues around communication. This would be an addition to the weekly newsletter. As this would be an operational matter, RC will liaise with the school's admin team for including relevant

Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 4 of 6	Date:



	information within the weekly newsletters. Communication over the new reading/phonics scheme might be improved with an information letter each term. RC said an invitation to an Open Morning after February half term was already planned.	
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#### COMMITTEES

4.	<b>Finance &amp; Resources Committee</b> Update from meeting on 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2024. The PPG (Pupil Premium Grant) and Sports Premium budgets still have funds unallocated, although this money is earmarked by the school and will be spent by the end of the year. The After School club is currently projecting a surplus at year end. The club is doing much better than was anticipated and governors felt this was something to be proud of. The Main School budget has a projected deficit of £12,946 mainly due to unavoidable staffing costs. A discussion was held as to whether the cost of radiators should come from existing trust funds, but money was found within the Capital Fund. Governors noted that when West Berkshire Local Authority (LA) were asked if there was anything that could be done to help the budget in view of the challenges the school has been facing, the LA said they did not perceive a deficit of this size to be a problem. Governors felt, having worked so hard to ensure a balanced budget in the past, they were keen to provide evidence of good budget practice. The governors had reviewed the budget to ensure nothing had been overlooked. There was a discussion as to whether maintenance costs could be better projected, but the conclusion was all had been done that could be regarding the bigger picture. Research will be conducted into whether the school should employ a cleaner directly as the current cleaning contract is coming to an end. It is anticipated it will be possible to report a balanced budget, despite the unanticipated costs. The SFVS (Schools Financial Value Standard) will be reviewed by the committee at their next meeting, and brought to the FGB (Full Governing Body) for approval in March.	
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#### GOVERNANCE

5.	<b>Governor Training &amp; Development</b> CM had completed safer recruitment and safeguarding training. SFS had completed fire safety and safeguarding training. NJ reported that the Clerk had signed up to attend the NGA (National Governance Association) online conference for Governance Professionals.  NJ urged all to make use of the resources that are available and reminded governors that the school pays for access to the NGA which has many training opportunities available, including bite sized courses.	
6.	<b>Governing Body Monitoring</b> No specific monitoring updates/reports this time.	
7.	<b>Child Protection &amp; Safeguarding</b> No specific updates this time.	

#### OTHER MATTERS

8.1	<b>Community, Church &amp; School Events relevant to Governors</b> The Remembrance Assembly for Mrs Weight had been beautiful. Governors commended the children's behaviour over what had been a long period and	
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Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 5 of 6	Date:



8.2	<p>thanked Mrs Howe for her heartfelt address. The next entry in the Community Newsletter should cover what was a very special event for the school.</p> <p>"Worship on a Wednesday" will take place in St Peter's Church on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February at 10.00 am. All children and their families are welcome.</p> <p>There will be a children's Good Friday service at St Matthew's Church, Midgham (details to be found in the parish new circulation).</p> <p><b>Articles for publication in the Benefice Online Newsletter and/or Community Magazine</b></p> <p>Upcoming governor articles:</p> <p><i>Action: CM to write articles for the March editions (deadline 17<sup>th</sup> February).</i></p>	CM
<b>MEETING SUMMARY</b>		
9.	<p><b>How has this meeting fulfilled our strategic purpose?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governing Body Self-Review</li> <li>• Reconstitution process</li> <li>• Succession planning and governor membership</li> <li>• School leadership</li> <li>• Effective communication</li> <li>• Moving forward</li> <li>• Budget monitoring.</li> </ul> <p><b>How has this meeting fed into our Christian vision?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopted a new Governor's Prayer</li> <li>• Self-evaluation successes and plans to take forward.</li> <li>• Membership and diversity</li> <li>• Wellbeing of staff and children.</li> </ul>	
10.	<p><b>Dates of next meetings</b></p> <p>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 7.00 pm (SFVS, Chair &amp; Vice Chair elections)</p> <p>Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April at 7.00 pm (Budget)</p> <p>Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 7.00 pm.</p>	

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Mins of Full Governing Body 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Signature:
Page 6 of 6	Date: