

Full Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 20th March 2013, 5.45pm

Attending: Alan Velecky (Chair), Ian Rothery (Vice-Chair), Emma Allen, Julie Harris, Mark Moody, Jo O'Donoghue, Alastair Pickering, Annie Schulte, Rosalyn St.Pierre, Sue Warren, Stewart Hunt and Sue Govus,

Minutes: David Rogers (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Anne Baker and Matt Kent.

2. Declarations of Interest & Confidentiality Reminder

No declarations of business or pecuniary interests were made. Governors were reminded of the confidentiality of some items in this agenda.

3. Summary and Approval of Committee Minutes

i. Full Governing Body 6/2/13

Action 2. (contacting West Country schools about Partnership options) was on hold until JO had met with her mentor. All other actions had been discharged. The minutes were agreed to be a fair record of the last meeting and signed by the Chair.

ii. Learning Committee 6/3/13

The decisions and actions of the minutes were summarized to Governors. All actions had been, or were being, discharged.

iii. Wellbeing Committee 13/3/13

The decisions and actions of the minutes were summarized to Governors.

4. Questions to Head on Updates in Learning and Wellbeing Minutes

i. Learning

RS asked how resistance to rote-based learning has been addressed. JO replied that there are daily writing, spelling and handwriting tasks and that it is important that children have these 'nuts & bolts' in place in order to progress to explorative learning. The next task would be to look at consistency of teaching.

Governors considered the effect of the new National Curriculum. AV asked about the extent of curriculum change. JO mentioned two examples: History will cover huge areas of British history from the Stone Age to the Cold War and ICT will become Computing with a change of emphasis toward Computer Science. It would be necessary to look at how to marry the new curriculum to the three-year plan and if we want broader balance how are we achieve it. Staff are ambitious to take control of the curriculum.

Possible future changes to the school's status (to a partnership, academy or similar) would also affect how much legal control the school has over the curriculum.

JO said that the new curriculum was still not known well enough but the best indicators were to be found in the preamble describing its broad aims and vision.

ii. Wellbeing

In the new DfE policy, as of September staff Performance Management would be linked to pay but it was not yet clear how this would work. JO said that the DfE policy had not yet been agreed by the Unions and she felt that implementation by September was problematic. There was still some investigation to do on the proposed Inclusion Manager post.

JO said that the updated staff structure would be brought to the next Full Governing Body meeting but it was not possible to assign names to the roles because any staff resignations will not be known until later in the year.

In answer to a question JO said that class structures would not change except for the splitting of Years 3 and 4 next year.

5. 3 year plan - update and vote to endorse

JO introduced this item to give some context to her view that the school ought to be aiming to improve to the level where it would be evaluated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and how the 3 year plan supports this goal. She talked about the feeling of relief when the school was rated 'Good' in 2011, given that the Ofsted inspection framework had recently been toughened up, and the school's previous level of 'Satisfactory' would have been re-classified as 'Requires Improvement', with a clear expectation that the school should not remain at that level. In the immediate aftermath of the inspection, staff felt that they wanted to consolidate as a 'Good' school, and South Malling now seems more solid in this respect. Now JO and the SLT are clear that the school needs to move to the next stage, and are considering how to make the school 'Outstanding' and what this would look like. The new three-year plan is designed to push the school to that next level, and JO described her personal conviction that this is in the best interests of the school and is the right thing to do for the children.

Governors discussed what factors can affect the aspiration to be an Outstanding school and considered the three-year plan in light of this. It was felt that learning should be fun and that if the children love learning, they will be engaged and motivated, with a positive impact on attainment and progression. The view was expressed that that nurturing this intention and aspiration was more useful than concentrating on the goal of being graded Outstanding. However, governors expressed confidence that if the plan as it stands is implemented in full, then South Malling would be evaluated as an Outstanding school.

AV summarised amendments to the previous draft of the plan shared with Governors, including:

- notes explaining what considerations have been filtered out of the document and why (q.v.).
- a broader consideration of the school's place in the world
- consideration of the school environment.

Some further alterations were discussed:

- It is a good vision document showing the steps to improvement needed but there is no statement about excellence in teaching:
 - The plan needs to state expectations about data targets. Rigorous figures broken into each of the 3 years would need to be added. It was pointed out that if our data is not strong, all other considerations would be secondary.
 - Extensive considerations of the financial implications were felt to be out of place, but it was felt to be important that the 3 year plan is costed and appropriate budget is allocated to it.
 - If the plan is to be published on the website then a glossary or expansion of abbreviations would be needed.
 - The use of the word 'Great' as an objective was discussed. Parents might be more familiar with the Ofsted term 'Outstanding'. However, it was felt that 'Great' is a more aspirational word without the implications and history of the Ofsted term.
 - The way in which financial resources will be prioritised is missing from the Governors Section.
- ✓ **Taking account of the above considerations, Governors strongly endorsed the three-year plan.**

6. SFVS approval

MM outlined how the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) replaces the FMSiS benchmark, which was externally audited and more inflexible. The new SFVS document must be signed off and returned to the Local Authority. The Working Party had been through and answered all sections, recording actions needed to comply with the standard. All actions had been completed so the document could be approved by Governors and signed by the Chair.

- ✓ **Governors approved the document with the proviso of minor word changes to improve clarity.**

- **SW undertook to make the proposed edits and pass the SFVS to AV to be signed and sent to the LA.**

7. Safeguarding update

RS said that all policies related to Safeguarding had been revised. The next proposed Safeguarding tasks would be to discuss with JO the high number of Child Protection Orders and to look again at the Register of Absences

RS left the meeting at 18:55

8. Report on Christian Distinctiveness of school

IR had circulated an analysis of how Governors could increase awareness of their special responsibilities as leaders of a church school. These include:

- The relevant statement in the Instrument of Government
- Expectations of the Governing Body from GLM Quality Mark Evidence Grid
- The agreed target for the next SIAS (now SIAMS) inspection.
- The proposed plans for Governor Visits on this subject
- Targets for Christian Distinctiveness in the new three-year plan.
- Participation of the Parish Church and the Diocese in school activities.
- Teaching Initiatives and training in the RE syllabus and assemblies.
- Monitoring Diocesan Academies' sponsorship plans.
- Developing relationships with other church schools
- Increasing public awareness of the school's C of E status.
- Noting the increased rigour of the new SIAMS inspections.

Governors discussed how the school is perceived as a Church School (reference was made to the school logo). The Vicar has undertaken to produce material for the newsletter. Governors questioned whether the option to opt out of specifically religious activities was conveyed clearly to parents and what the provision for this eventuality was.

It was explained that the land and buildings belong to the Church but are maintained by the LA. The Diocese may choose to give extra funding.

- ✓ **It was decided that a Church tab should be added to the website.**

9. Policy review & approval process

AV said that there was still some confusion about process of reviewing and approving policies. A proposed process diagram had been circulated. In order to involve Staff members the cycle had been extended the three weeks.

Governors discussed the process. SH highlighted the problem of a Curriculum subject Link Governor reviewing a policy but not being a member of the Committee to which that policy would normally be assigned. The technical issue of 'tracked changes' was discussed: some Governors may not have the computer facilities or the expertise to conform to this standard – but some method of tracking document changes seems necessary. MM said that policy documents from the LA are full of tracked changes, which may cause further confusion.

JO said that step 5 wherein the Head passes a version to the Clerk needs amending or removing.

MM said that there were too many judgements required about what version of the document was current and that the Clerk should email the current version to the relevant Governor in step 2.

JO said that the present system meant that she was swamped by preparation for Governor meetings.

AV said that the proposed process should alleviate this if implemented and that a way should be found to limit the number of policy reviews to three per meeting. This might involve adjusting the review frequency of some policies.

10. Any Other Business

JO invited Governors to a tea with Staff and Friends on Tue 26th March at 15:30. Governors should contact SW and childcare arrangements had been organised.

IR reported that JO had invited him to an official opening of the Rydon Homes show-house with the Mayor and press attending. An award was made to a Year 6 pupil who had won a design competition for one of the bedrooms.

11. Meeting closed at 7.30