

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
(to be called in future Teaching, Learning and Outcomes Committee)
OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY,
HELD AT SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY, 2nd DECEMBER, 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.

Present: Carole Mills (Chair), Jill Tuffnell, Gavin Ayliffe, Emily Evans, Mark Tinkler, Sarah Ransome, Lucy Walker and Jo Dean, Tony Davies (Headteacher), Lis Silver (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence but the meeting were advised that Neil Perry and Mark Tinkler had been delayed due to an accident in the local area (Mark arrived during the meeting). Sarah, Lucy and Jo attended the meeting since the first item on the Committee Agenda was an open item which all governors had been invited to attend.

2. Declaration of direct or indirect pecuniary interests relevant to any of the Agenda items

There were no relevant interests declared

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The Clerk apologised for the late circulation of the minutes. It was noted that these had been circulated with tracked changes in error. Gavin asked if tracked changes could be circulated routinely and Tony and Carole confirmed that this was possible. He was advised that many of the changes are simply minor typos and that this was unlikely to aid clarity. One of the governors asked if the agreed actions could be circulated immediately after the meeting. The Clerk advised that this was difficult to do without compilation of the minutes and the Chair advised that other meetings of the Board had taken up the practice of summarising the key actions at the end of the meeting so that all governors had confirmation of what had been agreed and any discrepancies in understanding could be discussed and clarified and that this practice should be adopted by the Committee.

The minutes of the Curriculum meeting held on 14th October 2015 were agreed with the following changes:

Item 4 Actions- abbreviation for Committee name should be TLOC not TOLC

Item 8 – spelling of Gavin Ayliffe's surname to be corrected (not Aycliffe)

Item 8 – Agreed action to be noted that the school should contact the University of the Third Age for reading volunteers. In addition it was noted that many churches had elderly people who might be interested in volunteering and the local church St Matthews would be a good starting point or an advert in the publication "Across the City" which is distributed to most churches.

Item 8 – Enrich should be spelt Nrich

It was agreed that page numbers should be included on future minutes for ease of identifying items.

4. Matters Arising and agreed actions update

- i) Sarah asked about the work being led by Kate on volunteers. Tony advised that the SDP will be used to pull all the threads together and ensure that the focus is on the most critical areas. Jo suggested that the request letters should link to a database for future reference
- ii) Sarah asked about progress on appointing a teacher to have responsibility for more able children. Tony advised that a teacher had been approached with regards to taking on this role. He also advised that within the SDP there would be an action plan for taking this piece of work forward.
- iii) Link governors for all areas will be finalised at the next FGB meeting when it will be agreed if there should be a Link Governor for this area. Jill advised that she had expressed interests in a number of areas but would not be able to be a Link Governor in all these areas and it was agreed that her workload needed to be reduces to a manageable level. She confirmed that she was happy to stay as Link Governor for PE if no one else wanted this area. Jo suggested that Kevin might be interested in being Link Governor for this area since it tied in with his skills.
- iv) Tony advised the meeting that it is likely that the date of the next FGB meeting will be changed from the 10th December to the 14th January, due to a clash with a Year 11 Parents evening at the local school that a number of governors including the Head needed to attend.
- v) Tony advised that he and Gavin had met about Anti-bullying initiatives and that this was a topic that should go to the next FGB.
- vi) In response to a question about Ever Free School Meals children (EFSM) Tony advised that the local authority has written a report and a paper copy has been circulated. He has requested an electronic copy of the final version which he will distribute to the FGB. The report highlights examples of good practice but indicates that even where good practice is implemented the school does not necessarily see a correlation with improved results. Ideally work should be done to look for other authorities tackling a similar range of issues who have been able to demonstrate that introduction of good practice has made a difference to results so that the good practice can be introduced to the area/school. Gavin suggested that St Matthews could look at areas where additional money has been available to tackle the problems and see if it is possible to import some parts of what they are doing according to our smaller budget. Tony said that some work has been done and keys seem to be strategic interventions and careful tracking of data. There are complex issues surrounding analysis of EFSM Data since there is a significant overlap with the SEND cohort (one third of EFSM children are also SEND and one third of SEND children are entitled to EFSM. Nationally there is a huge problem identified in getting good level of progress for children who are in both groups; Ofsted have published a national report with studies in Bradford and Tower Hamlets included – Tony advised that he is familiar with the situation in Tower Hamlets since this is the area he previously taught in. The numbers of EFSM children are very high in this area (60-70%) but they have different backgrounds e.g. newly arrived immigrants with low income but where education is considered very important by the family. In comparison many of the children in the intersecting group come from families with a long term history of under achievement. He noted that 100% of the children at St Matthews who are EFSM but not SEND had made good progress in the past year (with one possible exception in one subject). The problem is deeper than just providing additional time for supported reading but about changing attitudes to learning although having additional volunteers is likely to be helpful. He noted that recent cut backs by the local authority are affecting the amount of research that can be done. However this has been recognised as an issue of national importance. It is important that St Matthews looks at how the school can be pro-active in tackling the situation. Research has shown that character education is one area where schools have seen significant gains.

Action: TD to send out Local authority report on EFSM children

5. Outcomes in statutory assessments 2015/ Impact on School Development plan

Tony presented the data in the report to the Committee. He directed the Committee's focus to the KS2 data and advised that he had done further analysis which was tabled at the meeting (outcomes against Key Performance Indicators in Statutory Assessments). The data is colour coded to indicate whether above National average (NA) (green), in line with NA (yellow) or below NA (blue) to aid easy identification of areas of concern. He noted that the school needs to be aware that there are yearly fluctuations and therefore should be less reactive to changes in current year and focus on areas where there is evidence of decline over a 2 year or longer period since this tells an emerging story. It is clear that overall results for the last year are not as good as the previous year although reading is still strong there is greater cause for concern regarding Writing and Maths.

He noted that for the Foundation stage (cohort of 90) the results were overall positive. However analysis of EFSMs indicate that only 2/5 children (40%) achieved Good level of development (GLD) and average point score (APS) was 30.4. These children are above average for GLD but show a wider than average gap (36% compared to 19% national average) when compared to non EFSM children in the school. Data indicates that they are coming in with lower performance and struggle to close the gap during their time in Foundation. In response to a question about whether this is about language on entry Tony confirmed that this is an areas that the Nursery are working on. One of the nursery teachers has previously worked in Reception so is very aware of what will be needed and the importance of a language rich environment. Between a third and half the children entering Reception are from the school's nursery provision. He noted that the Phonics check at year 1 and 2 shows a very good success rate.

At Key Stage 1 the school was above or equal to NA on all measures of attainment with the exception of Level 3 in Maths and Writing, bringing the average points score for those areas to just below NA. No other measures for the end of Key stage 1 were of statistical significance, including analysis for vulnerable groups and gender. However the average APS for disadvantaged children is below NA. Analysis of the data clearly shows that children that are both EFSM and SEND show lower levels of attainment. The implications for the SDP are that raising attainment in Writing and Maths must be a priority. It was noted that the number of EFSM children is very low (5) and a question was asked as to whether this was because free lunches are provided for all children. Tony advised that originally there had been only 1 registration and there has been lots of publicity to parents as to why they should register since there is additional Early Years Pupil premium money for the school. There had been a suggestion at a recent Cambridgeshire Heads Finance meeting that schools could ask for additional information on entry such as NI number which would help the school to identify pupils likely to be eligible. Sarah confirmed that the local nursery school she works for is able to obtain information from HI numbers which identifies pupils that are eligible for Pupil Premium. Gavin asked if the school could ask the Local authority for comparative data for Cambridge City and whilst it was acknowledged that we could get the data Tony noted that the school will still be held to account against National averages and this should be the main area of focus. A School improvement board has just been created in Cambridge and this will have a data sharing protocol. It was agreed that the local data if available should be included in future analysis.

Action: Tony to look into collecting additional data such as NI numbers to be used to identify disadvantaged pupils

Action: Tony to see if local data available from School Improvement Board/LEA and to use for future analysis

Jo asked whether with a lower performing cohort it is possible to look at Value Added and identify specific groups that need to be targeted to improve the overall performance. Tony agreed that it was

clear from the Level 3 Maths that the school had been successful in closing the gender gap seen the previous year but that the overall performance was lower. The challenges faced by different cohorts needs to be understood and in this case it would appear that the core middle group needs to be challenged to bring them up to the next level.

Key Stage 2 Attainment – the school are aware that prior attainment of this cohort in terms of APS is 15.6, which is 0.9 lower than the APS of the school's next 3 year groups. This has been achieved following a great deal of early intervention to raise attainment of the group in line with NAs in KS1. Targets for the group were set with the School Adviser based on the children making expected progress from this point and were achieved by the majority of children. The cohort was above or equal to NA on most measures of expected progress with the exception of mathematics and writing. These scores brought the overall value added score down to below NA. Most of the attainment scores were not statistically significant according to RAISE online with the exception of L5+ in reading which was significantly above NA and Level 5+ in writing which was significantly below NA. Results for grammar, punctuation and spelling were lower than usual (just above NA). Sarah asked whether analysis has been done for individual teachers/class results. Tony confirmed that this analysis is done and whilst caution must be used since the number of children is small (30) this data is used as part of staff appraisals to identify potential issues for individual teachers. The cause of poorer results may not just be teacher's practice since it is acknowledged that there are some difficult classes. In addition any on-going issues during the year need to be taken into account. Tony was also asked as to why the results indicated that the school was hitting the required levels but that Value added was low. He indicated that this was a cohort where there had been lots of support put in at KS1 to get the results and therefore it had been a challenge for the children to remain at NA level and value added indicated more than expected progress. The reading targets of Level 4+ to be in line with NA had required significant effort but had been achieved. Interpretation of results requires understanding the cohort and the context within which these results were achieved. In answer to a question from Sarah as to what is expected progress Tony clarified that moving from Level 2 to Level 4 would be expected progress and from Level 2 to 5 would be considered as more than expected progress. RAISE Online looks just at Value Added not contextual Value added. He advised that Alison West from the LEA had advised that some schools are "more strategic" or generous in their assessment of writing. Gavin expressed concern about this view and challenged whether this was an appropriate method of dealing with the situation. Writing achievement is internally assessed and low results have been recorded which will affect whether children are considered to have made more than expected progress. The school have been very rigorous and fair in their assessments. For example, the school does not coach required skills immediately prior to an assessed piece of work to ensure that the work is carried out independently and so gives a true view of what the child can do without support. St Matthew's have looked to assess work produced without targeted teaching but this may be detrimental to assessment scores. The overall focus must always be on teaching in a way that is best for the children not focussing on the data achieved.

Gavin asked about how writing is moderated since this is an area that is internally assessed and at which the school had achieved lower results – is it possible that work was being marked more harshly than in other schools. Tony agreed that there is a subjective element since there is not a national writing test since it is felt that a single piece of writing under test conditions may not be representative of what a child can achieve and that further research would be needed. Currently a number of test pieces of work by a child are looked at to determine the level of achievement and assessment is a skilled activity.

Sarah noted that a family new to the school had observed that there was much less writing than at their previous school. Jill suggested that more writing homework might be a way to raise standards. Tony advised that previously the priority had been put on reading to ensure that there is reading every day and guided reading weekly. The frequency of writing and setting writing homework could be reviewed in future to see if this was considered a significant issue but there is a limited amount of time so it would affect other priorities. Gavin suggested that the priority now should be changed to increase the amount of time spent practicing writing.

With regards to SEND children the meeting were advised that value added was in line with NA for Reading Writing and Maths. Tony noted that one child was absent for the tests, which if he had performed as expected would have improved progress by 11%. The percentage of supported SEND children making expected progress was in line for Reading and writing but slightly below in Maths.

With regards to EFSM children there was again one child absent, which would have accounted for an additional 10% of marks but the data for expected progress was higher for reading and maths and below in writing.

With regards to gender there have been previously discussed issues about the gaps between girls and boys in attainment in writing and mathematics. This year there was no gender gap in writing although there was underachievement from girls versus the NA. In Maths a small gap is still seen in the data with boys achieving an APS 3.1 higher than girls but the differences were not statistically significant.

All these results indicate that this year the school have begun to meet one of the priorities of bringing vulnerable groups in line with national averages.

In summary Tony concluded that caution must be exercised in reacting to data from a single year; although Value added is lower than last year this is for an identified difficult cohort and VA the previous year was 100.5 with no significant concerns. The focus to improve needs to be on enabling class teachers to respond to the varying characteristics of different classes. The following must be priorities for the coming year to achieve this:

- ensuring teachers are aware and understand the characteristics of their class and year group in relation to NAs
- ensuring teachers know which children need to have accelerated progress in order to meet KPIs
- ensuring teachers use differentiation and provision mapping within their practice to reflect the identified concerns

The school will be looking at all KS2 Data to determine what is required under the new methodology to be good and outstanding. There will be mapping out of expected progress for all children and identifying what is the expected progress for the core middle-attaining group. Where performance is below expectation then analysis will be done of how many children are below and which children or group of children need their progress accelerating and how this can be achieved. Other elements that educators have identified as being important are clear objectives for children and timely feedback on progress, developing Staff Appraisal with increased focus on identifying and disseminating best practice.

Jo asked about partnerships with parents and the role of homework in this context. It was noted that whilst there are 2 parents evening a year there was less utilisation of parents as a partnership in improving results. Parents who are more aware of what is going on will be better able to support their children. Tony advised that whilst there are some parents who would like more information there are others who are not able to support their child in this way and this may not be an available resource for the areas where it would be most needed. A range of intervention strategies including targeted "guided sessions", catch up programs and small group interventions are planned. The question of mixed year groups was raised and Tony advised that this could be looked at to see if there was perceived to be a benefit. The recent introduction of Target tracker would help the school to analyse data and make comparisons between different years to give the benefit of better understanding of complex issues.

The meeting were advised that the school has recently purchased a new Spelling scheme that will sit alongside the Big Write. It was agreed that this was positive since one of the parent governors noted that weekly spellings had started very late for Year 6 children. Emily the staff governor agreed that this system would be useful in ensuring that appropriate spellings were available to be sent out earlier in the term. Jill asked about future work on Homework and it was noted that this was an issue that had

been identified in the Parent survey. However to take action further work was needed to give clarity on what exactly was required by parents and this would be done by having a more detailed Homework survey. However the increased workload with introduction of Target tracker and new assessment methodology meant that there was not time currently for a radical overhaul of homework. Tony suggested that the Homework survey would be done in 6-12 months since if it was done earlier it would raise parents expectations of change at a time when there was insufficient resource to carry out the work. He noted that the new spelling scheme would bring about an immediate change in the area of spelling homework. Gavin expressed significant concern about delaying the work and about how much time is needed for research. Gavin suggested that the school should just introduce writing homework to see if this led to improvements. Emily as a Staff governor expressed concern about the impact of such a change without adequate preparation. Jill confirmed that she too had a concern that research for the School Development plan is leading to significant delays in implementing change and that the rate of implementation of changes is too slow. Tony advised that in his discussions with teachers many of them had expressed a view that the rate of change was already too high and that was why it was important to research where change would be most effective. Gavin suggested that the school should start with the biggest problem and that intervention for the current Year 6 was needed urgently. Tony replied that there is already a significant level of intervention for this year group but that he was not sure that writing homework was the best approach. Sarah confirmed that as a parent governor she did not think there was enough writing in comparison to Maths, which she was aware, was done every day. The Committee agreed that they would like to see a change in this current year and asked the note taker to ensure that their challenges in this area were represented in the minutes regarding writing, homework and whether change is carried out in a timely way.

Action: Tony to consider request of Committee to increase the priority on writing and to report back to the next Curriculum /Teaching, Learning and Outcomes Committee on February 3

7. SEND Info Report – update for 2015-16

There is a requirement that this report comes to the Committee annually for review but that only minor changes have been made to the SEND Policy in the last year. For clarify these changes have been highlighted in the document. Changes have been made to reflect the introduction of Target Tracker and to clarify the types of play therapy (drama and music) available through ARU. The availability of the Breakfast club for disadvantaged children has also been added. The need for a separate Link Governor for this area was discussed in addition to the Safeguarding Link governor and it was noted that this was business that would be agreed at the next FGB. It was noted that the 2 staff in the SEND area between them now contribute 6 days of management and are very experienced with a strong intervention programme in place for children that need additional help. In the past they have also been very successful in accessing external provision although this is now becoming less available. It was noted that the current Years 5 and 6 had not benefitted from the current early intervention scheme so results may get stronger as this works through the school.

Lucy who has been the Link Governor for this area noted that externally the school is seen to be very strong with regards to SEND children and this has led to additional applications. Tony confirmed that the number of applications from SEND children who live out of area has increased. In addition the school has a number of pupils from difficult backgrounds including one very high profile child. The school has been successful in dealing with a number of children who had been very challenging in their previous settings. Lucy noted as well that the current funding in Cambridgeshire is low and that better funding from government would have a significant impact in this area. It was noted that whilst there is a Teaching Assistant (TA) in every Reception class this reduces significantly as you move up the school unlike some London Primary schools where there would be a TA in every class. This has meant the school has needed to be more strategic in their use of TAs, so for example an intervention group might take children from multiple classes across the year.

In answer to a question Tony advised that there are approximately 80 SEND children although few of these children will have individual statements and in some cases after a period of significant intervention may not be considered SEND. It is an ill defined term but the school would always tell parents if they considered their child had special needs or if significant intervention was planned. Lucy mentioned that at the termly governors briefing the issue of the overlap between SEND and EFSM children had been discussed since this is a countywide problem. One local school had recently had an Ofsted inspection that had focussed on management of this group of children since it is clear that it is an issue in the city. At St Matthews there is an overlap of 24 children from 83EFSM and 72 SEND. Ofsted's expectation is that a school would know which children are in this group and what is being done for them. It was noted that the EFSM group contains a wide range of children including both good and poor learners since there are varied elements to deprivation in the city with some having low income but very strong educational support from their family. It was noted that the St Matthews catchment area includes an enormous mix of children with postcodes at every level of deprivation/provision from the top to the bottom. Sarah noted that the local nursery school that she works at has also noted some anomalies in the system locally because the mix is so complicated. It was noted that Sarah Barratt (Inclusion Co-ordinator) considered that St Matthews took this issue very seriously and were respected for the interventions that were being made and the impact.

Action: Sarah to be contacted with a view to her coming to speak to Governors about effective strategies for working with SEND children.

Tony advised that he is optimistic that planned work will lead to the required improvements and proposed interventions are more focussed and targeted than previously (when the school had been rated outstanding).

8. Any other business

No items of other business were raised.

10. Date for the next meeting and agreed agenda items

Wednesday 3 February 2016 at 5.30 p.m.

Wednesday 22 June 2016 at 5.30pm

Action: Clerk to circulate dates of future meetings.