

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY, HELD AT SCHOOL ON TUESDAY, 5TH MAY, 2015 AT 6.15 P.M.

Present: Zoe Thorn (Chair), Carole Mills (Vice Chair), Kevin Blencowe, Jill Tuffnell, Sarah Ransome, Joanna Dean, Sam Wilkes Read, Ashley Walsh, Lucy Walker, Gavin Ayliffe, Mark Tinkler, Neil Perry, Melissa Hatcher, Emily Evans, Annabelle Lewis, Liz Steel and Kate Spencer-Allen (Assistant Headteachers), Tony Davies (Headteacher), Anne Maskell (Clerk to Governors)

1. Apologies for absence

ACTION

Apologies for absence were received from Carrie Rice.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

There was no additional declaration of direct or indirect pecuniary interests by any governor relating to items on today's agenda.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 5th March had been distributed in draft with the agenda. It was agreed that the last sentence of item 5(a) be amended to clarify that the year 6 children referred to would be those who left before the end of their final year, i.e. not those progressing to secondary school in the usual way. Parents would be sent an 'exit questionnaire' rather than be interviewed. With this amendment the minutes were agreed and the minute book would be signed by the Chair.

Anne/Zoe

4. Matters arising

Tony reported that the Breakfast Club had started well and nine children were currently attending (the maximum is twelve).

5. a) Headteacher's report

Tony led governors through his report, which had been circulated with the agenda. Governors asked whether the 'Early Excellence' base-line tool for Early Years would be the one model for all LA schools. Tony said that it was the LA's preferred option, and that of our school, but the LA couldn't compel schools to use it. He also notified governors that our team came a very creditable second in their group in the Netball tournament today.

b) Parent questionnaire

In terms of shaping the next School Development Plan, Tony would like to take a snapshot of parents' views via a questionnaire and proposed to use the list of Ofsted parent questions using Survey Monkey. This also gives parents the opportunity to make additional comments. Tony invited governor comments and the following were noted:

- The question re homework may need a qualifying sentence to expand it.

- The following questions re governance should be added:
Have you needed to contact a governor? If yes, were you able to make contact satisfactorily I feel I receive enough information about the work of the governing body. (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
- Having a permanent feedback link on the website may be worth investigating for the future.
- Does the survey enable results to be filtered? Tony said that it does, for example by year group, SEN, EAL, Pupil Premium, etc.
- Why does the school not promote Parent View? Tony said that more schools are actively promoting it and this may be something St Matthew's does more of now.

Tony said that he is keen to raise the profile of the School Council and will seek children's views via their School Council representatives and also via assemblies and class discussion. A free text box would be added at the end of the questionnaire for comments on any questions, particularly if scored "disagree" or "strongly disagree". Another free text box will ask for opinions as to what parents feel are the next steps of development. The questions could also form part of the "exit questionnaire" as per item 3.

6. a) Draft minutes of Resources Committee, 30th April

Draft minutes of the meeting held on 30th April were circulated. Tony said that item 7 needs to be amended to clarify that Kate Spencer-Allen's four-day-per-week teaching commitment is for the remainder of this academic year only. Governors received an update on the end- of-financial year position and on current staffing issues and looked at financial benchmarking and the SVFS. They also considered and agreed the draft budget for 2015-16, which comes to today's meeting for final ratification.

Anne

b) Proposed budget for 2015-16

All governors had now received a copy of the full budget submission proposed for 2015-16, and of Tony's accompanying report. The budget had been discussed in detail at last week's Resources Committee and was recommended for adoption to the FGB. Governors asked if the running costs for the air-conditioning units had been factored into the budget. Tony said that it was very difficult to predict this so it had not been done. Governors also asked whether the school had clear indications of the number of SEN statements next year. Tony said that this was very difficult to budget for –two years ago the number of statements had more than doubled. This is very unusual. All known statements are budgeted for in this budget. The proposed budget gives a predicted carry-forward of £25K, 1% of the budget, which gives a small contingency. Governors agreed that the draft budget be ratified.

c) Clerking the Governing Body

Following the resignation of the current clerk, Zoe had put together a paper detailing options for recruiting a replacement. One option is to use the LA's Clerking Service. A named clerk would be allocated to the school and they would provide a professional service from a highly trained member of staff. As we would require the Clerk to administer sub-committees as well as FGB meetings there would be an additional charge to factor in to the yearly subscription. The other option would be for the school to recruit direct, either as a stand-alone position or as part of a new part-time post in the school office. Some governors felt that this might represent a conflict of interests and that it might be preferable to recruit a parent. Tony pointed out that whoever takes on the role would be an employee of the school in any event. A governor said that having a parent in the post could also represent a conflict of interests. It was

suggested that a governor could clerk the committee and all agreed this would not be appropriate. After further discussion it was agreed as a majority vote to advertise the two posts separately. Zoe said that she would talk to Carol Peel of Cambridgeshire Governor Services for advice.

Zoe

7. Raising Standards – Reconstitution

a) Governance Health Check

Copies of the outcome of the Governance Health Check, undertaken on 24th February, 2015, by Alison West (LA Adviser) and Carol Peel (Governance Adviser) were circulated with papers for today's meeting. Zoe, Tony, Kevin, Emily, Sam and Neil were all interviewed as part of the process. The report gave a list of agreed actions and it was agreed to review progress against these at a meeting with the Headteacher and Chair in the summer term. Some of the items identified as actions were:

- a yearly plan of work for the governing body
- appointing a link governor for training to drive forward this area
- should a representative from each committee go to termly briefings?
- consider suggestion by CP to have team of governors linked to SDP areas
- governors to use the FFT governor data dashboard
- new-style agendas for meetings (already in place)
- agreed School Improvement actions/outcomes at end of minutes (already in place)
- termly updates on statistics
- a further session to development our school vision. Nigel Battey could be asked

to come in again.

- investigate ways of improving governing body self-assessment , including an annual statement of goals and progress towards them on the website

Tony said that a strong message came through from the Health Check that the primary focus should be on the outcomes for children.

b) Skills audit

Zoe had prepared a table from the skills audit questionnaires completed by governors, and also a further paper of the free response submissions. Overall there is a wide range of skills and a great deal of experience which equips our governing body to make informed decisions and conduct its business effectively. It was pointed out that this is a self-assessment process so it is not objectively verifiable. There are some key areas in which additional skills within the governing body would be desirable – e.g. procurement, links to local business, legal matters, premises, and Zoe suggested that governors might consider leaving a vacancy on reconstitution to allow this to be addressed and a suitable candidate to be sought.

c) Discussion

Zoe announced that Staff Governor Carrie Rice had indicated her intention to resign as governor. Ashley said that, due to other commitments, he had also decided to stand down.

It had been agreed at the February meeting that the reconstitution process would take place across two meetings. However the EFGB meeting in April had been cancelled and to allow time for feedback from Governor Services on our proposed reconstitution before the end of term so that the new Instrument of Governance can be prepared for September, it was proposed

that the whole of the reconstitution process takes place at today's meeting. This was agreed.

Governors discussed the proposal to reduce the term of office of Co-opted governors from 4 years to 2 years, to allow for more flexibility to meet the changing demands of the school. This was agreed.

Governors then went on to consider the current size of our governing body (18 governors, including the headteacher). The general view was that the governing body is currently of a size which suits our current purpose, but also offers flexibility in the longer-term to meet the needs of the school. It was felt that radically reducing the size of the governing body was not desirable given the amount of work that needed to be done.

d) Votes on the number of different categories of governors:

Governors voted, by secret ballot where appropriate, in the following categories:

- i) number of co-opted staff governors – 2 (vote 13/2)
- ii) number of elected parent governors – 4 (vote 9/6) (Reduced from 6)
- iii) number of co-opted governors other than staff 7 (unanimously agreed)

e) Proposal to elect governors in categories as agreed above:

- i) Staff governor – Melissa Hatcher was selected, serving out current term of office
Co-opted staff governor – Emily Evans (commencing new 2-year term)
- ii) LA governor – Carole Mills elected, to serve out her current term of office
- iii) Parent governors – Sarah Ransome, Joanna Dean, Sam Wilkes Read and
Gavin Ayliffe – all to serve out current terms of office

f) Nominations for co-opted governors

Those not elected so far left the meeting. Members of the reconstituted governing body discussed the proposal to co-opt for a two-year term the following: Zoe Thorn, Neil Perry, Mark Tinkler, Jill Tuffnell, Kevin Blencowe, Lucy Walker. If all six governors were co-opted this would leave us with one vacancy. After some discussion this proposal was agreed.

g) Election of Chair/Vice Chair

To be deferred until the next meeting. Zoe would continue as Acting Chair.

Decision:

The governing body made the following decisions, following reconstitution:

- i) **its composition would be:**

4 Elected Parent Governors
The Headteacher
1 Elected Staff Governor

1 LA Governor
9 Co-opted Governors

Total: 16 Governors

ii) this was decided because it enables governors to be taken from a wide range of stakeholder groups which reflects the size and complexity of the school, and enables the governing body to meet its current needs but also allows for flexibility in the longer term

iii) the Instrument of Governance would come into force on 1st September, 2015

iv) the Clerk will forward a copy of these minutes to the School Governance Team.

Anne

8. Feedback forms from Governor Training and Governor Visits

None submitted.

9. Any other business

No items raised.

10. Date for the next meeting

Thursday, 9th July at 6.15 p.m.

11. Agenda items

SDP priorities
Health Related Behaviour Survey
possibly E Safety Policy
Feedback from parent questionnaires

12. School improvement actions and outcomes from this meeting

- Agreed 2015-16 budget
- Agreed reconstitution of the Governing Body
- Discussed and agreed process for recruiting Clerk