

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY, HELD AT SCHOOL  
ON THURSDAY, 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2014 AT 6.15 P.M.**

**Present:** Zoe Thorn (Chair) Carole Mills (Vice Chair), Jill Tuffnell, Lucy Walker, Kevin Blencowe, Samuel Wilkes Read, Joanna Dean, Sarah Ransome, Gavin Ayliffe, Melissa Hatcher, Emily Barratt, Neil Perry, Ashley Walsh, Mark Tinkler, Carrie Rice, Tony Davies (Headteacher), Annabelle Lewis, Liz Steel and Kate Spencer-Allen (Assistant Headteachers), Anne Maskell (Clerk to Governors) Chris Meddle, Education Adviser, South Cambs and City (until item 7) Sarah Barratt, School INCO (for item 8) Graham Tweed (Education Capital Strategy Manager) and Joe Ackers (Project Manager), Cambs County Council (for item 9)

**1. Apologies for absence**

**ACTION**

None received

**2. Declaration of pecuniary interests**

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

**3. a) Appointment of Community Governor**

Zoe's term of office as parent governor ends this month. We have received advice from Governor Support Services that it would be appropriate to nominate her for our vacant community governor post until next September to see us through the reconstitution process. All governor roles will be reviewed at this time, in line with a skills audit which will form part of the procedure for reconstitution and which will then be undertaken regularly. At this point the category of 'community' governor will be replaced with a new category of 'co-opted'. Those already in post as community governors will not automatically transfer. There were no other nominations, and this was agreed.

**b) Appointment of LA governor**

The Local Authority has nominated Carole to continue in her role as LA governor for a further term of office. In a change to previous practice this now has to be agreed at a full governing body meeting. This proposal was agreed, and Anne will write to Carole and to the local authority.

**Anne**

**4. Minutes of the last full meeting and of the Resources and Curriculum Committees**

Full governing body, 2<sup>nd</sup> October

Under E Comms (item 6) it was agreed that 'two' systems would be amended to 'several'. With this change the minutes were agreed. It was noted that the Register of Pecuniary Interests was now complete and could be consulted by governors at the school office upon request.

Sarah raised again the issue of a letter to Year 6 parents which had not been received by all. Tony said that a letter had been written and was present on the system. It had not been sent out by Parentmail. It may be that it had not been sent out at all, in which case that was a mistake. He had received no expressions of concern regarding this matter at the time or since other than from Sarah.

Tony

Lucy said that she thought Safeguarding would be a useful topic to include in the options for whole governing body training. Anne will see if this is available, and then consult governors again on their preference for a session in the summer term next year.

Anne

#### Resources Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> November

The draft minutes of this meeting had been circulated with the agenda. Any proposed amendments will be discussed at the next meeting. Kevin highlighted the main areas under discussion.

#### Curriculum Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> November

Draft minutes had been distributed with the agenda. Carole said that this had been an open meeting and the main agenda item had been a comprehensive review of this year's performance in statutory assessments. Our School Improvement Partner Alison West has indicated that this year's results might be judged as 'outstanding' by OFSTED. Tony also presented a numeracy update on behalf of curriculum co-ordinator Caroline Bailey.

#### **5/6. Process for the Reconstitution of the Governing Body/current vacancies**

Zoe welcomed Chris Meddle to the meeting for this item. He explained that all governing bodies are required to reconstitute under the new regulations by September 2015 and distributed copies of the Governor Guidance Notes. Reconstitution has been agreed as there had been issues of professionalism and focus in governing bodies generally, and this would give us an opportunity to amend our constitution appropriately to serve the needs of our school. It is recommended that governing bodies have a strong emphasis on having the people with the right skills and expertise to carry out their role effectively and a skills audit can be built into the process. The new proposals offer the opportunity to have less elected roles and so more flexibility to appoint governors with the required skills, and a chance to have the size of governing body that is fit for purpose for each school's circumstances.

The rules now require there to be at least two elected parent governors, only one elected staff governor and only one LA governor, plus the headteacher. Governing bodies can decide how many co-opted governors they wish to appoint, but with the stipulation that there is a limit of one-third on the number of staff that can be included on the governing body. Tony circulated a paper with some illustrations of how the numbers of governors could be configured. It was felt that a minimum number of seven would be unworkable, particularly for managing, for example, disciplinary issues. There is no upper limit but the ultimate goal is to have the best functioning governing body for the school. It is not necessary to agree the number of associate members (these are currently the Assistant Headteachers) within the reconstitution, but, as with all other appointments, it is important that decisions to appoint are fully explained and justified in the minutes. Associates may vote at sub-committee meetings to which they are appointed, but not at those of the full governing body. (We will need to make sure that this is correct in the revised committee terms of reference for the next academic year.) Associate members should be appointed because of the specific expertise

and experience they can contribute to the work of the governing body, and may be invited to join to respond to a particular challenge the school is facing – an example would have been our school redevelopment.

The term of office for all categories of governor is four years, unless the instrument of governance specifies a shorter term of office (the minimum is a year) for a particular category of governor. The governing body may be reconstituted at any time, which gives flexibility, although Kevin felt that continuity was an important factor to be taken into account. Jill asked about the transition for governors already in post. Chris explained that existing governors continuing after reconstitution in their previous category of governor carry on until their current term of office ends. If a governor's category changes they would start a new term of office. A comprehensive skills audit will need to be undertaken to identify core areas of expertise we would wish to have on the governing body. Chris reported that Carol Peel from the School Governance Team has advised that schools can invite applications from parents with particular skills for consideration for co-opted governor vacancies. Martin asked if job-share teachers could share a staff governor post, but Chris said that this would not be possible.

The best way to take discussion forward was considered, and it was agreed to have an extraordinary meeting early in the new year. At this meeting we should look at the constitution and categories within our revised governing body and the skills audit. The National Governors Association skills audit form, with extra boxes if required, could be used at the meeting (or sent out with the agenda) and the results collated and circulated before the March meeting, when the new model should be approved. The LA can organize a Governing Body Health Check via our School Improvement Partner and Carole Peel, and it was agreed that Zoe would follow this up with a view to it taking place between the two governing body meetings if possible.

Zoe

It was agreed that we would not advertise the current two parent governor vacancies pending the reconstitution process.

## **7. Headteacher's Report**

Tony highlighted the main areas in his report, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He was particularly delighted to report the success of our Years five and six children in the Cross-Country Championship. We won the whole competition by 136 points. Within this we won team events for both boys and girls in Year five, came fourth in the boys' team event in Year Six and eighth in the Year Six girls' event.

## **8. New SEND information report and SEN and Disability Policy**

The SEN Policy has been updated and combined with the now required SEND Information Report in line with the new Code of Practice (2014) which was finally issued in September this year. We have combined the two documents and have aimed to give clear advice for parents, presented in an easy-to-understand and concise way. We have gathered together current practice, and during the course of the year will be asking parents and children for their feedback on how it is working from their perspective. This will be the first stage of an ongoing review process. Sarah Barratt is particularly keen to target parents who don't often respond to requests for feedback, possibly arranging small focus groups for those who are difficult to engage. Very occasionally there is a language issue and we would seek help for parents if this is the case. Governors said that it might be helpful to put together a short audio version of the policy. Lucy asked that the sentence 'St Matthew's is an inclusive school,

Sarah B.

committed to a positive outcome for all our pupils' be included.

The draft policy and report was formally agreed, and will be reviewed next September.

## **9. Discussion re overheating issues at St Matthew's following the rebuild**

Tony welcomed Graham Tweed and Joe Ackers to the meeting. He introduced the discussion by saying that the school is very grateful for all the work that has been put in by the Local Authority to achieve a wonderful new building for our pupils and staff. However overheating has been an issue since the completion of Phase I in September 2012. Temperature monitoring has been carried out since then by Mouchel, the LA and the school – from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> October this year data was gathered half hourly and passed by Joe to Mouchel and Atkins Consultants. The design for the building was based on Building Bulletin 101, which states that temperatures are not to go above 28 degrees Centigrade for a specified period of time and not above 32 degrees at all.

This is a Central Government document used for all schools and it would be difficult for a design to achieve lower temperatures without mechanical cooling units in all classrooms. In the last three years Joe said that the building did not go beyond the criteria set in BB101. Tony said that the school has taken every possible means of keeping classrooms cool but it has been necessary to remove pupils from them on occasion as the heat has been insupportable (and this is likely to be why temperature recordings have not gone above the upper limit). The fans used have done little to change the temperature of the rooms and having blinds down all day is unacceptable for children and not solving the problem, further restricting any airflow.

Graham Tweed said it is appreciated that St Matthew's is a special case, as it needs to be isolated from the traffic fumes on East Road and there are few opening windows on that side of the building. Extracted air goes out through the roof and there is no cross-ventilation. The LA has confirmed that, in their view, the building has been designed and built correctly, but Mouchel accepts that it is warmer than would be wished. Governors asked if the rate of airflow in the Mouchel report (256 litres per second) is actually being delivered. Joe said the ventilation units all have separate certificates to verify they are working as required, but he can make further checks. Governors felt strongly that the current situation is providing an unacceptable working environment for children and staff and that it needs to be addressed urgently. There are three possible resolutions in the Mouchel report – the LA does not feel that external shading will be sufficiently effective, although it does work to a certain extent as the windows do not then heat up. It is also difficult to fit retrospectively. The report only looks at a solution for the first and second floors, but Tony and governors all felt this was unacceptable, as the ground floor and the hall are also very uncomfortable. Kevin asked if other schools had encountered similar problems and how they had been resolved. Joe said that there had been overheating issues at a new school in Huntingdon, and they had installed very effective cooling units. Does the timber-framed structure of the building affect how efficient any solution is likely to be? Joe said that there is no thermal mass so there should not be any problem in this regard. Ashley asked if there was any policy statement or County guidance on the working environment for children. Graham said that all constructions follow the national BB guidelines – there is nothing specific to Cambridgeshire.

The three possible solutions:

- 1) External blinds. Already being tested on the ground floor to a limited extent by the canopy.

Would require going back to the planning authority. Unlikely to prove effective.

2) More opening windows on the courtyard side. The report quotes approx. £15K. Are all rooms catered for?

3) Cooling/air conditioning units. Quoted at £85K to do first and second floors only. Would the school have to fund replacement in due course? Graham said that we could apply to the County for Capital support as this would be classed as a major plant failure.

Governors agreed that they wished to support the second and third options, and that these should be applied to the whole of the new building. Joe said he would refer this back to Mouchel for adjusted costings and advice. Installation would have to be phased – the summer holiday would obviously be the ideal time but that would be too late for a solution for this academic year.

**Joe**

#### **10. Meet the Head – feedback**

Tony said that some of the matters discussed included:

- curriculum newsletters
- maths/literacy sessions for parents (these are planned for Spring term)
- SEND report and policy
- school dinners, in particular a list of parents who are willing to trial online payments (Adrian is following this up)

It was agreed that a summary of feedback from Meet the Head would go out with agendas in future.

**Tony**

#### **11. Governor training**

Lucy had attended Safer Recruitment training and Sam will be going on the course on 11<sup>th</sup> December. Sarah and Jo had been on an Anti-Bullying course and to the termly briefing.

#### **12. PTA news**

The PTA has been extremely busy planning the Festive Frolic on 12<sup>th</sup> December, and also taking orders for Christmas cards and DVDs and helping with the book collection for the Library. As always we are very grateful for all their hard work.

#### **13. Next meetings**

Full governing body – Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March at 6.15 p.m.

Curriculum Committee – Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> February at 5.30 p.m.

Resources Committee – Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February at 6.15 p.m.

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