

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY, HELD AT SCHOOL ON THURSDAY, 3rd APRIL, 2014 AT 6.15 P.M.

Present: Martin Smart (Chair), Carole Mills (Vice Chair), Joanna Dean, Sarah Ransome, Neil Perry, Zoe Thorn, Jill Tuffnell, Samuel Wilkes Read, Melissa Hatcher, Emily Barratt, Mark Tinkler, Tony Davies (Headteacher), Annabelle Lewis and Kate Spencer-Allen (Assistant Headteachers), Anne Maskell (Clerk to Governors)

1. Apologies for absence

ACTION

Apologies for absence were received from Lucy Walker, Kevin Blencowe and Carrie Rice.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

Governors present had no additional interests to declare. Anne is still waiting for one or two forms and will send copies again to those concerned.

Anne

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

It was noted that Kate Spencer-Allen was not present at the meeting on 12th December, 2013 – with this amendment the minutes were agreed and the minute book signed by the Chair.

Jo and Tony had a very productive meeting with Carrie Herbert at Red Balloon. Our PHSE co-ordinator Ruth Platt also plans to meet her. Carrie felt that the proposed Anti-Bullying Policy was sound but would benefit from slight rewording in some areas. The importance that everyone – children, staff and parents – feels they 'own' the policy, and that it should be a working document to which all can contribute was stressed. Tony circulated a black and white copy of the policy – the PTA has agreed to pay to have it professionally printed in colour. The School Council has had a great deal of input, and there has been discussion during circle time and in staff meetings. The aim has been to focus on a preventative and child-centred approach, and this is the message the policy seeks to convey. It is already on the school website. Governors felt it might be helpful to have a link governor in this area.

4. Minutes of governor committees

Resources Committee

The Resources Committee has met twice – for a scheduled meeting on 6th March and for an Extraordinary meeting on 13th February, which had a particular financial focus. Zoe led governors through the main issues discussed at each meeting. Jill said it was difficult for governors who are not on the Resources Committee to fully interpret the figures summarized in the minutes without being given the full background to them, and asked that this information be circulated to the full governing body. It was also suggested that in future committee papers should generally be sent so that the full governing body can access them, and methods of doing this were briefly discussed. Sarah has taken on the role of link governor for finance and is aiming to come in on a monthly basis to undertake some 'spot checks'. Tony said

that the County Council is sending in an auditor to undertake a full audit during the summer term.

Carole asked for a brief summary of the current financial situation. Tony said that an overspend on the school budget had occurred as financial reporting had not given an accurate picture on which to base our budgetary planning. Why the reporting was flawed is under investigation at the moment and cannot be discussed further at present. It is hoped that the first stage of the investigation will be completed after Easter. There are a number of factors which have contributed to the situation, including the number of staff on maternity leave, a significant rise in the number of statements of SEN, utility charges not being accurately billed by providers and cover for sickness absence. Generally we have to consider our budget as much tighter than anticipated and look at where economies can be made. Although there has been good news regarding extra funding for Cambridgeshire it is unclear at the moment how much of this will be devolved to schools as it is likely the local authority will retain some of it to put into central services such as family workers, educational psychologists and the specialist teaching team. Tony said that he has had a series of meetings with our School Financial Adviser Ray Byford, and Ray is happy that the correct financial procedures are in place and that the problem was identified and follow-up action taken promptly. Early indication for next year's draft budget are that we should break even within the year and have a small carry-forward, but this will not reduce the deficit unless we take a stricter view. Ray aims to come to the next Resources Committee meeting when the draft budget will be discussed in detail. It was proposed this should be an open meeting so all governors can attend if they wish.

Curriculum Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 27th March had been circulated. Carole led governors through the main discussion points. It was agreed that, in future, link governor reports would be circulated with the minutes of committee meetings to all governors.

Anne

5. Headteacher's report

Tony's report focussed particularly on attendance and the new LA policy re authorizing holidays in term time. More clarity on this latter issue is needed to ensure there is parity of decision-making across the locality. It is hoped that the leaflet the LA is currently putting together will assist in this, particularly as St Matthew's will wish to review its Attendance Policy next term. Recent and future events for parents and children were also detailed, and a report of the work undertaken by Emily Barratt and Mark Tinkler in developing the music curriculum. There has been a very successful Science and Engineering Week at which the Year 6 children organized a Science Fair and thanks were recorded to Science Co-ordinator Melissa Hatcher and Year 6 teacher Lowri Chatfield for all the hard work and planning which went into this event.

6. E communication and website

Tony and Sam have looked at this area and talked about where work is needed and how the website is hosted. It was felt that it would be useful to set up a task group delegated from the FGB to undertake further investigations and come up with a proposal. By September it was hoped that all communication would be by electronic means unless parents opt in for paper copies. Alternatives for Parentmail could be investigated – many of these also offer e-payments (Adrian Strowger has already started looking at this issue). It was agreed that Sam, Jo, Sarah and Kate would form this task group, with input also from the school office.

Sam said that he is also keen to establish a 'knowledge bank' of local people and parents which teachers can access. He would like a staff member to work with him to identify areas where support would be useful, and look at how the database is set up and how parents are contacted. There will need to be an agreement in place with parents re data sharing. Emily agreed to work with Sam on this.

7. Governor allowances policy

Due to time constraints this will have to be deferred until the summer meeting. Tony said that there is key information he can incorporate from all the drafts circulated with papers for today's meeting and he will bring a draft policy to the next meeting.

Tony

8. Governor vacancies

Rifat has resigned as parent governor. Martin will write to thank her for her significant contribution during her term of office. Notification of the vacancy will be sent out to parents next term.

Martin

9. Governor training

Anne had circulated details of the topics available for whole GB in-house training. Governors felt that the overview of school finances would be particularly helpful, and this is delivered by our own SFA Ray Byford. Anne will contact Governor Services regarding possible dates towards the end of the summer term.

Anne

10. PTA news

Members of the PTA Committee have been very busy organizing the successful World Book Day Disco and Band Night. There are also plans for a Film Night in the near future. Discussions are taking place with Lowri Chatfield re an Arts Week and with Marcie Green re playground developments.

11. Dates for future meetings

Resources Committee –Thursday, 1st May at 6.15 p.m.
Full Governing Body – Thursday, 8th May at 6.15 p.m.
Curriculum Committee – Wednesday, 18th June at 5.30 p.m.