

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY, HELD AT SCHOOL ON THURSDAY, 8th MAY, 2014 AT 6.15 P.M.

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

1. Apologies for absence

ACTION

Ashley Walsh had indicated that he may be either unable to attend today's meeting or would arrive late.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

Governors present had no additional interests to declare.

3. Minutes of the last full meeting and of the Resources Committee meeting, 1st May

Full meeting held on 3rd April, 2014

It was noted that Sarah is taking part in the task group to look at e.communications and online payments and not Neil – with this amendment the minutes were agreed and the minute book signed by the Chair.

- Kate has now taken over from Emily in liaising with Sam about the parental 'knowledge bank'.
- Martin will assume the role of link governor for anti-bullying.
- The vacancy for a parent governor following the resignation of Rifat Siddiqui has now been advertised.
- The in-house training session for all governors 'Making Sense of School Finances' – led by Ray Byford – will take place on 17th July from 6.15 – 8.15 p.m.

Resources Committee, 1st May 2014

This had been an open meeting so that all governors could attend the detailed discussion of the proposed budget for the new financial year. School Financial Adviser Ray Byford had approved the draft budget and had attended this meeting to answer questions. Zoe led governors through the minutes, which had focused on the likely closedown situation for 2013-4 – a year-end BCR report was distributed – and the proposed allocations and predicted income for the new financial year. A statement of how it was proposed to utilise both the pupil premium and sports premium funding was also received. Governors agreed the draft budget and recommended it go forward to today's meeting for final ratification.

The report of the recent investigation was now complete. Governors asked when they would hear the outcome, and Tony said that they would be given an update as soon as possible.

Tony

4. Budget 2014-15

The draft budget had been discussed in detail at the recent meeting of the Resources Committee. As set it results in a predicted deficit figure of £31,131. Substantial additional funding is due to come into school budgets in 2015-16 (although it is as yet unclear how much of this may be held back centrally), so it is anticipated that the situation should resolve itself and it was felt unwise to make stringent budgetary cuts in the short-term which might impact negatively on children's education. Some areas of funding are still uncertain – e.g. SEN, Nursery provision, school meals, but it is hoped that the situation for following year will have more clarity.

- Jill asked how many statemented children the budget is based on, bearing in mind that we have now to fund the first £6K of every statement, each financial year. Tony said there are nine confirmed, but possibly there will be others where the statements have not yet come through. The process is lengthy, and can take up to nine months.

- Is depreciation of assets costed in? This was said to be common practice in academies but not in maintained schools. The school has in the past budgeted to replace certain items such as ICT equipment over a period of four to five years using devolved formula capital, but now that this funding had been reduced from approximately £45,000 per year to £9,000 this was not possible. Increases in formula funding or capital funding in the future may enable this to be addressed again.

- Are we able to have a bridging loan again at the end of the year, if necessary? Tony said that we can and that we will monitor spending closely to assess when that may be required.

- Is there a policy on how much of their budgets schools should hold in reserve? Tony said that the general guideline in the past had been 3-8%.

- If it is necessary to increase the deficit due to unforeseen budgetary pressures (e.g. SEN provision) should further consent from governors be sought and how should this be accomplished? It was agreed that Tony would consult with the Chair of Governors and the two Committee Chairs and then inform the full governing body. It was agreed that, if Tony needs to make staffing decisions that do not impact on the total deficit (i.e. that increases are compensated by reduced spending in other areas) he can go ahead with this.

- Mark said that establishing a charitable trust gives more flexibility in holding reserves.

The draft budget was agreed by the full governing body.

5. Headteacher's report

Tony led governors through his report, which had been distributed with the agenda. As there have been just three working weeks since the last full meeting the report is briefer than usual. New curriculum leaders have planned a number of special events for the summer term and these were detailed in the report.

6. Revised Behaviour Management Policy

The school's Behaviour Management Policy was last reviewed in 2010 and now needs to be revised in the light of new DfE guidance and to ensure that it reflects current practice. A draft Behaviour Management Policy was distributed with the agenda – green highlighted areas reflect the changes in DfE guidance, and those highlighted in yellow have been added by staff. The basic principles remain the same but there are some changes to rewards. The hierarchy of sanctions has been revised to reflect current practice and is now age-specific. A section on restorative approaches to behaviour management has been added.

There is also a more detailed section on confiscation following DfE guidance. Governors were uneasy with the idea of listing all prohibited items and felt that giving a link to the DfE website for the full list could be sufficient. There is a new paragraph on incidents out of school.

Governors approved the draft Behaviour Management Policy.

7. E.communications and online payment update

Sam said that he and Kate had discussed in more detail the idea of a skills database of parents which staff could draw on and had looked at an online form which parents could fill in and which would then populate the database. They will have another meeting to discuss this further. Clear information will need to be given on the purpose of a parent's involvement, and the information will need to be included in our form which volunteers sign.

The task group of governors have looked at four systems for e.communications and online payments – only two of them link into our SIMS pupil database. Initial set-up costs for either system will be high so it will be important to ensure that the new system meets all the needs of both parents and staff. The next step will be for the office staff to look at both systems in more detail.

8. Attendance Policy

The good attendance at St Matthew's this academic year had been discussed at the last full meeting. A new Attendance Policy was brought to this meeting for approval to bring the policy in line with new DfE regulations. A key aspect discussed was that the school will not authorise absence for holidays in term time or any other absence other than in exceptional circumstances. Governors felt that a sentence should be added to say 'the school reserves the right to fine parents for unauthorised absence'. Tony said that there is likely to be a discussion at the next SSOR and CPH meetings regarding parity of decision-making in this area between schools in our Locality and that following these further revisions to policy may be needed.

The revised Attendance Policy was agreed by governors.

9. Governor Allowances Policy

As agreed at the last meeting, Tony had put together a draft, incorporating the key information from the policies previously circulated. The shaded areas were those which are open to discussion. Wording for the section on mileage allowance was agreed as 'mileage may be claimed for distances exceeding that which would normally be travelled to attend governors meetings'. A subsistence maximum of £7.50 was agreed. The draft policy was agreed.

10. Governor vacancies

The vacancy for a parent governor has been advertised. This leaves a Community Governor vacancy which we will look at again in the autumn term.

11. Governor training

Jo and Sarah are going to the termly briefing sessions for governors and have also attended the Advanced Financial Management course. Zoe is going on this next week and Sam may also attend (Zoe will check with Governor Support Services if there is a place available).

Zoe

12. PTA news

The PTA are busy with involvement in planning for Arts Week; they have also organized a Film Night and are working on the Summer Extravaganza. As there is no link governor at the moment, Zoe said that she will ask them for a brief update of activities before each meeting.

Zoe

13. Dates for future meetings

Curriculum Committee – Wednesday, 18th June at 5.30 p.m.

Making Sense of School Finances – whole governing body training on Thursday, 17th July, 6.15 – 8.15 p.m.

Full Governing Body – Thursdays 2nd October and 4th December, both at 6.15 p.m.

Resources Committee – Thursday, 6th November at 6.15 p.m.