

Minutes of the Meeting of
St Matthew's Primary School Full Governing Body (FGB)
at 6.00pm at St Matthew's Primary School on Wednesday 4th December 2024

Present: Christina Bates, Debora Lucarelli (Co-Chair), Ricardo Herbane, Simon Richardson, Katie Hehir, Chris Jagger, Adit Vedii, John Parkin, Linda Jones, Andrew Grieve, Kate Spencer-Allen, Elizabeth Steel

Online: Simon Richardson, Sonia Ingersent, Ananay Aguillar,

Apologies: Neil Perry

Attending: Tony Davies (Headteacher, HT), Daisy Lawrence (Clerk)

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 6pm and all participants were welcomed. Apologies were received and accepted.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests and Matters Arising

All governors have filled out the business interest form and there were no new specific declarations of interest.

AP – Candidate from the Perse to be invited for interview. Sophie Waring to be invited for interview. Interview panel of two governors and the HT.

3. Minutes of the FGB Meeting on 4th July 2024

It was noted AG had been present online but otherwise the minutes were deemed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

AP – Clerk to amend minutes.

4. Head Teacher's Report

The Headteacher (HT) shared a very full and comprehensive report with the FGB prior to the meeting and presented all the items.

Comments and Challenges:

The Governors specifically wanted to express and minute their great gratitude to Anne who had worked at the school since 1988 and would be very much missed. It was felt the new office manager

had big shoes to fill but was expected she would do this very well having worked at a GP practice prior where there were many parallels.

The budget and school accounting system to be used provided by the Local Authority (LA) was discussed in some detail. Could further efficiencies be made? Does the budget forecast take into account all spends including the percentage interest changes in wages and how that affects the school spend. The FGB thanked the HT for an excellent update and report.

Efficiencies could be made by not having to use two separate accounting systems. The LA have now indicated that this is not a requirement and that schools can use their own management information system (MIS) and print a report for the LA once per month. Clarification on this is being sought by CPH. The LA software was causing delays and inaccuracies and it was very challenging at times for the school to have any clarity if it were on track for the budget..

Sarah Callaghan is the new Director of Operations at the County Council.

6. Resources for Learning

The committee met last at the end of October 2024. The terms of reference were reviewed. It is clear there are substantial challenges facing the school Finance Manager in terms of the financial position and reporting.

The Finance Governor Link visit had looked at cash-flow management and how checks and balances were done and found lots of manual work and data manipulation were required. The school was deemed to be very solid and proficient.

Comments and Challenges

The governors delved into further questioning on the funding and the budget. The LA says that funding for SEN should be back-dated so is it? Can the school appeal for back-dated funding and dismissed cases? The FGB and the HT commended what an amazing the job the SENDCO is doing.

Is there any higher strategic work to be done that may help? How is the system working at the moment? What will be the 'Sarah Callahan ethos'? The Director of Education should have a fresh and clean handle on the financial situation. Is the Educational Care and Health Plan (ECHP) process completed using a mandated template or is there autonomy by schools to streamline it?

Governor report described how it is fantastic what the school is able to do with the limited resources available. Some recommendations included considering more channels of communication and regarding workload challenges to continue the good work to make staff feel more valued and empowered.

The Employee Assistance Programme which enables staff to access six weeks of free counselling is excellent and has been of invaluable help. The Achievement Team Meetings are really encouraging and offer the opportunity to come forward and problem-solve or discuss ideas together. The initiative is a great way to create channels and really gives everyone a lift.

Some back-dated funding has been awarded but not all. It is always a challenge to get the total amount. There is a lot of frustration with certain clear-cut cases with very strong evidence that are subsequently dismissed. Only parents are able to lodge the appeal.

The LA are now using locums to help with the backlog which is positive. The Cambridgeshire Educational Psychologists (Eps) are hitting their target for a 20-week turnaround. The systems in place were designed to process 25 referrals per week through the SEND Panel, but this does not meet demand. There has been high staff turnover at the local authority. The ECHP is standard for all schools and cases.

The introduction of the new Unit Leaders has also been really good. The ever-increasing amount of work and responsibilities are now shared and spread more across the team and it is currently the most cohesive senior leadership team the school has had for some time. The success will be re-visited in six months to ensure it continues to work well.

6. Raising Standards

TLOC Committee minutes were shared and agreed. The Inspection Data Summary Report had been discussed, plus Analyse School Performance. Much of the data had already been discussed in previous meetings having been retrieved from Perspective Lite. The school is at or above national averages in all areas at end of Key Stage Two, significantly so in reading (expected and higher standards), and higher attainment levels for Writing, mathematics and English Grammar, Punctuation and spelling. Two areas looked at in more depth were attendance (re comparison with similar schools). Details of discussion in minutes. The HT and GB discussed gross and motor skills, as well as phonics, reading, writing and maths, and understood how the statistics would look including and excluding their higher-than-average SEND cohort.

Ofsted will use the Inspection Data Summary Report. The most statistically significant date is Key Stage 2 reading and higher attainment in maths.

Comments and Challenges:

If challenged by Ofsted, is the school well-prepared to offer the evidence of what action has been taking place? Is the estimated impact the same as recorded impact? Will the three-year strategy change? It is important the school has the correct narrative regarding attendance; Ofsted will also want to see this. How will the school make sure parents are aware of the new requirements to penalise for unauthorised absence? Trust and a good level of confidence with parents is key to the school.

The School Development Plan (SDP) and Self-evaluation Form (SEF) are key documents outlining school's evaluation of practice and development points and its strategic development priorities that come from this. The plan for Pupil Premium was reviewed by governors in the last meeting and will be updated by the SLT in the Spring.

Pupil Premium Strategy

This has been updated and brought to governors following the review of the last plan at a previous meeting. Pupil premium had been discussed at recent Achievement Team Meetings. The multiple barriers to learning that many pupil premium children faced had been a key issue discussed in all those meetings. This strategy incorporated a plan to quantify this further and use the analysis from that process to further inform the strategy moving ahead.

The Sport Premium Strategy was discussed. This outlines how the school will spend its sport premium funding and the key targets it is looking to achieve around access, participation to high quality opportunities and in school and for inter-school competition. A measure of the impact of the last strategy was St Matthew's achieving the School Games Platinum Award for the first time.

Both the Pupil Premium Strategy and Sport Premium Strategy were ratified.

Attendance Policy

The school attendance figures are 1.4% above the national average. When delving deeper, the school is better for almost all groups of children. The County Council provide a template called Working Together to Improve School Attendance. The template is then amalgamated with the school's policy to provide very clear guidelines. There is currently a move and a message gone out to all schools that, subsequent to the reminders and formal early intervention protocols, it will be necessary to give parents a penalty notice. This will need to be carefully managed and introduced for the school's families. There will be a clear information booklet and the message will be explained at the Meet The Head meetings in a clear but compassionate way. It will be made known that it is a national policy and not at the discretion of the school. The Attendance Policy was ratified.

7. Safe-guarding (SG) Update

The governors received the local authority Safeguarding Audit. The audit had been discussed at the previous meeting and the initial feedback had been discussed. The report reflects that feedback.

Comments and Challenges:

Are policies up to date. Are all recommendations being acted upon. Is there a provision for lone-working?

The school is working on the recommendations outlined in the report, including updating certain policies that will be brought to the next Full Governing Body Meeting and streamlining the Single Central Record to cut out some non-statutory information. One of these is the policy on lone-working. Good practice is in place – the school needs to check that this is reflected in current practice.

Governors reiterated their congratulations from the previous meeting on a positive audit.

8. Governance – Restructure of the FGB

There could be six meetings across the year. Some meetings and processes have to happen at certain times. Many items on the committees and the full governing board meetings inter-link but it is important that they are not duplicated unnecessarily across the range of meetings. It was agreed the colour-coding is working well.

It was felt that the new structure could work well. There was a point that losing the committee meetings could potentially have disadvantages such as taking away the opportunity to take a deeper interest in something specific.

It was felt that sub-committees could still be used and ad-hoc TLOC meetings could occur. Remaining agile and limiting discussions and preparations to FGB meetings would continue to provide full transparency, advice and action whilst reducing the workload of preparations. The governing board agreed they were happy to trial it.

9. Any Other Business

The LA gave 32 days' notice that the school's broadband contract would end. Details and quotes were being sourced. The school may need the governors' approval.

10. Dates

The Budget submission is due on 9th May.

(There will be a pre-budget meeting with the school financial advisor prior to this.)

The next meetings were scheduled for 6:00-8:00pm:

Thursday 13th February 2025; Thursday 8th May 2025; and Wednesday 9th July 2025

11. Close of meeting:

20:12 Meeting ends.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____