

# Minutes



Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at 6 pm at The Link Primary School

<b>Attendees:</b>	Stephen Lawes Lesley Nicolas Sandy Turner Lily Nwosu John Reilly	Chair/ OHCAT Trustee Vice Chair Principal Parent Governor Governor
<b>Also present:</b>	Nic Andrews Sue Denman Norman MacDonald Sarah Farncombe Dilma de Araujo	Assistant Headteacher Deputy Headteacher OHCAT Management Accountant Clerk Observer pending appointment
<b>Absent:</b>	Anita Clay Jan Loughborough	Staff Governor Governor

Item	Action / Appendix
<b>1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</b> The meeting was opened by the Chair and introductions were made.	
<b>2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Apologies were received from Anita Clay. Jan Loughborough is expected.	
<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> There were no declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise not already made.	
<b>4. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS</b> Governors noted the resignations of Laura Roberts and Rachael Watson.	
<b>5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</b> The minutes of the meeting were agreed to be an accurate record and a copy signed by the chair of filing.	
<b>6. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA</b>	

None

**7. A. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Governors confirmed they had read the comprehensive report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Governors were taken through the report and particular attention was drawn to the areas highlighted as being a priority. Points made in response to Governor questions and in discussion included:

*Governors asked about the impact on learning and the ability of the school to grow and improve the offer given the constraints of the premises and the evolving more complex needs of the students.*

The Principal explained that the school had originally been set up to cater for around 50 students at a time when their profile was very different. There are currently 54 pupils on role with a possibility of increasing to an absolute maximum of 56-58. The profile of the students and their needs has changed dramatically. The financial viability of the school is dependent on being able to accommodate the increase in numbers. Particular challenges are meeting the needs of the children who can, and those who cannot, access group learning given the limited space and facilities.

*Governors asked about the progress of the temporary classroom.* They were advised that an upstairs room, formerly used as wash room, had been successfully converted into a teaching space for one child. They had previously been accommodated in a designated space in a corridor which was far from ideal given the inevitable disturbances. The impact this new space is having on the child is significant. They have settled into their new environment well. Their behaviour has also improved and no longer impacts on the learning of others.

*Governors asked about the new classroom in the playground.* They were advised that although initially it had been thought planning permission was not necessary it transpired it was. Work on the build has been suspended pending planning approval. Once complete the new classroom will increase capacity. In response to a question Governors were advised that OHCAT is supporting the school with regard to the planning application. It was agreed that it seemed sensible for the LA to look at the broader picture and it would make sense to potentially prioritise the application.

*Governors asked whether the safety/safeguarding of the children and the staff can be maintained given the profile of the cohort and limitations of the site which is being stretched to capacity.* The Principal was candid in her response saying the increasing numbers do increase the risk of injuries to pupils and staff. However, Governors were reassured the Principal and SLT were confident they can accommodate 4 students with the PDA profile at the moment and will be able to take

one more when the new classroom is finished but no more. In terms of accommodation there will be a challenge in a couple of years' time as the current higher level achievers move on and the demands on individual smaller spaces becomes more acute.

*Governors asked about the profile of the children coming in the new term. They were advised that based on the paperwork and a more robust assessment process this year the intake were not expected to be as challenging as last year.*

One positive impact of the particularly challenging start to the academic year had been on staff development. They had improved their skills in behaviour support in particular.

*Governors were impressed with the judgments they had seen being exercised by SLT and assured them of their support in making these difficult decisions.*

### **Staff and Personnel**

*Governors asked about the pressures on staff with the responsibilities which come with a flat leadership model. They were assured that the responsibility is commensurate with the experience, skills and pay grade of the individual. The move from a hierarchy model has freed up capacity for the Deputy to take a more strategic role. All staff have action plans for their particular areas of responsibility and will not be placed under undue pressure.*

Governors looked at the TES reports and could see that teaching was solidly good across the school. The two areas of amber have been turned to yellow with coaching and support.

The TES schedule works well and has had impact. It has encouraged teachers to do well and improve.

*Governors asked about agency staff. They were advised that it had been necessary to buy in agency support due to the additional complex needs of the newest cohort. It was initially unclear how long the extra support would be needed so it was necessary to use supply rather than recruit. There has been a recent recruitment drive which has resulted in TA appointments but one more is needed. There are gaps in the Therapy team and unfortunately there were no applicants so speech and language therapy support has been bought in from the Secondary School.*

There are lunch time supervisor vacancies. Recruitment and retention is difficult and there are also budget restrictions. Next year it is hoped to have more lunchtime cover as the impact of children having less 1:1 support from TAs will make lunch time more challenging.

*Governors asked about cover for the absent teacher and were pleased to hear they were on a phased return. Because the teacher had already put in place routines and strategies before her absence the staff had been able to step up and had coped well. It was evident from lesson observations the experience has improved their understanding of assessment and their practice.*

*In response to a question it was confirmed there was one teach direct student starting who will be supported over the next year.*

### **Safeguarding**

No questions.

### **Behaviour**

Governors were pleased to note the observations by David Scott in the Health Check and the strengths identified.

Governors were advised that since the report there had been one three day fixed term exclusion. There had been a serious behaviour incident resulting in one child being taken to hospital.

In response to a question it was confirmed the injured child is ok. They were able to return to school the next day and came in cheerfully.

There is a reintegration plan (with a multi-disciplinary approach) in place for Monday when the excluded child returns to school.

### **School Improvement**

Governors noted the progress with a number of targets being fully met and embedded. There were no red actions.

The Health Check was welcomed as evidence of the progress and key strengths. The key areas for development were clearly identified and the Principal will be developing the aide memoir for governors.

Governors were invited to join the secondary school training event with David Scott on the 24<sup>th</sup> June at 9-10.30 for a session on the new EIF (Education Inspection Framework).

Governors attention was specifically drawn to page 8 of the Health Check report with regard to the actions for governors.

### **B. DASHBOARD**

The principal confirmed there were a few inaccuracies in the Dashboard. They appeared to be inputting errors in relation to the number of behaviour incidents and the TES scores which do not match the internal data.

There were no further questions which had not been covered in section A above .

### **C. WEBSITE COMPLIANCE ACTIVITY**

Governors were reminded that one of their key responsibilities is to monitor the website for statutory compliance:

To develop Governor's skills in discharging their duty and to help familiarise themselves with the website Governors split into groups and were asked to find the answers to various questions from the website (appendix 1).

Governors confirmed they were able to find the answers and gave feedback on their experience of using the website. Points of note included:

- The website is easy to navigate
- A 'search' bar would be an helpful improvement
- There is a new video on welcome page
- The website reflects well on the school
- A calendar of events would be helpful

## **8. GOVERNOR VISITS**

### **A. PORTFOLIO GOVERNOR REPORTS**

To receive the following portfolio reports:

#### **i. Teaching and Learning**

Points made in discussion included:

- Governors had been particularly impressed by the school trips and the frequency.
- The trips to the supermarket were noted to develop life skills and confidence. In some instances they can be used to help desensitise a child to anxiety triggers
- Governors are welcome to attend the curriculum meeting
- A Governor has visited and observed the termly monitoring of schemes of work. The visit included a walk round classes to make sure the schemes are implemented.

#### **ii. Finance and Resources**

Finance is discussed in agenda item 10 below.

#### **iii. HR and Organisational Development**

The portfolio holder was absent from the meeting.

Governors were thanked for making visits which play an important part in effective governance.

## **B. OTHER VISIT REPORTS**

Governors to provide verbal or written updates of other visits undertaken.

None to report.

## **9. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Governors noted the portfolio visits were a useful opportunity to develop their skills and understanding of the school and as such were a valuable training opportunity.

As noted above Governors were encouraged to attend the EIF training at the Secondary school on the 24<sup>th</sup> June.

## **10. FINANCE AND FUNDING**

### **A. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS (for information)**

Governors were talked through the accounts up to the end of April 2019 which had been circulated in advance of the meeting and in the format they are used to seeing.

Points drawn to Governors attention included:

- The target for the Trust is to break even
- The deficit is down to the difficulty experienced in securing the place plus funding which has now been taken out of the budget
- Income was more than expected but so has expenditure. £113k has been spent on support to meet the particular needs of a challenging cohort.
- The movement in reserves
- The risk regarding the repayment claim by the ESFA
- Reserves remain at a strong level (particularly compared to other schools in the Trust)
- The deficit at this stage is not a major concern

### **B BUDGET 2019-20 (for information)**

The Budget had been circulated in advance of the meeting for information. Points drawn to governors for particular attention included:

- The ESFA funding is based on 51 students budget
- It is not unrealistic to budget based on 56 given the current number of applications although, as noted, capacity is tight
- It should be possible to meet the target of breaking even but the challenge will be on staffing costs
- Curriculum costs must be reduced
- An additional spend this year was the support from the digital school for a half day a week. It fills a skills shortage within the school, benefits the children and is good value for money

- The cost of the behaviour consultant for the full year is taken into account
- Teacher pension scheme contributions go up from 17.1% to 23.% which is fully funded for next year. Unless the ESFA decide to extend the grant this will represent an additional cost of around £45k per annum
- Staff costs will rise every year by at least 2%
- The Principal has talked to staff about the need to increase class sizes. The optimum in the past has been 8-9 but some will have 10 next year
- The nub of the dilemma is that capacity is 54 but 56 are needed financially
- Staff are very resilient. They do rise to the challenge of the changing profile of the student and find ways to adapt. Staff who have worked in other settings recognise other schools have larger class numbers and less support from therapists
- It is hard to turn children away when there is a waiting list which is why the premises challenges are so important
- There should be potential to reduce the spend on agency costs
- An agency teacher costs about £550-600 a week (about £22-25k a year).
- The capital expenditure of £43k capital expenditure (for air conditioning, general replenishing and furniture).

## 11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT

Governors looked at the Equality and Diversity Procedure and noted it had been subject to detailed scrutiny by them last year.

The procedure includes:

- Equality Statement;
- General / Specific Duties;

Governors discussed in some detail how the policy had been updated and had been working in practice. They noted the increased parental engagement and that the next steps will be to capture evidence of compliance and impact. The more targeted support for families with cultural issues which (as governors noted could stray into the area of neglect) was a new significant objective which Governors welcome and applaud.

**RESOLUTION:** Governors approve the updated Equality and Diversity Procedure

## 12. POLICES AND PROCEDURES

- A. To note the following Family policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board on 25 March 2019 and available on the Governors' Portal.

There were no questions arising from the policies which Governors duly noted:

- Attendance Policy (OHC)
- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Exclusions Policy (Academies)
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Traffic Management Policy

B. To receive and review any local policies or procedures  
The following policies were circulated in advance of the meeting for consideration:

- Accessibility Plan
- Child protection and Safeguarding Contextual Procedure

There were no questions but Governors were pleased to hear that the Contextual Child protection policy and procedure had been used by OHCAT as a model for other schools.

#### **RESOLUTION:**

Governors approve the following policies:

- Accessibility Plan
- Child protection and Safeguarding Contextual Procedure
- Equality and Diversity Procedure

### **13. OHC&AT GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION**

Governors noted updates to the following governance documentation were approved by the OHC&AT Board and are available to view on the Governors' Portal.

#### **A. Schedule of Responsibility**

The schedule has been amended to reflect the arrangements for consideration of permanent exclusions and now reads:

*"[LGB] appoints a panel of at least three members, one of whom must be the Executive Head, Quality and Learning Support (or his or her nominee) to consider any permanent exclusions and other certain fixed-term exclusions as set out in the DfE Exclusions Guidance 2017."*

#### **B. Portfolio Guidance**

The revised and updated portfolio guidance, to take effect from September 2019.

**14. CONSULTATION ON REVISED OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK**

Noted

**15. GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK**

Governors noted that the DfE Handbook was updated in March 2019 and is available [online](#) and on the Governors' Portal.

A summary of the changes from the previous version has also been uploaded to the Portal.

**ACTION POINT:** A copy of the summary of the changes will be re circulated (ST)

ST

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Confidential Strategy item

**17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Governors will agree LGB meeting dates for 2019-20, including the meeting of the Pay Committee in the autumn term 2019 by email in consultation with the secondary school.

**18. CONFIDENTIALITY**

A confidential strategy item is recorded in confidential minutes.

Signed.....

2019

Chair of Local Governing Body