

**MINUTES
LINK PRIMARY AND LINK SECONDARY SCHOOLS
JOINT GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2022 AT 6.00PM**

Members: Julia James (Chair) – JJ
Jane Gibbs (Vice Chair) – JG
Sandy Turner (Executive Principal) – ST
Anita Clay (Staff Governor) – AC
Karen Hayward (Staff Governor) – KH**attended remotely*
Jan Loughborough (Governor) – JL
Lesley Nicolas (Governor) – LN
Sameera Saleem (Parent Governor) – SS **attended remotely*
David Murphy (Parent Governor) - DM

Also present: Nic Andrews (Assistant Principal, Link Primary) – NA
Amanda Griffiths (Deputy Headteacher, Link Primary)
Hannah Wallwark (Deputy Headteacher, Link Secondary)
Sue Denman (Deputy Headteacher, Link Primary School).
Katie Swire (Clerk) – KS

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed KS to her first meeting. All present introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dilma de Araujo.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS

- i. The LGB noted that further to her appointment as Governor with effect from 10 December 2021, Avanti Patel had subsequently resigned. The Governance Manager is working to fill the vacancy and appoint a new Governor.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting, held on 17 November 2021, were approved by the LGB.

6. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

- i. Governors confirmed that they had read the September 2021 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance document.
- ii. The LGB appointed Jane Gibbs as the Careers/Work Experience portfolio link governor.
- iii. The LGB noted the resignation of Sameera Saleem, Parent Governor (Secondary). Governors thanked SS for her service and contribution to the LGB in her role as governor. Governors discussed the process for filling recruiting a new parent governor, and ST suggested that it would be beneficial to delay an election until the start of the next academic year to capture new parents joining the school in the autumn term.

Action: Parent Governor election (Secondary) to be held at the start of the autumn term.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

ST presented the Principal's report and highlighted key aspects, as well as providing updates to specific areas, which were noted as follows.

Pupil Matters

2022/23 Pupil Numbers

ST reported that both schools are currently at capacity with numbers of pupils on roll. Admissions for the forthcoming academic year will also mean that pupil places at both the Primary and Secondary schools remain full.

SEND Funding Review

The Sutton SEND consultation process is drawing to a close. ST has been heavily involved in the consultation process. The outcome of the consultation process and the exact financial implications on schools have not yet been finalised, however, it is anticipated that funding for pupils at the Link schools will be reduced in line with changes to funding bands across the borough. The negative financial implications for the Link schools are expected to be replicated for other OHCAT schools in the borough of Sutton, most of which are expected to remain at their current funding levels or receive less SEND income.

ST explained that the new SEND funding formula will be implemented in September 2022 for most schools, although The Link will have a reprieve for a year, as one of the schools that will be losing out in terms of pupil funding.

This gives the school a year to iron out some of the anomalies in the new funding formula, including the fact that there is a vast difference in expected income between pathway 2 learners at the Primary and pathway 1 learners at the Secondary despite the cohorts being of a similar need and ability. The Sutton pupil commissioner is due to visit the school at the end of April to observe the pupils to get a better understanding of this highlighted anomaly. It is likely the pathway document will be altered to outline the expected progression between the Primary and Secondary pathways to resolve this issue.

ST noted that there are good intentions behind the review, particularly in terms of increasing accountability for SEND funding and creating consistency in funding bands across the borough. However, what cannot be accounted for financially is the complexity and varying needs of individual pupils.

The new funding system poses a substantial risk to quality of service in the Primary school, particularly in terms of the ability to provide one to one support to meet the complexity of needs of some children. The financial impact is more manageable in the Secondary school.

Negotiations around final fees are on-going, particularly around therapy fees, which the Link schools currently provide in house.

DM asked whether the SEND funding review could impact the proposal for the new Satellite site, specialising in PDA provision. ST explained that under the new SEND funding bands, pupils with a diagnosis of Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), will receive a higher funding band. In practice, this should mean that the new PDA provision is not impacted, however, the school will need to ensure that specific PDA funding is ring fenced for pupils with that diagnosis.

The current Admission Policy for the Link Schools, and the proposed new Satellite site will need to be kept under review, in line with the local authority SEND review, to ensure that all sites are financially viable. The location of the Satellite site means that it falls under the jurisdiction of the London Borough of Sutton, however, it sits on the border of Croydon. Currently, pupils in the London Borough of Sutton are prioritised for admission. SEND funding across other local boroughs will need to be monitored when considering future pupil admissions.

Satellite Site

The consultation on the proposal to develop a new satellite site, specialising in provision for pupils diagnosed with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) has now closed. The consultation process was positive and a business case will be submitted to the DfE next week. The DfE will consider the business case and will notify ST of the outcome by the end of April 2022.

It is anticipated that the proposal will be approved by the DfE and the Satellite site will be in operation from the start of the next academic year, in September

2022. The Satellite site will be based in an annex on the existing Wallington Primary Academy site. Some improvement work will be required to the site entrance to improve accessibility on the main site, however, the annex is located on the newer part of the site and requires little renovation, other than some fencing to separate the two buildings.

ST noted that there are no concerns about filling the pupil places in the new site; the main risk posed is the completion of the required improvement work in time for a September 2022 opening.

The local authority (London Borough of Sutton) are likely to match the capital funding for the new site, and a bid for this will be submitted once approval for the establishment of the site is granted by the DfE.

JJ asked if negotiations on the lease of the new site have been completed. ST noted that negotiations have almost finished and this will include split site funding across the three new sites (Primary school, Secondary school, and Satellite site). The majority of the funding will cover the cost of the lease, however, there will be additional costs to bare by the school for operational running of the new site.

DM asked if it was the intention to move existing children with a PDA diagnosis across to the new Satellite site specialising in PDA provision. ST explained that there are currently only two children with a PDA diagnosis on roll at the Secondary school. As both children are very settled in their current environment, the school will not risk disrupting those children by moving them to the new site, and they will therefore remain in the Secondary provision. There are an additional 13 PDA children in the Primary school and a decision around where they are best placed will need to be considered, pending approval of the proposal. It is likely, however, that most of the 13 children will move across to the Satellite site, as they will benefit from the new provision. All decisions to move individual children will be considered in full, and made on a case by case basis, to ensure the best outcome for each child. This decision will also include consideration of pre-existing relationships with other PDA children to maintain positive pupil relationships.

The PDA staffing model in the Satellite site is based on the local authority success criteria. This will be modelled on six PDA children per one member of teaching staff, with additional one to one TA support, as appropriate. ST added that due to increasing restrictions on SEND funding it is unlikely that all PDA children will have their own one to one TA support; resources will instead need to be shared across the six children in each cohort. ST noted that the nature of PDA means that pupils with this specific ASD diagnosis require considerable emotional and behavioural regulation interventions from staff.

ST explained that not all ASD children who join the Link Schools have a PDA diagnosis on their individual EHCP's when they arrive; some have an exact PDA diagnosis, while others have a general ASD diagnosis with a profile that includes traits symptomatic of PDA. As PDA is a relatively new diagnostic within the Autistic spectrum, it is a learning process for staff working with children to identify strategies and support children to further enhance the understanding of the PDA profile.

ST recorded her thanks to members of the OHCAT team, particularly Tracey Trotter and Susanne Hersey from the Finance team, who have supported the school through the consultation and meeting process.

Merge of Link Primary and Secondary schools

The business case for the merging of the Primary and Secondary schools has now been submitted to the DfE. The proposal to merge the two schools, also incorporates the inclusion of the proposed new satellite site for PDA children. If approved, the school will adopt a new name 'The Link School' which will be used across all three sites. The merging of the Primary and Secondary provision, as well as the satellite site, will enable the school to be issued with one DfE number, rather than a separate number for each site.

Health and Safety

Covid-19 remains prevalent across both schools, however the impact has been more significant in the Primary school. Positive cases of Covid-19 resulted in the implementation of a reduced timetable for two classes in the Primary school at the start of the spring term. There are still a number of staff and pupil absences as a result of Covid-19, however the Primary school is managing to maintain provision to keep classes open.

NHS self-isolation and testing guidelines are being maintained and recommended by the school for all staff and pupils testing positive for Covid-19; two negative tests are requested on return to the school premises.

The Primary environment is returning to a pre-Covid-19 normal, with community visits reinstated, assemblies running, and class bubbles removed. Staff morale has improved in line with the easing of restrictions across both schools, and staff are now able to work collaboratively across both sites, which is having a positive impact on well-being.

The Primary school are mindful that positive Covid-19 cases are beginning to pick up in the community once again; any associated impact of this will be reported at the next LGB meeting.

There are some cases of staff and pupil absence due to Covid-19 within the Secondary school at present, but cases are not widespread. Risk assessment measures introduced during the pandemic, such as split break and lunchtimes for Secondary pupils, have been maintained as normal practice. This is because the staggered approach works well for the school and the pupils.

Secondary attendance is very good and is higher than it was pre-Covid-19.

Site and Premises

Improvement work to the Primary school playground is underway with work undertaken today. Further completion of alterations and maintenance to

existing playground equipment is scheduled to take place during the May half term. Some elements of the improvement work have been delayed as a result of costing changes and subsequent alterations to work plans.

A comprehensive series of site works will be undertaken on the Secondary school site. The project will be completed in three phases and will include improvement work in the following areas:

- Phase 1: Levelling off of playground area, re-tarmac of school entrance and carpark, a new fence and electronic gate to improve security at the school entrance.
- Phase 2: Improvement work to middle section of the playground.
- Phase 3: Increasing disability access around the school and playground with the building of slopes.

The first and second phases of the site work are scheduled to be undertaken during the forthcoming summer holidays; phase three work will follow at an appropriate time in the school calendar, pending completion of phases one and two.

School Development Plan Progress

SDP targets for the Primary school are currently on track. There have been a number of positives, such as the reimplementation of community visits, in line with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. Continued professional development initiatives facilitated for SSA staff have had a positive impact, with notable improvement on teaching and learning practices in the Primary school.

SDP targets for the Secondary school are also on track, and progress to meet targets is being made ahead of the estimated timeframe. Considerable progress has been made in respect of leadership and management, where a robust induction process has been introduced for all new staff. The impact of this is evident in the recent lesson observations, which were very good, and demonstrated a limited difference in the teaching and learning practices of new and existing staff members. Additional evidence can also be attributed to the consistently high quality assessments across the Secondary school.

OFSTED Inspection

The outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection was very positive, particularly for the Behaviour criteria, which was rated as Outstanding. The Ofsted report and the feedback received, highlights the journey of the Secondary school and the commitment and impact of staff to embed improvement across the school. The school will work to develop and embed a love of reading for all children, outside of lessons in school, in response to an action point in the Ofsted report. This action will be supported by the development of the Library in the Secondary school.

Governors noted that they are extremely happy with Ofsted report and recorded their thanks to the Principal and all of the staff working in the Secondary school for their hard work and commitment to school improvement.

Behaviour

Behaviour in the Primary school has improved this term, with a reduction of 62 instances of behaviour in the spring term, compared to the autumn term. Behaviour instances that have occurred in the spring term have been significantly reduced in severity, and this is linked to the development and promotion of a language of wellbeing to Primary pupils. The rationale behind the initiative is to remove the negative associations of behaviour through language and to deescalate patterns of behaviour before they arise.

Wellbeing plans have now been put in place in the Secondary school. Behaviour is generally good and there are no major concerns to report. One fixed term exclusion has been issued for the first period of the spring term to date.

8. DASHBOARDS

The LGB received and noted the following data dashboards:

- i. Link Primary Spring 21-22
- ii. Link Secondary Spring 21-22

9. SAFEGUARDING

The LGB received and noted the following documents:

- i. Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offers
- ii. Safeguarding Audits

ST noted that the new Safeguarding Audit documentation is very helpful in collating safeguarding information and data in a clear format to present to governors.

10. POTFOLIO GOVERNOR VISITS

The LGB received and noted the following portfolio reports from Governors:

- i. Ethos, Vision and Strategy
- ii. Teaching and Learning
- iii. Health and Safety, Child Protection and Safeguarding
- iv. Finance and Resources
- v. HR and Organisational Development

- vi. Business Development and Marketing

11. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The LGB noted that there was nothing to report or actions to be taken for governors at present in respect of training and development.

12. FINANCE AND FUNDING

The LGB received the management accounts report. ST provided an additional verbal commentary, and Governors noted that:

- i. The Primary school currently has an in year surplus of £25k, which is significantly higher than the £6k surplus originally forecasted.
- ii. The Secondary school are in a similar position, with an in year surplus of £28k, which is above the forecast of £19k.
- iii. Staffing costs at the Primary school are currently sitting at 78% of the total budget income; the figure for the Secondary is lower, with staffing expenditure at 68% of the total income.
- iv. Staffing capacity has been increased to support the individual needs of specific children on both sites.
- v. The cost of living rise for Support staff was agreed nationally at 1.75%. No significant impact to the budget is anticipated, as this was part of the budget forecast for 2021/22.
- vi. The budget position across both schools is in a relatively healthy position. This can be attributed to a historical robust management of the two school's budgets, along with some additional funding income for individual pupils, as well Covid-19 funding.
- vii. The Principal and School Office Manager are reviewing the budget to look at ways to reinvest in each school now that the financial position has improved. To this end, projects such as a new Library in the Secondary school, along with an IT audit to improve IT resources, such as laptops to improve efficiency, are being developed to release some of the surplus in the budgets.
- viii. The issue around contracts for TA's within the Primary school has now been resolved and TA's have been moved onto new equitable contracts of employment as appropriate. Staff affected will receive back pay from September 2021.

13. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- i. The LGB received and noted the family policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board on 10 December 2021, which are available to view on Governor Hub.
- ii. The LGB approved the following local procedure for the Link Primary School:
 - a) Wellbeing – Positive Handling Procedure

14. OHC&AT GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

The LGB noted that the following documents had been approved by the OHC&AT Board and are available to view on Governor Hub:

- i. OHC&AT Scheme of Delegation
- ii. OHC&AT Schedule of Responsibilities

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Term dates for 2022/23

Governors noted that the schools have adopted the London Borough of Sutton's term dates for the next academic year; these dates differ to the dates set by the London Borough of Croydon.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The LGB noted that the next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 29 June 2022, at 6pm.**

17. CONFIDENTIALITY

The LGB noted that there were no items of business deemed confidential.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed: _____ **Julia James, Chair.**

Date: _____

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS		
Item	Action	Allocated to
6i	LGB records to be updated on Governor Hub to note that governors have read the September 2021 KCSIE document	KS
6iii	Parent Governor Election to be held in the autumn term	KS/Governance Manager