

ST JOHN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, NURSERY AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE, KENILWORTH

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 7PM

Present: Mr T Martin, Mr D Barrow, Rev A Attwood, Mrs T Coopey, Mrs A Derrick, Mr W Harris, Mrs S Kettle, and Mr J Whitehouse

In Attendance: Mrs C Weir (Clerk to Governors), Mrs M Baker (Deputy Headteacher)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G Bucci and Mr C Rollason. No conflicts of interest were declared for the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON THE 1ST JULY AND 5TH SEPTEMBER

The minutes of the meetings of the Full Governing Body held on the 1st July 2013 and the 5th September 2013 were approved and signed as a true record. With regards to the membership of the subcommittees as agreed at the 5th September meeting, Mr Whitehouse noted that going forward the Resources Committee will also fulfil the role of the Pay Committee, and the membership as agreed only includes three non-Staff Governors. This will be a consideration when allocating new governors to the subcommittees.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Sources of External Support (arising from the 7th May Meeting)

Mr Barrow explained that the LA has extended its support for St John's for another year and the school has been allocated a new LA officer, Tonia Bowden. An initial visit has taken place and took the form of a desktop exercise reviewing the data.

Mr Barrow stated that he has successfully arranged for some additional support to be provided by Karen Davies who works in Birmingham. It is hoped that she will bring a different perspective being from outside Warwickshire. Five visits have been agreed: her initial visit will take place tomorrow and will be a fact-finding walk around the school.

Governor Recruitment

Vacancies exist for four governors, one in each of the parent, staff, community and local authority categories. Governors noted the appointment of Miss Miranda Baker as staff governor.

Mrs Weir updated Governors on the remaining vacancies. A letter has been sent to all parents and carers regarding the parent governor vacancy, with a deadline for nominations of the 27th September. As yet no nominations have been received and a reminder will be included in the newsletter. Mrs Weir had spoken to Governor Services regarding the local authority governor vacancy, and they will notify the Council of the vacancy. However, there are a number of vacancies across the county so it may be some time before it is filled. The community governor vacancy has been registered with the Governor One-Stop Shop service but no candidates have been notified as yet. Mr Whitehouse volunteered to contact the University of Warwick to see if they were able to recommend any suitable candidates.

Action: contact the University of Warwick regarding candidates for the community governor vacancy (Mr Whitehouse)

Funded 2 Year Old Nursery Places

Mr Barrow explained that securing funded 2 year old nursery places was important to St John's on two fronts: firstly it is consistent with St John's vision of providing seamless care from age 0 to 11, and secondly it would help to safeguard the jobs of the Children's Centre staff in the light of future budget reductions. An application had been submitted to OFSTED before the summer, and there had been an exchange of correspondence over the summer regarding the detail of the application. The information requests have now ceased so it is assumed that the application is being considered. If St John's application is successful, then funding will be available from January 2014. Mr Barrow is optimistic: there are enough eligible two years olds within Kenilworth to allow for multiple providers, with St John's seeking 12 funded places. Mrs Dyer will chase the application's progress next week.

Rev Attwood asked which other childcare providers in Kenilworth were also proposing to offer funded 2 year old places. Mr Barrow confirmed that the Kenilworth Children's Centre has applied, and some of the private nurseries, playgroups and child minders although he was not aware of which ones. Mrs Coopey asked how many hours would be funded. Mr Barrow confirmed that funding would be for fifteen hours a week, and St John's proposal was to offer this over two and a half days as this was the best solution from a staffing perspective.

Governor Self-Assessment Workshop

A date for the Governor Self Assessment Workshop has been set for the 10th October from 7 to 9pm at the school. With the exception of Rev Attwood, all Governors present confirmed that they would be available to attend. Mr Rollason will be circulating a 20-point Governor Self-Assessment questionnaire as pre-work in advance of the meeting, and Mr Martin requested that governors complete and submit this even if they are unable to attend on the evening.

Mr Martin explained that the workshop will also address the Governing Body's vision and strategy for the school. The workshop will be structured around the twenty questions in the questionnaire. It was noted that the OFSTED School Inspection Handbook also contains a list of areas that the governing body should be addressing. Mr Barrow stated that he believed that there was close correlation between the two documents and suggested that the workshop focus on the 20 points in the Self Assessment questionnaire as a starting point.

4. DRAFT PAY POLICY FOR ST JOHN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following on from the last meeting, Mr Barrow had modified the Model Pay Policy for Warwickshire Schools to make it specific to St John's, and this draft had previously been circulated to Governors. Governors supported Mr Barrow's proposal to retain the teachers' main pay spine and upper pay spine, with an increased emphasis that progression through the pay scale will be dependent on satisfactory performance.

Mr Whitehouse noted that in twelve month's time the policy could become very onerous for Governors, giving them a level of involvement in staff pay that they had never had previously. Mr Barrow agreed and explained that the policy will need to be reviewed annually. Establishing a working party to look at future development of the Pay Policy could be a suitable way forward. Mr Barrow explained that he saw the proposed policy as a stopgap for a period of a year, which could be extended for a further year if necessary whilst a working party developed an alternative. Whilst Mr Barrow is using performance language in staff performance reviews, he expressed his reluctance to go down the route of fully performance related pay at this point in time. He also expressed general concerns about comparability between schools and potential implications for staff recruitment if schools began implementing their own pay structures. Rev Attwood commented that high staff morale was vital for the school to achieve a good rating from OFSTED, and that care needed to be taken that morale was not sacrificed for high performance.

Mr Harris asked whether it was known when more significant changes were likely to be introduced: Mr Barrow responded that the unions were not in agreement, and he

believed that it would be around a year's time. Mrs Coopey asked Mr Barrow how he would feel about moving away from the established pay scales: Mr Barrow explained that he liked the security and convenience that the existing pay structure provided, and he would more time to research and see other examples working in practice before he would be happy moving away from this. By keeping the existing structure, it buys time to look at all possibilities carefully.

Governors ratified the proposed Pay Policy for St John's School as presented, and the Resources Committee work programme will include a revisiting of the policy later in the academic year.

5. UPDATE ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Mr Barrow provided an update on the proposed industrial action on the 1st October. He explained that teachers currently feel aggrieved as a result of matters such as their pay freeze, changes to terms and conditions of employment, pension changes and OFSTED, and therefore some of the teaching unions are planning a day of industrial action on the 1st October. Mr Barrow explained that he is supportive of teachers' right to take industrial action, but is also mindful of the disruption this would cause, particularly for working parents. As a result he has decided to keep the whole school open on the 1st October with Teaching Assistants and members of staff who are not members of the unions concerned providing a safe environment for the children. Mr Barrow emphasised that the curriculum will not be delivered on the day. The alternative would be a partial school closure, and Mr Barrow expressed concern that this could leave the teachers concerned open to negative reaction from parents. Mr Barrow has written to parents to explain the arrangements.

Mr Martin asked whether the planned industrial action had caused any tension between Mr Barrow and the teaching staff, and Mr Barrow replied that he did not believe this to be the case. Mr Whitehouse asked for clarification on whether the message to parents was that pupils should or could come into school on the day. Mr Barrow responded that all pupils should attend school as normal: he also highlighted that a number of parents had offered their help and he would be taking them up on this.

6. SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

A draft set of Sub-committee Terms of Reference for St John's based on the Warwickshire model terms of reference had been previously circulated. Governors approved these Terms of Reference with two outstanding points for clarification being agreed at the meeting: the Resources Committee has delegated authority to write off irrecoverable debts up to £250; and the Hearings Committee will retain the authority to make any determination to dismiss any member of staff or make any decisions relating

to any member of staff other than the Headteacher under the governing body's personnel procedures.

7. CHILDRENS' CENTRE UPDATE

Mr Barrow gave an update on the current position with regards to the Children's Centres in Kenilworth. Mr Barrow has been working with Rachel Gillett of Kenilworth Children's Centre to put together a tender to run both children's centres as a combined service. The tendering process is open to third party bidders, so the outcome is uncertain; Mr Barrow emphasised that both he and Ms Gillett were looking to come up with the best solution for the Kenilworth community. Rivalry between the two centres was being successfully avoided, as demonstrated by the Children's Centre managers collaborating on the development of a joint programme of services. Mr Barrow acknowledged that economies of scale and restructuring would be an inevitable outcome of the process. Work on the detail of the proposal is ongoing.

Mr Barrow explained that an Interim Advisory Board would need to be established with representatives from both the St John's and the Kenilworth Children's Centre and Nursery School governing bodies, together with the two heads. This would act as an umbrella committee over the two existing advisory bodies. A meeting is scheduled for the 23rd October to which representatives of both governing bodies are invited, at which the future governance arrangements will be discussed. It was agreed that Mr Martin in his capacity as Chair of Governors, together with Mr Whitehouse who has a particular interest in the proposals, would be nominated as representatives to the Interim Advisory Board. Depending on the number of representatives required, the Rev Atwood also expressed his willingness to be involved, and will attend the meeting on the 23rd.

Mr Whitehouse gave a short update on the procedural issues surrounding the Council's proposals on the future of Children's Centres in Warwickshire. The latest proposal is for ten groups of children's centres similar to the proposals for Kenilworth, which would offer savings in management costs. The Cabinet had approved the proposals but this decision has been called in by the opposition and therefore the decision has been deferred. The reason for the call in was that in some areas of the county the proposal was significantly different to the plans that were consulted on. The proposal will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee this coming Thursday, and the Committee can either agree with the original decision; refer the decision back to Cabinet with recommendations; or refer the decision to the full Council for debate. Mr Whitehouse's view was that officers should consult in greater detail with stakeholders such as Mr Barrow in order to get the proposals to a state ready for approval. Regardless of the outcome at the Scrutiny Committee there will inevitably be a delay to the ambitious timescales set out in the original programme, which was due for implementation in

March 2014, and the Council will have to find bridging funds until the changes become effective.

8. RAPID IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND SELF EVALUATION FORM

Mr Martin explained that during the previous week he had worked with Mr Barrow to review both the RIP and the SEF, and Mr Barrow had subsequently rewritten the documents. Copies of the updated documents were circulated to Governors. Mr Barrow explained that there had been minimal changes to the RIP, but that the SEF is no longer presented in a tabular format and is now cross referenced back to the RIP. It is hoped that these changes will make the document more user friendly for Governors.

Mr Barrow highlighted that the SEF now includes a summary section with a rating for each of the areas examined by OFSTED. Mr Barrow stated that he was looking for challenge from Governors on the Leadership and Management rating in particular. Mr Barrow also pointed Governors towards section 2 of the document which covers progress since the last inspection and is key information for Governors to be familiar with. Mr Barrow requested that Governors feed back on the SEF, and offered to go through with Governors on a one to one basis anything they were unclear about.

Mr Whitehouse stated that he felt there was a need to Governors to go into school and challenge progress at a lower level than the SEF. Mr Barrow agreed but did not feel that lesson observations would be an effective means of achieving this. He suggested that attending pupil interviews and conducting work trawls would be more effective. Mr Martin questioned whether Governors would be in a position to assess pupils' work: Mrs Baker responded that the leadership team could support Governors in this, for example by taking them through how the marking policy works. Rev Atwood suggested that interviewing staff could also be an effective means of assessing progress: Mr Barrow responded that attendance by Governors at pupil progress meetings was a good way of understanding the staff perspective, and Mr Martin has attended in the past. Rev Atwood commented that he thought there would be value in speaking to staff directly to understand the state of morale.

Mr Barrow offered to prepare a draft monitoring schedule containing dates of events such as book trawls that Governors might wish to get involved with. Mr Martin suggested that this be circulated as a draft and then discussed at the forthcoming Governor Self-Assessment Workshop.

Action: Feed back on Self Evaluation Form (All)

Action: Circulate draft monitoring schedule (Mr Barrow)

9. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Resources Committee

No meeting of the Resources Committee had been held. Mr Barrow requested that a meeting be held in the near future, as there are a number of matters which need deciding. Mrs Weir will contact Mr Bucci to agree a date.

Action: Contact Mr Bucci to schedule a Resources Committee meeting (Mrs Weir)

Performance & Standards Committee

Minutes of the Performance and Standards Committee meeting held on the 15th July 2013 are attached to these minutes. The next meeting of the Performance and Standards Committee will be held on Wednesday 6th November at 7pm.

10. GOVERNOR TRAINING

Governors noted that any request for training for the whole Governing Body has to be submitted by the end of the autumn term, otherwise the 2013/14 allocation will be lost. It was agreed that this would be discussed in light of the output of the Governor Self Assessment Workshop.

11. APPOINTMENT OF NAMED GOVERNORS

It was agreed that the following Governors would be responsible for the specified areas:

Special Educational Needs – Mrs Coopey

Early Years – Mrs Kettle

Child Protection and Safeguarding – Mr Harris

Health and Safety – Mrs Derrick

Mrs Coopey agreed to continue in the role of Training Link Governor.

12. PARENTAL COMPLAINT

Mr Martin informed Governors that a complaint had been received from the parents of a Year 4 pupil. Mr Barrow has heard the complaint and has briefed Mr Martin on the details. Mr Martin has written to the parents inviting them to put their complaint in writing to him if they wish to take it any further. As yet there has been no response to this letter. Mrs Coopey asked Mr Barrow whether the complaint was having an impact on the functioning of the school, and Mr Barrow confirmed that this was not the case.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the FGB will be held on Wednesday 27th November 2013, commencing 7pm at the school.