

St Mary's and St Pancras CE Primary School

Minutes

**Governing Body Meeting
Thursday 12 December 2013, 6.00pm**

Present

Slaney Devlin (Chair)	Nana Oye Adjepong	Marion Rushbrook
Sheila McCalla-Gordon (Headteacher)	Diederick Santer	Gregory Watson
Dora Garrido	Carol Hardy	Marie LeMaitre

Not in Attendance

Rev Anne Stevens	Dr Mark Paul-Clark	Father Paschal Worton
Andrew Carter	Sophie Steel	Father Robin Jones
Francisca Okeneme		

Associate Member

Debra Griffith (School Business Manager)

In Attendance

Stephen Fisher, Professional Partner	
Lucy Heard (Deputy Headteacher)	Pat Elcock (Clerk)

Part One

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Slaney Devlin.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received for Rev Anne Stevens, Dr Mark Paul-Clark, Father Paschal Worton, Father Robin Jones, Sophie Steel, Andrew Carter and Francisca Okeneme.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary and Business Interest

None received

4. Declarations of Any Other Business

None received

5. Governor Training: Effective Governance – Stephen Fisher

The Chair welcomed Stephen Fisher, Camden Professional Partner, to the first part of the meeting where he was asked to proceed with his training session on effective governance.

Stephen explained that effective governance is not a 'rubber-stamping' exercise but one whereby the roles and responsibilities of members of a governing body need to be clearly understood. Governors have a wide range of responsibilities and as volunteers this needed to be cleverly balanced alongside other competing demands. Stephen suggested that good governance started with members looking at their own skill sets and experiences and how these matched the required competencies to strategically manage a school, Future recruitment of governors should bear in mind any identified knowledge/skill gaps.

He outlined the three main governance roles of strategic management, being a critical friend and accountability. Definitions of the three roles were clarified including the importance of not trying to 'micro-manage' a school but supporting school development through constructive questioning and challenge. To do so effectively it was noted that governors needed to know their school well and questions were asked how they did this. Those in attendance responded that they visited the school on a regular basis and triangulated information provided to monitor and evaluate progress.

Governors were referred to the Ofsted document 'Learning from the Best' published in May 2011 that provided examples of good and outstanding governance practices.

Governors were asked to answer a set of questions that tested their knowledge and understanding of the processes and performance including the safe guarding measures of St Mary's and St Pancras CE Primary School.

During the questioning governors noted the:

- Strengths of the Governing Body included: their commitment, size that included a range of experiences and expertise, knowledge of the community, value of parent, community and staff representation on the GB, effective communication and good relations among members and the School.
- Areas for development included: more effective challenge of pupil performance and achievement, taking greater responsibility for knowing more about the School and consideration of how the Governing Body could work more 'smartly'.

Further questions were asked and discussions held about reading strategies used in the School and the impact of the pupil premium grant in closing performance gaps among groups of children.

Questions provoked thought about how governors use of information to make and take decisions including difficult ones around tackling underperformance and how they can directly support the quality of teaching through adequate resourcing. A discussion was held about the merits of reviewing governance structures so that performance management and pay policies are closely aligned.

The session ended with questioning around school self-evaluation and the adequacy of processes in the school to gather evidence and how that evidence was used to develop school improvement including making comparisons to similar schools.

Stephen was thanked for his presentation and the thought-provoked through his questioning. His offer of returning to carry out other training at future governor meetings was welcomed.

Stephen left the meeting after this session.

6. Minutes and Matters Arising of Previous Meetings

- a) Part 1 of the previous minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013 was **agreed as a true and accurate record** by those governors present at the meeting.

Matters Arising

The following items from the previous minutes were discussed:

- ITEM 3: The School Business Manager stated that completed declarations of pecuniary and business interest forms are outstanding for two governors who have been handed forms and asked that they are completed this evening.
- ITEM 7: The Chair informed governors that a letter had now been drafted for circulation to teachers encouraging staff governor nominations. The letter will go out on 6 January 2014.
- ITEM 9: The School Business Manager informed governors that she had advised two governors of how to update their CRB checks online. She also advised governors that updated CRB forms would need to be brought into the School to be viewed as evidence.
- ITEM 14: The Chair stated that the governor training analysis sheet had now been updated and would be discussed at a future governing body meeting.

- b) Part 1 of the previous minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2013 was **agreed as a true and accurate record** by those governors present at the meeting. There were no matters arising.

7. Headteacher Report

The Headteacher referred governors to her 'Headteacher's Report to Governors' previously circulated with the agenda. As agreed by the Chair in her email dated 11 December 2013, where governors were asked to read the report in advance, the Headteacher was asked not to go through the report but to take questions.

A question was raised about why the achievement of pupils was judged by the School to be Grade 3 (requiring improvement) and identified as a school improvement priority. The Headteacher stated that not all the children across the School had made expected levels of progress. This was due to poor quality teaching, coupled with staff absences (maternity leave) and a high turnover of staff, which had been identified at the start of last year. Measures had been taken to address the concerns such as the redeployment of senior staff members from booster work into the classroom but the long period of inconsistent teaching had an unfortunately negative impact on pupil achievement.

In response to a question about what other measures are now being carried out to support the quality of teaching in the School, the Headteacher informed governors of the monitoring processes in place. She referred governors to her tabled report on 'Tracking the quality of teaching- Report to governors December 2013'.

She talked governors through the contents of the report explaining that two forms of teacher observations were being carried out, namely formal lesson observations through performance management and unannounced 'lesson drop-ins' that differed from formal observations which are subject to prior notice. Governors noted that of the drop-ins in the first half of the autumn term 76% of lessons were observed to be good or better and in the second round of drop-ins this figure was 82%. Of the formal observations carried out the percentage of lessons judged good or better was 78% of which 67% were considered to be outstanding. The Headteacher stated that the report suggested that teachers in the School are capable of good or better teaching and they now needed to fully understand and be supported with ensuring that they teach good quality lessons all the time. She also stated that a culture of collective responsibility for supporting children's progress throughout their time at the School was now being established.

The Headteacher informed governors that the Senior Leadership Team had met with Stephen Fisher on 11 December 2013 and at that meeting Stephen agreed to seek funding from the Local Authority (LA) to partially pay for the temporary appointment of an additional teacher to support two year groups for the Spring term 2014. The additional support would include the provision of booster classes and one to one tuition. Unfortunately, Stephen was unable to secure any funding other than a few days of support from the Council's numeracy and literacy advisers. The Headteacher asked that the Governing Body agree to the School using its own funds of approximately £10,000 to pay for an additional teacher full-time for the Spring term. Governors were advised that urgent efforts were being made by the School and the LA to identify a suitable teacher.

Governors noted that the School currently had a budget surplus and in response to a query about continued support after the Spring term governors were advised that two experienced teachers are due to return from maternity leave in the Spring term and would continue the intervention work. The Headteacher stated that she felt confident given the current teaching profile and with additional support that pupil levels of attainment will improve in the School.

Decision Taken: It was agreed that the School would fund the appointment of a full-time additional teacher in the Spring term to provide booster support in the School.

The list of curriculum enrichment activities was noted in the Headteacher's report and governors were advised, in response to a question about the effectiveness of the gifted and talented (G&T) provision in the School, that the G&T teacher was already having a noticeable impact among the children, parents and staff.

8. Admission Policy

Governors were asked for their comments and views of the previously circulated copies of two proposed admission policies for the School.

The Chair stated that Camden Council is advising church schools to move to an admissions system whereby half its places are allocated on the basis of faith (church attendance) and the other half allocated as open places. The Chair advised governors that the London Diocesan Board of Schools and the Archbishop of Canterbury would also prefer that schools offer open places in the spirit of inclusion.

It was understood that St Mary's and St Pancras CE Primary School does not currently offer open places but few children come to the School through the "faith" route. A number of children are admitted as siblings or because they live very close to the School. Governors were advised that 'Draft A' represented an amendment to the School's current policy that met the current schools' admissions legislation but did not offer open places.

Governors were advised that Draft B represented another amended model which did offer open places. A lengthy discussion was held about the impact of the two drafts in respect to the types of admissions they would attract and the inclusive ethos of the School serving its local community. Governors recognised that the implications of a recent upset at a church school in a neighbouring authority following its referral to the admission's adjudicator on the grounds of fair access for children who lived close to the school and siblings could apply to them. It was also acknowledged that a predicted rise in population and current housing development in the area would give rise to a need for more school places.

The Chair also proposed that a change to the area from which children's families worship at other Christian churches is made. It was noted that currently priority is given to families that live in the districts of St Mary's and Old St Pancras but the area did not include parts of Somers Town, which is in the Parish of St Pancras. Maps were provided to demonstrate the area covered by moving to a proposed distance measure using a straight line from the School of a third of a mile to create a circumference.

A brief discussion was held about the pros and cons of having a criterion whereby children of staff members were prioritised.

After further deliberation it was agreed that Draft B be agreed as the Admission Policy for the School with the following revisions:

- i. the introduction of a distance measure; and
- ii. the removal of the criteria prioritising children of members of staff who have worked at the School for at least two years.

Decision Taken: Draft B with revisions was agreed by all governors in attendance as the most suitable proposal for consultation as the School's Admission Policy from 2015.

9. Achievement and Standards Report

It was noted that this item was discussed at the previous Full Governing Body meeting held on 6 November 2013.

10. Any Other Business

The following items were raised by the Chair:

- a) Governor Training - It was commented that the earlier governor training session held with Stephen Fisher was felt to be thought provoking and a valuable exercise for governor development. It was agreed that similar sessions will be held at future governor meetings.
- b) Governor Visits – In response to a query about the housing of governor visit forms it was **agreed** that a 'Governor Visit File' will be set up in the School Office. It was also agreed that reports of governor visits to the School will be made at full governing body meetings.
- c) Site Service Officer Report – The Chair informed governors that newts had been identified in the School pond and that advice would need to be sought about their safe removal in the event that they are identified as a protected species. The Headteacher stated that the pond was broken and would need to be urgently repaired. Unfortunately, a submitted bid for funding to develop the area was unsuccessful but drafted plans for redevelopment indicated costs of approximately £2,000. It was noted that these costs would include the safe removal of the newts. A brief discussion was held about whether to proceed with the works or to seek advice from Camden Council in the first instance. Even though it was understood that the pond needed to be urgently repaired it was felt that the School should seek advice from the Local Authority.

Agreed Action: It was **agreed** that the School will contact the Local Authority to seek urgent advice.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Full Governing Body will be held on Monday 24 March 2014, 6pm.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governing Body for St Mary's and St Pancras Church of England Primary School