

GREAT CHESTERFORD [C. of E.] PRIMARY ACADEMY

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the video-conference meeting held on 17 November 2020

Membership		Office	Term
Andrew Farrimond	Foundation		01/09/2024
* Alex Jeewan	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
Vacancy	Foundation		
Gary Benn	General Member		21/02/2021
Jayne Greenwood	General Member		01/09/2024
Jan Menell	General Member		21/02/2021
Sarah Mitchell	Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Rachel Thackray	General Member		15/06/2023
Adele Peters	General Member	Chair	21/02/2021
Nicholas Rowe	Parent		21/02/2021
Laura Saunders	Parent		15/06/2023
Amy Sargeant	Staff		21/02/2021
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		21/02/2021

The Headteacher opening the meeting with a prayer

Action

59/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from the Rev Alex Jeewan.

60/20 Notification of AoB

- Neighbouring Household
- Neighbourhood Plan

61/20 Notification of business interests

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for the Academy and he worked for Eddisons that provided services to the Academy. Rachel Thackray declared she was a member of the Great Chesterford Parish Council.

No other governor declared any potential conflicts of interest with any of the items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had received or given any gifts or hospitality that could or be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the Academy.

62/20 COVID-19

The meeting received the updated risk assessment and measures put in place to provide a safe environment for staff and pupils that had been amended following the decision by the SLT that all staff should wear masks when in communal areas.

Staff had been advised to follow best practice and not use air conditioning units when children were in classrooms and to keep the rooms well ventilated when using them (specialist guidance allows the use of the air- conditioning units in classrooms).

More information on COVID-19 had been added to the school's website, including information on frequently asked questions including Covid-19 related absence protocols.

63/20 Headteacher's Report

The meeting received and noted the HT's termly report circulated before the meeting.

In answer to a question, the HT reported the level of funding provided for children with SEND had not been affected by the school closure and lockdown.

The Academy had ongoing staff commitments and had employed additional staff to support and provide one-to-one support to the high number of pupils with Education and Health Care Plans [EHCPs].

The Chair asked why the progress standard targets for KS1 and KS2 pupils had changed and had they changed due to COVID-19.

The HT reported the change was not due to COVID-19 but to the assessment of each cohort of pupils. The lower KS1 targets reflected the ~~higher~~ number of pupils with SEND and their low GLD scores.

It was noted that Phonics standards had been lower at other schools due to COVID-19 - an area of the key curriculum greatly impacted by lockdown.

The meeting noted the data provided on school absences included pupils self-isolating at home but that attendance levels were still very high.

The HT highlighted there had been more mobility than usual with children leaving the school for the reasons set out in the report. This had provided space for new children from families moving into Great Chesterford and neighbouring areas.

There were several pupils on the waiting list who had not taken up vacancies because their parents also wanted places for their siblings.

Andrew Farrimond asked about staff welfare and morale.

The HT reported the school's Local Authority advisor had virtually visited the school and reviewed the website and educational provision. She had been impressed with the level of the school activities being provided that were at near normal levels. She was particularly impressed with the clear and helpful communication with parents through the school newsletter. However, all this had come at a cost in terms of rising staff fatigue levels due to higher workloads on taking on and following additional H&S requirements as well as providing remote learning for children self-isolating.

The HT reported teaching staff were under pressure in providing the best education to pupils during the pandemic while being mindful of Ofsted. They were committed to ensuring all things were being done now whilst also planning for the future.

Andrew Farrimond asked if there was anything the governors could do to improve the welfare and motivation of staff.

The Chair reported that she had written to all staff thanking them for the additional work and responding to the increased pressures from the pandemic. She was also going to give staff an opportunity to discuss any concerns that they had directly with her (or other governors) either individually or in small groups.

The HT reported that several parents had expressed their thanks and their appreciation via email on how hard the teachers and the school was working in keeping the school open and providing a high level of education to all those in school and self-isolating.

It was important to monitor the situation and if the workload and pressure became unsustainable, the school would need to review and prioritise its activities to reduce the pressure on staff.

The meeting noted Rachel Thackray and Nick Rowe were currently carrying out two surveys, one for staff and one for parents. Staff survey focus is on health and well-being during the current situation. The parent survey is focused on health and well-being of the

pupils. Each survey may highlight areas that need prioritising. They will be reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Committee to identify and report on any actions necessary.

The HT reported the governor and staff training on Ofsted Inspections by the Schools Improvement Partner had been well received and had motivated many governors on carrying out monitoring visits subject to teacher workloads.

The HT reported that if Ofsted decided to visit the school in the new year it would focus on how the school provided a safe environment for staff and pupils and how this was being monitored by the SLT and governors. Regular Ofsted inspections are not due to resume until Summer Term 2021. Governors could find a lot of information to answer questions that Ofsted may ask in the HT's termly reports and SDP.

Governors should liaise directly with teachers when arranging monitoring visits and, where possible, arrange visits during teachers' "release time".

64/20 School Development Plan

The meeting received the 2020-21 SDP and noted the tasks undertaken and progress made in meeting the five priorities within the plan since the beginning of the new academic year.

65/20 Risk Management

The meeting received and noted the updated risk register. The register had been amended to reflect changes in governor responsibilities because of governors stepping down from the LGB and new governors joining. All governors were reminded to review and monitor the risks for the areas that they were responsible for and to advise the Chair and Gary Benn, the governor responsible for Health and Safety, of any changes to be recorded on the risk register.

66/20 MAT Development

Gary Benn reported that the MAT Board of Directors had met on 16 November 2020 to consider a request from a federation of two schools to join the MAT.

The Trust had been approached by the joint governors and SLT of the Federation, with the support of the Diocese, to join the Trust. If agreed, the Diocese would provide funding to cover the legal costs associated with the Federation joining the Trust.

The Board had agreed that it was important to involve and canvass the views of the current schools within the Trust and had already advised the Chairs of each Local Governing Body [LGB] of the current proposal to expand the Trust.

The MAT [the Trust] was established seven years ago and since its inception had always planned to expand the number of schools to maximise the financial and other benefits and to be financially sustainable. The Board had felt this would be achieved with five to seven schools within the Trust.

The Department of Education [DFE] and Diocese of Chelmsford had approached the Trust to sponsor Debden Primary School [DPA] and support its conversion to an academy to join the Trust, which it did on the 1st January 2017.

Over the past three years, the Trust has had several discussions with other local primary schools on the option of them joining the Trust that has come to no avail.

The Trust agreed that any future schools joining the MAT should, in normal circumstances, be rated at least as good by Ofsted to minimise the impact on the Trust's capacity whilst support is still being provided to DPA.

A survey carried out to identify suitable schools interested in joining the Trust showed there were few outstanding and good primary schools in the local area that had either

not already joined another MAT or had plans to convert to an Academy. It was felt expanding to four schools would make it more attractive for good and outstanding schools to consider joining the MAT in the future.

Enlarging the Trust would be good for staff in providing improved career opportunities in being able to take on more leadership and management roles and responsibilities supporting staff recruitment and retention.

It was still early days and the Directors had agreed to carry out full due diligence on the Federation's finance, the effectiveness of their restructuring plans, and on their buildings and facilities to identify all potential costs.

The following points were made in the discussion that followed:

- The Chair reported that she had asked the Directors what criteria they were using when evaluating the proposal for the Federation to join the Trust. She had raised concerns on the Federation's financial position, the impact on the capacity of the Trust in supporting the current academies within the MAT and the timing of the proposal given the current pandemic.
- The HT reported that expanding the MAT allowed it to remain in control of its future and ethos of being a collective of independent village schools. The alternative, should the Trust not grow, could be for it to be encouraged to join another MAT by the DFE. It would only be allowed to join another Church of England MAT such as the Vine Schools Trust, a MAT set up by the Diocese of Chelmsford that included large as well as small academies located throughout Essex that may not be a good fit for the Trust.
- It was noted non-Church Schools could join GOMAT.
- If the MAT had the capacity and grows, to say five schools, it would benefit in being able to have single subject leaders serving the whole trust, be able to employ full-time specialists such as ICT Technicians, Sports Coaches that larger primary schools already enjoyed.
- It was important to carry out full financial checks to ensure that the Federation could operate, as with all schools in the Trust, on an independently financially sustainable way.
- The MAT had learnt a lot since taking on DPA in building capacity, the role, and responsibilities of the EHT and the back-office staff.
- The Federation did not pose the same challenges for the MAT as DPA, when it joined the MAT. The Federation were already addressing their financial deficit by reducing the number of classes and restructuring teaching and support staff. Both schools had recently been assessed as good by Ofsted.
- The Directors had agreed to make a start by carrying out due diligence on the Federation's financial position as well as on their buildings and on drawing up plans on address issues on the MAT's capacity to support four academies.
- It was **agreed** the LGB should be kept informed on the actions being taken and to be involved in the Board's discussions.
- It was **agreed** to set up a meeting to allow more time for governors to express their views in more detail for before the next Board meeting.

HT

GB/All

67/20 Policies

a) Remote Learning

The meeting received, considered, and approved the Academy's Remote Learning Policy

b) Equality Information & Objectives

The meeting received and considered the Equality Information & Objectives Policy and **agreed** to approve the policy, subject to amending the wording to highlight cultural and racial differences.

c) Accessibility Plan

The meeting received and considered the Academy's Accessibility Plan. The HT was asked whether the policy conflicted with the Academy's Admission Policy.

The HT reported the Accessibility Plan was drawn up using guidance from the Key for School Leaders and emphasised that the Academy welcomed children from all backgrounds.

68/20 Safeguarding

Jan Menell, the governor responsible for safeguarding, reported she had had an update on Safeguarding with Amy Sargeant and there were no significant safeguarding issues to report.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

69/20 Chairman's action

The Chair reported that she had not taken any urgent action since the last meeting.

70/20 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 September 2020 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

71/20 Matters arising

Minute 45/20 Business Interests

It was reported that several governors had not completed the annual Declaration of Pecuniary and Personal Interest 2020-21.

Governors were reminded this was a statutory requirement and it was **agreed** that all outstanding declarations should be sent to the Clerk by the end of the week following the meeting.

Minute 56/20 Governor training

It was noted several governors had not returned the Confirmation on Safeguarding and Child Protection confirming that they had read the following documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 Part 1 includes Annex A – please see the school website www.greatchesterfordprimary.co.uk
- School Child Protection Policy including the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education – please see school website www.greatchesterfordprimary.co.uk
- School Behaviour Policy – please see school website www.greatchesterfordprimary.co.uk

All

- Procedures and guidelines for volunteers – please see the school website www.greatchesterfordprimary.co.uk
- Fire procedure
- Lock down procedure

It was **agreed** that all outstanding confirmations should be sent to the HT by the end of the week following the meeting.

All other matters arising from the previous minutes had been completed or were covered on the agenda.

72/20 Minutes/reports of committees

a) Finance and Premises

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the F&P Committee meeting held on 07/10/2020.

The Committee had reviewed and agreed its terms of reference. It was **agreed** to include a provision to allow it to hold meetings using video conferencing.

The committee had reviewed the Management Accounts for the year ended 30 August 2020. The year-end audit was completed and had gone well. The Academy was now waiting the final annual report and financial statements.

The HT reported governors should consider and propose specific projects that the Academy could undertake and fund from its reserves.

b) Teaching and Learning Committee

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the meeting held by the Committee on 05/10/2020.

The Committee had reviewed its terms of reference and had agreed to recommend changing item 9 to reflect current priorities and to remove Gifted and Talented as a specifically mentioned group. The recommended amendment and the inclusion of a provision to allow the Committee to hold meetings using video conferencing were **agreed**.

73/20 Governor visits

Natalie Starbuck reported she had not received any governor monitoring visit reports and urged governors to complete and send monitoring forms covering any contacts with teaching and other staff as well as remote monitoring visits.

74/20 Governor training

The HT reported that she had circulated a lot of information on governor training courses. Most governors had completed the Safeguarding training module while others still needed to complete the course.

75/20 Any other business

Neighbouring Households

Gary Benn reported works had started on building a new house close to the school that was affecting the access to the school by lorry and other vehicle deliveries. It was important that children and parents remained vigilant when dropping up and picking up children.

It was **agreed** to speak with the contractors to highlight the risks and minimise the impact at dropping up and picking up times.

All

SM

SM

GB

Neighbourhood Plan

The HT reported Andrew Taylor had responded, on behalf of the MAT, to the UDC consultation on the new Neighbourhood Plan and the future housing needs.

76/20 Date/time of future meetings

- Tuesday 23/03/2021
- Tuesday 29/06/2021

Committees to arrange their dates to feed into the LGB meetings

Approved by the LGB on the 23 March 2021