

Governing Body Meeting Minutes

School: St Agnes CE Primary School

Quorum: 5

Chair: Helen Thompson

Clerk: Andrew Crosbie

Date of meeting: 2nd April 2020

Venue: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendance

Name	Governor type	'End of Term of Office' date	Present (P)/apologies (Ap)/absent (A)
Shoab Uddin	Headteacher (HT)	N/A	P
Helen Thompson	Foundation (Chair)	07/09/22	P
Lesley Gutteridge*	Co-opted Governor	22/03/21	P
Afeefah Ali	Co-opted Governor	01/03/22	P
Catherine Collinson	Parent (Vice Chair)	01/03/21	P
Bunnessa Haque	Parent	02/04/24	P
Sarah Oxley	Staff Governor	01/03/22	P
Bethan Jones	Co-opted Governor	01/09/22	P
Rev Eugenia Adoyo	Foundation	N/A	Ap
Charlie Mok	LA Governor	31/10/23	Ap
Muna Chowdhury	Parent	02/04/24	Ap
Margaret Taylor	Foundation	01/09/20	Ap

**Briefly left meeting in item 4.*

Others present

Name	Role
Andrew Crosbie	Clerk (One Education)

Agenda Items

1	Apologies & Welcome		
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially new Parent Governor, Bunnessa Haque. There were apologies from Charlie Mok, Margaret Taylor, Rev Adoyo and the second new Parent Governor, Muna Chowdhury.		
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

2	Declaration of Interest		
There were no pecuniary interests expressed regarding any of the agenda items.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

3	Minutes of Previous Meeting (12.12.19) and Matters Arising		
The minutes of the previous meeting (12.12.19) were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.			
<u>Matters Arising</u>			
There were no matters arising from the meeting.			
<i>Q. What is happening with the roof leak?</i>			
Willmott Dixon is currently assessing the situation and monitoring the need for any initial remedial work. However, given current circumstances, this work is on hold.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of last meeting 12.12.19 approved. 	Governing Body	

4	Head Teacher's Report		
A copy of the HT's report was circulated in advance to governors and the following issues were raised in discussion:			
It was noted that the Spring Term QA report, completed by Sheila Cairns, was very positive but also very thorough.			
HT confirmed that the visit had included thorough review of the School Improvement Plan, incorporating the post Ofsted Action Plan and there had been a deep dive review of Reading and Phonics which was very useful.			
Coronavirus update			
HT outlined a summary of what actions have taken place at St Agnes, date by date, since the onset of the current pandemic. The school has continued to respond to national government and local authority advice and worked through its own Business Continuity Plan as the situation has escalated.			
Because of the rapidly falling numbers of staff and pupils attending – down to 48%, the decision was taken to close the school on Thursday 19 th March, two days earlier than the national shutdown. A letter was issued to inform all families that the school will be closed until further notice.			
<i>Q. Has the school had to furlough any staff?</i>			
No, all staff are still being paid through normal routes. Circumstances are slightly different for supply staff, who would be paid by the agency if they have worked for under 12 weeks. However, this does not apply to any staff at St Agnes.			

Q. What about the administration apprentice?

The apprentice's contract runs until the end of the year. Arrangements will have to be reviewed before this contract finishes.

Q. What was the LA's reaction to the school closing early?

It was not delighted with the decision and would have preferred the school to stay open until the end of the week, however, it understood the context of the decision and the fact that, on balance, the health risk to staff and pupils was more important than staying open. HT liaised closely with other local schools and 3 other primaries also closed early for the same reason.

The current situation is that the school is completely closed. There was an insufficient number of pupils to justify opening the school and so other schools were used as hubs, for example Longsight Community Primary, which took in 2 pupils on Monday 23rd March, but was not needed by Tuesday 24th.

This week, St Agnes provisionally made arrangements for 3 of its vulnerable pupils to attend Stanley Grove Primary Academy, but in the end, none of the pupils attended. The biggest pressure has been ensuring that contact is maintained with vulnerable children. There are weekly phone calls and visits made by the DP team and a weekly rota has been developed that will see HT, DHT and Rachel all available to work with/accompany vulnerable children, if needed.

Safeguarding Link Governor noted that, should St Agnes pupils need to attend other local schools, then a Senior Leader from St Agnes must also be in attendance at the school.

Link Governor to discuss this with DHT and ensure that changes to school policy reflect this government guidance. An appendix will be drafted for the Safeguarding Policy and circulated to GB for approval.

**Lesley Gutteridge left virtual meeting.*

New parent governor, Bunnessa took the opportunity to introduce herself to other governors. She confirmed she works as an LTO at the school and also has a daughter in Y2, as well as a baby boy who will also join the school in the future. She is looking forward to getting involved in the governing body and developing a greater insight into the school's operation.

**Lesley Gutteridge re-joined the virtual meeting.*

HT continued to update on the school's coronavirus response. At present, the school's continued closure is being reviewed on a weekly basis. A staff rota has been developed and, though it changes day to day, because of self-isolation issues, staff have been very supportive, even volunteering to work throughout the Easter holidays if required. At present, this does not appear to be necessary.

HT receives a daily briefing at 2pm from the LA, offering statutory and safeguarding guidance. The school is doing as much as it can, pro-actively, to address the situation but it is apparent that parents do not want to risk bringing their children into school.

Q. What is happening with children on Free School Meals?

Prior to the school closing, arrangements were made to provide Asda vouchers or cash amounts to parents of FSM entitled children. The LA has since announced its own voucher scheme but this was going to take some time to deliver so school carried out its own arrangements, with staff attending on Thursday and Friday to hand out vouchers as well as home learning packs.

Over the Easter holidays, school will email FSM families with online link to the Government's Voucher Scheme. This is specifically for children on FSM and does not apply to families on Universal FSM in Reception, Y1 and Y2.

HT is also liaising with catering providers, Manchester Fayre to see if they can come in to the school and set up food packs for vulnerable families.

Q. How is the school reacting to children who were not previously entitled to benefits but whose families are now claiming Universal Credit because of hardship issues?

This is difficult because many families are very new to Universal Credit and are only just being processed on the system. These families will need to advise the school of any change in circumstances. The government voucher scheme will take some time to deliver so, in short term, the school will continue to operate its own internal system.

Q. Is the school able to keep track of any of its 'homeless' families?

Yes, the safeguarding team has set up a RAG-rated system to track the most vulnerable families and liaise with them weekly and provide food packs. Two families presented as homeless a couple of weeks ago and school has both of these on its watch at the moment.

Although there is regular contact between school staff and management, there is frustration that staff can't maintain regular communication with the pupils. At an SLT meeting it was agreed that all teachers will take responsibility to contact their own classes, find out how they are coping and ensuring they are able to carry on with their learning.

Staff Governor advised that she had found this a very positive initiative and it had been great to speak to a lot of the children on the phone. For many of the children, especially the younger ones in KS1, it is often difficult for them to respond to online instruction so direct phone conversations with them and their families was a positive way of offering reassurance and support.

Although some families are struggling with lack of space or gardens, it was reassuring to hear that they are all trying to keep busy. Parents appreciate that not all tasks and work can be undertaken online so they are trying to keep children occupied with activity away from a computer screen.

Q. When staff are making these calls, are measures in place to ensure their privacy is not compromised?

Yes, some calls are made on the school phone and, if using personal mobiles, staff have been given guidance on withholding their numbers. In emergency situations, parents are directed to the safeguarding mobile number.

In addition, a protocol sheet was developed for all staff to use, giving a set criteria of questions for staff to ask parents. Everything discussed is also recorded on CPOMS so all safety and welfare issues are fully tracked. It is apparent that many parents think the school will re-open again after the Easter holidays, when the reality is that the shutdown could be much longer.

Q. Will staff have enough work to keep them occupied while working from home?

The shutdown provides a good opportunity for them to maintain their online CPD programmes and catch up on essential training on, for example, Prevent, FGM, online abuse, etc. The staff have shown themselves very keen to access this training resource and many new certificates have already been submitted.

Q. Would governors be interested in receiving a weekly update from HT?

Yes, but only if the information is absolutely necessary and not too onerous for the HT to compile. A regular, fortnightly summary of government/LA advice and regulations and school response should suffice. HT will continue to have phone call updates every few days with Chair.

Q. Is there any prospect of the school re-opening in the summer holidays or before September?

September looks like the most realistic prospect at present but this is all conjecture. Obviously all that is certain is that exams have been cancelled which presents some issues for this year group.

Governors thanked HT for his comprehensive update and look forward to ongoing updates.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Policy Appendix to be drafted to cover use of external school provision. Regular phone contact to be maintained between Chair and HT and GB summaries submitted as necessary. 	Lesley Gutteridge Chair/HT	

5 Policies and documents for review

Admissions Arrangements

HT confirmed that this is a standard LA policy which is being followed by most schools in Manchester. There are only minor amendments to front page.

Policy was unanimously approved.

Behaviour Policy

This is a statutory policy that has been reviewed by the SLT and circulated at staff meetings. Other than details on a Rewards System and Unwanted Behaviour, included in an appendix, there are no significant changes.

Policy was unanimously approved.

Calendar 2020/21

This calendar has been previously discussed, in the context of Ramadan and Eid dates, and was put out for staff consultation pre-Christmas, as well as to governors and parents last term.

Although there was a 50/50 split over the reduced Easter holidays, it was agreed that LA's proposed Option 1 would be the choice.

2020/21 calendar option 1 was unanimously approved and this will now be published on the website and parents advised.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions Arrangements Policy approved. • Behaviour Policy approved. • 2020/21 Calendar Option 1 approved. 	Governing Body Governing Body Governing Body	

6 Government Body Housekeeping

Chair confirmed that there had been two applications for the positions of Parent Governors and she was delighted to confirm the appointment of Bunnessa Haque and Muna Chowdhury which completes a full cohort of governors.

In the current circumstances, all governor visits and training sessions have now been postponed or cancelled.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new Parent Governor appointments confirmed. 	Governing Body	

7 AOB

Q. Will the Leadership & Management committee meeting still go ahead on 4th May?

The Chair and HT will evaluate the success of today's Zoom meeting and then decide on future meetings. It may be that meeting dates and times need to be changed to allow greater flexibility for governors working from home.

Chair to update governors with future date and time suggestions.

Chair thanked all governors for attending today's 'virtual' meeting and hopes that everyone can stay safe and well.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future meeting dates and times to be confirmed. 	Chair	

8 Additional Questions

Prior to the 'virtual' Zoom meeting, papers were circulated to governors and questions invited. A summary of the governors' questions, and the HT's response is included below:

Q. What happens if Y2 and Y6 SATs are not sat this year?

At present we are waiting for Department for Education (DfE) advice. They have made some arrangements for GCSE and A levels, but based on the approach for those qualifications, final pupil outcomes will be based on teacher judgements. This is the case for Y2 anyway, even though they sit tests.

Q. Is there a possibility of the school not opening at all for the rest of the academic year? If so, will there be a cut in the holiday days for the next academic year?

There is a possibility of school not opening, at present for 3 months. It is still impossible to answer as it depends on how COVID-19 is spreading in the country.

Q. Reading and phonics are priority, but are other subjects given enough time and importance for learning?

Yes, maths and writing continue to also be key areas that are taught in the morning and allocated a large proportion of the daily timetable. With the new Ofsted Inspection Framework (OIF) focus on the whole curriculum, we also give the allocated time and space in the timetable to other subjects - Science, Geography and History being our other priority subjects. It does cause timetabling issues but the SLT and staff have worked to ensure there is a good balance throughout the week so the foundation subjects can also be covered. The SLT have worked hard to make sure our curriculum is mapped out in such a way that subjects can be combined where appropriate for a cross curricular and enriching experience. For example in Year 6, their Rivers topic, in the afternoon, although primarily a geography subject also incorporates science (chemistry elements) and maths (coordinates).

Q. Do we need a virtual GB policy?

GB does not need to adopt a substantial stand-alone policy that covers virtual meetings, but a simple protocol, or set of ground rules agreed by the Board, will suffice.

Q. Is school getting any, or enough, support and guidance from DfE and the LA?

Yes, HT receives daily emails at 2pm from LA regarding DfE and LA updates and guidance.

Q. Is the school maintaining contact with the most vulnerable children?

Yes.

Q. How long can this be maintained remotely?

This can be maintained for the foreseeable future subject to how staff are affected by the virus. Current arrangement is all DP staff have a school mobile to contact vulnerable pupils once a week followed by a 'safe and well' check physically once a week. Last Friday was the first one, HT (due to DP Lead self-isolating) and another DP staff member did the home visits, in line with observing distancing measures. This proved manageable, although a few tweaks need to be made such as early morning not being the best time. Most families are up late morning. A much closer liaison has been a result of the lockdown, with social services communicating more frequently. Concern is the huge workload and stress on DP team. This is offset by doing a rota, with contingency measures in place.

Q. Is there a whole school approach to remote learning or by phases or classes, and is there DfE expectations on this?

Whole school approach in terms of staff expectations in terms of regularity and areas to upload. Phase and class specific approach to content. No clear expectations from DfE, most schools are tailoring their own way as needs are specific to schools.

Q. Are we to expect any reductions in budget if school is closed for rest of academic year?

As of yet, nothing has been mentioned on this aspect. Additional costs incurred by schools as a result of the closure and coping with the pandemic have been factored in and there is the possibility of this being recouped from the DfE.

Q. Are supply staff being kept on?

Only those who have been with us for more than 12 weeks as contractual obligations are different for them. Those under 12 weeks, depending on what they were assigned to, have either finished or continued to be paid when needed i.e. on the last two days before national closure was announced they came in to support disseminating work packs etc.

Q. How frequently should we expect to hear from HT with regards to updates / ongoing info?

See above. HT is liaising with Chair every few days. As changes come about and based on immediacy then there will be more communication.

Q. Is the building being maintained and inspected whilst closed?

Yes, at present there is a visit by Kane at least weekly to ensure nothing is amiss and checking for issues. A deep clean was carried before closure.

Q. What measures will be taken when school is reopened?

At present, consideration is being given to ensuring building is ready to welcome pupils whenever they return.

Q. Is there anything governors can do to support the HT and the team?

At present everything is in hand, but thank you for the offer.

Q. How will the year's attendance be calculated now with the school being closed slightly earlier than the national announcement?

They have been given a separate code, specific to the special circumstances.

Q. I notice the breakdown of costing in relation to Covid. Are there any savings from the school closure at the same time?

No. As the day to day costs are factored in the budget, these are already set. Savings would be nominal amounts such as odd supply support that won't be needed for the remainder of the school closure up to Easter.

Q. What's the overall position Covid has landed us in when comparing extra Covid costs and savings?

There will have been a slight increase in resource expenses to cope with Covid related actions in the immediate term as the breakdown shows.

There is DfE guidance in relation to additional costs incurred as a result of the outbreak and procedures to get recompense. This will become more apparent as things unfold further.

Q. Last but not least, how do we know if pupils are continuing with their learning?

There have been good responses on the website. Safe and well calls made by teachers to all families get a review of how home learning is working. Feedback from families has been very positive. Ultimately, we won't be able to measure 100% response as one would expect in normal classroom teaching and learning.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

Date and time of next meeting:

Provisionally scheduled for Thursday 2nd July, dependent on developments. Time to be confirmed.