



## St John's Church of England VA Primary School

### Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting At St John's C of E Primary School

on  
Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023  
at  
5:30pm

**Present:** Brian King –Parent Governor  
Olly Priestley – Ex Officio  
Joe Basquill - LA Governor  
Harry Foster – Staff Governor  
Patrick Robinson – Foundation Governor  
Jo Leigh – Ex-Officio

Chair (Safeguarding)  
Headteacher  
(SEND, Pupil & Sports Premium)

Vice Chair (Finance and HR)  
(Church School Distinctiveness, RE  
and SIAMS)

**Apologies:** David Hodson-Whittle (see below)

**Clerk:** Angela Morley (SBM)

Item	Details
1.	<p><b>WELCOME &amp; OPENING PRAYER</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everybody and the <b>Headteacher</b> led a moment of reflection.</p>
2.	<p><b>APOLOGIES</b></p> <p>David Hodson-Whittle was unable to attend the meeting by reason of a work commitment. David had offered his resignation and expressed his desire to stand again when his work commitments allow.</p> <p>The Governing Board accepted David's resignation and welcomed his offered to re-join the board at a future date. <b>Action Chair</b></p> <p>The meeting was quorate.</p>
3.	<p><b>DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTERESTS</b></p> <p>There were no matters to declare.</p>

4.	<p><b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022</b></p> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.</p>
5.	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p><b>Action Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HT</b> had shared with parents the details of how to contact the class teacher. He offered reinforce this message in the next School Newsletter. <span style="float: right;"><b>Action HT</b></span></li> <li>• <b>HT</b> reported that he had exercised caution in respect of offering reward incentives to encourage improved pupil attendance. The current Government guidance in respect of COVID, flu and Strep A is to keep children at home until they are well. An incentive scheme may conflict with this advice.</li> <li>• Due to the Christmas holidays, Governors have not yet arranged monitoring visits in respect of the SDP. Visits will be prioritised during this term. <b>Action HT/Chair/Clerk</b></li> <li>• The Single Central Record had been reviewed by the <b>HT and Chair</b> (see agenda item 8 below).</li> <li>• The <b>Clerk</b> shared details of a SSE governor course entitled 'Introduction to School Finance' due to be held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023.</li> <li>• <b>HT</b> had analysed the Website usage statistics and reported that the usage is very encouraging. Of particular note was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Spikes on curriculum page following circular letters to parents.</li> <li>➢ Vacancies page frequently visited.</li> <li>➢ Considerable interest in Class pages.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Clerk</b> had received updates from Governors in respect of training courses attended.</li> <li>• Bespoke Diocesan Governor training will be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023.</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b>HEADTEACHER'S AUTUMN 2022 REPORT</b></p> <p>A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Governors thanked the Headteacher for the report. Governors noted that the report covered the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. School Characteristics</li> <li>2. Attendance</li> <li>3. Attainment and Achievement</li> <li>4. Teaching/Staff</li> <li>5. Staff CPD</li> <li>6. Pupil Premium</li> <li>7. Sports Premium</li> <li>8. Educational Enrichment Activities During Autumn 2022</li> <li>9. Exclusions during Autumn Term 2022</li> <li>10. Child Protection/Safeguarding</li> </ol>

Questions arising from HT Report:

**Q Staff Absence: Why was this high during the Autumn term?**

**HT** Staff absence had been an ongoing challenge during the Autumn term due to illness (mainly Flu and COVID). So far, attendance had improved this term.

**Q Pupil Attendance averages 91.38%. Why so low?**

**HT** This figure echoes the National trend. There had been high levels of sickness during the Autumn Term (Strep A, COVID, S&D etc.). Added to which, parents had been more likely to keep children at home because of Government guidelines.

**Q What action is being taken to address persistent absence?**

**HT** Letters had been issued to parents and where relevant, followed up with the first stage of the legal process. The HT is in communication with the County Attendance Team.

**Q Do we send letters regarding lateness?**

**HT** Confirmed that letters had been sent home and stated that it is more difficult to take action if persistent lateness occurs.

**Q Why had writing standards dipped?**

**HT** The new Literacy Tree Scheme is an excellent reading tool but teaching staff had found that the short reading tasks were not always conducive to the teaching of writing. As a consequence, adaptations had been introduced.

**Q Are the pupils following an external scheme in writing?**

**HT** They follow an outside scheme but it had been adapted to assist children with short attention spans and limited vocabulary.

**Q How are things in Y4?**

**HT** remarked that there had been a change in the behavioural culture of the class. Breaktime and lunchtime continue to be a particular challenge. Structured lunchtime activities had been effectively introduced. SEN, EAL and PP are very high in Y4 and strategies had been employed to meet individual needs.

**Q Teachers' reporting gaps in learning from the pandemic. How are we helping plug those gaps?**

**HT** Y3 had been particularly impacted and a gap in their core skills had been identified. A significant emphasis had been placed upon developing the foundations/basics and this had proven to be effective. They had made very good progress.

**Q The areas of concern across the school are quite varied. Why is this the case?**

**HT** The cohorts in each year group varies tremendously. The teaching staff had worked hard to achieve a consistent approach to learning whilst simultaneously tailoring the delivery of the curriculum to each individual cohort.

**Q How is staff Morale this term?**

**HT** Generally positive. Attendance had been good. The new Site Manager had been a great addition to the team and had worked hard to improve the condition of the site. Staff had commented positively about improvements to the working environment.

**Q You say there are a lot of hits on the website vacancies board. Has this translated into an increase in job applications?**

**HT** Sadly not, recruitment had continued to be difficult. The number of applications for vacant posts had been very low.

	<p><b>Q What Intervention measures are in place for pupils at risk of exclusion?</b>  <b>HT</b> A range of support had been offered; designed curriculum, time away from peers, Nurture Group, reduced timetable and working with external agencies.</p> <p>Governors expressed their support to the Headteacher for the work that is taking place to support pupils at risk of exclusion.</p>
7.	<p><b>SEND AUTUMN REPORT 2022</b></p> <p>A report had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Questions arising from SEN Report:</p> <p><b>Staff Governor</b> commented that the SEND surgeries for teaching staff had been very successful. Action points had been addressed quickly and efficiently. The exchange of information and ideas had positively impacted the delivery of support to SEN pupils.</p> <p><b>Q The report mentions the Nurture Room receiving 70 children daily. How does this work?</b></p> <p><b>HT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thrive is delivered across all age groups.</li> <li>• Each day two groups of 10 children.</li> <li>• 40 children do sensory circuits daily.</li> <li>• Always additional activities available.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q How long are pupils in there? Do they miss out on curriculum input?</b>  <b>HT</b> The majority attend Nurture for a short period of time and then return to their class.</p> <p><b>Q Would the Nurture Room benefit from a qualified teacher?</b>  <b>HT</b> Potentially but this is not affordable. The children remain the responsibility of the classroom teacher whilst receiving Nurture provision.</p> <p><b>Q The data regarding progress is slightly confusing in the way in which it is presented. Would it be possible to modify this in future reports?</b>  <b>HT</b> Agreed to feedback this request to the SENDCo and suggested rag-rating the statistics. <b>Action SENDCo</b></p> <p><b>Q SEN attendance is lower than regular attendance. Could there be a targeted focus upon improving the SEN attendance?</b>  <b>HT</b> The true picture may be distorted because of a range of considerations. One child had been frequently absent, another had been a school refuser and others were on part time timetables. Added to which, external assessments and underlying health needs impact the totals.</p> <p>Governors requested further analysis to be included in the next report. <b>Action SENDCo</b></p> <p><b>Q SEN Staff training is an area for staff development? What will this entail?</b>  SENDCo is planning to compile an action plan during the course of the Summer term. This information will be included in the SEN Summer report. <b>Action SENDCo</b></p>
8.	<p><b>SAFEGUARDING/CHILD PROTECTION</b></p> <p><b>HT</b> informed Governors that there had been a significant increase in workload because of an increasing number of safeguarding concerns.</p>

	<p>The SCR had been checked by the Head and Chair and was found to be in good order.</p> <p>The Annual Safeguarding audit had been completed and all staff had been asked to update e-safety training.</p>
9.	<p><b>FINANCE REPORTS</b></p> <p>The following reports had been circulated prior to the meeting:</p> <p><b>Finance Report as at Month 9</b></p> <p><b>Notes to Accompany Month 9 Finance Report</b></p> <p>Governors received, noted and thanked the SBM for the reports.</p> <p>The <b>SBM</b> confirmed that income and expenditure remain in line with the original budget plan as reported at Month 6.</p> <p><b>Governors</b> asked for the negative balance in future accompanying notes to be expressed in a clearer format. <b>Action</b></p> <p><b>SBM</b></p> <p><b>Q Is there any news on the 2023/24 Budget Allocation?</b></p> <p><b>SBM</b> The Government estimate £4,125 per pupil and an additional allocation in the region of £38,000. This sum had previously been paid direct to the Local Authority (See Core Offer item 13 below). Full details will be released in February.</p> <p><b>Q Are there any significant factors that will need to be addressed in the 23/24 draft budget?</b></p> <p><b>SBM:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA Core Offer (see item 13 below)</li> <li>• Teacher/Support Staff Pay Awards. Unions are seeking an average award of 12%.</li> <li>• Energy Costs. Current fixed price contract due for renewal in April.</li> <li>• A grant of £17,000 had been received from the Diocese for investment in energy efficiency improvements. This must be spent by 31/08/2023.</li> <li>• The revenue budget for routine maintenance and redecoration is likely to be higher in 2023/24 because a number of defects had been identified.</li> <li>• A rolling programme of premises improvements is planned.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q Why had the Committed and Uncommitted revenue balances changes significantly since Month 6?</b></p> <p><b>SBM</b> specific grant funding had been used to deliver services and resources. Recoding had taken place to accurately reflect this expenditure.</p>
10.	<p><b>ICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b></p> <p><b>SBM</b> reported that the school server was in need of replacement as soon as possible. Audits had been conducted by three separate companies and they concurred that the server is struggling to host SIMS and other school information. This had caused significant operational difficulties.</p> <p>The Current IT provider, Praestantia, recommended dispensing with the physical server and migrating to the Cloud:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration costs £3,590</li> <li>• Annual licence fee £3,155</li> </ul> <p>Cost of Replacing the Server/Hybrid Solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Server £6,470</li> <li>• Licences/onsite solutions £6,119</li> <li>• £2,519</li> <li>• Estimated annual depreciation £2,500</li> </ul> <p><b>Q Does the school meet DFE standards for back up if it migrates to the Cloud?</b>  <b>SBM</b> had been assured by Praestantia that the back up arrangements meet DFE standards.</p> <p>A discussion followed in which governors considered the options. <b>Governors</b> agreed to approve the migration to the Cloud subject to the SBM securing the following reassurances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the contingency plan if internet connection is lost?</li> <li>• Is there any value in operating a dual system in the short term?</li> <li>• Will staff be offered on site support during the transition period?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action SBM</b></p> <p>Governors agreed to fund this project via DFG funding and contingency.</p>
11.	<p><b>PREMISES REPORT</b></p> <p><b>HT</b> verbal report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Site Manager is now full time.</li> <li>• Crossing Patrol reinstated.</li> <li>• Site Manger had identified a list of maintenance issues for action.</li> <li>• SBM and SM working together to create rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment.</li> <li>• New repair reporting system introduced.</li> <li>• Concentration upon neatening up external areas.</li> <li>• Savings on grounds maintenance now that this has been brought in house.</li> <li>• Premises Manager still supporting new Site Manager but will soon focus exclusively upon the office.</li> <li>• Hookways are yet to undertake annual condition survey.</li> </ul> <p>Governors received and noted the Premises report.</p>
12.	<p><b>HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT</b></p> <p><b>HT</b> Verbal report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire extinguisher checks complete.</li> <li>• Fire Risk Assessment due this term. Date not yet confirmed.</li> <li>• New systems introduced to ensure daily, weekly, monthly site checks are undertaken and recorded.</li> <li>• New Site Manager conducts security check each evening.</li> <li>• PAT testing complete.</li> <li>• PE equipment safety check complete.</li> <li>• Legionella testing up to date.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training up to date.</li> <li>• Headteacher has updated and shared all Risk Assessments (accessible on staff OneDrive).</li> </ul> <p>Governors received and noted the Health and Safety report.</p>
13	<p><b>CORE OFFER</b></p> <p>A briefing paper had been circulated prior to the meeting outlining the Local Authority (LA) proposal to change the way in which they offer support services to schools.</p> <p><b>HT</b> informed Governors that, hitherto, the LA had 'top sliced' maintained school budgets in order to deliver core services. Further services are purchased by the school at an annual cost of £18,331.17.</p> <p>From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the LA can no longer 'top slice'. Therefore, they plan to change the way in which services are offered to schools. This is called the Core Offer. The LA has quoted £53,961 (an increase of 60.7%). The school had been given a three-week deadline in which to consider the proposal.</p> <p><b>HT</b> reported that Somerset Headteachers are asking Governors to consider signing a letter to the LA expressing the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Timeframe to respond to the offer is too short</li> <li>• The offer lacks detail</li> <li>• The quality of information provided is poor</li> <li>• Many questions remain unanswered</li> <li>• There is not time to ensure Best Value</li> <li>• The LA had not provided assurances regarding the quality of provision.</li> </ul> <p>So far, 57 out of 60 schools had declined to sign up to the Core Offer.</p> <p><b>Governors</b> objected to the way in which the LA had communicated the changes and agreed that there is insufficient time to consider the proposals effectively. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of opportunity to undertake due diligence and ensure compliance with the Financial Management Scheme.</p> <p><b>Governors</b> asked for the <b>HT</b> to hold conversations with other schools (particularly VA schools) and report back proposed recommendations for action.</p> <p><b>HT</b> suggested that, given the tight timeframe, it may be necessary to hold an extraordinary meeting.</p> <p>Having considered the matter, <b>Governors</b> resolved not to sign up to the Core Offer in its present form and agreed to support the HT in signing the letter.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action HT</b></p>
13.	<p><b>POLICY REVIEW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions 2024 -2025</li> <li>• Biometric Data Policy 2023</li> <li>• Whistleblowing Policy 2023</li> </ul> <p>Governors agreed all the above policies.</p>

14.	<p><b>GOVERNOR ITEMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governor Training Update</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Action Governors</b></span></li> <li>• <b>Cybersecurity</b> The Staff Governor agreed to become the Cyber-security link governor.</li> <li>• <b>Bespoke Diocesan Training</b> <b>Clerk</b> reported that Claire Hudson, Diocesan Advisor will be delivering face to face training at St John's on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February at 6pm. Refreshments to be provided. <span style="float: right;"><b>Action Clerk</b></span></li> <li>• <b>Governor Visits to School</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• SFVS</li> <li>• Church School Distinctiveness</li> </ul> <p>To be arranged for the second half of the Spring term. <span style="float: right;"><b>Action Governors</b></span></p> </li> </ul>
17.	<p><b>CORRESPONDENCE</b></p> <p>Correspondence from the Teacher Trade Unions had been received indicating that the National membership had voted in favour of Industrial Action. Six teaching staff were eligible for strike action. The majority had indicated that they will not be exercising their right to strike. It is unlikely that the school will close.</p>
18.	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the Governing Body will be held virtually on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 5:30pm.</p>

Meeting closed at **7:35pm**.

**Action points arising from meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Minute Ref	Action Point	Responsibility
5	Share details of how to contact the Class Teacher.	HT
5	Governors to conduct monitoring visits in respect of the SDP.	HT/Chair/Clerk
7	Rag rate the SEN statistics in the Summer Report	SENDCo
7	Further analyse the SEN attendance figures in Summer Report	SENDCo
7	Include staff SEN training schedule in SEN Summer Report	SENDCo
9	Change the way in which 'balances' column expressed in future 'Accompanying Notes'.	SBM
10	Seek assurances from Praestantia as outlined in item 10.	SBM
11	Core Offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss offer with HT groups</li> </ul>	HT

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send letter of concern to LA</li> <li>• Report updates back to Governors</li> </ul>	
14	Update Clerk regarding Governor training	<b>Governors</b>
14	Provide refreshments for Bespoke Governor training	<b>Clerk</b>
14	Arrange Governor monitoring visits to school	<b>Governors</b>

**Signed**.....

**Chair of Governors**

**Date**.....