

The Governing Body Sefton Park School

Infants and Juniors

Chair of Governors: Corrie Bell

Headteacher: Dan Simson

Clerk to Governors: Alexandra Casley

Sefton Park



Infant and Junior Schools

Full Governing Body Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 8 February 2023

Sefton Park School

Ashley Down Road

Bristol

BS7 9BJ

ITEM	AGENDA ITEM AND NOTES	PAPERS CONSIDERED
1.0	Welcome and apologies and declarations of interest and resignations/new appointments	
	<p><i>Present:</i> Corrie Bell (Chair) (CB), Carrie Spittlehouse (CS), Jane Wheelock (JW), Rachel Wills (RWS), Dan Simson (DS), Maggie Smithson (MS), Neville Catton (NC), Sally Dore (SD), Ben Crowley (BC), Andy Lillie (ALL), Amy Campbell (AC), Amy Lewis (ALS)</p> <p><i>Apologies:</i> Sally Dore, Megan Arnold, Shabaana Mitha</p> <p><i>Absent:</i></p> <p><i>Attending:</i> Alexandra Casley (AC)</p> <p>BC was welcomed to his first FGB.</p>	
	<p><i>Present: 11</i></p> <p><i>Quorum met: Yes</i></p>	
2.0	Previous minutes/matters arising	
	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.	
3.0	Clerk's report	
	<p>The governors unanimously resolved to reappoint CB as a co-opted governor.</p> <p>AC asked all governors to undertake relevant training via GDS, particularly the safeguarding training. Appropriate training was available via the Key and CB asked all trustees to undertake this before the end of the academic year.</p> <p>Usage of the governor school email addresses would be monitored, and AC would continue to use GovernorHub for notification purposes.</p>	
4.0	Governing body	
	<p>JW's visit reports had been added to GovernorHub and provided a good example of the type of reports that governors should be completing after visits. It was agreed that CB would write to the PTFA to thank them for their contribution to the safari playground. good examples of visits. Request that governors thank PTFA for input into safari playground. ACTION FOR CB</p>	

	CB putting together timetable – request governors undertake one visit each before end of academic year.	
5.0	Policy review	
	<p>It was noted that all the policies had been through CCS, and MS was thanked for the covering summary, which made it much easier to understand the changes made.</p> <p>The SEND and Anti-bullying policies, and the accessibility statement, were approved. It was noted that reporting on the anti-bullying policy would be made to governors via the leadership report in the future.</p>	
6.0	SLT report	
	<p>Q – were staffing changes driven by anything other than personal reasons? A – no – it was simply a matter of where people are personally – two were relocating and a third was changing career direction.</p> <p>Q – was keeping the heating off necessary, given the school’s beneficial gas contract and the agreed deficit budget? A – it was agreed there was a balance to be struck, and staff are aware of the financial position and the wish to protect jobs. It was agreed that the heating would be turned up after half term. It was noted that, in terms of wellbeing, it is the LSAs who are struggling the most as the one-to-one role is very demanding, and they are being moved around the team to cover illness etc.</p> <p>Q – had any immediate actions arisen from the audit of mental health? A – Rebecca and Jane had now completed two parts of the four part training process, and while no immediate actions had arisen to date, the result will be a more formal process by which children are identified who are at risk, and appropriate plans put in place to help them. A plan would be put in place to roll out from September, which would involve all staff and which would have a high profile within the school in future years. A staff audit had been carried out at the beginning of the year that had not shown up anything that the school was not already aware of.</p> <p>The audit had been covered in depth at the latest H&S committee meeting, and it was noted that all governing bodies will need a wellbeing governor from 2025. There were multi-agency opportunities that encompass wellbeing, such as with school nurses, and while the Healthy Schools initiative had initially covered healthy eating etc, it would be good to see this extended to cover mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Q – there had been an increase in transport costs for swimming lessons – is there a breakdown of where transport costs are being incurred? A – trip and excursion costs had been covered at F&R. The big loss-leader in terms of transport costs is swimming, as fewer than 50% of parents contribute towards swimming costs, and some parents refuse to let their children swim at all. However it is part of the national curriculum and schools have to report on year 6 swimming ability. Some local schools are arranging for their children to walk to the pool, but it was too far away for SP. Staff with business insurance on their cars are taking children to and from sporting events to minimise costs, and the school would look into liaising with secondary schools about sharing minibuses, or asking the charity to fund the lease of one.</p>	

	<p>The question had been raised about what success in terms of attendance would look like for the school, given that it was unlikely to reach 96% at the end of the year. The key action for the school was reducing persistent absentees to below the national average, and improve attendance for previously persistent absentees. Attendance falls within safeguarding, so if children are not attending school, this does raise red flags. Conversations around attendance can be hard for teachers to have with parents, and staff need to practice dealing with this.</p>	
7.0	Staffing structure	
	<p>The proposed staffing structure had been discussed initially at F&R, and subsequently amended following those discussions. An additional F&R meeting had considered and approved the changes.</p> <p>DS took governors through the background to the proposal and how the leadership team would look moving forwards in terms of changes of personnel, the possible SEN resource centre and the SENCO role.</p> <p>MS's current deputy role would be split into two parts, the DSL role would be moved from the SENCO to one of the new deputies, and the phase leader roles would be shared between the deputies. This would create more capacity within the leadership team, as well as allowing for two more individuals to cover absences in class where needed. At present the school was missing the capacity to support newly qualified teachers in the school, as this now requires more mentorship, and one of the deputy roles would take this on.</p> <p>Only one phase leader is currently ringfenced so a management of change process would be needed, and if the individual were to stay in the school, they would need to paid TLR for 3 years. However it is likely that the relevant individual would look for a leadership role either within the school or elsewhere.</p> <p>Q – where would the safeguarding lead role sit? A – one of the deputy heads would be the pastoral DSL safeguarding lead, and there would still be a safeguarding team.</p> <p>The governors approved the proposed staffing structure, as well as the change to the deputy head pay scale within the pay policy.</p> <p>It was noted that in terms of recruitment, a panel of governors would be required for the interviews. The timescales envisaged were approval of the recruitment pack during the week after half term, closing application son 17 March, shortlisting on 20 March and interviews on 28/29 March. Any governors interested in being involved should email CB.</p>	
9.0	F&R Committee	
	<p>Most issues had been covered above. The latest outturn had been approved, which showed an in-year deficit but an overall surplus.</p> <p>CS asked if any governors were interested in being involved in completing the SVFS, they should let her know.</p>	
10.0	CCS Committee	
	<p>Two staff members had joined the meeting and provided an interesting update on assessment, as well as teaching and learning. BC confirmed that the latter approach was very enabling for teachers, which was unusual, and a real asset to the school.</p>	

11.0	SEND Resource unit report	
	<p>The governors extended their thanks to the working party for their extensive work on the paper.</p> <p>ALS highlighted the approach taken by the working party, particularly the concerns that had been raised at the outset by governors, which had been allayed during the process. The working party's recommendation was that the school proceed with the SEN Unit – this would allow more support for the school's existing and future pupils with SEN, it would harness the resources available at Ashley House, and would improve the school's offering generally.</p> <p>The red lines identified by the working group were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base funding has to be on a per place basis. • Top up funding is done on a per pupil basis. • The school has to be provided with adequate start-up costs. • The intention would be to specialise in autism and language – the school has to have the ability to say no to children who do not fit that profile. • The SEN unit has to be able to share space with the after school club. • 3 years is too short a commitment – the school would want to see the initial arrangements would run for longer than this. <p>In terms of finances, CS and DS had been through the costs in detail, were happy that these were reasonable and realistic, and that the school would not be required to fund the unit from existing funds.</p> <p>Q – a 5% increase on salary is unlikely to be sufficient – is there enough wriggle room within the budget to pay additional pay costs? A – yes there is wiggle room, and the school would look to ensure that per place payments increase in line with inflation.</p> <p>Q – how does the recruitment of pupils into the unit work? A – only children with an EHCP can access resource units. BCC would send the school the EHCP consultations where parents had identified SP resource unit as the setting they wished their child to attend, and the team would consider each of these to determine whether the unit would meet the needs of those children. If the conclusion was that they would, the pupil would be accepted into the resource unit. The SLA is clear that the school has the final say, and cannot accept more than the 12 places available within the resource unit.</p> <p>Q – is there an appeal process for parents? A – yes, a detailed appeal process is set out in SLA.</p> <p>Q – how would the school decide between equal applicants? A – there would need to be criteria that would allow the school to decide between applicants, akin to the way in which nursery places are allocated.</p> <p>Q – how would it affect existing pupils with EHCPs but not of the type required by the unit? If the school is recognised as an expert in this area, would it lead to more children with EHCPs applying to the school, who would then have priority within the mainstream school admissions criteria? This could lead to the school struggling with capacity.</p>	

	<p>A – the unit would only have 12 spaces in the SEN unit, and it may be that it did not have spaces in some years. The reputation of the school is such that it is already attracting children with SEN who have ECHPs already, and this would happen with or without the SEN unit. Having the resource unit will improve the capacity of the school to help its pupils with SEN, allowing it to fund an assistant SENCO. There would be a net positive to the children and wider community.</p> <p>Q – the staffing proposal is one teacher and 3 support staff – what does the SLA say if the teacher is off on long term sick?</p> <p>A – staffing is difficult in terms of cover, particularly when working with high needs children who do not cope with change. The school would have to develop a way of providing cover, for example the SENCO providing cover in the case of short term sickness absence, and there are agencies who provide specialist expertise in terms of long-term sickness absence. There are also training opportunities for existing staff to get experience of specialist teaching, and this could be funded out of start-up funding.</p> <p>A key potential stumbling block would be if the costs involved in upgrading Ashley House would be too high – in this case BCC may decide not to proceed.</p> <p>Q – if there is a shortage of teachers with the relevant expertise, will this make recruitment more expensive?</p> <p>A – the school would look to recruit someone on a higher band who had experience, and this was covered in the budget.</p> <p>Q – what would be the timeframe for parent/stakeholder consultations?</p> <p>A – once the survey had come through, which would determine whether the project was viable, the consultation could go out. A 5 week consultation period was required. This could be done via the school’s website, with possible Zoom or face -to-face Q&A sessions. Staff will be informed of the possible resource unit at the inset day following half term, and DS anticipated that they would be in favour. The leadership team have already discussed it and support the proposal. DS would prepare a stakeholder engagement plan.</p> <p>Formal legal advice would be needed on the final version of the SLA, and BCC should be asked to cover the costs of this. RWS would look at obtaining some estimates, and RW would be asked to include these as a budget line for legal costs.</p> <p>Having considered the report, the risks involved, and subject to the SLA and the red lines identified above, the governors unanimously decided to proceed further with the SEN Resource Centre project. It was also agreed it would be worth revisiting the academisation work previously completed, but this would be done towards the end of this academic year/the start of the next academic year.</p>	
12.0	Industrial action	
	<p>To date there had been one strike day, on which the school had been closed, and another was planned.</p> <p>Only the head can decide to close school on grounds of health and safety. All members of staff, plus 2/3 of the leadership team, were members of the union which had balloted to strike, so DS had decided to close the school. In the end, only 4 teachers chose not to strike, and 3 support staff had decided not to cross the picket line.</p>	

	<p>There were legal constraints on schools and leaders in terms of what they can and cannot ask staff – for example DS can ask staff if they are planning on striking, but they do not have to respond.</p> <p>Having discussed it with the leadership term and the relevant union representative, next time the school will most likely partially open to a small number of classes, based on the number of people who had been in on the previous trike day and the year groups with the highest number of familiar adults available to them.</p> <p>While this would be positive for some families, it would not help those who have children in multiple years, some of whom could be in school and some of whom could not. If a place has been offered to a child who decides not to take it, they have to be classified as not attending that day.</p> <p>Q – is it possible to open to families of critical workers? A – some schools had done, and others had not. The issue was with the nuanced definition of critical workers, and the school would have to spend some considerable time explaining to parents why their children could not attend. It had been possible during the first strike to offer holiday club provision to children of teachers whose schools were shut, but if the school was partially open, this would not be an option available to the school.</p> <p>It was noted that the second strike is regional rather than national, and fewer people may strike on that basis, but there are so many variables, it makes it difficult to plan appropriately. The message would be put out to parents that it is likely that the school will be closed, but no more certainty than that would be possible.</p>	
AOB		
	Next meeting: Wednesday 29 March, 9-12 (same day as possible deputy interviews)	

Meeting Closed at 21.40

Summary of Documents and Policies Agreed/ Ratified/ Adopted or if sub-committee – to be recommended for adoption by FGB

Actions Agreed at Meeting		
3	All governors to complete the Key safeguarding training .	Before end of term 6
4	CB to thank the PTFA for their contribution to the safari playground.	
8	Governors interested in deputy head recruitment to email CB.	
11	RWS to obtain estimates for SLA legal advice	
11	DS to prepare stakeholder engagement plan for SEN unit	

Agenda Item	Policy/Document	Action
5	Anti-bullying policy	Approved
5	SEND policy	
5	Accessibility statement	Approved