

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: Thursday 20 October 2022

Sefton Park School

Ashley Down Road

Bristol

BS7 9BJ

| ITEM | AGENDA ITEM AND NOTES | | PAPERS CONSIDERED |
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| 1.0 | Welcome and apologies and declarations of interest and resignations/new appointments | | |
| | <p><i>Present:</i> Corrie Bell, Carrie Spittlehouse, Amy Campbell, Jane Wheelock, Amy Bellinger, Rachel Wills, Dan Simson, Megan Arnold</p> <p><i>Apologies:</i> Maggie Smithson (MS), Neville Catton (NC), Sally Dore (SD), Madeleine O'Loughlin (MOL), Andy Lillie (ALL), Shabaana Mitha (SM)</p> <p><i>Absent:</i></p> <p><i>Attending:</i> Alexandra Casley (AC)</p> | | |
| | <i>Present:</i> 7 | <i>Quorum met:</i> Yes | |
| 2.0 | Previous minutes/matters arising | | |
| | <p>Staff survey results would go to F&R in term 2.</p> <p>ALL has liaised with the school over website compliance and there were actions pending to update accordingly. The leadership report for future meetings would include a termly report on website compliance.</p> <p>The latest H&S visit report would be circulated to FGB.</p> <p>CB was looking at Survey Monkey for governor visit reports.</p> <p>CB and DS would liaise on feedback to parents on recent survey reports.</p> | | |
| 3.0 | Clerk's report | | |
| | <p>JW agreed to take on the role of PP governor, alongside her roles as attendance governor and H&S governor.</p> <p>There were a number of co-opted governor positions available, and it was agreed that the governors should consider skills gaps and whether any of the previous candidates for parent governor would fill those gaps. RW was happy to work on this.</p> | | |

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| | <p>MA was unanimously elected as a co-opted governor.</p> <p>AC asked all governors to complete their declarations of interest, and to record training on GovernorHub.</p> <p>School email addresses had been set up for all governors. CB had suggested setting up a WhatsApp group so that governors could be prompted to check emails as and when items of import had been sent. AC expressed the wish to move to use of school email addresses by Christmas.</p> | |
| 4.0 | Governing body | |
| | <p>The Governor code of conduct was approved.</p> <p>Terms of reference for both committees were approved, subject to names being updated, the quality of teaching bullet point being removed from F&R, and pupil wellbeing being added to CCS. H&S had been included in CCS as JW attends that committee, but it was agreed that she could report to F&R on H&S as necessary.</p> <p>The governor expenses policy was approved, and would simply refer to HMRC limits without putting express figures on childcare etc.</p> <p>JW reported on a recent visit to the school, where she had attended the singing assembly, and visited the revamped Safari playground. A report would follow.</p> | |
| 5.0 | About the children | |
| | <p>DS shared a video made by two year 6 pupils, describing their life at the school in year 6. The video demonstrated pupil leadership and pupil voice. The governors welcomed the video, and passed their thanks to the children for preparing it.</p> | |
| 6.0 | Policy review | |
| | <p>It was noted that all the key policies under consideration had been through the relevant committee, and all the policies were adopted.</p> <p>There was some discussion about communicating the updated behaviour policy to parents, possibly via the newsletter. It was noted that it would be included on the website.</p> | |
| 7.0 | SLT report | |
| | <p>DS took governors through the SLT report.</p> <p>There had been little staff turnover for the past 3 years, and most staff have stayed in the same year group, providing a sense of continuity. However, all schools are entering into a period of turbulence, with the government decision not to fund the teacher pay rises, leaving a huge dent in school budgets. The school does not have an excess personnel, and with 77% of the budget being spent on staff salaries, there is little room to cut down further. While increased energy costs will not impact on the school in the present year, or next year, other inflationary pressures will have an impact and ultimately children's education will be affected.</p> <p>The governors were informed that LSAs and teachers will be balloted by the various unions about strike action, and the headteachers' union will be balloting for the first time (although DS was not convinced that they would vote to strike). Governors needed to consider how to manage the impact of any strikes, and how to communicate with parents. The rules had changed to allow schools to bring in staff to cover those on strike,</p> | |

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| | <p>but would this be the right thing to do? No blame would be attached to staff if the school were to close due to strike action.</p> <p>It was impossible to predict how the teachers/LSAs would vote as it was not clear what unions they were in, but DS would need to explain the financial situation of the school to them, in order to be as transparent as possible. Any action would not happen until mid-January, so the governors would be meeting again before then. The governors agreed that it would be better to take a position in advance and not be reactive, and also not to alarm parents about the financial position of the school, which was strong.</p> <p>Q – if leadership team’s role is to support teachers and staff at school, the governors should be supportive – what are the governors responsible for and what can they do? A – there was no guidance on the Key on this topic, but it would undoubtedly come up at the next governor network meeting. DS suggested speaking to GDS and meeting with the local MP as well. There was a chair of governors network where CB could raise the issue as well.</p> <p>Governors need to consider communication with parents to ensure that they are onside, but DS needs to speak to staff first to obtain a sense of what they are feeling – this would happen in the first week of term 2. This would enable the school and governors to be on the front foot. The governors would need to consider how to speak to parents – an in-person meeting or a Zoom meeting with questions set out on the chat were two options.</p> <p>It was agreed that bringing staff in from outside during strikes who don’t know the children would be harmful to them.</p> <p>It was agreed that CB and DS would collect some more information, and CB would put together a draft letter for governor consideration to go to GDS, the Director of Education at BCC, and the local MP. The letter would be clear that the issue is one of funding, with the decrease having an impact on the wellbeing of staff with possible associated strike action. The positive financial position of the school would be emphasised to parents. Collect some more information, and CB write collective letter for governor consideration</p> <p>It was agreed that bringing someone onto the governing body with PR experience in this context would be helpful, either as a full governor or associate governor. CB would consider various options.</p> <p>In terms of timing, communication could go to parents in term 2, and an extraordinary governors meeting may be needed to sign off on communications.</p> | |
| 8.0 | F&R Committee | |
| | <p>Points raised were largely covered above, and the minutes would be circulated after the meeting.</p> <p>The outturn had been considered at F&R, who had recommended approval by the Governors, and this had included an in-year deficit but a carry forward for the full year. This was approved by FGB. If the Council responded to the deficit forecast, the governors would be updated accordingly.</p> <p>In a recent DfE premises survey, Ashley House had been graded C (not fit for purpose) and this was a factor to consider when talking about the SEN unit.</p> | |

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| 9.0 | CCS Committee | |
| | <p>The minutes were taken as read.</p> <p>The new chair of the committee would be confirmed in due course.</p> | |
| 10.0 | SEND Resource unit report | |
| | <p>NC and SD had raised a number of issues, which were set out on GovernorHub.</p> <p>Q – what is guaranteed in terms of finances, and what is not? A – the school’s understanding is that funding is per place and not per pupil – however from CS’s research that isn’t entirely clear. Normally special schools are funded per place and per pupil, with resource centres funded in a way between the two. If funding was only provided based on annual census information, this was a potential problem. DS would go back to RW with this point.</p> <p>Q – would there be additional funding for some pupils, depending on EHCP requirements? A – that is where the SLA and consults would come in. Every EHCP comes to the school before it agrees to take the child on – the school may decide that it cannot meet an individual child’s needs, which is why it is important to have the consults. The school would need to be more aware of the due diligence needed before taking on a specific pupil.</p> <p>Q – was there an opportunity to get more funding/support out of BCC as a quid pro quo for providing the SEN unit? A – yes, there would be an opportunity to a certain extent, but that would depend on what they are asking for.</p> <p>Q – did the school have an alternative space for the after school club? A – yes, but it would not have access to a kitchen, and the school was keen to ensure that the after school provision stays attractive. It may be possible to put something together, but this may be at the expense of something else – for example if the hall is used for after school care, other activities cannot take place in that room.</p> <p>Q – did the leadership team think that the proposal was feasible at a time when SEND support is stretched, high-need children need a disproportionate amount of time spent in supporting them, and there are other pressures on leadership time – would this not be a distraction? A – this had been discussed as a leadership team, and the school cannot be blind to the fact that time and capacity will be taken, particularly when the children are in place. The funding model potentially allows an assistant SENCO, which wouldn’t be possible now, and this could be used to support the school, hence the potential opportunities available to the school.</p> <p>Q – to what extent can the SLA be negotiated, as a number of concerns were raised about it – for example vagueness, lack of clarity on the Council’s responsibilities, what would happen if it were not extended past the initial 3 years, inconsistencies around termination provisions. A – the Council are desperate for spaces so the school would be in a strong position to negotiate – DS understood that Shirehampton had negotiated their SLA strongly.</p> | |

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| | <p>Q – how would the unit impact on safeguarding, with high needs children being in the same space as the youngest children on site, and how would it impact on attendance, attainment etc from an Ofsted point of view? Did the school have a view on how it would be perceived within the school community?</p> <p>A – at this stage the governors did not have enough information for a definitive response – there are a variety of positives and negatives, other than staff and leadership time, that need to be taken into account before a decision can be made.</p> <p>Q – 3 days of extra SENCO is not much – can the school ask for more?</p> <p>A – while it may not be able to ask for extra resourcing for staffing, it could ask for capital costs to cover the development of the playground etc. The way Rebecca would envisage the additional SENCO time working would be the 3 day support person working on the Bristol support plan elements, with Rebecca covering all EHCP children in the mainstream setting, as well as those in the resource unit.</p> <p>Q – is this something that the school wants because there is a community/school need and it brings opportunity to students already at the school, or is it simply a favour to BCC? Is there already a staff skillset that could be built up with some additional funding, or a gap that needs to be filled?</p> <p>A – in terms of staffing, the answer was yes and yes. The school wants to keep the good people it has, and consistent staffing allowed for leadership opportunities for those moving up the scale. The resource unit was costed for PG8 LSAs, but the school has current LSAs at PG5 who would take on the roles. Demand will not fall away – once a resource unit is set up, it can be amazing opportunity for the school. There are capacity issues that have to be considered, and the school would not go in blind, but people at the school are keen to proceed as they see it as a great opportunity. SEND is a strategic opportunity for the school. There is also the opportunity to upgrade the existing building, which would add value to the rest of the school.</p> <p>In the academy discussions, the working group had recognised the opportunity for the school to obtain additional SEN recognition, so this was recognised a while ago and is not simply responding to the needs of BCC. There was a strategic alignment with school discussions, but clearly there are a number of important issues to consider and that would need to be worked through by SLT and the governors, with the best interests of the school, pupils and staff being uppermost in their minds.</p> <p>It was noted that the governing body would need to be aware of the additional responsibilities that having this unit would bring to them.</p> <p>It was agreed that the governors would form a working party to consider the resource unit and the various questions raised above and outside the meeting. AB would chair the group, with support from DS. DS would also see if Jessica Taylor could come in and speak to the governors at a future meeting.</p> | |
| AOB | None. | |

Meeting Closed at 21.06

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

| Actions Agreed at Meeting | | |
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| 2 | CB and DS to liaise re reporting survey results to parents. | |
| 2 | DS - leadership report for future meetings include a termly report on website compliance to | |
| 2 | CB Survey Monkey for governor visit reports | |
| 2 | JW H&S visit report circulated to all governors | |
| 2 | CS Staff Survey results to go to F&R in T2 | |
| 3 | All govs to governors to complete their declarations of interest, and to record training on GovernorHub. | |
| 6 | DS Behaviour Policy on website | |
| 6 | DS Behaviour Policy communicated to parents | |
| 7 | CB and DS to collate more information for communications on possible strike action. | |
| 10 | A working party would be formed to consider the SEN Resource unit | |
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| Agenda Item | Policy/Document | Action |
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| 6 | Safeguarding policy | Approved |
| 6 | Behaviour policy | |
| 6 | Anti-harassment policy | |
| 6 | Managing Sickness and Supporting Attendance policy | |
| 6 | Probation policy | |