

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: Monday 22 May 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 (CB) (Chair), Dan Simson (DS), Maggie Smithson (MS), Andy Lillie (AL), Rachel Wills (RW), Amy Lewis (ALS), Ben Crowley (BC), Megan Arnold (MA), Amy Campbell (ACL), Carrie Spittlehouse (CS)</p> <p><i>Apologies:</i> Sally Dore (SD), Shabaana Mitha (SM)</p> <p><i>Absent:</i></p> <p><i>Attending:</i> Alexandra Casley (AC)</p>	
	<p><i>Present:</i> 9</p> <p><i>Quorum met:</i> Yes</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>AC reminded governors to complete the Key safeguarding training, and to add all training details to their GovernorHub accounts.</p> <p>It was agreed that, in term 6, both committees would review meeting timing and days before dates are set for the next academic year. Timing and venue for FGB meetings had been considered previously so would not change.</p> <p>SD was reappointed as co-opted governor for a further term of office.</p>	
4.0	Pupil Voice	
	DS had spoken to two members of the school's Eco council that day, and he read out what they had had to say (a copy attached to the minutes for reference).	
5.0	SLT report	
	The report was taken as read.	

SEN - numbers have increased dramatically this term, particularly in the infants where numbers had gone from 20 to 43. This was not unusual as children moved through the school year, but a 23% overall in the school was high compared to previous years. This had its challenges, particularly as SEN capacity has remained static over that time.

Attendance – the number of persistent absentees had dropped, so the RAG rating had moved from red to amber, but there is more work to be done on this. It was noted that it was a city-wide issue, and not just SP.

SATs – DS paid tribute to the Year 6 team, particularly Alex and Heather, for making sure that the year 6s were in as good a place as they could be for SATs week. Breakfast at school had been a big success, and the school had not seen any drama about the English paper which had been reported in the press. The children had been on their residential camp the week after, and those children that DS had spoken to had thoroughly enjoyed it.

Careers week – this had been very successful, with a wide range of people visiting the school.

Industrial action - there was potential for more strike action moving into the new academic year.

Q – in the pared-down staffing plan for the next academic year, would sport coaches cover staff absence?

A – sport coaches currently cover personal development time, but not staff absence.

Q – no update had been provided on the equalities section – should this be considered at CCS?

A – yes, this would be added to the CCS agenda for term 6.

Q – in terms of attendance, would the school reach its target on the current trajectory?

A – no – the aim had been 96%, but the school will reach around 94%. In discussions at CCS, in the knowledge that the target would not be obtainable, it had been decided to focus on persistent absentees.

Q – can anything be done during the course of the next academic year to help reach this target?

A – in the recent past, given the pandemic, DS has been generous in authorising absences for holiday but would be moving away from this, so in future any such absence would be unauthorised. There are a handful of individuals with whom the school needed to work on issues such as anxiety and school refusal, and it was noted that the vast majority of persistent absentees are for exceptional reasons. DS had attended an attendance briefing the previous week, where other schools had shared their strategies for dealing with this. A number incentivise people with certificates and rewards etc, which is not a route that the school wishes to go down but may have to consider as an option.

Q – does the school fine parents?

A – no, and the evidence is that it does not work – it does not stop those who can afford it, and is punitive for lower earners. Advice is that it should only be used as a very last resort when the school has tried everything else that it can.

	<p>Q – how is unauthorised absence communicated? A – parents have to complete a form requesting authority for absence, and this will be returned to them with the decision marked on it.</p> <p>It was suggested that the school rephrase the message and emphasise that children have to attend school to truly belong in school – this would be considered moving forwards.</p> <p>Q – when will the details from the year one phonics assessment in term 6 come to governors? A – the data will be reviewed by CCS in the first instance, and will be coupled with a review of the phonics programme as well.</p>	
6.0	Budget	
	<p>CS had circulated the draft Service Review Plan after the initial F&R meeting on 9 May. Questions that had been posed on the former had been answered via GovernorHub. The governors resolved to approve the Service Review Plan.</p> <p>The budget had been drafted with a small surplus of £19k for this financial year, which would increase to £58k next year before dropping down again. It was noted that a number of the savings proposed for the current financial year would only start from September, so the benefit of these would only be seen for part of the year.</p> <p>CS thinks it is a conservative budget, due to the fact that it is showing a surplus of over 8% at the end of year 3. However the school does want to be careful due to uncertainties around funding for pay increases. The government have said that it thinks schools can fund 4% pay rises, and the school has put in a 5% pay rise on the advice from BCC, but there are a number of cuts needed to achieve this. A number of inflationary increases had also been built in which may not impact on the school. CS expressed the wish to see more money being spent later on in the financial year once these issues were clear.</p> <p>DS highlighted how hard it had been to work with the deficit and to preserve jobs, and the resultant tightening of belts had taken its toll on staff workloads and wellbeing. He would prefer to be in a position to add capacity into the budget, rather than remove it. He would like to spend the surplus throughout the year, primarily on people, and the opportunities and risks for such spending would be kept under review by F&R. It was also not clear what, if any, additional support the new Reception cohort would need. The school already could see additional children in year 2 showing dyslexic tendencies, who may need more support.</p> <p>Q – a few teachers were leaving – were there specific reasons behind these departures? A – people are relocating and retraining. It was noted that any movement gave the school an opportunity to bring more people into the school.</p> <p>The governors expressed their thanks to everyone who had put in a lot of hard work through the budget process.</p> <p>The governors resolved to approve the budget, with the following details:</p> <p>Income £2,416,617 Expenditure £2,397,643 Carry forward £111,706 from 2022/23 and £130,680 for 2023/34</p>	

7.0	F&R Committee	
	<p>Other than the budget, the main point discussed were two best value proposals, which had been discussed in detail.</p> <p>PE provision</p> <p>The school was dissatisfied with the existing provider (Forever Sport), and have had a proposal from a second provider (Novus) which the committee had considered. The third option was to employ a coach direct, which was not financially feasible and therefore had been discounted.</p> <p>The school's preference was to appoint Novus, and after discussions that had been the committee's recommendation to governors. The contract would be for a year.</p> <p>In terms of after school sports club provision, Novus are happy to provide one and Premier would be happy to provide another. DS would check with Novus that they take childcare vouchers as this is important for a number of parents.</p> <p>Q – would there be an issue for teachers having to support PE lessons if there is only one coach, if they were taking personal development time during that class?</p> <p>A – MS confirmed that there is only one class where there is no LSA support available, and in those circumstances SLT will step in. It was pointed out that previously the school had only had one coach, and it was only recently with Forever Sport that two had been available.</p> <p>The governors resolved to approve the contract with Novus.</p> <p>Woodland area</p> <p>This was a big spend, but DS had explained at F&R why he thought maximising the outside space was key for the future of the school, in the context of a falling pupil numbers across the city and competition from other schools.</p> <p>Quotes had been sought from three different companies, two of which had provided an estimate. Pentagon's design was more traditional, with the bulk of the money focussed on an outside classroom area. TouchWood were proposing something different, with more natural materials, and this had proved more attractive to the children. They would also provide visits to the workshops and get the children involved. While TouchWood had not worked at SP before, they have worked with other schools.</p> <p>After the woodland space had been finished, the next stop would be the year 1 playground and then all outside spaces would have been improved.</p> <p>Concerns had been raised at F&R that the governors were not making a best value decision in this context as they were not comparing like with like. DS confirmed that both companies had been given the same brief but had interpreted it in different ways.</p> <p>Q – when would the work be done, and would it impact on teaching and the children's use of the space?</p> <p>A – ideally it would be done over the summer to minimise disruption.</p>	

	The governors resolved to approve entering into the contract with TorchWood. It was agreed that there would be a discussion at a future F&R meeting as to how best to evaluate best value decisions moving forwards, given the conversations that had taken place.	
8.0	CCS Committee	
	Most issues had been covered above.	
9.0	SEND Resource unit	
	<p>DS had shared the consultation results on GovernorHub. He had been in touch with the Council to confirm that the consultation had closed and had given them the responses. It would now go to Cabinet for further approval, and the school was waiting on that decision.</p> <p>There had been discussions at CCS about how best to communicate with those who had sent in a negative response, who were a relatively small group of people but with strong opinions on the subject. The consultation document would be put on the website, and parents who contact governors directly should be pointed to DS in the first instance. It was agreed that a governor response to direct approaches would be put together for future consultations, in order to support DS in this process.</p>	
10.0	Parent views	
	<p>The potential survey questions had been circulated, and there was some discussion about how best to phrase a question on attendance. The aim of the question would be to understand the parent body's attitude towards attendance, and to see if this shifted over the course of a year.</p> <p>It was agreed that the school's work with pupils may be more informative on this than asking parents, as those who have a particular type of attitude towards attendance may not answer the survey in any event.</p> <p>It was agreed that one way of addressing this would be to ask if parents are aware of what their child's attendance rate is, and whether they would know if their child is a persistent absentee. CB, MA and JW would liaise outside the meeting to discuss how to phrase the question.</p>	
11.0	Governing body	
	Further consideration would be given as to how best to report on visits.	
AOB		
	None.	

Meeting Closed at 20:34

Actions Agreed at Meeting		
3	Meeting timing and days to be considered at term 6 committee meetings	
4	Equalities update to be added to CCS agenda for term 6.	
7	DS to confirm that Novus take childcare vouchers	
10	CB, MA and JW to discuss absence question for parent survey	

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

Agenda Item	Policy/Document	Action
6	Budget	Approved.
6	Service review plan	
7	Novus contract	Approved
7	TouchWood contract	Approved