

# 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 29 January 2024**

**Sefton Park School  
Ashley Down Road  
Bristol  
BS7 9BJ**

ITEM	AGENDA ITEM AND NOTES		PAPERS CONSIDERED
1.0	<b>Welcome and apologies and declarations of interest and resignations/new appointments</b>		
	<p><i>Present:</i> Corrie Bell (CB), Dan Simson (DS), Carrie Spittlehouse (CS), Jane Wheelock (JW), Andy Lillie (AL), Amy Lewis (ALS), Rachel Wills (RW), Claire Kearney (CK), Ben Crowley (BC), Sally Dore (SD) (via Zoom)</p> <p><i>Apologies:</i> Shabaana Mitha (SM), Emily Shuker (ES), Ben S, Amy Campbell (AC)</p> <p><i>Absent:</i> Megan Arnold (MA)</p> <p><i>Attending:</i> Alexandra Casley (AC)</p> <p>CK was welcomed to her first FGB.</p>		
	<i>Present: 10</i>	<i>Quorum met: Yes</i>	
2.0	<b>Previous minutes/matters arising</b>		
	Subject to some minor amendments which had been sent to AC via email, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.		
3.0	<b>Clerk's report</b>		
	AC had sent a chasing email to those governors whose GovernorHub declarations had not yet been completed, and she asked that these be done as soon as possible.		
4.0	<b>Governing body</b>		
	CB mentioned that she had had an approach from a parent who was interested in joining the governing board - it was agreed that the balance of parents on the board was such that the approach should be welcomed. A skills audit would be carried out to identify any gaps on the board, to ensure that any future governor recruitments could be more strategic.		

	<p>CB would follow up on this approach, as well as confirm with SM if she wishes to continue as a governor.</p> <p>CB and CK would liaise over a skills audit to be sent out to governors.</p>	
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Policy review</b>	
	Both the SEND policy and Appraisal policy would follow in term 4.	
<b>6.0</b>	<b>SRB</b>	
	<p>CB had set out the context of the discussions on GovernorHub. There had been discussions between the school and BCC on the terms of the SLA, and at the end of December, the Council had returned the SLA, saying it was in final form. A number of the suggestions made by VWV on behalf of the school had not been taken into account. The project officer (who has since left the Council) was able to clarify some of these objections, but a meeting with the legal team had been refused.</p> <p>VWV had been asked to go through the Council's version of the SLA and highlight the risks - this is the document that was shared on GovernorHub.</p> <p>CB, DS and RW had met on Friday - at that stage they felt that they could not recommend adopting the SLA. CB has since had two further conversations with the Council - the legal team are under-resourced and there is a 6 week wait for any work to be considered by them - hence the reason why they had refused a meeting. CB had also spoken to GDS, who had provided her with the name of the SEND SIO (Alison Hendy) and there may well be some avenues that she can follow up with her, depending on the outcome of the governors' discussions.</p> <p>RW highlighted that the revised document is a redraft of the original and while better in some respects than the original, there were higher levels of risk in other areas. A number of specific issues may impact on the decision of the governors to proceed - while they would not be able to eliminate all risk, there had to be a balance.</p> <p>RW took the governors through the key areas of risk identified by VWV:</p> <p><b>SEN</b></p> <p>The provisions on annual reviews and emergency review meetings reflect what happens in practice now, so may be something the school can accept.</p> <p>One risk for the school is that, if it decides it cannot meet the needs of a child placed at the SRB, the risk is that the child could still remain on the roll for 12 months, and this would impact on the provision for other children, particularly if that child needed one to one support. There was some discussion as to whether this differed from the situation where the school is named on a child's EHCP, and the national guidance on this is woolly. It was noted that Rebecca has not yet had a chance to consider this provision, and it may be that she does not share VWV's concerns but this was something to be followed up.</p> <p><b>Commercial</b></p> <p>There are a number of larger risks, for example in relation to the length of the SLA, where VWV have identified a number of issues. The Council can terminate the agreement for a</p>	

wide range of reasons, and consideration needs to be given to what would be the cost implications for the school in terms of residual liability to the Council and picking up any residual costs for children still on the roll.

VWV have said that a number of these provisions are fairly standard, and the school needs to understand what its potential exposure is and be comfortable with it. However there are some provisions that are not standard - for example if the Council wishes to vary the SLA and the school does not agree, the Council can terminate. The governors need to be comfortable with the reasons for termination of the contract, and the implications if it were to be terminated.

The school is potentially liable to indemnify the Council for losses that it incurs as a result of termination of the contract, which could be a considerable sum that would be outside the school's control. The governors could explore insurance to cover this, and there is an obligation under the contract to take out insurance to cover losses, but it was not clear how much that insurance would cost, or whether it would be covered by the Council's existing insurance for the school. DS would investigate.

AL suggested undertaking a formal risk analysis of the school's obligations under the contract, the probability of an issue arising, what the impact would be if it does happen and what mitigations can be deployed. It would also be good to examine how the risks differ from the school's existing risks in relation to SEN provision and the Council. AL and RW would put together a template, and would seek Rebecca's input on the SEN side, and RWS input on the commercial side. It was agreed that this would be crucial before moving forwards.

It was agreed that negotiations need to be taken further up the Council's hierarchy, and that this was not the end of the road for negotiations. Alison Hendy would be a good starting point. There was also the option of speaking to councillors and local MPs. There would be a big drive within the Council for SRBs to succeed, so it would be potentially embarrassing for the Council if the school should walk away at this stage.

If the school were to walk away from the SRB, the immediate consequences for the school would be the loss of the assistant SENCO and the school would need to consider how it would meet the needs of SEN pupils without it. The future of Ashley House would also be an issue.

Work at Ashley House has not yet started - the Council were expected soon, and it needs to be made clear to them that any work undertaken on Ashley House before the SLA is agreed is undertaken at the Council's financial risk.

DS would arrange a meeting with RWS and Rebecca for after half term, with the aim to complete the risk analysis ASAP so further conversations can be carried out with the Council.

In the meantime, it would be made clear to the Council that the governors cannot agree the SLA at this time, as currently drafted.

The governors extended their thanks to everyone who is doing so much work on the matter.

<b>7.0</b>	<b>F&amp;R committee</b>	
	<p>The meeting was the following day.</p> <p>CB had signed the audited accounts of the unofficial school account - there is currently £6k in it and the school are investigating whether the funds can be transferred to the school charity.</p>	
<b>8.0</b>	<b>CCS committee</b>	
	<p>The meeting had considered whole school data, where writing is an area of focus. There had been an improvement in attendance figures, and the governors were given a full understanding of where this is coming from. CPD for staff had been highlighted as a response to the staff survey, and this would be a good issue to discuss with staff during the daytime FGB, together with zones of regulation. The minutes would be circulated once in final form.</p>	
<b>9.0</b>	<b>SLT report</b>	
	<p>The report was taken as read.</p> <p>DS provided a contextual summary on what has happened since the staff survey in terms of staff morale. Achieving a balance for staff is difficult in terms of mental health issues, as if they are struggling this can impact on the children in terms of consistency. Seven members of staff have taken time off since September, which is a high number. Of those, one was as a result of work-related stress, and the others were triggered by external factors that are impacting on their work. The school wants to support those staff, while keeping the wellbeing of children at the forefront.</p> <p>Unlike a physical injury or sickness, recovery from mental health issues can be very stop-start. Absence insurance requires staff to be back in work for 20 days after a sickness absence before it will pay out, but for staff who are off for mental health reasons, they are not necessarily back for that length of time before going off again. The school does flag up the support available for staff via its insurance company.</p> <p>Q - is there a mental health first aider scheme at school?</p> <p>A - the school does have mental health champions, but having a mental health first aider, who is trained to signpost people towards help and watch out for signs of people who are struggling, would be an option to consider.</p> <p>Communication with parents and children can be difficult when staff are off for mental health reasons, as plans put in place can change, so there is a certain amount of waiting and seeing before informing parents of plans that are to be put in place.</p> <p>Q - in terms of PPA, why is it difficult for people to work from home?</p> <p>A - it is not necessarily difficult for people to work from home, but it has not been taken up as much - some people want to be in as they work side by side with partner teachers.</p> <p>Q - DS had flagged up a series of misogynistic behaviours - is that something confined to year 6 or is something going to be done across the whole school?</p> <p>A - there are definite pockets within the school where boys aren't always as considerate to girls as they could be, and this looks different at different times developmentally. What the school had noticed re year 6 in particular was that this behaviour had crossed the line from developmental issues to a situation where there were a number of external</p>	

	<p>factors coming into school, and the girls voiced that they were feeling unhappy about the situation. The behaviour that had been seen was not something present further down the school, and this had to be called out early to ensure it does not become normalised as the boys get older and go to secondary school. This would be considered as part of the PSHE curriculum review, and the culture throughout the school had improved as a result of the discussions that had taken place. The school's communication to parents had been very prompt and reassuring.</p> <p>DS would add a hyperlink to GovernorHub to the school newsletters.</p>	
<b>10.0</b>	<b>About the children</b>	
	The Governors heard from the wellbeing ambassadors about child mental health week and zones of regulation. They were also treated to a recording of the new school song.	
<b>AOB</b>		
	None.	

Meeting closed: 20:50

	<b>Actions Agreed at Meeting</b>	
4	CB to follow up with the possible governor.	
4	CB and CK to liaise over a skills audit for governors.	
6	DS to investigate insurance position for the school.	
6	AL and RW to put together risk analysis template	
6	DS to arrange meeting with RWS and REbecca for after half term to consider risk analysis	
9	DS to add a hyperlink to the school newsletters to GovernorHub.	

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

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Policy/Document</b>	<b>Action</b>