

GOVERNING BODY FOR ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY GOVERNING BODY MEETING
HELD AT THE SCHOOL
ON MONDAY 16 MARCH 2020

GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

Name	Governor Type	Term End	Present/Apologies/Absent
Alessia Errico (Chair)	Foundation	31/8/20	Present
Sylvia Lehrian (Vice Chair)	Foundation	31/8/20	Present
Fr John McKenna	Foundation	31/8/21	Apologies
Fr James Fasakin	Foundation	31/8/20	Apologies
Francesca Giacon	Foundation	31/8/20	Present
Peter Moger	Foundation	31/8/21	Apologies
Peter Collins	Prospective Foundation		Present
Vacancy	Foundation		
Gordon Fisher	Local Authority (LA)	13/1/21	Present
Julie Burke	Parent	6/3/23	Present
Liz Reeve	Parent	16/5/22	Present
Liam Fitzpatrick	Parent	17/12/23	Present by Mobile Phone
Maureen Kelly	Staff (Headteacher)	n/a	Present
Úna McAuley	Staff	7/6/22	Present
Non-Voting Attendees			
Marc Boucherat	Associate Member (Committees)	24/11/23	n/a
Mary Ainger	(Deputy Headteacher)	31/8/20	Present
Nicki Whatley	(Assistant Headteacher)	n/a	Present
Sheila Bennett	Clerk	n/a	Present

PART I

The meeting opened in prayer.

20/26 WELCOME

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at this meeting, called at very short notice due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

20/27 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been submitted and were accepted from Fr John, Fr James and Peter Moger.

20/28 **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN THE CURRENT AGENDA**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests in the business to be discussed.

20/29 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 13 FEBRUARY 2020**

The Part I and Part II minutes of the first spring term meeting, dated 13 February 2020, were **CONFIRMED** by email as being a fair reflection of it, following the correction of a typographical error on page 8.

20/30 **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

The Chair clarified that she had called this meeting to discuss with the Governing Body the steps the School was taking, in line with government advice, due to the unprecedented global outbreak of Coronavirus. She had been in contact with the School on this matter over the past week to discuss planning and the staff situation.

A newsletter had been sent to parents to explain how the School was coping with the crisis. They had been informed that the position was being evaluated on a daily basis. Governors heard that any child showing signs of a cough or fever was isolated and then sent home.

The Chair handed over to the Headteacher to inform Governors of the School's current practice in response to the pandemic.

20/31 **HEADTEACHER'S REPORT**

School Roll

The Headteacher said that 73 children were currently absent, which was 15% of the whole school. The highest number of absences were in the Nursery.

Staffing

There had been two teachers absent that day; one of whom had showed symptoms and another's child had done so. They would be self-isolating in accordance with government advice.

There had been one teaching assistant absent due to toothache.

The Headteacher had looked into the staffing situation in relation to the safety and wellbeing of the children. Governors heard that if nine class teachers were absent then the School would have to close due to health and safety reasons.

The Chair reminded everyone that the current government advice was not to close schools unless they were understaffed.

Protective Measures in Place

The Headteacher said that the School had been pro-active over the past two weeks by increasing the amount of disinfecting. There had been two meetings with the cleaning staff to update them on the School's expectations in ensuring that the high-risk areas for the children and staff were being cleansed effectively.

A consistent approach to increased hand-washing for the children had been in place for over two weeks. Staff were expected to carry out hand-washing with the children four times a day, with the children lining up for hand-washer to be put on their hands. They then returned to the back of the line whilst thoroughly rubbing the soap in everywhere over their hands and wrists for at least 20 seconds. When the children reached the front of the queue again they washed and rinsed their hands under the tap. This ritual took place once the children had arrived in class, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of the school day.

The children had been spoken to about the need to minimise touching their faces. This was very hard, especially for the younger children, to understand and remember. The Headteacher emphasised the importance of not frightening the children. Governors were aware that the older children were listening to the news and heard grown-ups talking about the crisis. Staff had talked to the children about looking after each other.

Communication with Parents

Governors noted that the next newsletter to parents would communicate that the School was taking this situation very seriously. This would mean that decisions on matters such as trips and events would be taken on a daily basis. Sports Week was expected to be cancelled.

Parents would be told that they would no longer be invited to come into the School to drop their children off at Breakfast Club in the dining hall. They would have to leave their children at the front door. Parents would also be asked to wait outside the School to collect their children from After-School Club. Class Masses would unfortunately have to be postponed to lessen the risk to the children in their classroom.

The Headteacher said that the meetings with parents from Yr 1 to Yr 6 to discuss their children's reports would also be postponed.

The Chair raised concerns about parents milling together in the playground. The Headteacher would remind parents by text about this as it was easy to forget that their usual behaviour could put others at risk of infection. The Headteacher would ask parents to collect their child and immediately leave the premises.

QUESTIONED about the school gates being opened at 8.30 am and parents waiting until 8.40 am for their children to go into class, the Headteacher said that, in future, parents would be able to send their children into School from 8.30 am. In the afternoon, children could be picked up at 3.15 pm so that parents could go

straight to the Nursery to collect other children and then leave the premises as soon as possible.

Action: Headteacher

The Headteacher highlighted that, as the educational psychologist went straight to a separate room and left the School immediately afterwards, these appointments would continue at present. The children involved washed their hands both before and afterwards.

Governors heard that three applications for Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) were currently in process, and these meetings were important to fulfil these.

Julie Burke highlighted some useful links to help parents talk to their children about the current crisis, which she would share with the rest of the Governing Body.

Action: Julie Burke

Governors stated that it was vital to continue good communication with parents. The Headteacher said that while more interactions were taking place by text, phone and email, further virtual means were being looked into. The Chair spoke about the importance of getting a reliable system in place, but recognised this was not an immediate focus for the School.

Information to Staff

The Headteacher said that staff were being clearly informed of the latest advice and the decisions taken, in one daily email to them all. She hoped that, by explaining the changes day by day to the children, they would get used to the current difficult situation and learn to accept it without undue anxiety.

Staff talked to the children about how to look after each other, emphasising that they were strong and healthy and less likely to succumb to the virus, and to be mindful of the elderly and those whose immune systems needed more care. The Headteacher said that the children's questions were being answered sensitively, giving them the reasoning behind each decision.

The Headteacher spoke about staff briefings at 8.15 am each day. Time was given to staff for them to discuss matters of concern. She intended to do this each day to support staff and encourage them to express their anxieties.

20/32 **GOVERNORS' RESPONSE & QUESTIONS**

The Chair, on behalf of the Governing Body, praised the Headteacher and all the staff for their proactive approach to minimise the risks to children and staff. Governors were invited to ask questions.

QUESTIONED, the Headteacher replied there had not been any government information about increasing class sizes.

QUESTIONED about the catering staff, the Headteacher explained that this workforce was not employed by the School. If a member of the catering staff was away, the company would send supply staff to cover. She was pleased to report there were no issues at present.

QUESTIONED about teaching assistants, the Headteacher said that if they were absent the School could manage.

QUESTIONED about putting classes together, the Headteacher said that this option might have to be considered to release teachers. It was noted that staff absence could well have an impact on teachers' Planning Preparation & Assessment (PPA) time.

QUESTIONED about the SATS, the Headteacher replied that no information had yet been received. The School was working on the assumption that it was business as usual. The SATS were due to start on 11 May 2020.

A short discussion took place on the forthcoming SATS and the effect of the outbreak on the children's attainment. Governors were aware that SATS results could decide sets at some secondary schools. It was noted that Yr 6 children should be at Age-Related Expectations (ARE). Governors were pleased to hear that the children in this year group were very organised. They took responsibility for their own learning and were used to self marking. This practice would continue.

QUESTIONED about school admissions, the Headteacher said that this was arranged centrally by the local authority (LA). The first offer to new parents had gone out. There had been 177 applications.

QUESTIONED about the Performing Arts Hub and the new provision for two-year-old children, it was expected that building work would continue if the building company was able to carry on, as the workmen were well away from the children. It was confirmed that funding for these projects could not be used for any other purpose, such as purchasing resources for home working for the children.

QUESTIONED on whether the School should be deep cleaned, the Headteacher said that she had to follow Public Health England advice. She had met the cleaning company. More cleaners were being used and their work was checked more often.

The Caretaker was thanked for his assistance, cleaning the School throughout the day on a regular basis. He was paying particular attention to door handles, door plates and other risk areas.

20/33 **LEARNING SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE**

The Chair said that the closure of schools would happen at some point, quite possibly with very little notice. A short discussion took place on how this might be managed.

The importance of home learning was emphasised. It was accepted that this would be different for each year group. The Headteacher said that the uploading of additional material onto class pages had begun the previous week. Staff were being encouraged to put something on every day, so that in the event of closure, the children would have plenty of support for their learning and their education could continue at home.

The Headteacher informed Governors that many companies were emailing the School with free one-month subscriptions for home-learning resources. She naturally did not want to take up these offers too early, and was planning to put links onto class pages when the School had closed.

The Headteacher had contacted Katie Dawbarn, the Learning Network Inspector (LNI) for guidance on these matters. She had been informed that schools could only wait until the Department for Education (DfE) gave its advice.

The problems of parents managing during this very stressful time with work, finding child care and caring for other family members, was discussed. The School would give parents as much support as possible if and when schools closed to help the children continue their learning as well as they could.

It was acknowledged that all schools would be facing the same challenges because of the pandemic.

QUESTIONED on the availability of laptops and technology within the school community, the Chair said that all parents had a mobile phone but the number of laptops was unknown. It would not be possible to loan equipment to parents. Governors recognised that it would be far from ideal for children to use a mobile phone for their learning.

The limitations of remote learning for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and very young children was another concern. The Deputy Headteacher said that if parents did have any problems they would be able to contact the School for assistance.

Governors emphasised the importance of ensuring that the children did not lose their routine of learning if the School had to close. It was acknowledged that a strong programme would have to be put in place on their return.

QUESTIONED on the number of text books available, the Headteacher said that there were not sufficient copies for every child. Exercise books had been nearly used up for this financial year; further orders had been placed but would not be received until after 1 April 2020. The Headteacher said that no additional materials to support learning had been ordered recently due to the restrictions of the very tight budget.

The financial implications for schools had not been mentioned by government so far.

QUESTIONED about worksheets for the Early Years, it was confirmed that worksheets were not used for this age group. The Staff Governor had put various activities on the class pages that parents could do with their children to support their development and to keep them happily occupied.

QUESTIONED on the effect of home learning on Year 6, the Headteacher said that the impact would be huge if the School was closed. She confirmed it would be necessary to prioritise some year groups.

A suggestion was made that parents could buy materials if necessary to assist their children, although it was recognised that this would be discriminatory as not every parent could afford to do this.

Governors were pleased to note there was plenty of free material online for Yr 6 children, such as previous SATS test questions and answers.

20/34 **FUTURE GOVERNOR MEETINGS & COMMUNICATION**

QUESTIONED about Governors meeting to attend committee meetings and learning walks, the Headteacher said that the learning walks would be postponed to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The PTA meeting had also been postponed.

The next Governing Body meeting, planned for 2 April 2020 would be cancelled.

It was **AGREED** that the School Budget 2020/21 would be considered and ratified by Governors through email.

The Chair explained that virtual meetings would be set up where necessary, and document ratification could be completed by email. She said that although this was not ideal, it was essential at the present time.

The Chair asked Governors to let her know if they wished to be part of a Governors' WhatsApp group. A decision on this would be made shortly. She emphasised the need to continue to improve communication between Governors.

Action: Chair/All Governors

Governors heard that the Parent Representatives were excellent and could assist with communication with parents. They were thanked for their work and generosity in giving their time to others.

The Chair concluded the meeting by saying that these were exceptional and challenging times. The School was doing everything it could to minimise risks to the children, staff and larger school community.

She wished to place on record the Governing Body's grateful thanks to the Headteacher and all the staff for the way they were coping during this unprecedented emergency.

There being no further business, the meeting ended.

POST MEETING NOTE: On Monday 23 March 2020 all schools in the UK were closed by the government, in an effort to reduce the risk of the Coronavirus infection spreading more widely. The children of key workers, the most vulnerable and those with a social worker or an EHCP would continue to be educated in a few selected schools. Those schools were being encouraged to stay open over the Easter break for this purpose. It had also been confirmed that the SATS would not take place for this year.

Chair's Signature: *Alessia Errico*

Date: 11 May 2020