

GOVERNING BODY FOR ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 14 DECEMBER 2020

GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

Name	Governor Type	Term End	Present/Apologies/Absent
Alessia Errico (Chair)	Foundation	31/8/24	Present
Sylvia Lehrian (Vice Chair)	Foundation	31/8/24	Present
Fr John McKenna	Foundation	31/8/21	Apologies
Fr James Fasakin	Foundation	31/8/24	Present
Francesca Giacon	Foundation	31/8/24	Present
Peter Moger	Foundation	31/8/21	Present
Peter Collins	Foundation	31/8/24	Present
Vacancy	Foundation		n/a
Gordon Fisher	Local Authority (LA)	13/1/21	Present
Julie Burke	Parent	6/3/23	Apologies
Liz Reeve	Parent	16/5/22	Present
Liam Fitzpatrick	Parent	17/12/23	Present
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
Holly Evans	(Interim Deputy Headteacher)		Present
Nicki Whatley	(Interim Deputy Headteacher)		Present
Lydia Pavlou	(Interim Deputy Headteacher)		Present
Sheila Bennett	Clerk		In Attendance

PART I

The meeting opened in prayer.

20/93 WELCOME

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the second autumn term Governing Body meeting. This was a virtual meeting due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic precautions.

20/94 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been submitted and were accepted from Fr John, who had Church commitments that evening, and Julie Burke.

20/95 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN THE CURRENT AGENDA

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

20/96 MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 30 September 2020 were **CONFIRMED** as being a fair reflection of it.

20/97 **MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair checked through the action points in the minutes not yet completed or dealt with elsewhere. She also asked Governors for any further matters arising:

20/69 Appointment of Chair It was confirmed that the Diocese of Westminster (the Diocese) had now completed the reappointment of Alessia Errico. Her term of office had been backdated and would end on 31 August 2024.

20/75 Headteacher's Report: Parental Questionnaire The Headteacher confirmed that this had been revised and sent out to parents. Governors were reminded that a paper questionnaire had been given out last year and the year before to every parent from Yr 2 – Yr 6 at their children's consultation meetings. This year a Survey Monkey had been sent to each family and 107 had been returned. This was about 50% of the total number of parents. Governors were pleased with this good response. Nationally the average return on similar surveys was only around 30%.

QUESTIONED on feedback from the parental questionnaire, the Headteacher said she was in the process of going through the results and how best to present them to make the information clear. The results of the survey would go onto the website this week.

Action: Headteacher

Peter Collins would look into finding a suitable questionnaire for Governors to complete.

Action: Peter Collins

20/98 **VERBAL REPORT OF THE HEADTEACHER**

Update on Covid-19 Pandemic

Governors regretted to learn that a child in Yr 2 had tested positive the previous week. This had resulted in that class being closed down and four Yr 1 children in the Breakfast Club who had also been in close contact were asked to self-isolate. The Headteacher said that government guidance changed afterwards on the period of self isolation. The children were therefore welcomed back after being away from school for ten days.

Phonic Screening Check

Governors noted that schools had until 18 December 2020 to carry this check out for the children who were now in Yr 2. They had been unable to do this in Yr 1, due to the lockdown.

It was noted that any children who were isolating because of vulnerable family members would be marked absent and this would be recorded. They would be able to retake the test at the end of Yr 2.

Pupil Progress

An audit of pupil progress would be completed at the end of the autumn term. This would inform the areas of development and the targets in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Book scrutinies and learning walks were also taking place. The information would be shared with the Learning & Achievement and Catholic Life Committees.

It was expected that pupil progress meetings would be carried out at the beginning of January 2021. Teacher assessment meetings would take place to go through the children's books, look carefully at current support and identify any interventions necessary to support the children in their learning.

School Effectiveness Visit (SEV)

Katie Dawbarn, Learning Network Inspector (LNI) had conducted a SEV via Zoom earlier in the term. She had been very complimentary about the children.

Sharing Good Practice

The Headteacher spoke about an invitation from the local authority (LA) to share the School's good practice with other schools via Zoom, as part of the Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI). This LNI project would require intensive training that would start in January 2021.

Another partnership opportunity that had been applied for was connected with the Department for Education (DfE). This project again would require additional training for staff.

The possibility of Nicki Whatley, Key Stage 1 Leader, taking part in a third research project by the Institute of Education was awaited. This would involve Yr 2 and was related to improving grammar skills. Schools that had been chosen would hear in January 2021 to which area of the trial they had been allocated. If chosen, a teacher would have ten weeks' training. This would be rolled out across both Yr 2 classes.

The Headteacher thanked her staff for being so positive and willing to take on the extra work these new projects involved for the benefit of the children and the School.

Staffing

Teacher appraisals had all been completed, as required, by 31 October 2020. They had received their pay award.

Governors heard that a long-serving teaching assistant would be leaving after 33 years' service at the School. She was relocating to another part of the country. The Headteacher said she was a well-liked, professional member of the staff and would be much missed. Her post would be advertised together with that of another teaching assistant to specifically support a child in Nursery.

Nursery & Reception

The Headteacher gave details of a marked increase in the high level of need among children in Nursery and Reception in comparison to previous years. Holly Evans, Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo) and Inclusion Leader, had successfully applied for SEND Inclusion Funding to support a child with particularly severe needs. She would be applying for further funding to assist two other children as well as another child with severe needs.

This increase in high levels of need meant that parents awaiting Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) for their children had to wait longer for them to be assessed. Managing parental expectations and the high levels of anxiety these delays caused was increasingly difficult for staff to deal with. The School was doing everything possible to reassure the parents and to assist their children as much as possible.

The Chair said that Governors were aware that staff were working hard to make sure every child was safe in school and that those who needed it would have trained staff in place to support them.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Governors noted that at present there were seven children with an EHCP. Others were in the process of being approved, and an additional three EHCPs were currently being written.

The Headteacher said that this gave Governors an appreciation of the very high level of need at present in the School, especially in the younger age groups. It was well above the national average for a mainstream school without any special provision.

QUESTIONED on what would happen if funding for these children did not materialise, the Headteacher said she would continue to stress with the LA and other professionals that funding was essential to enable the School to cope with this level of need.

QUESTIONED on the difficulty of managing parental expectations, Holly Evans replied that staff understood parents' concerns and anxieties. They did their very best to help wherever they could.

Admissions

Governors heard that families of nine additional children had applied for a place in the Nursery in January 2021. This would bring the total to 43, which was five over the number allowed. Home visits to these families had been carried out through doorstep visits and meetings with parents had been via Zoom.

QUESTIONED on when full information on admissions for 2021/22 would be known, the Headteacher replied this would be available in late January 2021.

Attendance

Governors congratulated the Headteacher and staff on the current excellent attendance rate of 98%.

The Headteacher thanked parents for maintaining their children's attendance during these difficult times. She warned that this excellent figure was expected to go down as some families were withdrawing their children from school prior to Christmas, for Covid-19 related reasons. This type of absence would have to be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Thank-you to Staff

Father James wished to record thanks to the Headteacher and all members of the staff for their hard work and care in safeguarding the children and continuing their education over the course of the pandemic.

20/99 **PUPIL PREMIUM**

The Headteacher said that vouchers were available for children in the free school meals (FSM) category and families in need throughout the Christmas holidays. Governors noted that these had been purchased by the School already to make sure that families were supported. The School would be refunded at a later date.

QUESTIONED on the number involved, the Headteacher said that 35 children would benefit from this initiative. This amounted to 29 families in total: 26 FSM and 9 in the vulnerable category. Governors noted that the vouchers amounted to £15 per child per week.

Peter Collins said that he and Francesca Giacon, Pupil Premium Governors, had arranged a meeting with Holly Evans. This had been cancelled as there were no statistics ready to consider this year, due to the pandemic. Holly Evans confirmed that it had not been possible to review the spend on this area of the School. They would meet again in January 2021.

20/100 **SPORTS PREMIUM**

Liz Reeve, Sports Premium Governor, had met Nicki Whatley last week with the Resources Committee to see how much funding was available.

Governors were informed that it had been decided not to go ahead with the resurfacing of the playground as it was proving to be too expensive.

The money set aside for this work would be used to improve the children's outdoor experiences. The climbing frame would be replaced by one that would challenge older children as well as the younger ones. A trim trail would be installed to surround it. This would be in use all the year round. Quotations from three different companies were being sought for this project at present.

The storage shed would be replaced. An audit of resources for PE had taken place, and more PE and playtime resources would be purchased.

Sports Premium funding would also be used to pay for top-up swimming lessons for Yr 6.

QUESTIONED on how long the Sports Premium funding for 2019/20 could be carried over for, Liz Reeve replied that this had to be spent by the 31 March 2021.

20/101 **SAFEGUARDING, ON-LINE SAFETY & GENERAL PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

Sylvia Lehrian, the Safeguarding Governor, gave an overview of the Safeguarding Meeting held on 16 October 2020.

Single Central Record (SCR) She and the Headteacher had met on Zoom with Kim McKenzie, School Business Manager, on 19 October 2020 to check the SCR. Governors were pleased to hear that, following spot checks, no concerns had been found. Sylvia Lehrian wished to thank Kim McKenzie for her diligence in managing the SCR so well, despite longer delays at present due to the pandemic, to obtain information such as references. All action points would be followed up at their next meeting.

Fire Drill A fire drill had been held this term. Governors were pleased to hear that the School had been evacuated in 1.46 minutes. More use had been made of the external stairs and it was emphasised that the children should use the nearest available exit.

Governors noted that the children had to line up in the playground because that was the School's evacuation point. A bottle-neck, which was difficult to avoid, was being managed as best as possible.

Shoeless Learning In wet weather the children in the shoeless learning area of the School would of course have to evacuate without spending time putting on their shoes. Parents in Key Stage 2 had been asked to always have a spare pair of clean, dry socks in their child's bag, just in case these needed to be changed. Governors also noted that the external stairways were gritted and non-slip.

Wellbeing The wellbeing of staff had been discussed with the Headteacher. Although tired they were being well supported.

It was noted that staff availability related to the pandemic meant that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) often had to make last-minute changes to staffing.

Safeguarding Safeguarding training for some Governors needed to be updated. When the next Level 1 safeguarding training was available, those Governors would be reminded of the importance of accessing this.

Action: Liam Fitzpatrick/Vice Chair

20/102 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Catholic Life

The Vice Chair gave an overview of the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2020 because Father John was absent that evening.

Wellbeing & Stress Management A focus of the meeting had been on how staff were coping through this pandemic.

Una McAulay had attended the meeting and she updated Governors on how they were coping. Governors were pleased to hear that they were managing well in the circumstances. Staff had been very flexible with deadlines and were making sure no one was being overwhelmed. Good communication continued and resources were being used as necessary. Everybody had taken part in the stress management training delivered by Maria Goldsmith. The feedback on this had been very positive.

Pupils' Wellbeing The Vice Chair said that the children had reconnected and were given time to share their experiences.

Holly Evans spoke about recent research by a mental health and psychology specialist who explained that even if children looked all right, the stresses of the pandemic had affected them. Governors heard that their brains were not making good connections with new learning and memories. They were not processing their learning as quickly as before. These difficulties would be overcome with time. It was necessary for teachers to work at the children's pace at present. The children were gradually getting quicker.

Holly Evans added that, as the whole school had not had to isolate since their return from lockdown, the children's education had been consistent. This was helping them to make progress and move their learning forward.

QUESTIONED on whether this change in pace affected other parts of the curriculum, Holly Evans replied that this was stressful for teaching staff. They had to concentrate on the learning process, which would get better. They were aware that there was no point in rushing through new learning if the children were not able to process it. Teachers were focusing on this and on the children's wellbeing.

The Chair said that the health and safety of the children and everyone else in the School was an absolute priority. The fact that the School had remained open was a testament to the conscientiousness of staff.

The Vice Chair said that stress and anxiety levels were being managed and the focus on wellbeing would continue. Father John helped Yr 6 with Christian meditation, which was of great benefit to them.

Road Warriors The Vice Chair wished to record a vote of thanks to all the Road Warriors who had helped manage traffic and social distancing during drop-off and pick-up times outside the school.

Shoeless Learning This had been discussed and the consensus was that it worked well for the school. More information on this would be provided on the website.

Learning & Achievement

A meeting of this committee had been held on 15 October 2020 for which minutes were not yet available. Peter Collins undertook to follow this up. He would take over as Chair of this committee while Julie Burke was self-isolating. It was noted that the Headteacher was the lead in this area of the School.

Action Peter Collins

INSET Days This training for staff in September 2020 had been very effective in giving staff strategies to support the children's return to school. A wellbeing audit was undertaken to gauge the emotional health, resilience and anxiety levels of staff on their return.

Children's Progress The feedback from teachers had been pleasing. They had identified the children's needs, the majority of which were in Nursery and Reception.

Pupil progress meetings had taken place. The SLT had highlighted clear areas of development in the SIP, with targets. The format had been changed for this year.

The next meeting would be arranged for February 2021.

Resources

Performing Arts Hub Peter Moger shared the final design of this new building with Governors. He reminded everyone that the previous contractor had gone out of business and it had been necessary to find another builder. He was pleased to say that the final proposal was very similar to that which the Governors had originally wanted. Some minor changes had been made, such as a smaller window, which would save money.

Peter Moger then shared a document showing the costs of this project. He went through the figures in detail. It was noted that the Governing Body would be liable for £39,100. It was hoped that the Performing Arts Hub would be completed by summer 2021.

QUESTIONED on whether these changes to the building would mean that it would have to be approved again by the Planning Committee, Peter Moger replied that this was not thought to be an issue. He was confident that the

School would be able to go ahead, as the impact was less than the building that had been previously planned. Governors would be kept informed of progress.

Action: Peter Moger

Safeguarding

The minutes of this committee had already been discussed under item 20/101.

20/103 **RATIFICATION OF POLICIES**

The following policies, which had been updated, had been distributed to Governors prior to the meeting:

Appraisal

Following consideration, the Appraisal Policy was **RATIFIED**.

Pay

The Headteacher said that a further small change would be made to the Pay Policy that had been sent out to Governors with the agenda. The policy would be amended and Governors would be asked to ratify this by email after the meeting.

Action: Headteacher/Clerk

CHALLENGED by Governors to make it clear which changes had been made to previous policies, the Headteacher undertook to highlight these alterations in future so that Governors would be fully informed.

Action: Headteacher

20/104 **GOVERNOR TRAINING**

Liam Fitzpatrick had attended a three-part training course from the Diocese on Introduction to Governorship in November 2020.

Francesca Giacon had booked the Diocesan Inspection for Governors course, but this had been postponed until next year.

The Headteacher and Una McAulay had attended training on Sex & Relationships & Health Education that term.

The links for online training at present were as follows:

Diocese training: <https://courses.rcdow.org.uk>

LA training: www.barnetce.org.uk

The link for any LA course queries: SDTUed.Admin@barnet.gov.uk

Governors noted that J P Morrison, Director of Education, would be leaving the Diocese after many years' service.

20/105 **GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP**

Reappointment of Foundation Governors

It was confirmed that all Foundation Governors had now been reappointed. There remained one vacancy for a Foundation Governor.

Forthcoming End of Term of LA Governor

The Clerk was liaising with the LA on the reappointment of Gordon Fisher, whose term of office would be ending on 31 January 2021. He was thanked for being willing to continue in the post.

20/106 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

20/107 **WHAT WAS THE IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN?**

This meeting had been focused on the children:

- The spiritual well-being and the safeguarding of the children continued to be the priorities for the staff. Attendance had been excellent since the start of term, which showed that the children were happy to be in school.
- An audit of pupil progress, which would be complete by the end of term, would inform teaching staff of any necessary interventions and pupil support.
- The School's efforts in supporting an increasing number of children with very high levels of need was acknowledged.
- The School had not closed down again since September 2020. This had enabled the children to benefit from a consistent education. A report on the School Effectiveness Visit (SEV) had been very positive.
- Staff had been asked to share their good practice with other schools by the LA. They were also putting themselves forward to take part in national educational projects that would add benefit to the children's learning.
- The response from the recent parents' questionnaire had been high. The results would be published on the website.
- Vouchers for vulnerable children and those eligible for FSM had already been purchased by the School to ensure families would receive them over the Christmas holidays.
- Plans were going ahead to develop the children's playground and outdoor experiences by installing a new climbing frame and trim trail. Further resources for PE were also being purchased to improve these lessons for

the children. Yr 6 would benefit from top-up swimming lessons that had been missed over the lockdown period.

- The exciting Performing Arts Hub project was going ahead. It was expected to be ready for use by September 2021.
- The Headteacher and Safeguarding Governor continued to maintain a constant dialogue throughout the pandemic to ensure the safety and welfare of the children.
- All Foundation Governors had been reappointed so that they could continue their work for the School.

20/108 **DATE OF NEXT GOVERNING BODY MEETING**

The next meeting of the Governing Body would be:

Thursday 25 February 2021 at 7 pm.

20/109 **MOTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

It was **RESOLVED** that, because of its nature, the business to be transacted be treated as confidential and not for publication.

Chair's signature: *Alessia Errico*

Date: 25 February 2021