

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING OF ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, ON TUESDAY 9TH MAY 2023 AT THE SCHOOL AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Name	Governor Type	Other Information	Term of Office	Present/Apologies/Absent
Alessia Errico	Foundation	Chair	01.11.2020-31.08.2024	Present
Sylvia Lehrian	Foundation	Co-Vice Chair	01.09.2020-31.08.2024	Present
Fr John McKenna	Foundation		01.10.2021-31.08.2025	Present
Francesca Giacon	Foundation		01.10.2020-31.08.2024	Apologies
Peter Moger	Foundation		01.09.2021-31.08.2025	Present
Peter Collins	Foundation	Co-Vice Chair	01.09.2020-31.08.2024	Present
Fr David Pember	Foundation		TBC	Present
Liz Reeve	Foundation		01.01.2023-31.08.2026	Present
vacancy	Elected Parent			
Serena Horgan	Elected Parent		07.10.2022-06.10.2026	Present
Liam Fitzpatrick	Elected Parent		18.12.2019-17.12.2023	Present
Maureen Kelly	Staff	Headteacher	Ex-officio	Present
Una Turner	Staff		08.06.2022-07.06.2026	Apologies
Gordon Fisher	LA		14.01.2021-13.01.2025	Present
Non-voting attendees				
Holly Evans				Apologies
Nicki Whatley				In attendance
Caroline Winston	Clerk		N/A	In attendance

PART ONE

1. OPENING PRAYER

- 1.1 The meeting opened with a prayer.

2. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, extending a special welcome to the new Clerk.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 3.1 Consent was recorded to apologies for absence submitted on behalf of Una Turner and Francesca Giacon.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 4.1 None of the Governors present declared a pecuniary interest in the business to be discussed.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH JANUARY 2023 AND MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.
- 5.2 Arising from the minutes:
- 5.3 Item 23.3 The Education Space to check if any declarations had not yet been received This action was pending and the new Clerk undertook to progress this.
- 5.4 Item 23.13 Add ratification of SEND policy to next agenda This had been completed.

- 5.5 It was reported that this policy had already been reviewed and ratified and had since been published on the school website.

		Action	Who?	Deadline
5.3	a.	Check that all governor declarations have been completed	Clerk	May 2023

6. REPORT OF THE HEADTEACHER

- 6.1 A full and detailed report had been shared with Governors on GovernorHub.
- 6.2 The Headteacher explained that this included an update on the Spring and Summer term due to the timing of the last meeting so early in the Spring term, and after a late Autumn term meeting.
- 6.3 **ASKED** whether there were waiting lists for the cohorts where roll numbers were below 60, the Headteacher said that there was not, but that this changed weekly. A new child would be joining the School the following week. There was lots of movement in pupil numbers and the roll was therefore expected to be full soon.
- 6.4 The Chair highlighted the higher than usual number of pupils transferring from Year 6 to Loretto College that year. In the past, only 2 or 3 pupils had been allocated this setting and Governors agreed that it was positive that this had been 7 for 2023.

Liam Fitzpatrick joined the meeting at this point.

- 6.5 **ASKED** about the substantial amount of funding successfully applied for with the Tales Toolkit programme, the Headteacher said that this had been achieved through matched funding being provided by an external organisation. The toolkit was a programme which allowed children to create and retell stories helping them to share ideas, develop their language, comprehension creativity and imagination. The toolkit included training for staff, story scribing resources and funding to purchase resources for the environment. It would be used from the 2-year-old provision right up to Year 1.
- 6.6 **ASKED** whether the children who did not meet the expected standards last year in the phonics screening check were on the SEN profile, this was confirmed and the Headteacher reminded Governors that children who did not meet the standard in Year 1 would re-sit the check in Year 2.
- 6.7 The Headteacher reported that in the current Year 1 cohort, only one child had been predicted not to meet the standard in the phonics screening check and additional support had been put in place for them.
- 6.8 **ASKED** about the gender gap identified in the data for areas of development and whether this had always been the case, the Headteacher said that this had been the first time this had arisen since she had been at the School. She explained that in the current cohort there were more boys on the SEN profile, especially in Year 6 which also had the highest number of EHCPs. These children were not removed from the data, which had an impact on the apparent trend at present of girls outperforming boys.
- 6.9 **ASKED** about the fact that the School was receiving multiple requests for school places for SEND children via the LA, the Headteacher confirmed that there had recently been three consultations for children with EHCPs to join the School which had been declined as it was felt that the School would not be able to meet their needs.
- 6.10 Governors were reminded that there were already two children with considerable needs in Reception. The families were currently being supported to provide evidence to show that they should be allocated a special school placement.
- 6.11 **ASKED** whether these types of requests to admit pupils would take the School over roll capacity, this was confirmed. The Headteacher said that the LA could do in-year admissions if they needed to, which could take classes over 30.

- 6.12 The Chair reported that she had recently been in school on a visit to observe Science. She said that this had been extremely positive, and she had observed children in KS2 who had been engrossed in their learning, which was a credit to the teaching.
- 6.13 The Vice Chair praised the passion of the teachers for their subject leadership work.

Peter Collins joined the meeting at this point.

- 6.14 **ASKED** for an update on the teacher recruitment process, the Headteacher informed Governors that an advertisement had been placed for a third time and candidates had been shortlisted. Three teachers had been appointed.
- 6.15 Governors were reminded that teachers could resign any date up to the 31st May.
- 6.16 **ASKED** whether there had been different numbers of teachers who had taken strike action on each of the NEU industrial action days, the Headteacher said that there had not been.
- 6.17 Academisation It was highlighted that there was a significant shift within the Diocese of schools moving into multi academy trusts (MATs). Over half of the schools in the Diocese were reportedly in a MAT or were about to become part of a one.
- 6.18 Governors heard that the Headteacher, Sylvia Lehrian, Gordon Fisher and Peter Moger had recently attended some meetings on academisation.
- 6.19 A meeting had been held with the CEO of ASCAT, a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) in Hertfordshire. This MAT currently contained mainly primary schools and one secondary school, but they were working on growing as a Trust.
- 6.20 The discussion at the meeting had focussed on what the advantages were of being in a MAT and how schools could keep their identity and autonomy. The information he had provided had been reassuring, as schools could create their own schemes of delegation in order to run in the way that would continue to benefit themselves and the other schools in the MAT.
- 6.21 Governors were informed that there was an expectation that the Diocese of Westminster would be encouraging their schools to academise to protect Catholic education for children.
- 6.22 The Headteacher, Sylvia Lehrian, Gordon Fisher, Peter Collins and Peter Moger had then met with the Director of the Diocese, Peter Sweeney, to express an interest in creating a Catholic MAT in Barnet. No other Catholic primaries in Barnet had taken this step yet, so starting the process would mean that the School could set up a scheme of delegation that suited them and the children and ultimately the School would still have full control of its own budget.
- 6.23 The CEO of ASCAT had proposed that he support the process as the School academised. He had already shared some example schemes of delegation, one of which the working party felt would likely be adopted.
- 6.24 Governors were informed that if in agreement with proceeding with plans to academise, the first stage of the process would be to do due diligence. This would need to be sent to the Diocese.
- 6.25 Once this stage was completed, the School could contact other schools to form a working party to take the matter to the next stage.
- 6.26 **ASKED** what the timeline was to academise and whether there was a minimum number of schools who could join, it was explained that the aim would be to have more than one school to form the MAT in Barnet unless the School joined another MAT. It was explained that ASCAT wanted a cluster of three or four schools from within the same area to join their MAT.
- 6.27 Governors heard that there was no specific timeline for the process of academisation and that there was a need to be as thorough as possible when taking this step.
- 6.28 It was acknowledged that starting due diligence was now urgent and Gordon Fisher, Peter Moger and Sylvia Lehrian undertook to complete the necessary paperwork for submission by the half term break.
- 6.29 After this, work could commence on investigating whether any other Catholic primary schools in Barnet would be interested in joining the MAT.

- 6.30 The Headteacher undertook to report the fact that the School was now doing due diligence with the aim of actively exploring academisation, when she attends the next Deanery meeting.
- 6.31 Advice would be sought from the Diocese on which schools to approach. The Headteacher said that this was likely to be St Vincent's, St Joseph's and St Agnes in Cricklewood initially.
- 6.32 **ASKED** what the purpose was of due diligence, it was explained that to be part of an academy chain, checks on the robustness of a school had to be completed and this information be put into one single source.
- 6.33 **ASKED** what the benefits of academisation would be, it was explained that academies within a MAT could benefit from economies of scale for services such as HR, finance and photocopying contracts, the sharing of resources and staff CPD. Primarily, the drive to academise would be to prevent the closure of small Catholic schools due to falling rolls and deficit budgets.
- 6.34 **ASKED** whether LA support would be affected by this change, the Headteacher said that it would be the School's funding which would change, but LA support would remain in place.
- 6.35 The Governing Body **AGREED** to proceed with due diligence for the academisation process.

		Action	Who?	Deadline
6.28	a.	Complete academisation due diligence paperwork for submission by half term	PM, GF & SL	June 2023

7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 7.1 **Resources Committee** The minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2023, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.
- 7.2 Arising from the minutes:
- 7.3 **Budget 2023-2024** It was reported that the budget forecast for 2023-2024 had been analysed in detail by the committee. The work of the School's accountant was praised by committee members.
- 7.4 It was explained that some budget codes had been amended for benchmarking purposes.
- 7.5 Governors noted that although setting a balanced budget for the new financial year, the School would reach a deficit within three years in the long-term forecast.
- 7.6 It was noted that income was £2.7million and expenditure was also £2.7 million. There would be a small carry forward of £7,000.
- 7.7 Assumptions had not been made about potential staff salary increases.
- 7.8 It was recognised that the percentage of the budget allocated to staff salaries was high.
- 7.9 After full consideration, the budget for 2023-2024 was **RATIFIED**.
- 7.10 **Governors' Fund Update** The Committee had been informed that there was £20,000 in the CAF bank and £121,000 in RBS. The School Business Manager had been asked to provide an update on how much of the £120,000 was already committed and what was therefore available to spend.
- 7.11 The Headteacher said that it would be beneficial to purchase a sound system for the new arts hub.
- 7.12 **ASKED** for further information about the council tax issue reported, it was explained that a caretaker house used to be positioned onsite where the new arts hub was now located. The School had continued to be charged council tax for a residential dwelling that had been demolished with LA permission. A governor volunteered to draft a letter to the LA and would also send photographs alongside this.
- 7.13 A brief discussion ensued about providing an update to parents about how the Governors' Fund was used and projects it would support moving forward.
- 7.14 The Headteacher said that the hall floor and Nursery heating should be prioritised as future projects and undertook to provide a full wish list to resources committee.
- 7.15 A Governor highlighted that the boys' toilets were also in need of works and it was suggested that the Diocese be contacted to see whether they could fund this.
- 7.16 It was reported that the site survey was still in date.
- 7.17 **Learning and Achievement Committee** It was reported that there had been a learning walk to look at the teaching of phonics and how children were using language. Governors had visited both Key

Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and had been impressed with how engaged the children had been. They could also see progress throughout the School.

7.18 The spelling and vocabulary skills of the children were also praised by Governors.

7.19 The consistency in the teaching of these skills throughout the School were also highlighted.

7.20 **Catholic Life Committee** The Committee had looked at mental health and wellbeing across the School during a visit. It was reported that it had been impressive to see how the children had such a great understanding of the importance of mental health and how they were able to articulate this, even lower down the School in Key Stage 1.

7.21 Governors congratulated the School on achieving the Gold Award for mental health and wellbeing.

7.22 The Headteacher reported that an invitation had been received to attend a ceremony at the town hall in recognition of the fact that the School had received the highest number of special awards in Barnet.

7.23 Governors suggested that this be publicised on the School's letterhead and/or website.

7.24 **Safeguarding Committee** It was reported that this had been a short meeting as lots had been covered the previous session.

7.25 The Committee had been updated about the Gold Award for wellbeing.

7.26 It had been reported that staff wellbeing was currently very good. They had recently been provided with new equipment following their feedback on this.

7.27 A number of governors had recently attended Prevent training in school.

7.28 The safeguarding governor had been into school to meet with the Headteacher and School Business Manager to carry out a check of the SCR. All actions had since been followed up on.

7.29 A safeguarding online refresher course was being organised for July and a date for this would be circulated.

		Action	Who?	Deadline
7.12	a.	Draft letter to LA about the issue of school being charged council tax for a property that no longer existed	SH	June 2023
7.14	a.	Provide wish list for the Governors Fund	Headteacher	June 2023

8. RATIFICATION OF THE SCHOOL BUDGET 2023-2024

8.1 This had been dealt with under item 7.9.

9. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

9.1 This had already been discussed under item 7.21.

10. UPDATE ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

10.1 The updated document had been shared with Governors on GovernorHub and this was received and noted.

11. RATIFICATION OF POLICES

11.1 There were no policies to ratify.

12. CATHOLIC MULTI ACADEMY TRUST PROPOSAL

12.1 This had already been discussed under item 6, Report of the Headteacher.

13. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

13.1 A parent governor election was currently in progress. The closing date for nominations was Thursday 11th May 2023.

13.2 The Clerk reported that she had chased the Diocese about confirmation of the appointment of Fr David Pember.

14. GOVERNOR TRAINING

- 14.1 The links to the Diocese of Westminster and Barnet training programmes were noted.
- 14.2 A link had also been provided for the BELS CEO's termly report.
- 14.3 As discussed earlier in the meeting, Governors would be invited to safeguarding training taking place in July 2023.
- 14.4 The training link governor reminded Governors to let him know if they attended any training.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 15.1 There was none.

16. WHAT WAS THE IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN

- 16.1 The Chair summarised the impact of the Governors' work as follows:
- The new Arts Hub and its outside area had now been completed and was being enjoyed by the school community.
 - The impact of the Science curriculum had been recognised, as well as the impact of the subject leaders' work on pupil learning.
 - The School had achieved the Gold Wellbeing award.
 - The close management of the budget allowed a broad and full curriculum for the children.
 - Academisation would ensure the future of Catholic education within the community.
 - The children were happy and flourishing.

17. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 17.1 The date of the next meeting was to be arranged.

		Action	Who?	Deadline
16.1	a.	Send potential dates for a GB meeting in September 2023	Clerk	May 2023

There being no further business, the meeting closed.