

Balcombe School Governing Body

Minutes of Meeting held in the School on Thursday 7 November 2013

Present: Jeff Thompson Jane Lindsay-Stewart
Wendy Littlefair Sarah Flint
Neville Ashcroft Jeff Gunning
Liz Bendall
Matthew Record

In Attendance: Jill Dawson
Margaret Lawrance

Welcome

Jeff Thompson introduced Jill Dawson to governors and welcomed her to the meeting. JD will be acting Headteacher during Wendy Millbanks' maternity leave. Her cover will start on 1 January and she will work 3 days per week (Monday, Thursday and Friday). JT invited JD to provide some background information about herself and outline her experience to governors. It was noted that she has held headteacher posts at three schools, St Andrew's Nuthurst, Holy Trinity in Cuckfield and currently a jobshare at the Gattons, Burgess Hill which runs to the end of the year. She also spent 7 months at Balcombe School in 2012 from April to October covering PPA in Lake class.

Governors agreed they are fortunate to have someone who knows the school and staff so well.

Apologies

Apologies for absence received from Grant Perrin, Andy Couves, Hester Dunstan-Lee, Jamie Kirkman Desmond Burton and Adele Burke were noted and accepted by the Chair.

No conflicts of interest were raised.

No urgent matters were raised.

Previous Minutes

Governors agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September to be a true and fair record of the meeting. The minutes were signed by Jeff Thompson.

Committee Reports & Questions on Minutes

Finance & Staffing – Matthew Record ran through the activities of the committee over recent months. Teaching pay levels have been considered and it has been agreed to move Hannah Rowland across the threshold to the next scale.

The headteacher performance review has been completed with all objectives successfully met.

The committee has discussed the consequences of Susie Couves moving out of TA position to a student teacher. She will shortly have completed her degree and wants to continue training to become a teacher – she will leave at the end of the year. Governors agreed to advertise for a Schools Direct student to replace Susie. The successful applicant will spend one day per week at college and the rest of the time at Balcombe School. Susie would like to remain at Balcombe School but will have to go through the interview process. Financially it will be revenue neutral.

The model pay policy has been signed off by the committee.

There are some concerns financially as there will be no carry over into next year's budget. The principal reason is that pupil numbers have fallen, although it is believed they will rise again to 144 we currently have a £32K reduction in funding.

The PTA have again performed well for the school raising £12K which has been earmarked for outside works.

Curriculum – the committee has met with Liz Bendall and Anthony Evans at length to discuss data in depth. Tracking and targets are in place. Staff are happy with outdoor areas which enhance the curriculum.

Some items have been removed from the School improvement Plan to reflect reduced budget. A lot of

work has been carried out in the SIP and future priorities discussed, possibly Science.

Premises, Safety & Welfare – met in October and identified three areas requiring urgent attention:

- A quote of £515 has been received for replacement of the boiler fan.
- The gap outside Wendy Millbanks' office (subsequently sorted out)
- Pointing of the chimney where the lowest quote is £1200-£1400.

It was agreed that the expenditure would have to be carried out to the boiler and thought given to the financial implications of the necessity to replace the boiler in the next five years.

The chimney will be put on hold, it was noted the main part of the cost here is the scaffold tower.

JT advised that it may be possible to put in for capital funding if we pursue conversion to academy status. The government are currently keen to give money to schools converting and JT suggested batching together several items for funding.

Neville Ashcroft asked whether the committee have looked into any benefits of changing energy suppliers. Jeff Gunning advised that this had not been done but they have been involved with a group in the village looking into solar energy provision. Julian Fitzsimons (former governor) is involved with the group who have been holding meetings at school. We have been asked if we would consider 'renting' the school roof for solar energy generation. Governors agreed this should be explored further.

JT asked Jeff Gunning and Matthew Record to prioritise works/costs for review.

With Grant Perrin moving at the beginning of December additional members are needed for the PSW committee. JG advised that Adele Burke will join, JT and Jane Lindsay-Stewart will also join the committee.

On behalf of governors JT expressed thanks to Grant Perrin for his contribution to the governing body, his efforts were greatly appreciated and governors wished him and his family well with their move to Hong Kong.

Link Governor – In Hester Dunstan-Lee's absence JT reported that she is currently investigating group governor training which he will discuss with her.

Headteacher's Report

Wendy Millbank's ran through the report previously circulated to governors, the main headings being:

Admissions – numbers are looking healthy for September intake with 21 parents having advised they will be choosing Balcombe as their first choice of school.

Staff – Fleur Palmer-Malins has settled in very well and there have been no adverse comments at all from parents about the job share in Lake class. All performance management reviews have been completed and formal observations carried out. All targets have been met and in most cases exceeded. Targets have been set for this year, most have a maths target, an English classroom target and Liz Bendall, Anthony Evans, Beverley Hoddell and Sue Harris have specific targets relating to the School Improvement Plan.

Absence targets were discussed, it was agreed that although legislation no longer dictates that schools have an absence target we should continue to do so. It was agreed there should be a conversation in the Spring about absence requests and relaying policy to parents.

Review of Data

Jill Dawson will deal with the Raise on Line data with Liz Bendall and Anthony Evans in the Spring.

Wendy Millbanks produced in-depth data for governors but with the reduced number of governors present – the majority of whom were on the curriculum committee and previously discussed the data – it was decided to postpone the review until the Spring. The School Improvement Plan will also be discussed at the Spring meeting.

Register of Pecuniary Interests

The Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests was circulated during the meeting for governors' signatures. It will be passed to those governors absent outside the meeting.

Chairman's Action

Academy Update – WM recently sent a note out to all staff advising that governors are investigating conversion to academy status. JT will address staff on Tuesday, 19th November.

Grant Perrin has worked with the bursar to identify areas where we are spending money for services to County where alternative suppliers may need to be found.

Five schools – Bolney, Scaynes Hill, Staplefield, Twineham and Balcombe have agreed together they are interested in discussing a multi-academy trust. Governors of Warninglid, Ardingly and Horsted Keynes have meetings in November and they also may ask to be involved. Two other larger schools, St Wilfrid's and Holy Trinity may also be interested.

There is a meeting next week with two Diocese representatives who will be addressing the 'five'. The next step is to register interest to the DfE but this can only be done with the agreement of the Diocese. It is likely that a joint working group of governors across schools will be created. The Christmas registration deadline has been extended to March and the funding available increased. JT will email governors after next week's meeting and the school working party will then convene early in December.

JT has been through all the example legal documents, most seem straight-forward and similar to the CIC legal documents.

Governor Self-Assessment

The current Strategic Assessment Framework document (2012\13) was discussed with emphasis on the 'What we do well' and 'What are our challenges' sections.

- What we do well – needs expansion to include
 - Meeting the needs of individual children and parents
 - Focus on individual achievement
 - Progression / Monitoring
 - Community
 - Behaviour
- What are our challenges
 - How to engage the difficult to reach parents
 - Academy transition
 - Maternity cover for headship
 - Financial outlook

The third section – Does the SIP address our challenges needs to be updated with the areas noted above. Discussion also took place on whether the SIP should incorporate premises as well as curriculum. It was agreed that strategic premises items should be included although there may not be any at present since so much outside development was carried out last year. JT will review and send a first draft of updates through to governors.

AOB

It has been decided not to pursue wireless internet at the current time for financial reasons.

Forest School - WM reported that Lindfield school have made available ten places each Friday morning between 10 and 12 for forest school activities. The cost will be £5 per session per child. Governors agreed Balcombe should trial the arrangement initially before opening out to NEARS schools. Staff will identify 10 children who will benefit and be able to provide feedback. Mrs Kirby will go with the children and parents will be asked to help with transport. Consideration will be given to requesting a contribution of £2.50 per child per session. *(since the meeting, WM has received a donation from a charity which will cover the cost of the initial sessions).*

Meeting dates

Suggested dates for future meetings will be emailed out to governors.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.