

**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting  
for Alfreton Park Community Special School  
held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at Alfreton Hall**

**Present:** Mrs J O'Donnell - Acting Headteacher (AHT)  
Mrs E Durham – Acting Deputy Headteacher (ADHT)  
Mr J Glasby – Chair (Chair)  
Mrs F Franklin (FF)  
Mr K Dean – (KD)  
Mr R Sowter – (RS)  
Mr W Jowett – (WJ)  
Mrs R Spray (RS)  
Mrs C Higgins (CH)

**In attendance:** Mrs C Hughes - Clerk  
Ms R Dallman - School Business Manager (SBM)

Meeting opened at 1:13pm.

**21/1 Apologies**

Staff governor Clare Charlesworth tried to join the meeting via Zoom, however due to a poor internet connecting her attendance was intermittent.

**21/2 Declaration of interest**

Mrs R Spray declared an interest in item 21/11 – Personnel report.

**21/3 Agree any other urgent business**

- Solar farm (Chair)
- Governors dinner (Chair)
- Governors newsletter (Chair)
- Whats App (Chair)
- Headteacher recruitment (Chair)
- Cleaning proposal (SBM)

**21/4 Minutes of the Full Governors Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – to agree accuracy**

The clerk observed that the date of the previously circulated minutes was incorrect and informed governors that it would be corrected on the copy uploaded to Governors Virtual Office (GVO)

Aside from this, the governors agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

## **21/5 Matters arising from the minutes**

- 1.1 Clerk to resend NOS login details to all Governors – **completed**
- 1.2 Clerk to check accessibility of previous safeguarding audits – **completed. Physical copy of the last 3 years in JOD's office and 3 years accessible on the school network drive**
- 1.3 HT to reply to Chris Greenhough regarding academy proposal – **AHT confirmed this had been completed by Cheryl, the previous HT**
- 1.4 Clerk to add review stakeholder views to next agenda – **completed**
- 1.5 AHT to look into peer coaching organisation and ask ED to liaise with DHT's of other schools – **completed, will be in place from the spring term**
- 1.6 AHT/Clerk to ensure school self-evaluation summary information is available at next meeting – **AHT confirmed that this has not yet been done – clerk to add to the next agenda**
- 1.7 Clerk to add equality objectives to next agenda – **completed**
- 1.8 Clerk to add impact of pupil premium & plan for sports premium expenditure to next agenda – **completed**
- 1.9 Chair to sign Early Help Statement – **completed**
- 1.10 UPDATE – Bev P no longer requires funding so this has been removed from the agenda – **the chair asked why the funding was no longer required, and the AHT confirmed that it transpired that she already had a level 3 qualification in Health & Social Care and was therefore in a position to become a Specialist TA without the course. The AHT informed the governing board that Bev had been recently successful in gaining a position as a fixed term contract Specialist TA at Alfreton Park School (APS)**

**Action: Clerk to add school self-evaluation summary to next agenda.**

## **21/6 Standing item - Safeguarding**

FF confirmed that since the last meeting she has been in to school check the SCR.

FF informed the board that the AHT has been in regular contact with her surrounding safeguarding issues which has been very useful.

FF informed the board 2 instances within school, one of inappropriate behaviour by pupils and one where a child disclosed that they had been hurt by a family member. Both of these instances were dealt with swiftly and inline with safeguarding procedures. The second instance mentioned has been dealt with and monitoring continues.

There were no questions on safeguarding.

## **21/7 Standing item - Health & Safety**

A governor asked when the next health & safety committee meeting will be held and the SBM explained that it should have been in September but will now be held in October. The SBM confirmed that the plan is to hold one meeting per half term.

There were no further questions on health & safety.

## **21/8 Standing item - GDPR**

The chair referred to the previously circulated GDPR report and raised concern that there were more instances than usual, and asked if this was a reflection on the current cramped conditions in school? The SBM said this is a possibility, but also that there are new pupils and new staff. Recent conversations in school amongst long standing TA's have led to the outcome that only one TA should have the responsibility of putting pupils belongings, included home school diaries, in bags. The SBM confirmed that school will monitor this.

AHT has been looking into other methods of home communication which would help. One parent is trialing using Class Dojo, and here a daily class broadcast would go to all parents/carers with the same message and information on what's happened in the school day, while personal information such as medication, food intake etc will still get written into diary. This will create time for more focus to be on getting the right belongings home with the right pupil. The chair asked staff governors how they feel about this and they both agreed that this method would provide a great snapshot of the day.

RS confirmed that there is a parent group meeting scheduled for next week.

SBM confirmed that school report all errors big and small which is evidence that the school take GDPR issues very seriously. The chair noted approval as small issues can turn into large issues.

There were no further questions on GDPR.

## **21/9 Standing item - Finances**

A meeting with the finance Patch Officer Andy Walker had taken place on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> October.

The SBM confirmed a healthy surplus of 270k, which is 30k above the original budget, providing a cushion in which to move into the new school, the running costs of which are fairly unknown.

RSO affirmed that this is a very healthy financial position and strong and encouraging position to start with.

The chair informed the board that he had asked Andy Walker if estimations of energy consumption could be provided by DCC, but no information on this has been received yet. It is hoped that the new school will be energy efficient.

The chair thanked the SBM for keeping the school in a health financial position. The SBM commented that the school had turned a corner of the last 5-6 years, developing a mindset that resources are not to be squandered and this has become part of the structure of the organisation.

RS asked the SBM to share Andy Walker's report when he sends it through and the SBM confirmed that it will be sent out once it has been finalised.

A governor asked if utility costs will still be shared with Moorwood and Parkwood once school has moved into the new build and the SBM confirmed that they will not.

There were no further questions on finances.

## **21/10 Standing item – Teaching & learning update**

The AHT referred the governors to the relevant section of the previously circulated HT report. She confirmed that 3 Teachers are currently on long term sick and are being covered with Higher Level TA's but she doesn't want this to continue long term. It is hoped that one of the Teachers will be back in school in the not too distant future, but they may have to recruit a temporary teacher as this is important for the pupils. Furthermore, TA's stepping up means there are fewer staff to fall back on.

The chair asked if the current cramped conditions have had an impact on teaching and learning and the AHT said that all staff are making the best of the situation and that their work is not suffering for the lack of space.

KD asked for clarification on the HT's report regarding lesson observations, as the figures stated in the report don't tally with the external observations done previously by Chris Greenhough and Danielle England from Swanwick School as they were less than good. The ADHT confirmed that Chris and Danielle didn't give school a grading, and agreed that 2 class observations were good, 1 was borderline and 1 was not so good. A governor expressed concern that the differences between their observations and schools were inconsistent, and that this is worrying when this is our only external verification to go on. The ADHT confirmed that school has used Ofsted grade descriptors and agreed that for school to continue grading for observations, then external observations need to grade too. It was agreed that grading needs to happen to ensure the correct feedback on the quality of teaching.

The AHT explained that an observation on teaching for 40 minutes doesn't represent the quality of a whole years worth of teaching.

The ADHT reminded governors that when Chris and Daniel visited lessons were planned for that phonics, and the Teacher with poor feedback did a lesson that she wouldn't normally do and this was the reason it went wrong.

The chair expressed concern that with the exception of KD, the governors have little experience of evaluating this area and that it's something that needs serious consideration.

The AHT commented that learning walks, an observation cycle, middle leaders/deputies of other schools providing external observations will all build a picture of the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

A governor commented on the danger of bringing in other deputies for external observations as there isn't the challenge there.

ED reassured governors that the school had the same interpretations as Chris & Daniel had, so it wasn't that school had thought it was fantastic and the incoming report had been a surprise. The AHT said she will include external obs in quality of education section of ht report going forward.

## **21/11 Standing item – Personnel report**

RS left the meeting due to a previously mentioned interest in this item.

The AHT explained that a member of staff had applied to reduce their hours by 2 days per week. Originally as a compromise, she suggested a reduction of one day per week, however since then, another TA in that class has resigned and this leaves the class very volatile and unstable. The AHT has gained advice from HR at DCC and now believes that the request cannot be granted, as it is not in the best interest of the class or school at this time.

The governors discussed the process if a member of staff wants to reduce their hours. It was agreed that they couldn't introduce a blanket 'no' for requests and agreed that requests should be made on a case by case basis, to ensure flexible working requirements are met.

A governor asked if the member of staff is aware that the request has been refused, and the AHT confirmed that they will be told verbally and will receive a letter.

It was agreed that requests would still go to the HT initially for input, and then the SLT along with 3 governors will decide and respond to any future requests. Any appeals will go forward to the full governing board for a final decision.

The ADHT will confirm with HR at DCC that they are happy with this process.

The chair pointed out that this would possibly mean a delayed response, but it was agreed these decisions have to be taken fairly and carefully with the correct amount of time to consider the case.

RS rejoined the meeting.

The chair asked why absence is currently so high and the SBM said that there has been a lot of intermittent absences – lots of bugs going around and problems with persistent intermittent issues. The SBM said that absence monitoring used to be looked at once every half term but it will now be done monthly to keep an eye on it.

The SBM informed the board that there are 3 members of staff on long term sickness and although it can sometimes feel distasteful, the stages of absence are valid and fair and it's important to go through the absence monitoring process, although it's quite a big task.

The chair asked for KD's thoughts on whether this was the experience in other schools, and he said that when absence gets out of control it's because the monitoring is slack, but that he's confident that this is not the case at APS.

The chair asked if the 90% attendance mark should be adjusted and it was agreed to keep it at 90% rather than 'give in' to the situation.

The SBM informed the board that points rise when there are intermittent days off here and there, raising the number of times a person has been off. The ADHT agreed that actually, there are members of staff on step 2 that actually have only had 11 days in a rolling year.

The SBM said that covid hasn't helped as staff have had to isolate with symptoms but then test negative so there have been a higher number of days off here and there.

The SBM confirmed that all changes in the personal report are incorporated into next years budget figures.

A governor asked if the cleaning costs are included in the figures and the SBM said no, they will be included from next March.

The personnel report was approved by all governors.

## **21/12 Standing item - HT report & School Development Plan (including school vision, values & ethos)**

The chair explained that the AHT intends to submit a HT report which includes the school development plan prior to every governors board meeting.

The AHT spoke of a recent school improvement exercise that had taken place with staff during the last inset day.

A governor asked if staff had been critical enough and the AHT said that it was a lovely exercise, and that criticism was necessary in order to improve – some feedback was very 'surface level' and she encouraged staff to dig deeper following a look at the Ofsted descriptors. There were some useful points made, lots of feedback and it will be very useful.

A governor asked how the results of this will be evidenced and the AHT explained that the feedback gathered will enable the team to update the school self evaluation and a one page overview will be included - this will be distributed prior to the next governors board meeting and will include evidence of areas of strength and recognised areas for development.

A governor asked if this will be run annually and the AHT confirmed that she intends to make it a regular exercise.

The ADHT explained that specific criteria was given to staff, surrounding the 4 areas of the Ofsted framework in order to make it more thought provoking and useful, it also served to make staff more familiar with the Ofsted framework.

The chair asked for an update with regards to commissioned places and the SBM confirmed that there are currently 111 paid for - 90 commissioned and 21 paid for by Derbyshire County Council not the DfE.

The chair commented that the changes to the HT report were great.

JOD informed the governors that the recent work on vision and ethos had been received well by staff and that she is hoping to do a parent awareness session next term on the school curriculum.

A governor asked if more information, or a demonstration could be given on Earwig and the AHT agreed to arrange for this for the next governing board meeting.

It was acknowledged by all that a 10 week cycle of evaluation would be really good.

A governor thanked the AHT for providing more information on career and post school development and the AHT credited the the ADHT and Amy Naylor for the extra work they have done on this area.

**Action: Clerk to add Earwig as an item on the next agenda.**

### **21/13 Review named governor positions**

The chair asked if everyone was happy to continue with the current named positions and all agreed.

### **21/14 Review any committee structure and membership**

It was discussed and agreed by all that Teaching & Learning remain a standing item at full governing board meetings.

It was discussed and agreed by all that a separate resource committee was unnecessary due to the coverage at full governing board meetings.

It was discussed and agreed by all, as per previous item 21/11, that there should be a Personnel Committee which will deal with change of hours and flexible working requests and monitoring absences. The chair stated that he he felt he should not be a part of this committee to enable him to deal with appeals.

KD, RSo and FF volunteered for the Personnel Committee.

### **21/15 Review code of conduct for governors**

The clerk handed out copies of the current code of conduct. All attendees read the code of conduct and unanimously agreed that it need not be changed at this time.

### **21/16 Annual GB impact statement & review of attendance**

The clerk informed the board that the attendance dates for the academic year 2020/2021 had been added to the school website.

It was acknowledged that the impact statement previously circulated was an incorrect version. The correct version will be circulated and this will be reviewed at the next governors board meeting.

**Action: Clerk to add to the agenda for the next meeting.**

### **21/17 Review & adopt pay policy and any reports from the Pay Committee**

A discussion took place on the fact that the Pay Policy has not yet been received and the AHT informed the board that HR had advised that this cannot be agreed until the last document has been received but that teacher appraisals can go ahead prior to this. The last document is expected to arrive soon.

**Action: Clerk to add to the agenda for the next meeting.**

## **21/18 Policies to be reviewed**

- Off-site Visit Policy

The Off-site Visit Policy was ratified and signed by the chair and AHT.

## **21/19 Complete Instrument of Governance**

It was discussed and agreed that no changes need to be made to the instrument of Governance at this time.

## **21/20 Clerking matters**

### **21.1 Board skills audit**

The clerk asked governors to spend some time completing this on GVO prior to the next meeting.

### **21.2 360 review of chair**

The chair advised the board that a questionnaire will be sent out on Microsoft Forms for completion.

### **21.3 Declaration of Interest forms for 21/22**

Declaration of Interest forms were handed out at the beginning of the meeting and collected at the end.

### **21.4 Staff update forms**

Staff update forms were handed out at the beginning of the meeting and collected at the end.

### **21.5 Governor page compliance**

The clerk informed the board that the governor page on the school website was up to date.

### **21.6 Website compliance**

The clerk informed that board that there were some outdated policies on the school website and the AHT agreed that this is a topic for evaluation.

### **21.7 GVO**

Nothing to report on GVO.



## 21.8 Financial skills matrix

The clerk will look at the best way to conduct this.

### **21/21 Review stakeholder views**

AHT will email out a new questionnaire as the last one went out this time last year. This will continue to be an annual event.

### **21/22 Impact of Sports Premium**

The ADHT confirmed that this was done but needs to be uploaded onto GVO. This will be done prior to the next governing board meeting ensuring that governors have time to read it.

### **21/23 Plan for Sports Premium Expenditure**

The ADHT confirmed that this was done but needs to be uploaded onto GVO. This will be done prior to the next governing board meeting ensuring that governors have time to read it.

### **21/24 Any other urgent business**

#### The solar farm

The chair informed the board of his recent attendance at a meeting with a group called Save our countryside, on behalf of Alfreton Park School. He informed the board on how they object to the instillation of a solar farm, the plans for which will butt up to the boundary of the new school build. The chair informed the board that objections could be sent to council leaders with letters via letter.

A discussion took place on the possible effects of the solar farm and possible sensory impact on the children.

It is hoped that if the solar farm does go ahead then the invertors, which is what will likely create the noise, will be placed well away from the school.

#### Governors dinner

It was agreed to arrange a dinner for next year.

#### Governors newsletter

The chair commented on how good the newsletter is and encouraged the AHT to put good and bad news in it.

#### Whats app

It was agreed to create a whats app group to aid communication amongst governors.

#### HT recruitment

The chair informed the governors that he has been in touch with DCC with regards to the process of recruiting a permanent HT. Sonia Jordan, a senior adviser at DCC will join the interview panel. The job description and person specification have been updated with the SBM's help.

It is the intention that the position will be advertised in January with a closing date of mid-February, shortlisting towards the end of February, interviews and appointment by the end of March for a September start date.

Some time will be arranged for governors to decide on the questions that should be asked in interview.

#### Cleaning Proposal

The SBM referred to the previously circulated proposal to bring cleaning in-house as opposed to it being a service through DCC. The SBM explained that it would be easier to cover sickness and that it would give us greater flexibility for deeper cleans and keep the building at a high level of cleanliness. The SBM said that the caretaker/building manager would be on a 41 week contract and cleaners on a 38 week contract.

The SBM requested approval to go ahead with this proposal and to start it from March 2022.

The chair asked if the SBM was happy to take this under her wing and she confirmed she is and believes that recruiting a fulltime building manager would be beneficial as they would take over statutory checks i.e. health & safety.

The governors discussed the estimated costs of the proposal.

The proposal was approved by all governors.

### **21/25 Date and time of next FGB**

The next meeting was arranged for Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021.

Meeting ended at 14:47