

**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting for Alfreton Park School held on
Tuesday 6th February 2024 at Alfreton Park School**

Present: Mrs J O'Donnell – Headteacher (HT)
Mr J Glasby (Chair)
Mr W Jowett (WJ)
Mrs F Franklin (FF)
Mrs B Wells (BW)
Mrs Marie McCuaig (MM)
Mrs Carla Higgins (CH)
Mr R Sowter (RSo)

In attendance: Mrs J Osment – Clerk
Ms R Dallman – School Business Manager (SBM)

Meeting opened at 1.35pm

The Chair thanked C Charlesworth for her valuable contributions as Staff Governor.

23/40 Apologies

The chair noted and accepted apologies from Mrs S Norton. The meeting was quorate.

23/41 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in any items on the agenda.

23/42 Agree any other urgent business

- (i) Approval of pay progression (23/56)
- (ii) Staff request for sabbatical (23/49)

23/43 Minutes of the Full Governors Meeting held on Tuesday 5th December 2023 – to agree accuracy

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting and will be electronically signed by the chair on GovernorHub.

23/44 Matters arising from the minutes

- 23/28 - update on reporting Physical Interventions (see 23/45) – completed.

- 23/28 – update on student NHS apprenticeship – completed, included in HT report.
- 23/30 – Hepatitis Policy to be updated (see 23/51) – completed.
- 23/30 – Toilet facilities report (see 23/47) – agreed this is no longer applicable and has been removed from the most recent report.
- 23/31 – DPIAs for WeTransfer and Tucasi (see 23/48) – completed.
- 23/33 – Autumn Term budget meeting report to be uploaded to GovernorHub – uploaded and emailed 05.12.23.
- 23/38 – Chair to review and sign HT Performance management report – completed.

23/45 Standing item - HT report & School Development Plan update

The HT report & School Development Plan update were uploaded to GovernorHub prior to the meeting.

GQ – there are a lot of challenging targets set – do we have capacity to handle this?

Yes, we are confident it is achievable.

A reminder that CH is our Wellbeing governor and a Wellbeing Wednesday newsletter is sent to parents every week.

GQ - Are parents being sent too much information / too often?

No, we think there is a steady flow of communication.

GQ – Physical interventions - does ‘calming room’ include a staff member sitting outside a room with a child inside?

This doesn't happen anymore. We have breakout spaces to keep everyone safe but we don't stop a pupil leaving a room. If necessary a staff member will be in the room with the pupil. We are preparing two breakout rooms to assist sensory regulation and help get pupils get ready to go back into the classroom. One room has vibration wall panels and the other has a desk and one-to-one activities

A reminder that the ILP data is still being prepared - changing the data cycle and point system has led to more work than anticipated to change the formulas and update the excel sheet. This will be ready for the next meeting.

GQ – There are still quite a few biting incidents.

It's a behaviour that gives sensory feedback to the biter therefore is quiet common, even in mainstream settings.

We currently have some very challenging younger pupils, more so than in previous years.

GQ – With our admissions policy being reviewed, are we confident we can handle this number of challenging pupils?

Yes - the younger pupils will benefit from suitable adaptations, interventions, medical and professional advice and diagnoses which should improve behaviour as they get older.

We are looking at reprofiling a few pupils which should increase funding to assist them. We feel we can still meet their needs with the right support.

We are more cautious with consultations for older pupils who still present with challenging behaviours as it may be too late for some interventions.

23/46 Standing item - Safeguarding

The HT confirmed that all incidents have been reported to the Safeguarding governor with nothing of note to report.

A pupil recently suffered a bereavement. It has been a huge shock to the family and school community. The pupil is being offered support by staff and peers.

23/47 Standing item – Health & Safety

An updated Health & Safety Report was uploaded to GovernorHub prior to the meeting.

GQ – Are we due for a Health & Safety inspection soon?

Yes, we will set a date for before Easter.

Today's Fire Evacuation was good practice, it was useful to have it at lunchtime when pupils and staff may not be in their usual zones or have radios on them.

GQ – Governors weren't accounted for on the evacuation register.

The Sign-In app is not checked due to the time required for this, but all zones were checked and confirmed to be clear.

GQ – Are we due a lock-down practice?

Yes, we will have one soon.

GQ – Has the issue with forest school been resolved?

This is still in process and we are looking at the best fence options for access and safety – **SBM to provide update when available.**

23/48 Standing item – GDPR

Data Protection Impact Assessments for WeTransfer and Tucasi were approved.

GQ – What will Tucasi replace?

It will replace ParentPay, but won't replace Class Dojo. It will be an App which should be easier to use as ParentPay involves logging into a website.

GQ – Do we have parents who don't use technology?

Only a few, since lockdown most parent are now online.

GQ – Privacy Notice Workforce 3.13 – this policy was last updated on 24th June 2022 – is this correct?

No – this will be updated – SBM.

GQ – Is the green text in the document required?

The green text is the updated information and is useful when reviewing changes.

It will be removed from the final version – SBM.

Data breaches – there has been one minor breach since the last report.

23/49 Standing item – Personnel report

The personnel report was uploaded to GovernorHub prior to the meeting. The SBM asked for approval for the requests on the report. Governors gave unanimous approval for the requests on the Personnel report.

The Site & Premises Manager is leaving at half-term. We have arranged short-term cover from TIB agency until a replacement is recruited. The job advert is currently live and closes on 11 February.

GQ - What is the budget for cover?

£1400 is budgeted to cover until we have a replacement. We need a keyholder, especially for over half-term.

The School Business Assistant applicants were shortlisted yesterday with interviews next week. We have managed to cover gaps in the short-term but this is not sustainable.

GQ – It is noted that absences are improving. Are we able to compare absences to previous figures, or this time last year?

No, as we have changed the way it is reported. This report shows absences by term, the last report shows absences by month.

A member of staff has requested a year's sabbatical to work at another school. Governors agreed that an answer would not be possible during this meeting. Many aspects need considering such as precedent, cost, effects on pupils and effects on staffing. If an answer is required before the next FGB meeting it can be agreed by email.

HT to consider request.

There has been an increasing amount of requests from staff for part-time working. We have always tried to accommodate part-time requests, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to coordinate cover. Our pupils in particular benefit from staff continuity. Part-time working also results in an increased number of employees, which has implications for staff management in general. Requests will continue to be responded to on a case-by-case basis.

23/50 Standing item – Finance

The Spring Budget meeting will be 24th April 2024. The budget hasn't changed significantly since December.

Finance Update February 2024:

GQ – Supplies & Services - there is an overspend of ~£80k and only half the overspend is explained in the report.

An explanation will be provided by email – SBM.

GQ - Income – “The school has received a further £29K to support the teacher’s pay grant” – is this additional to the previous payment?

No – it is the payment we were expecting, the report just notes that we have received it.

GQ – The school is still predicting a significant in-year deficit.

As always, the only options are to decrease staff or increase pupils, however we can't increase pupils without increasing staff in classrooms.

GQ – LSA and HPCA grade 5 jobs have been introduced to decrease salary expenditure. How is this going?

Teachers have been asked for feedback. The model could work well, but with high levels of sickness the grade 5's often have to fill in for grade 8's. This can cause resentment and affects staff morale. There are a few things that we can do to address this.

Some staff are getting around unapproved leave by phoning in on the day instead of requesting leave in advance. Whilst this is unpaid, it doesn't help with cover on the day.

We have looked into our high levels of sickness previously – we have a largely female workforce of a certain age with dependent children and ageing parents, and are bound by Derbyshire County Council's employment terms.

GQ - Whilst a deficit seems to be common for many schools, and our deficit is not currently a concern for the Local Authority, could we have a worse case scenario plan so that we are prepared if needs be?

Mainstream schools are getting rid of staff to reduce their deficit. If necessary we could cut staff outside of classrooms, but we recognise this would have a detrimental effect on pupils and remaining staff.

We could become a Severe Learning Difficulties school, but this would need planning well in advance. We could use Deershed charity money to support nurture funding.

GQ - We have always had an issue with budget. Why is this different?

We have always had an in-year deficit but ended with a surplus so it didn't matter. We are hoping to breakeven this year.

23/51 Policies to be reviewed

Governors gave unanimous approval for the following policies:

- Administration of Medicines Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Allegations Against Staff (Including Low Level Concerns) Policy
- Hepatitis B Policy
- Instrument of Government

GQ – Hepatitis B Policy - we are still not happy with the situation that staff are not automatically able to access a vaccination after a bite.

We have exhausted all routes, all other special schools are in the same position.

GQ - We request that the HT keeps bringing this up with Headteachers of other special schools in case the situation changes.

We are in the process of filling in the Immunisation Disclaimer for all current staff. The policy has been updated to remove the onus of proactive vaccination from the employer.

22/52 Approval of CSE Zycomm radio system

The purchase of the CSE Zycomm radio system was approved by all Governors by email outside of the meeting.

23/53 Purchase of Minibus

GQ – Is this a replacement or in addition to the current school vehicles?

It is in addition – it can be driven with a normal driving licence because it is lighter. There is no mechanical lift, just a manual ramp so less to go wrong.

GQ - Would the driver still have to complete a Derbyshire County Council driving test?

Yes, they will need a DCC driving permit.

GQ – How is it being paid for?

By Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) funding and a grant. This will leave DFC £6k left in the DFC fund.

GQ – Will that be enough left in the DFC fund, and do we have to spend it all in a year?

Yes it is sufficient. We don't have to spend it all within the year, but there is supposed to be a plan for what it will be spent on.

All agreed to the purchase of the minibus.

23/54 Possible legal implications of School's Admission Policy

The Michaela Community School High Court challenge raises the issue of who decides on school policies and who is legally responsible – Headteachers or Governing Boards?

It has been suggested that Headteachers and Governing Boards protect themselves from legal action by asking parents to sign a contract of conduct and acceptance of school ethos.

We used to have a home-school agreement detailing expectations for school, parents and pupil attendance. It may be useful in some instances to refer back to a signed agreement and could deter some problems.

This agreement will be reviewed – HT.

MM left at 15.09pm

23/55 Governing Board Update

BW will be resigning as a Governor at the end of this academic year. All agreed that she has been an invaluable support to the school and Governors.

Governor Recruitment – we have previously asked Derbyshire County Council for suggestions of governors which has been unsuccessful. HT will ask cluster heads for suggestions. Ideally we would like a governor with teaching and learning experience.

23/56 Any other urgent business

(iii) Approval of pay progression

See Confidential minutes for this item.

The HT thanked the SBM and Leadership team for attending.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm

Next meeting 1.30pm on 19th March 2024.