

THE GOVERNING BODY OF BIRKBY INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 1.00 pm by videoconferencing on Monday, 18 May 2020.

PRESENT

Dr A Williams (Chair), Mrs L Devlin (DBS check pending), Mrs S Hadji-Lary, Mrs J Hinchliffe, Mrs P Holderness, Mrs C Moscardini, Mrs M Whalley, Mrs K Westeman, Mrs D Wilson.

In Attendance

Ms C Stephen (Minute Clerk), Mrs L Stockman (Business Manager), Mr J Grabowski (IT Support)

Prior to the opening of the meeting, Dr Williams welcomed Mrs Devlin to her new role as co-opted governor. Mrs Stockman, the school's Business Manager was also welcomed to the meeting and thanked for her hard work in preparing the budgets without the challenge and support of the governing body because of the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That meetings of the Governing Body be held via videoconferencing during the coronavirus pandemic.

61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Khan (Consent), Mr S Saeed (Consent).

There were no declarations of interest.

62. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS TO BE BROUGHT UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items were notified.

63. REPRESENTATION

The following matter of representation was noted:

Appointment of Co-opted Governor

RESOLVED: That Mrs L Devlin be invited to serve as Co-opted Governor.

Mrs Devlin agreed to serve as Co-opted Governor.

A further vacancy existed for a Local Authority Governor. Mrs Wilson knew of someone who may still be willing Post Covid to take on this role in the future. Governors were asked to speak with Mrs Wilson if they were aware of anyone who might be suitable to take on this role.

64. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

65. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Standards and Effectiveness Committee (Minute 50 (b) refers)

Because of government advice to keep meeting agendas short, the SEF and SDP were deferred until the next meeting of the Governing Body.

Governors had familiarised themselves with these documents, as per the Action noted in the above minute.

(b) School Website (Minute 56 refers)

The issues raised by Dr Williams after his appraisal of the school website had been addressed. Thanks were noted to Mr Grabowski for his work.

(c) Governing Body Self-Evaluation, Governor Visits and Development

The Action: **Mrs Holderness to forward the LA questionnaires to Mrs Wilson and, via her, to the rest of the Governing Body**, remained outstanding.

Dr Whalley had been contacted regarding giving up responsibility to Mrs Holderness for KS1 and this had now been done. Dr Whalley remained as Governor with Special Responsibility for Early Years.

(d) Committee Meetings (Minute 58 (b) refers)

Committee meetings had been cancelled for the rest of the academic year, as per the NGA's advice during the pandemic. Draft dates for next year's meetings would be decided by Dr Williams and Mrs Wilson with Resources Committee meetings taking place during the day and Standards and Effectiveness Committee Meetings taking place prior to the meetings of the Full Governing Body.

Mrs Devlin was yet to be appointed to serve on a committee.

66. RESOURCE REPORT, INCLUDING BUDGET UPDATE

All paperwork had been shared with governors via their secure area on the school's website as well as on the screen during this meeting.

(a) Financial Closedown 2019-20

School had ended the year with a carry-forward of £121k and was in a good position financially.

Mrs Stockman explained the breakdown of the figures shown in the report.

Q. Was a carry-forward of this size likely to attract penalties from the LA?

A. No. If the carry-forward were greater than 10% of the school's budget, then it would have to provide explanation as to why this were the case but that did not apply to the figure this year.

Dr Williams congratulated Mrs Stockman and Mrs Wilson for safeguarding the school's financial position.

(b) Draft Budget 2020-21

The budget needed to be submitted to the LA in June, having been scrutinised and formally adopted by governors. This was normally the responsibility of the Resources Committee but as this had not met, the information was to be looked at by all governors in this meeting.

Mrs Stockman explained that the majority of items were similar to last year with an added 3-4% allowance for inflation. More money had been allocated to the ETA budget to cover the increased needs of the anticipated intake in 2020. Funding could become available later in the year to help offset these costs.

Q. School had been able to provide for this extra cost from its carry-forward. If there were no carry-forward in future years, where would the funding come from?

A. The number of ETAs would have to be adjusted to reflect the budget constraints of the school.

RESOLVED: That the B3 be unanimously approved by Governors and submitted to the LA at the appropriate time.

(c) Three Year Budget Plan

This was a document subject to change, especially in the current circumstances.

Mrs Stockman informed governors that the document was provided by the LA and was based on their predictions of the school's intake during the next three years. A demographic dip in the birth rate was noted for 2022/3, otherwise, predicted numbers appeared to be stable.

Q. Had school's numbers in September been impacted by the opening of Brambles?

A. Brambles had more pupils enrolled for September 2020 but school's numbers were no lower. More people had moved into the wider area and this had had a knock-on effect for numbers.

Figures for the total budget share allocation were also examined which was also based on assumptions regarding numbers. Whilst school would initially lose money because of the National Funding Formula, the amount received would rise again in subsequent years.

The conclusion was that the document was based on too many variable assumptions to be used confidently in the school's decision-making process.

(d) SFVS

The form used for reporting this now demanded more detail. Mrs Stockman shared the completed form with governors and asked for feedback. The document needed to be signed off by governors and submitted to the LA in March but this had not been possible because of the cancelled meeting on 23 March 2020. Mrs Stockman had submitted the draft version, pending governors' approval at this meeting.

Mrs Stockman went through the answers she had submitted to the questions. Governors unanimously agreed that the first section relating to their role in the school was accurate. Other sections on the budget setting process, staffing, how the school felt it provided value for money and how it protected public money, were also discussed and approved by governors.

Information about how the school spent its budget compared with other schools was also included. This was RAG rated and allowed governors to question any areas in the “red” category which could indicate higher or lower spending in comparison with other schools.

- Q. Why was school considered to be at high risk in the income section?**
A. This would be altered. School had put in its income (i.e. Money received in addition to its LA budget) rather than its total funding which is what the form meant by “income”.

Some areas of difference had fairly obvious explanations; for example, more was spent on ETAs because of the level of need in the school.

- Q. Did this mean that school employed more ETAs or paid them more than other schools?**
A. Perhaps a little of both in that more than average numbers of ETAs were employed but all were paid at Level 6 whereas other schools differentiated between roles and paid some at Level 5.
- Q. Why was spending lower on teaching resources?**
A. School already had good resources which the ETAs helped pupils to access and therefore spending was lower. Classes were larger than in many other schools but pupils learned and made progress that was better than in many other settings.

Governors had no concerns about the SFVS and thanked Mrs Stockman for her hard work involved in its preparation.

RESOLVED: That the SFVS be approved by governors and signed by Dr Williams.

Item 7 on the agenda was moved to the end of the meeting as members of staff could not be present when it was discussed.

67. COVID 19 UPDATE

Mrs Wilson informed governors that school had remained open throughout the pandemic with twenty pupils being eligible to be present. Between three and ten had attended each day. Others were isolating. Some were children of shift working key workers who did not need childcare every day. Transport was being organised for one family. Five or six staff members were present each day, including a Designated Safeguarding Lead, a First Aider and a member of SLT.

With a view to widening attendance in line with government guidelines, school was ringing parents to ascertain which children were likely to return. It seemed that approximately half would do so, though this was obviously subject to change in what was a fluid situation. Should the government decide to open the return to school option to Year 2, this would have serious implications for how the school could operate safely. There were already concerns regarding social distancing and the use of PPE, both of which were felt to be damaging the mental health of small children. If PPE were to be used, it would slow down the return to school process.

Both staff and parents had anxieties about returning to school and Mrs Wilson was in daily contact with the LA regarding the position of unions on the topic.

It was proposed to open the school on Monday and Tuesday, then Thursday and Friday with deep cleaning and PPA taking place on Wednesday. This was necessary to allow teachers to prepare not just for the pupils in school but also for those remaining at home,

as they had done throughout the pandemic. All staff had worked incredibly hard. About four members of staff would continue to be furloughed.

Mrs Wilson felt that no school could guarantee the safety of either staff or pupils as people may be infectious prior to developing symptoms themselves, but the school had worked hard to minimise risk of infection. She would like the LA to provide some sort of legal immunity in the case of children spreading secondary infections. It would be made very clear to parents that they had the choice whether to send their children back to school before September. Some Local Authorities had taken the decision that their pupils would not return to school before September. Whilst Kirklees had not gone this far, it was up to each Head Teacher to decide when it was safe for pupils to return. This could vary from week to week or even day to day. School was awaiting guidance regarding the opening of Nurseries and PVI providers. COSH training would be provided for teachers to enable them to undertake cleaning throughout the day.

Q. Would the decision of parents regarding whether they would send their child back be recorded?

A. Yes.

Q. Why would school be closed on Wednesday rather than a different day?

A. This would allow the potential for Year 2 to come in on different days from the other year groups and to return to a clean environment.

It was felt that it was impossible for government to fully understand the situation on the ground; this would vary from school to school and only the senior leaders of any given establishment could assess whether it were safe to open.

Governors agreed with the above point.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Wilson and the SLT be responsible for making the day to day decisions regarding whether the school should open and would receive the full support of the Governing Body. The associated risk assessment would be shared with governors as and when it was updated, and comments were welcomed.

Q. What was the likelihood that staff would be shared with other schools?

A. This would not be safe as cross-contamination could occur. It was possible that a member of staff could be seconded to work in another setting but no one would be asked to work in more than one school.

Q. What preparations were being made to provide a secure and safe space for EYFS pupils to return to school?

A. Mrs Moscardini informed governors that all soft toys had been removed and a deep clean had been done. Each child had been allocated its own tray in which to place their equipment of choice. Each group of children would have the same teacher and support staff to provide continuity; these members of staff would also accompany the children at playtimes. Children would be in the same groups as they usual but these would be smaller.

A Play Therapist would come into school to help children whilst the mental health of staff was supported via the existing HR package. Mrs Wilson was concerned that the return to school should be a positive experience in order for it to be worthwhile.

Governors noted their thanks to all members of staff for the work and planning they had already done and for that which remained to be done. The size of the task facing them was not underestimated by the Governing Body.

Mrs Westeman reassured staff and governors that the proposed situation in England was already in place in Sweden where she had relatives; it did not appear that it had caused the virus to spread.

Action: Mrs Wilson to keep the Governing Body informed of any developments and would welcome comments or questions from them, communicated by email.

A Risk Assessment form had been provided by the LA for Head Teachers to complete prior to the wider opening of school.

Action: Mrs Wilson to send the completed risk assessment to governors for comments and questions.

Governors reiterated their sincere thanks to all members of staff.

68. SCHOOL WEBSITE

The website had been updated to take into account the points raised by Dr Williams. Thanks were noted to Mr Grabowski both for doing this and for providing the support to allow the Governing Body to meet by videoconferencing.

69. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the Governing Body be held at 1.00pm by video conferencing on Monday, 6 July 2020.

70. AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY

RESOLVED: That Minute 71 be excluded as confidential under Regulation 15 (3) School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013 from the copy to be made available to the staff governors and observers.

Members of staff left the meeting at this point.

71. FINAL OUTCOME OF HEAD TEACHER'S APPRAISAL FOR 2018-19

The Appraisal team had met in December to discuss Mrs Wilson's appraisal. The next scheduled meeting to make recommendations regarding pay had been cancelled because of the Covid 19 pandemic. Appropriate recommendations regarding Mrs Wilson's pay were made at this meeting.