

## **THE GOVERNING BODY OF BIRKBY INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at 6.30 pm by videoconference on Monday, 22 March 2021.

### PRESENT

Dr A Williams (Chair), Mrs A Deering, Mrs L Devlin, Mrs S Haji-Lary, Mrs J Hinchliffe, Mrs P Holderness, Mrs S Khan, Ms C Moscardini, Mr S Saeed, Mrs P Smith, Dr M Whalley, Mrs DZ Wilson.

### In Attendance

Ms C Stephen (Minute Clerk)

Prior to the opening of the meeting, Dr Williams welcomed Mrs Deering to the Governing Body and governors introduced themselves to her.

#### 60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

#### 61. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS TO BE BROUGHT UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following items were notified to be brought under Any Other Business:

- KLP Visit
- Budget 2021-22

#### 62. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair at a later date as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

##### Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Mrs Holderness was not present at the meeting on the 8 February 2021 and had submitted her Apologies for Absence which had been granted Consent.

#### 63. MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

#### 64. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT AND GOVERNORS' QUESTIONS

Mrs Wilson gave governors an oral update, mentioning the following points:

- More staff had tested positive for Covid-19 since pupils returned to school on 8 March 2021. Fortunately, none were seriously ill. Bubbles had been closed but several children had also tested positive in the following days. All bubbles should be reopened by Wednesday, 24 March 2021. Contact had been maintained with pupils who were working from home.

- Other health problems had affected staff but they remained positive and enthusiastic. Lateral flow tests were done by staff twice a week.
- Staff had carried out baseline assessments for all children after their return to school on 8 March 2021. This had been a very busy period as interventions were designed and put into place for those children who needed extra help. Staff were also working hard to keep children who had not fallen behind during lockdown on target. All members of staff were looking forward to the prospect of two uninterrupted seven week terms after Easter where it was hoped accelerated progress could be made.

Governors thanked staff for their continued hard work and professionalism in the face of very difficult circumstances.

Governors thanked Mrs Wilson for her update.

## 65. SAFEGUARDING

The Kirklees Safeguarding Audit had been completed. There were no outstanding issues. The school's Learning Partner, Mike Whitfield, had suggested that the "Context" section of the Audit be updated; Mrs Wilson had shared the new version with governors, pointing out that whilst some things included might not seem relevant to children of Infant School age, they did affect older siblings and therefore had a knock-on effect on children attending the school.

Mrs Moscardini had completed her Designated Safeguarding Lead training, taking the number of staff having done this to four.

In her role as Governor with Special Responsibility for Safeguarding, Mrs Hadji-Lary had visited the school on 22 March 2021 to check the Single Central Record which had been found to be comprehensive and up to date. She commented on the efficiency of Ms Stockman in making regular updates to the SCR. Dr Williams thanked Mrs Hadji-Lary for her efforts in this area.

Numbers of pupils on the Safeguarding radar had increased slightly but remained volatile. Checks were made on children listed as Missing in Education and calls were made to any child whose parent or guardian had not called school to explain their absence. Ten children were currently on extended absence in other countries; they were removed from role after 21 days absence, but places would be available for them should they wish to return to the school.

**Q. How many pupils were currently on role? Would there be room for returning pupils?**

A. There were currently 397 on role with some children "in transit".

Governors thanked Mrs Wilson for her report.

## 66. BUDGET UPDATE

Governors had received the budget report for Period 12. One further period remained in the current financial year.

School was on target with its spending and a healthy carry-forward of approximately £97k was anticipated. This was larger than previously thought as school had received a Covid Catch-Up Grant of £20k and the cost of providing Free School Meal vouchers had been refunded. Other savings had been made when members of staff had left the school in February.

Governors were satisfied that all was in order, as had been predicted at the previous meeting when governors had scrutinised the accounts for Period 9.

## 67. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

### Report from the Standards and Effectiveness Committee Meeting held on 22 March 2021.

Mrs Hadji-Lary reported on the meeting, mentioning the following points:

- Mrs Todd had provided a comprehensive update on SEND provision in school. 14 children had EHCPs and 5 more were on My Support Plans. All but one of these pupils attended school during lockdown. There was concern over the numbers of pupils with increasingly complex medical needs who needed support from specially trained ETAs. Many external agencies had been able to come into school during lockdown and other had provided support virtually.  
There were some concerns regarding funding and Mrs Wilson was applying for support from Access Funds.  
Transition was a concern for SEND pupils and school was working with various agencies to attempt to make this as smooth as possible.  
Mrs Todd had expressed concern regarding some of the processes involved in working with the LA and with the amount of paperwork required in applying for ECH Plans. She had volunteered to work on a panel reviewing the systems for such applications in Kirklees.
- Mrs Moscardini updated the meeting on EYFS whose attendance had been low during the lockdown period. Children had been very happy to return to school in March but many had regressed not only in academic areas but also in personal and social skills. This was disappointing as good progress had been made in the Autumn term. Some children had suffered bereavements and had enhanced emotional needs. There were now significant gaps in Reading, Phonics, Writing and Maths which school was seeking to address.
- Mrs Wilson gave an update on KS1. Year 1 had been more severely affected by the most recent lockdown as they had also missed significant periods of time when accelerated progress was usually made last year as well. Data comparing the achievements of the current cohort with those of the previous year's group was shared. Governors had also looked at the school's progress data which highlighted the gaps and interventions were being put into place.  
Attendance had been variable during lockdown, though those who were having difficulty accessing remote learning had been invited to attend school in order to improve their chances.

Mrs Hadji-Lary thanked all who had contributed to the reports for their input and explained how impressed governors had been with the staff's knowledge of each child's needs and the way these were being addressed.

## 68. ATTENDANCE

A detailed attendance report had been shared with governors prior to the meeting. Mrs Wilson pointed out that it had been difficult to monitor attendance accurately this year because of the pandemic but staff had worked very hard to keep in touch with families and to check on absences. School's attendance was slightly below the national figure. The figures provided were broken down into special interest groups and by ethnicity. There was some difference in the attendance of Pupil Premium children (93.69%) and non-Pupil Premium (95.58%). Year 1 had the best attendance at 96.36%.

It had been noticeable that in the main, the children who had failed their Phonics Check had had lower than 95% attendance.

**Q. There was a difference in the attendance data cited in the KLP's report and the data shared with governors. Why was this and which was accurate?**

A. The figure in the KLP's report was accurate on the day of Mr Whitfield's visit but governors had more up to date data.

**ACTION: Mrs Wilson to check that the figure in the KLP's report was accurate.**

## 69. SCHOOL WEBSITE

Mrs Wilson had shared the draft versions of the Skills Policy, PSHE Policy and the RSHE Policy prior to the meeting.

Mrs Wilson sought governors' permission to share the draft RSHE Policy on the school's website in order to allow parents to view it prior to being invited to give feedback on it after Easter.

RESOLVED: That the draft RSHE Policy be uploaded to the school website.

**Q. The RSHE curriculum was very detailed. Had the school produced its own or had it been bought in?**

A. It was a mixture of the two. Some items had been added to address common problems in the school (for example, oral hygiene as many children had tooth decay in EYFS).

Mrs Hinchliffe praised the work of Rebecca who had updated the policy and had detailed new objectives.

**Q. When was the policy due to be brought back to the Full Governing Body for ratification?**

A. It was hoped that there could be a face-to-face meeting with parents after Easter so school could explain that the issues covered in the policy were the same ones that had been taught in the school for many years and to address any fears or questions that parents might have. If a face to face were not possible, feedback would be sought via a questionnaire. The July meeting of the Full Governing Body would be the most suitable for ratification of the policy.

## 70. GOVERNING BODY SELF EVALUATION, GOVERNOR VISITS AND DEVELOPMENT

As there were a number of new governors, it would be useful to complete a skills' audit in preparation for a self-evaluation of the governing body.

**ACTION: Dr Williams to email new governors regarding the skills' audit and to collate the responses in time for the meeting of the Governing Body in July.**

No governor visits (other than that of Mrs Hadji-Lary to check the SCR) had taken place because of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Governors were reminded that school bought into the LA's GLAD Package and that many courses were available at no cost to the individual.

Mrs Holderness was to attend Safer Recruitment Training; Mrs Hadji-Lary had recently

completed this. Other governors were encouraged to think about doing this.

Governors decided that it would be useful to compile a record of who had completed what training in order to prepare for the self-review and be able to notify governors when renewal dates were approaching.

**ACTION: Dr Williams to collate the information regarding training provided by governors.**

Mrs Wilson informed governors that she planned to organise a one hour PREVENT training session for them in the near future.

Mrs Deering had completed most of the Governor Induction Programme training but had experienced some technical difficulties in accessing the final session.

**ACTION: Mrs Wilson to feed back to the providers regarding the technical difficulties experienced during the final session of Mrs Deering's Governor Induction Programme training.**

## 71. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### (a) Kirklees' Learning Partner Report

The draft version of Mr Whitfield's report had been circulated to all governors.

Mrs Wilson explained that school received one visit per year because of its status as a Segment 1 school. She found the meeting very useful but more so when it was held in Autumn term as there had to be a lot of retrospection when it occurred in Spring at a time when she was focusing on the coming year. Mr Whitfield was to visit school in the Summer term to carry out learning walks.

Some recommendations had been made in the report, including:

- A clear plan to be confirmed for reviewing the School's Self Evaluation Form which would feed into the updating of the School Improvement Plan.
- The SIP was to reflect the new staffing structure.

**Q. In the section on Pupil Performance and Outcomes, Reading and Writing for Year 2 were both in the high 70%**s** but Phonics was only 67.1%. Why was this?**

A. Phonics in the Autumn term was very directly linked to a child's attendance, as stated earlier in the meeting. The 15% who had been expected to pass the check were being targeted with interventions and would resit the test in the Summer term. A big gap had been created during the first extended lockdown and the pupils whose attendance had not been good in the Autumn term had not had enough time in school to make a real difference.

Mrs Hadji-Lary commented on the positivity of the final paragraph of the report which commented on the ability of the school not only to support other schools but also the LA because of its good practice.

**Q. Had any of the recommendations been unexpected?**

A. No.

***The following items were taken out of agenda order.***

72. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED: That the next meetings of the Governing Body be held at 6.30 pm at the School (if possible):

Monday, 24 May 2021.

Monday, 5 July 2021

**ACTION: Dr Williams to contact governors individually to ascertain their feelings about meeting at the school for future meetings.**

73. AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY

RESOLVED: That Minute 71 (b) and related papers be excluded from the copy to be made available at the School, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

***Staff governors left the meeting at this point. Dr Whalley also left the meeting.***

***Agenda order was resumed.***

71. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(b) Finance Report and Budget Implications for 2021-22

Governors had received written information regarding the implications of the reduced budget which would affect the coming academic year as well as the proposals made by the school to facilitate presenting a balanced budget.

Because of falling numbers on roll (attributed to the opening of another school in the immediate area and a falling birth rate), school was to receive less money for the coming year. In addition, money had had to be paid back because of lower numbers in Nursery. If school had put forward a budget for the same amount of spending as this year, there would have been a shortfall of approximately £148k, despite using the carry-forward of £97k to supplement income.

Proposals on how to present the LA with a balanced budget were shared. These included lower salaries for SLT with an additional teaching load for Assistant Head Teachers and a restructuring of the staffing structure. SLT had been transparent with colleagues regarding the need to pare back staff. Human Resources were involved in this process, along with the relevant unions. Two fixed term contracts were to be terminated, along with that of a part time music specialist. Support staff were also affected with 8 contracts being terminated from September, 2021. Administrative costs and caretaking costs had also been reduced.

Questions and comments were invited.

**Q. Why had the LA not supported the school more actively?**

A. The HR department had been involved in providing advice. It was felt that the impact of the building of an additional school in an area where schools were not oversubscribed was largely responsible for falling rolls and the lower budget. No information regarding projected pupil numbers was available and so school had no ability to make preparations. It would be good if there could be an assurance that the new school would not expand further.

**Q. What would the impact of the loss of both teaching and support staff be on pupil progress?**

A. Responsibilities were to be shared out and the emphasis on guided reading would remain. Planning in KS1 would be reviewed and teaching strategies were being looked at. There would be no changes in Reception. The ETAs who continued to be employed were experienced and competent but school was very sad to lose the people whose contracts were to go.

It was felt that the impact of the sacrifices made by SLT in terms of returning to the classroom (which meant they would have less dedicated leadership time, teaching responsibilities and reduced pay) in order to minimise the impact of the reduced budget on pupils needed to be monitored very closely by governors.

Mrs Holderness felt that the reduction of pay for SLT was unacceptable but Mrs Wilson explained that this had been a decision taken by the team who had felt they needed to share the impact of the cuts when others were losing their jobs.

**Q. Had school considered losing an Assistant Head post?**

A. This would have been very difficult. Subjects needed leaders and the people in post had a wealth of experience. By reducing salaries by one point and reintroducing classroom teaching, an equivalent (or greater) amount of money had been saved.

Dr Williams commended the team spirit which was in such evidence in school and the planning that had had to be done in order to cope with these very difficult circumstances.

**Q. Would the measures taken be enough to keep the school viable in the longer term?**

A. The less radical measures taken by the school meant that it could keep a five-form entry and provide strong catch-up support for Covid 19. There were preparations for another member of staff to leave at the end of next year. David Gearing, the LA's schools' financial director, had welcomed the gentler approach proposed by school as additional funding could make a significant difference. If this were forthcoming, the staff would be on hand to resume former responsibilities. It was felt that these proposals would keep school stable and able to maintain the high level of quality provision it currently gave. Albeit belatedly, the LA recognised that action needed to be taken to address the problem of surplus school places. School acknowledged that further cuts could be needed in the future.

**Q. Had plans been drawn up for future staffing structures?**

A. It would be very difficult to do this without reducing the PAN. Planning for school places lay with the LA yet no data for school catchment area birth rates was available.

**RESOLVED:** That the draft proposals for the new staffing structure be approved by governors.