

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
FOCUS ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23rd JANUARY 2019 at 6.00 pm

Small school, big heart, aiming higher together

Our vision is to “value everyone” to enable them to develop curiosity, ignite a love of learning, discover talents and reach their full potential in a caring and secure environment.

*This vision is rooted in our Christian values of **respect, compassion, friendship and perseverance** that are at the heart of our school.*

1 Peter 3.8: ‘...be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.’
Proverbs 22:6: ‘Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.’

Core Functions of a Governing Body:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

PRESENT: Prof H Hall (Chair), Mrs H Pye (Headteacher), Mrs D Craig, Mrs J Fineran, Mrs V Gale, Mr C Henderson, Mrs H Morris, Mr G Redfern

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk), Mrs O Seymour (Assistant Director of Education, York Diocese)

Minute No.

Gov 1 Prayer

The meeting opened with the School Prayer.

**Gov 2 Apologies for absence, consents and declarations of interest.
Reminders regarding confidentiality, gifts and hospitality.**

Apologies for absence, with consent, had been received from Mrs A. Williams. There were no declarations of interest. There were no notifications of AOB.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature of the meeting dated 5th December 2018.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2018 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

Gov 4 Matters arising from the minutes and from Action Plan dated 6.12.18.

Minutes

Mr Redfern would send a summary of his findings regarding maintenance issues to Richard Day.

Action Plan

Item 1 – no update available

Item 2 – November minutes on the school website

Item 3 – completed but no local resident come forward re Governor vacancy

Item 4 – completed and waiting for any interest in Governor vacancy

Item 5 – amended as Mrs Williams is unavailable in next meeting, Mrs Morris to action

Item 6 – ongoing with latest update on contracts review on agenda

Item 7 – Budget Management Policy was reviewed in December meeting

Item 8 – agreed that the Headteacher would provide a data summary on a termly basis (on agenda for February), at the School Improvement focus Governing Body meeting

Item 9 – still to be done

Item 10 – SIAMS inspection on agenda

Item 11 – Governor Allowances Policy was agreed in December meeting

Item 12 – on agenda

Item 13 – to be done before next meeting

Item 14 – Skills Audit to be included on agenda of next General FGB

Item 15 – resolved

Item 16 – resolved

Item 17 – best practice for Governor monitoring has been circulated by the Chair

Item 18 – Most Governor monitoring visits still to be organised. Mrs Craig will be in school in February to meet Celia Wilson, Diocese of York School Development Adviser.

Item 19 – completed

Item 20 – on agenda

Item 21 – on agenda

Item 22 – Lock Down policy still to be finalised. Child Protection and Whistleblowing policies on agenda.

Gov 7 Order of business

Agreed that Item 8 on the agenda would be taken before other business.

Gov 8 SIAMS presentation

a) Mrs Olivia Seymour, Diocese of York Assistant Director of Education, had been invited to discuss the new SIAMS Inspection Schedule with Governors. Mrs Seymour circulated copies of the Schedule, entitled “An Evaluation Schedule for Schools and Inspectors” published by the Church of England

Education Office together with the Methodist Church and introduced in September 2018 (date of publication April 2018).

Mrs Seymour presented each of the seven strands of the schedule, highlighting key aspects and allowing Governors time to reflect and discuss amongst themselves, and to ask questions, after each element of her presentation.

Mrs Seymour would be sending a visit report to the school for circulation to Governors.

b) The new schedule has a renewed focus on the Christian vision, how this drives actions and the impact of these actions. The theme of a school's sustainability runs through the schedule. Mrs Seymour emphasised that Inspectors would be looking at the school's unique vision, how it is understood and articulated individually by everyone involved in the school, and how this drives everything the school does. There would be one overall judgement based on the evidence gathered on all seven strands of the schedule. There would also be one specific judgement on collective worship. It was suggested that the school's vision should be included on the Governors' meeting agendas.

Governor discussion:

The Chair commented that now a School Development Plan is in place, it would be useful to return to and reflect again on the vision, values and strategy. He emphasised the importance of everyone developing their own understanding of the vision and their own way of expressing how the vision has an impact. Mrs Seymour explained that Governors, along with everyone else, need to be able to articulate in their own way how the vision informs their activity on the Governing Body. Governors felt that spending time in school would be useful in this respect.

c) Strand 1: Grade Descriptors

Mrs Seymour highlighted the emphasis on partnerships in this strand, including through sharing good practice, linking with the local Church, with the Diocese and with the family of schools.

Governor discussion:

The Headteacher reported that her mentor is based at South Kilvington School and that this provides a useful path for good practice sharing beyond the Easingwold cluster.

Governors discussed the local context for Sutton on the Forest School. The importance of being an outward facing school was mentioned, an example being the involvement of parents through questionnaires asking what in their view made the school special.

Governors highlighted the sometimes prohibitive costs of providing CPD for staff, leading to a discussion outlining the role of the Diocese in providing training and updates through the Service Level Agreement, one example being the current session on the Inspection Schedule.

The Headteacher circulated her document listing evidence for strand 1 so far, and will circulate the Self Evaluation Framework to Governors.

d) Strands 2, 3, 4, 5

Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills; Character Development: Hope, Aspiration and Courageous Advocacy; Community and Living Well Together; Dignity and Respect

These strands were taken together. Mrs Seymour emphasised that there is a focus on helping all pupils to flourish academically and socially, on the personal development of the child, including “courageous advocacy”. The schedule looks at both social and cultural development, diversity and difference, inclusion and what it means to be “a hospitable school”. Mrs Seymour recommended Governors considering the VAGC document as a Governing Body (Valuing All God’s Children). The Clerk would circulate this document to all Governors.

Governor discussion:

The Headteacher drew Governors’ attention to work ongoing in school which relates to these strands. The school has a member of staff who is a trained ELSA (an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant). Mrs Fineran is the school’s Stonewall champion. Mrs Seymour recommended looking at how the Stonewall training fits within the VAGC context. The Headteacher has recently purchased a useful booklet “No Outsiders in Our School” and is disseminating the learning from this.

The Headteacher described a current project in school: “Is our local area perfect?” and how this has built from taking the children out to look around the area, to considering what they observed, and how things could be improved. The project is now going on to look at charities and the pupils are selecting charities to support. The idea of setting up a Food Bank has been proposed by the children.

Mrs Seymour emphasised the need for Governors to keep up to date on these issues and recommended the following documents (which would be listed with links in her visitor report): VAGC2; Global Neighbours (Christian Aid); Mental Health and Wellbeing (on SIAMS website) and Ethical Leadership (a recently published national document).

e) Strands 6 and 7

The impact of collective worship; the effectiveness of collective worship

The Governors have a formal responsibility for monitoring collective worship. This strand discusses evidence for the distinctively Christian collective

worship and the impact it has on both children and adults involved in the school.

Governor discussion:

The Headteacher reported that staff had been trained on collective worship last term. The idea of spending time for worship in the forest area is being considered for when the warmer weather comes. Mrs Seymour drew Governors' attention to the guidance on the York Diocese website (link will be in the visitor report).

Mrs Seymour explained that RE is an academic subject and the context for RE is reflected in the locally agreed curriculum. She recommended Governors have clarity about their mechanisms for knowing about RE in the school. The Chair drew attention to the Link Governors' responsibilities to gather evidence and report back to the Governing Body. The SEF also provides Governors with evidence to add to their knowledge of the school.

f) Mrs Seymour outlined the Inspection process, in response to the **Chair's question** regarding the balance between documentation and discussion in the collection of evidence for the Inspector's judgement of the school.

Inspections are carried out in a 5-year cycle. Before the visit to the school, the Inspector reads: the SEF, the SDP, school data, the most recent OFSTED report, the most recent SIAMS report, and the school's website. The Inspector will also request the school's IDSR (the OFSTED Inspect Data Summary Report). The Inspector then makes a tentative pre-inspection plan on the basis of this evidence and works with the Headteacher to set up a timetable for the 24 hour visit. The discussions on the inspection day are key. The Inspector gives feedback throughout the day, to the Headteacher, to give the opportunity for further evidence to be provided in areas of interest at the time. The Inspector sends a PIP, a pre-inspection briefing, in advance of the visit which also allows further evidence to be collected and presented at the inspection visit.

Mrs Seymour drew Governors' attention to two useful documents: an inspection report template, and a policy checker template, both available on the Diocese website.

As regards the "excellent" judgement, Mrs Seymour will be visiting the school to discuss this as it is a highly bespoke element focusing on "innovative and imaginative practice".

Mrs Seymour emphasised the need at FGB level to be able to have confidence and be able to articulate the impact of the school's vision on everyday life. Two further examples were cited: the Remembrance Service where the Chair said all children demonstrated an understanding of the meaning; a recent letter to parents explaining that pupils need to arrive on time in school and how this reflected the school's commitment to ensuring all children flourish.

It was **suggested by a Governor** that SIAMS should be included as an item on all FGB agendas because Governors need to ensure they are up to speed on the issues involved.

The Headteacher committed to circulate the most recent version of the SEF for discussion at the February FGB. She requested that Governors send feedback on the SEF. The Chair suggested that the SEF should be included on the agenda twice a year.

The Chair thanked Mrs Seymour for the presentation and advice.

Gov 5 Chair's opening remarks

Governors returned to the agenda - item 5.

The Chair recorded the Governing Body's thanks to the school's previous clerk Angela Instone for her support to the school over many years.

The Chair reported that:

a) he had sent information on Governor recruitment to the Parish magazine and the Church newsletter

b) he had written a letter to parents before Christmas, updating them on the latest news from the Governing Body, particularly its priorities and the appointment of new Governors. The letter is available on the school website.

c) dialogue with parents is a key aspect of a Governing Body's role highlighted in the National Governance Association Chair's Handbook. Governors discussed having a presence at the February 13th and 14th Parents' Evenings to provide parents with the opportunity for an informal chat or to raise concerns and questions. It was suggested that at least 2 Governors would be needed to cover each evening. Mrs Morris and Mrs Craig provisionally volunteered for the Wednesday and Thursday respectively. Mr Redfern and Mrs Gale also provisionally volunteered, but needed to check dates and times. The Chair committed to circulate a timetable for Governors to volunteer their availability.

d) Governors have been offered data analysis training by Linton school. As there is documentation available online and there is a cost associated with the training, this offer has been declined. The Headteacher commented that she has attended data analysis training and therefore can provide Governors with an analysis of the school's data.

e) NYCC have authorised a school sign, pending confirmation with the Parish Council. The School Office Manager is following this up. The estimated cost is £300. The school has to find the funding for this, but it is possible the Parish Council might help.

f) there is new Government guidance on schools' complaints procedures and a model policy on serial complainants. As the school adopted its complaints procedure in September 2018, the intention is to adopt the new procedure in September 2019, rather than mid-year.

Gov 6 Headteacher updates

The Headteacher stated that:

a) the date for school applications has now passed. There are 9 children with the school as first choice and 6 with the school as second choice for September 2019 enrolment

b) Mrs Tubb (ELSA, interventions, forest school) has requested a reduction in hours to work afternoons only after the half-term break. A trained teacher wanting to return to work after a 6 year break has been identified and interviewed. She will work with the Class 1 pupils as a TA 5 mornings a week, starting after half-term. This will give the school a much needed flexibility for supply requirements, for example, and in terms of succession planning if there is a requirement for more teaching hours in the future.

c) members of staff are being considered for HLTA as part of their development

d) the new Bursar/Business Manager has now reconciled the school's financial data, having brought everything up to date, and the school will have an accurate monitoring report on Monday 4th February. **A Governor asked** whether the reconciliations had brought any surprises. The Headteacher outlined that there could have been an overcharge for electricity, which is being investigated. The electricity was shown as £10 k last year, which possibly included a contingency. Actions are being taken in school to reduce electricity costs, for example through correct usage of storage heaters, and reductions are already evident (spent £2594 so far this academic year). The Bursar/Business Manager is providing a monthly financial report and will attend Governing Body meetings to report to the Full Governing Body. The Headteacher highlighted the fact that there is still a query regarding grounds maintenance costs. This is addressed in minute Gov 9.

Gov 9 External contracts and Service Level Agreements

The review of external contracts and SLAs had been progressed by the Chair and Mr Henderson.

a) The Chair opened the discussion by seeking Governors' views on terminating the arrangements for grounds maintenance. Mr Redfern suggested retendering the contract. Mr Henderson confirmed the justification for terminating arrangements. It was agreed that the Chair would draft a letter to terminate the contract, outlining the reasons (no contract or safety certificates have been provided, NYCC Grounds Monitoring Report findings that the work was "poor"). Mr Redfern would review the letter, prior to it being

sent. The outstanding invoice for £600 (the quarterly fee) would be paid, but there would be no further payments. The Headteacher would check with the School Office Manager whether grounds maintenance had been carried out this academic year.

b) Mr Henderson had reviewed the NYCC Maintenance Contract. He noted that if a maintenance project cost exceeds £3k, it is not covered by the contract and **queried how such projects would be dealt with**. However, Mr Redfern clarified that if a project costs more than £3k, NYCC would cover the costs in cases when it is a priority according to their definitions and in line with their other demands. The NYCC Maintenance Contract includes an annual inspection and report.

c) Mr Redfern explained that the school needs a plan for monitoring maintenance throughout the year eg external decoration, gutter clearing. He committed to draw up a maintenance monitoring plan and identify what needs to be done. This type of work needs to be covered within the school's own financial resources (outside of the SLA with NYCC). **Mr Redfern queried** the £4,900 budget line for "devolved capital". The Headteacher would clarify how this budget could be used.

d) The Chair would circulate the questions he has on contracts and discuss these with the Headteacher, with a view to achieving more from existing SLAs and contracts.

Gov 10 SEND Report

The Headteacher reported that the SEND report is on the school's website, as required by the Statutory Duty, and that she would circulate it to Governors. The Chair highlighted that the Governing Body has delegated its responsibility for this areas of the school's work to the Headteacher. In response to a **Governor query**, the Headteacher confirmed that new children have been identified who need extra help.

Gov 11 Pupil Premium

The school has only 2 children allocated Pupil Premium. These children are also in the "Ever 6" category (receiving PP for 6 years after their first year entitled to PP). Both children are achieving expected levels academically and therefore the PP funding is being used for spiritual development (for example for the residential visit and piano lessons).

Gov 12 Sports Funding

The Headteacher reported that:

a) there is still £11k left in the budget to spend by April 2019, however the restrictions associated with the budget are very limiting.

b) for the next academic year, she is exploring the idea of having an additional specialist sports teacher come into school to deliver lessons alongside the teachers. This will provide CPD for the staff, as well as benefitting the children. The sports specialist could also provide further after-school sports clubs.

c) she would be exploring further how other schools used their Sports Funding.

The Headteacher confirmed that the Sports Funding could not be used to fund swimming lessons. A number of other ideas were suggested by Governors. The Headteacher said that she would investigate further options.

Governors queried whether Sports Funding could in part address the problem with lighting outside the school, including at the school door and in the playground/car park. The proposal was put forward of using the Sports Funding for a lit netball pitch at the front of the school, which would then also resolve the general problem with outside lighting. The Headteacher did not believe the funding could be used in this way.

The Headteacher already had arranged for the school doors to be checked, and would extend this to include a review of how to improve the lighting at the doors which was a particular concern for staff locking up the school because of the step at the door presenting a hazard in the dark.

d) The Headteacher reported that the possibility of marking out a “Golden Mile” is being investigated.

Gov 13 Governor visit schedule

Mrs Morris would develop a schedule and allocate dates for Governor visits to school, with the understanding that Governors would then come back to her if the dates were a problem for them.

Gov 14 Feedback from Governor visits

There had been no Governor visits since the last reports.

Gov 15 Feedback from Governor training

a) Mr Redfern and Mrs Fineran would be attending training for new Governors at Alne Primary School on Monday 28th January.

b) The Chair reported that all Governors’ safeguarding training is currently up-to-date but emphasised that it would need to be repeated in September 2019. with a view to everyone having the same renewal date.

Gov 16 Policies for approval:

The Chair requested that document version control be added to all policies.

a) Child Protection

The Chair and Mrs Gale had comments which they would send to the Headteacher. The correct policy would be recirculated by the Headteacher.

b) Whistleblowing

The Chair had comments he would send to the Headteacher. The policy was approved, subject to the amendments.

c) Collective worship

Approved.

d) Lock down

This document had not yet been finalised by the Headteacher and had not therefore been circulated. Mr Redfern volunteered to review specifically the aspect of communication with parents.

The policy would then be circulated and included on the next meeting agenda.

Gov 17 Correspondence

There had been no correspondence.

Gov 18 Any Other Business previously notified to the Clerk

There was a brief discussion about Governor vacancies. It was confirmed that Mrs Morris' term as a Foundation Governor was due to expire on 18th March 2019. This would be discussed at the next meeting.

Gov 19 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 21st February 2019 at 6.00 pm.

Those present were thanked for the attendance and the meeting closed at 8:40 pm.