

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 20th 2021 at 7.00 pm via Zoom
GENERAL MEETING

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 G Redfern, Mrs T Comfort, Mr M Graham, Mrs H Morris, Dr Katherine Forsey

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk)

Minute No. _____

Gov 1 Prayer

The Chair opened the meeting with the School Prayer and welcomed the new Parent Governor Dr Katherine Forsey to her first meeting.

Gov 2 Apologies for absence, consents and declarations of interest.

Reminders regarding confidentiality, gifts and hospitality. Notification of AOB.

There were no apologies for absence. There were no declarations of gifts or hospitality. The Chair reminded Governors of the need to respect confidentiality. AOB: Stillington consultation; FOSS report to Governors.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature of the meeting dated December 2nd 2020

Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on December 2nd 2020. The minutes would be signed electronically by the Chair and filed in school.

Gov 4 Matters arising from minutes and action plan dated December 2nd 2020

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Action Plan updated on 2nd December 2020

Item 5 and Item 6 – the Headteacher noted the action to send the link to NYCC contracts to the Chair.

Item 10 – the Chair noted that the latest Child Protection Policy had not been uploaded onto the website. The Headteacher explained that the aim had been for the website to be revamped in December, and the latest CPP uploaded then, but that the latest COVID crisis had caused a delay. She would ensure that this policy was uploaded immediately.

Item 11 – the Chair stated that these priorities would be identified when school business returned to a more normal situation.

Item 12 – Committees would be revised in Autumn 2021.

Item 13 – the Headteacher reported that she and the school administrator would be meeting Veritau w/c 25th January and would report back on Veritau questionnaire at the February FGB.

Item 14 – the benchmarking document had been circulated to Governors.

Item 15 – Google Drive instructions to be circulated to Governors. Headteacher to share folders with Dr Forsey.

Item 17 – it was agreed that given the now different government guidance and instructions for schools, it would not be necessary to review bubble arrangements at each FGB.

Gov 5 Chair's Opening Remarks

a) The Chair opened by wishing all Governors a Happy New Year. He noted that although the COVID infection, hospitalisation and death rates had reached unprecedented levels, the vaccination programme gave reason to hope that children could be back in school after Easter, which would be so important for the physical and mental health of the children, the staff and the parents.

b) Governors would continue to conduct their meetings on Zoom. The Chair stated that following discussions with the Headteacher and Clerk, the aim for this meeting would be to complete business within an hour if possible. He therefore suggested deferring items 9, 10 and 11 to the February meeting. Governors agreed, noting the exceptional challenges currently facing staff.

c) Remote learning information for parents. The Headteacher confirmed that this document, which had been circulated to Governors ahead of the meeting, would be proofed by Mrs Berthinussen before being uploaded onto the school website.

Gov 6 Order of business

Governors agreed the order of business.

Gov 7 Headteacher update

d) **School organisation.** The Headteacher reported that there were now 89 children on roll, and that just below 50% were currently attending school following the widening of the key worker criteria. The highest attendance since the start of term had been 41% and the lowest 34%. The Headteacher reported that the school is now closed on Wednesday afternoons to allow time for staff to work on planning and pupil records. Parents have also been asked to keep children at home if at all possible on Friday afternoon due to allocated staff PPA time reducing the numbers of available staff. The Headteacher emphasised that staff were now effectively doing two jobs because of the need to work with children at home and with the high numbers of children in school.

A Governor questioned why so many more children were attending school than in the previous lockdown. The Headteacher explained that now only one parent needed to be a key worker and that more job roles had been given key worker status. She noted that in some areas schools had introduced restrictions because the staff were so overstretched, but NYCC had been very clear that schools must provide places in school for children in families where the government criteria are met. The Headteacher stated that children were in three bubbles: Reception and Yr 1; Yrs 2,3 and 4; Yrs 5 and 6.

e) **Staff update.** The Headteacher noted that two members of staff were shielding and working from home effectively. Live lessons were being delivered daily one-to-one online for a pupil with EHCP by one of these two team members. It was also noted with great appreciation that Mrs Williams volunteered in school on Monday afternoons and Wednesday afternoons. Although a teaching assistant resigned at the end of the Autumn term, the Headteacher had not yet had time to carry out a recruitment process.

f) **School day.** The Headteacher explained that school delivered 3-4 hours' learning through Google Classrooms. The school day was structured around a Google meet at 9:30am (except for Reception and Yr 1), and at 3pm, which provided the opportunity for children to see each other and discuss the day. Mrs Ovenden records a message for the children in Reception and Yr1 to explain what would be happening each day. It had been found that this was more effective than the live meet for these age groups and provided a way to engage with the children but also to help parents support the activities planned by the teacher. The Headteacher stated that the staff recorded the lessons; it was not possible to teach live online with children also in the classroom. Staff were working real time to respond to the children online as well as in the classroom. The Headteacher noted that this approach seemed to be working well and asked the Parent Governors for their feedback.

Parent Governors (whose were all in different age groups) agreed that in their experiences, the school's provision is well structured and effective. They all noted in particular how much their children enjoyed seeing everyone at the

beginning and end of the day in the Google meets. A Parent Governor with a child in the Reception/Yr 1 age group supported the decision to move to a recorded video rather than the 9:30 am live Google meet, noting that her child joined in with the activities as they were described in the video. Dr Forsey noted the impressive quantity of online learning provided and also the amount of advance notice of activities given to parents to allow them to support their children effectively. Governors expressed their gratitude and admiration for what the staff had been able to achieve.

g) Staff wellbeing. The Chair asked the Headteacher to update Governors on staff wellbeing. The Headteacher reported that staff were exhausted and emotional but beginning to feel better as term progressed. Mrs Fineran, the Staff Governor, noted that confidence was beginning to grow as the new skills and technical aspects to the work were being mastered for example. She explained that a recorded lesson needed to be paced very differently from classroom teaching, and that it was challenging to approach the lesson without visual and other live feedback from children. The Chair emphasised the importance of recognising that this represented a change of mindset and skillset for teachers and that staff would need to give themselves time to learn from their experiences of this new approach. He advised the team to figure out an appropriate workload for themselves as staff and to avoid excessively high expectations of themselves. The Headteacher emphasised the importance of this change of mindset. The Headteacher also noted that it was important that parents should understand that the children in school were working in the same way as children at home: they also have the Google meet, watch the teacher's video and then go ahead and do their work just like the children at home. The Chair emphasised that the teachers were now "facilitators" of the children's learning.

h) Remote teaching and learning. Mrs Comfort noted the reduced level of content children could absorb from a recorded lesson as compared with a live lesson in the classroom. The Headteacher agreed, describing the videos being recorded by the teachers as more of an introduction to the lesson which should be kept simple and brief.

A Governor questioned how teachers mark the work. The Headteacher noted that OFSTED and DfE had emphasised the importance of this being made clear to Governors. Mrs Fineran explained that she had a template of the work which includes the success criteria. Each child had a Google document of their own, tailored to their learning, and could see the success criteria as they worked on the document. Mrs Fineran emphasised that she could also view the document as the child worked on it. When the work is complete, the child clicks on "Hand in" and Mrs Fineran could then add in suggestions as text, or record a voice message with feedback, or send a text with feedback, which the child then used to review the work. Mrs Fineran noted that there was a very high level of engagement from the children in Yr5/6. Governors with children in school commented that the teachers' feedback was very much enjoyed by the children. Dr Forsey noted that it would be useful for parents to be reassured that lessons could be adapted in line with children's own interests.

The Headteacher stated that she would be seeking parental feedback now that processes were more established.

In terms of staff wellbeing, the Headteacher noted her agreement with the Chair and Governors that the teachers need to take time to check in with each other and make sure that no one is taking on too much. She added that teachers should not re-record lessons, following on from Governors' comments that parents understand the challenges of working online, including the interruptions and technical issues.

i) Safeguarding. The Chair asked the Headteacher to confirm that staff were making sure that every child is seen throughout this period. The Headteacher confirmed this was the case, noting that Google Classroom records who has been/is active and that this is monitored, and that teachers also check that work is being received from all children. There had been concerns about one family but contact was made and it was possible to confirm that all was fine.

A Governor questioned whether the school would be receiving any free devices via the Government scheme, but the Headteacher reported that this had not happened yet. The Headteacher commented that some children used borrowed or shared devices, but that no one had approached school for a device.

j) Lateral flow testing. The Headteacher stated that staff would have to do two lateral flow tests each week, probably Sunday pm and Wednesday pm. If this test shows a positive result, the next step would be to have a full test.

A Governor questioned whether this scheme would still be going ahead in the light of recent news coverage. The Headteacher explained that schools had been informed that this coverage had been inaccurate, and lateral flow testing would be going ahead.

k) Governor letter to parents. The Chair agreed to prepare a draft a letter from Governors with respect to the current situation. A Governor commented that in the light of the recent statement from a government minister that parents should contact Ofsted if not satisfied with a school's provision, it would be worth considering including a reminder of the procedure for dealing with concerns, including the option of approaching the Governing Body before contacting Ofsted.

The Headteacher concluded her report by expressing her thanks to and pride in the staff.

Gov 8 Budget update

l) Governors noted the good budget position reported in the latest update (December 2020). The Chair commented that the position would be healthier still if/when the two further tranches of COVID funding were received. The Headteacher stated that applications indicated that the school would be oversubscribed in September 2021. The budget position would therefore continue to be positive in 2021-22. Also, a number of siblings would be likely

to join the school therefore a positive budget picture could be expected in 2022-23. It was agreed that the PAN and implications of exceeding the PAN would be discussed in February's Governing Body meeting. The Chair noted that staffing and space would need to be considered if school pupil numbers were to increase.

m) The Headteacher reported that work on the area outside Reception and Yr1 would start in the next few weeks. This was being funded from the school's capital budget, and also using funds from FOSS. The aim was for the area to be cleared, the roof, storage and astroturf put in place, and then available funds would be reviewed to establish any further possibilities. The space would be for all children in the school to use. Dr Forsey offered to continue to be involved, if that would be useful, in her capacity as an outdoor learning specialist.

The Chair questioned when the space would be ready. The Headteacher stated that it was possibly going to be available in May 2021.

Gov 9 Senior leadership development and staffing

Deferred to February FGB meeting

Gov 10 SFVS (school's financial value standard)

Deferred to February FGB meeting

Gov 11 SEND

- Annual report 19/20
- SEND Information Report
- Whole School Provision

Deferred to February FGB meeting

Gov 12 Correspondence

There had been no correspondence.

Gov 13 Any Other Business

n) Stillington consultation

The Chair invited Governors to consider whether a response to the consultation should be submitted by the Governing Body and if so the feedback to be provided.

Governors discussed the potential impact of the proposed nursery and implications locally and with respect to the school itself.

It was agreed that the Chair would contact Mark Ashton and Andrew Dixon at NYCC, to discuss the proposal, and the options of either a letter to the planning officer outside of the planning process or feedback within the planning process.

o) FOSS report to Governors

It was noted that FOSS had circulated a report to parents in December 2020, however the Chair stated that the Governing Body would require a complete report, including detailed accounts and expenditure, such as should be submitted by all charities annually to the Charities Commission.

The Headteacher stated that Laura Border, FOSS Treasurer, had agreed this. Dr Forsey emphasised the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of the group.

It was agreed that the report from FOSS would be included on the February FGB meeting agenda.

The Chair noted the amazing amount of funding raised by FOSS in the current crisis and expressed gratitude on behalf of the Governing Body.

Gov 14 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 10th February 2021 7pm via Zoom General meeting

The meeting closed at 8:25pm.

Signed:

Date: