

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING
FOCUS ON RESOURCES/FINANCE
HELD ON THURSDAY 13th MAY 2021 at 7:00 pm (via Zoom)

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), Mr G Redfern, Mrs T Comfort, Mr M Graham, Mrs J Fineran, Mrs V Gale, Dr K Forsey, Mrs Craig, Mrs Morris

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk); Caroline Davies (Bursar)

Minute No.

Gov 1 Prayer

The Chair opened the meeting with the School Prayer.

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.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature of the meeting dated 14th April 2021

Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2021, pending two amendments. The amended minutes would be signed electronically by the Chair and sent to school for filing.

Gov 4 Matters arising from minutes and action plan dated 14th April 2021

There were no matters arising not included on the agenda/action plan update.

Action Plan dated 14th April 2021 update

The Clerk clarified that items shown in green in this version had been confirmed by the Headteacher as completed (Items 7, 10, 11 and 17).

Item 1: all Governors had sent biographies to Mrs Berthinussen.

Item 2: OFSTED focus FGB to take place in 2021-22 academic year. Clerk to note and remove from the action list.

Item 3: It was agreed that the SEN progress data would be presented in July each year and the Information report in December. Clerk to note and remove from the action list.

Item 12: Monitoring via GoogleDrive no longer necessary as children back in school.

Item 14: Listed building restriction no longer relevant to the planned changes.

Item 15: Accessibility plan on this agenda.

Item 16: The Chair noted that the FOSS statement of accounts was needed. Discussion on this agenda.

Item 18: The Headteacher stated that Learning Walks would restart in September 2021.

No further updates.

Gov 5 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair reported his discussions with Parish Councillor Rhona McMeekin regarding the Council's negative response to the school's proposed plans for road markings and school signage, particularly in the context of the recent near-miss incident on the road outside the school. Mrs McMeekin indicated that Parish Council members were in favour of signage. The next step would be a meeting between the Chair of Governors and a small group of Parish Councillors.

Gov 6 Headteacher's news updates

See Item 10

Gov 7 Order of business

Governors agreed the order of business. Governors addressed the outturn statement in Item 9 before moving to approve the Start Budget in Item 8.

Gov 9 Outturn statement

a) The Bursar highlighted the strong position in the Year End Budget Monitoring Report with a carry forward balance of £30,203. She noted that income had been as predicted, however expenditure had been reduced due to the impact of the COVID pandemic. The Bursar stated that the details of the impact had been included in the report.

b) **The Chair questioned** whether there was a maximum carry forward figure. The Bursar emphasised that revenue budget would not be taken back by the local authority.

c) **Mr Redfern questioned** whether revenue budget would need to be used for any capital expenditure in the case of a balance being carried forward. The Bursar stated that for capital projects, only the capital budget allocation would be taken into consideration and the revenue budget would not be required. However, the Bursar highlighted the importance of ensuring that there was a plan in place for using the revenue budget being carried forward, related to teaching and learning, for example staffing.

d) **The Chair questioned** whether some of the £30k revenue budget could be transferred to capital by the Governors. The Bursar confirmed that this would be a possibility, but noted that once transferred, it could not be moved back to the revenue budget. She also emphasised that the expectation was that the revenue budget should be spent on enhancing teaching and learning, for example through increased staffing. She emphasised that the usual scenario was not to carry revenue budget forward to build up a large pot, but noted that an exception might be if there was a plan to invest in expanding the school, for example.

There were no further questions on the outturn statement.

Gov 8 Approval of 2021-2022 Start Budget

a) The Bursar introduced the two Start Budget scenarios which had been circulated in advance of the meeting: one scenario based on the assumption that no teachers applied for UPS, and the second scenario including provision for UPS. The Bursar noted that the budget position was strong in both scenarios. She noted that the additional funding promised by the Government had now come through and had had a significant impact for the school.

b) The Headteacher recommended scenario 2, which included UPS, following on from previous Governing Body discussions regarding introducing flexibility in the budget to allow for career development opportunities. The Chair noted that scenario 2 provided extra finance should it be needed, but emphasised also that there was no requirement to spend it. Dr Forsey emphasised the importance of having this budget available to support staff retention and the stability of the school. The Chair added that until now the budget had been in deficit and therefore there had not previously been the opportunity to increase salaries or fund the desired level of staff development.

c) **Dr Forsey questioned** whether the redefinition of and uplift in sparsity funding currently under discussion would have a positive impact on the school. The Bursar could not provide any further information until the legislation was finalised.

d) **Mr Redfern questioned** whether provision for external decoration could be included in the budget. The Headteacher added that internal decoration was also needed. Governors confirmed the importance of a well-maintained and attractive-looking environment for learning, as well as for the staff and parents. It was agreed that £5k would be added to the contractor budget line each year for internal and external decorating. The Bursar noted that changes could be made to this going forward, and that it was not a requirement that the provision should be used.

e) **Mr Redfern questioned** whether increases year-on-year had not been included in certain items. The Bursar explained that the County specified where incremental rises could be included, and that largely the budget forecast was based on what is known currently.

f) **Mr Redfern questioned** the insurance cover. The Bursar explained that NYCC no longer provided insurance cover. RPA insurance was recommended by NYCC as providing matching cover at a reduced cost (£19 per pupil). RPA had been providing insurance for academies for 10-15 years.

There were no further questions.

Governors approved budget scenario 2 including the UPS.

Gov 10 Headteacher update

The Headteacher provided a verbal update. She informed Governors that she had been teaching in the classroom for the last two weeks, due to staff absence.

a) **Pupil numbers.** The Headteacher reported that the total number of pupils on roll in September was expected to be 91. One new pupil had joined the school in Year 4 this term, and two new children (one in Year 1 and one in Year 2) would be starting in June. In September, 17 children were expected to join the school, and there were also two children on the waiting list.

A Governor questioned whether these were children who were new to the area, or who had moved from other local schools. The Headteacher stated that there was a mixture of both.

b) **School structure.** The Headteacher had circulated the proposed change to class structure for consideration for the second half of the summer term: the children in Year 4 and 5 would be brought together, and Year 6 would continue in a separate class. The Year 6 children would then be able to spend time preparing for transition, and the Year 4 and 5 children would have

additional time to get used to being together in advance of the next academic year. This would help mitigate some of the impact of the pandemic and also changes in teaching staff over the last academic year. Governors discussed the staff arrangements in order to ensure stability for the children. Mrs Fineran stated that the children in Year 6 were in a strong position for moving to Year 7 because it had been possible to teach new content for longer without the usual preparation work involved for SATs. The Headteacher noted that in some schools, the children are routinely moved to the classes for the next academic year already in the second half of the summer term. Governors were all in favour of this approach. The two Governors with children in the classes involved expressed their strong support. It was agreed that the Headteacher would draft a letter to parents to be sent out before the half-term break. She would continue to keep Governors informed of plans.

c) **Assessments.** The Headteacher stated that assessments had been completed and had helped identify gaps in learning.

d) **Staff and Pupil Wellbeing.** The Headteacher reported that Mrs Carter had led two afternoon sessions on mental health and wellbeing during the recent Wellbeing Week, and this had included a whole school meditation. She had also prepared a display board and wellbeing packs for staff.

e) **Energy.** The Headteacher reported that a new energy certificate had been issued, and that there had been a slight improvement in the level of usage. The school might be considered for a pilot project aiming to study the impact of a new heating system on a school like Sutton on the Forest Primary which currently had a combination of different heating systems.

The Headteacher thanked the team, including Mr Merrall who had recently come in to the school to cover Class 1.

Gov 11 Staff and pupil health and wellbeing (see above)

Gov 12 Safeguarding

The Headteacher stated that there was nothing to report.

Gov 13 Health and Safety

The Headteacher stated that the H&S visit had been rearranged due to her current existing heavy teaching commitments.

The Chair questioned when the position of the green button on the front door would be moved. The Headteacher stated that a contractor had been to the school that day to measure up for the replacement of the front door, which would also involve adding an emergency release button..

Gov 14 Premises

a) The Headteacher and Mr Redfern reviewed a number of minor electrical issues. It was agreed that Mr Redfern would contact the electrician. The Headteacher would send a list of outstanding electrical issues to Mr Redfern.

b) Mr Redfern questioned whether a rear door fob would be installed. The Headteacher stated that the same company dealing with the front door (Item Gov 13) would be notified to follow this up. It was agreed that Mr Redfern would join the discussions with the company.

c) The Headteacher reported that the electrician who visited the school recently noted that some of the lights in the hall were broken. A cherry picker would be needed when the bulbs are replaced. Mr Redfern commented that the whole school needed LED lights which would be better and more efficient. Dr Forsey informed Governors of the latest research on the most effective lighting to support the children's learning in a school environment and recommended daylight bulbs or natural light bulbs.

Gov 15 Governor training

a) Dr Forsey reported that she would be joining NYCC Introduction to Governance part 1 on 16th June and had booked part 2.

b) Governors were informed of the NYCC termly Governor School Improvement network meeting to be held online on 25th May.

c) The Headteacher reminded Governors that the Diocese provides Governor training. The next would be the Governor Forum online via Zoom on 15th June 2021 (link in weekly Diocese email a week ahead).

Gov 16 Governor monitoring

The Governors agreed monitoring would be resumed when visits were allowed.

Gov 17 Governor appointments/vacancies

a) Mrs Gale noted that her term as a Parent Governor had come to an end. It was agreed that the Headteacher would discuss with Mrs Gale whether the role of co-opted governor would be of interest.

b) Mrs Morris raised the possibility that she would be considering resigning as a Governor at the end of the academic year. Dr Forsey commented that the input from the TreeTops perspective was useful. It was noted that the Diocese would need to be contacted regarding the Foundation Governor vacancy if Mrs Morris resigned.

Gov 18 FOSS Annual Report

a) The Chair reminded Governors that FOSS was required by the Charity Commission to present a set of financial statements identifying the objectives of the charity, the funds in their account, and their expenditure in line with the objectives. There is a template available for the report on the Charity Commission website. This report also needed to be submitted to the school's

Governing Body. The Governing Body should have overall oversight of funds coming in to the school and approve the FOSS accounts.

b) The Headteacher shared the most recent document which had been provided by FOSS. It was noted that this report was not in line with Charity Commission requirements and did not therefore provide enough information for the Governing Body to fulfil its role.

c) The Headteacher updated Governors on next steps with regards to recovering money. Governors expressed concern regarding the timescales and requested a further update on a schedule of payments with dates.

d) Governors expressed the need for assurance that procedures were now in place to avoid financial irregularities in the future. The Chair commented that the Charity Commission must have been provided with such assurance.

e) Dr Forsey provided insight into the role of FOSS volunteers. Governors expressed concern about a possible lack of clarity regarding whether volunteers are all trustees of the charity and the extent to which volunteers know about how the charity operates.

f) It was agreed that the Headteacher would follow up initially informally with Mrs Border and Mrs Carras to explain what Governors need and by when. If necessary, the Chair would write formally.

g) All Governors agreed that the work by FOSS volunteers is highly valued and expressed their appreciation.

Gov 19 Policies

a) Accessibility plan

Mrs Fineran had completed the accessibility audit. She explained that this would inform development of a short term, medium term and long term plan to ensure that the school would be accessible.

A Governor questioned whether the aim was to make the school accessible now for anyone who might wish to attend in the future or to ensure accessibility for pupils enrolling. The Headteacher and Mrs Fineran stated that the aim would be to ensure accessibility for children joining the school when their needs were known. It was noted that ensuring wheelchair access would require some time however ramps could be used immediately. A hearing loop would require time to put in place. Mrs Fineran noted that text audio on the website could be included and she would take this forward. Accessibility needed to be ensured for parents as well as children.

A Governor questioned whether accessibility had been raised on NYCC Health and Safety visits. Mrs Fineran stated that accessibility is not covered in H&S inspections.

A Governor questioned whether the accessibility plan would cover the situation of a child with a broken leg. The Headteacher confirmed that it had

been possible to adapt to ensure accessibility for a child when this had happened.

The Chair confirmed the Governing Body's agreement that accessibility would be ensured as needed when children joined the school.

Governors approved the accessibility audit.

The Headteacher and Mrs Fineran would now put together a plan based on the audit.

b) Resolving issues at work policy

The Chair informed Governors that this was the NYCC model policy with the school name and logo added.

Governors approved the policy.

Gov 20 Correspondence

There had been no correspondence.

Gov 21 Any Other Business

None

Gov 22 Date of next meeting: 23rd June 2021 7pm Zoom

The meeting closed at 8:45pm.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Date: