

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL
APPROVED MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1st DECEMBER 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), Mrs T Comfort, Dr K Forsey, Mr G Redfern, Mr M Graham

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk), Mrs S Redfern (Bursar)

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 from Mrs Fineran and Mrs Craig were accepted.
There were no declarations of gifts or hospitality.
The Chair reminded Governors of the need to respect confidentiality.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2021, were approved, would be signed electronically by the Chair and filed in school. An unsigned version would be made available on the school website.

Gov 4 Matters arising from the 20th October 2021 minutes and Action Plan

There were no updates on items 1-7 in the Action Plan.

8 and 9. The Headteacher had developed and circulated the monitoring schedule. See agenda Item 16.

10. The Headteacher requested that Governors sign on the Google Drive to confirm having read 2021 KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education).

11. The Headteacher and Mrs Comfort had discussed this and agreed to meet in January 2022 to discuss Governor training further. Mrs Comfort would produce a Governor training spreadsheet and the Headteacher would upload a ticksheet to record training on the Google Drive.

12. The Headteacher requested that Governors upload signed Registers of Business Interests and Disclosure Declarations onto the Google Drive.

13/14. The Headteacher noted that Governor biographies and the school noticeboard would be updated as soon as possible. The Chair highlighted the need to ensure that current membership of the Governing Body should be up to date.

15. The Headteacher would contact Simon Quartermaine at Diocese of York in January to investigate the Diocese schools maintenance scheme. This had been deferred due to time pressures in school.

16/17. Mr Redfern confirmed that his report had been submitted in advance of the school premises condition survey meeting and that he had attended the meeting. (See agenda Item 15).

18. The Headteacher stated that she needed to complete the relevant training before completing the legionella survey. This was noted as an action.

19. The Headteacher requested that Governors sign the safeguarding log and upload their training certificates on the Google Drive when they had completed the Basic Safeguarding Awareness training and PREVENT training.

Mrs Comfort noted that she would be developing a Governor training spreadsheet listing all the training so far completed. The Headteacher added that there would be a tick sheet for Governors to update their training records on the Google Drive after the Christmas holiday.

There were no further matters arising from the minutes or the Action Plan which had not been included in the meeting agenda.

Gov 5 Chair's opening remarks

a) Headteacher appraisal. The Chair noted that the Performance Management process had been carried out by the Chair, Mrs Craig and Alison Smith from Diocese of York and that a successful report would be issued.

b) Governing Body vacancy. The Chair noted that a parent had expressed an interest in joining the Governing Body and he would be meeting her to discuss this before the end of term.

c) Strategic Plan. The Chair and Headteacher had discussed the idea of developing a Strategic Plan. It was agreed that this would be useful and should be explored further. The Chair would collect examples from other schools as a starting point for discussions.

Gov 6 Order of business

It was agreed that Item 8 would be brought forward to allow the Bursar to leave the meeting when the budget discussions had been completed.

Gov 8 Revised Budget Forecast

The Governors had been provided with the revised budget forecast covering financial years 21/22 to 23/24 (ledger level and summary) (version name Revised Budget v5) in advance of the meeting.

a) Sparsity grant. The Bursar explained that the government had changed the criteria for the sparsity grant from the distance to the next nearest primary school “as the crow flies” to the distance by road for the children in the school’s catchment area. She highlighted that the calculation would vary depending on the cohort each year. She noted that NYCC had lobbied government to draw attention to the unfairness of the previous criteria for schools in rural areas. Under the new criteria, if the next nearest school is between 1.6 to 2 miles, schools would qualify for the sparsity grant on a sliding scale up to £35k. Confirmation would be received by Christmas. The school’s revised budget forecast needed to be submitted before the end of term and therefore it was a possibility that sparsity grant details would not have been finalised by the budget submission date. The Bursar stated that the version circulated to Governors did not include the potential £35k sparsity grant.

b) Budget assumptions. The Bursar stated that the staffing assumptions going forward had been based on 21-22 levels. The pupil numbers of 22-23 had been estimated at 17 joining Reception and a total of 93 children, and for 23-24, 15 joining Reception and a total of 98 children.

c) In-year deficit and balance brought forward position. The Bursar drew Governors’ attention to the in-year deficit in 21-22 of -£3.5k, in 22-23 of -£12.8k and in 23-24 -£5.7k. The balance brought forward figures were for 21-22 £30.2k, for 22-23 £26.7k and for 23-24 £13.9k. The Bursar noted that if a school was in an overall deficit position, NYCC would ask for a recovery plan but this was not the case for Sutton. The Bursar also noted that if the school were to be allocated £35k sparsity funding, there would not be an in-year deficit.

Governors were invited to ask questions and comment on the revised budget forecast.

The Chair questioned why there was such a significant increase in teaching staff costs from £233.7k in 21-22, to £266.8k in 22-23 and £275.7k in 23-24 given that the staffing levels were not expected to change and there was currently a national pay freeze. He noted that next year the unions would be putting forward a large pay demand and if this still needed to be found from within the school budget, the school would again be in financial difficulty. He questioned how the school could be projected to be running a deficit with an increase in pupil numbers to over 90 from around 70 in the recent period.

The Bursar and Headteacher noted these concerns and would verify these figures.

Dr Forsey questioned the predicted pupil numbers and noted that no provision had been made for children joining beyond the Reception year. The Headteacher commented on the limitations on pupil numbers with the current classroom space.

Dr Forsey questioned the drop in "Other income" from £70.9k this year to £60.2k next year. The Bursar stated that for 21-22 this included £4.5k COVID winter grant and catch-up funding. Also Sports Funding had been brought forward from last year. This had been detailed in I18 of the Budget Forecast by Ledger Level document.

Mr Redfern questioned whether refurbishment of the damaged flooring in the hall could be funded from capital funding. The costs would be approximately £4k-£5k. The Bursar would check this, but noted that if the project could be defined as a renovation project it should be possible to finance it from capital funding. Mr Redfern suggested an alternative option could be to use some of the Sports Premium because the hall is used for PE. The Bursar agreed to investigate this further too.

There were no further questions.

The Bursar drew Governors' attention to the various small increases in costs due to COVID, such as hand sanitiser. She emphasised the significant increases in energy costs going forward.

d) Deferral of approval. The Chair stated that the Governing Body required more information, in particular on staffing costs, before approving a revised budget forecast. The Bursar committed to review the costs and issue another revised budget forecast based on her findings. Governors would then be asked to approve this version by email.

The Bursar left the meeting.

e) Staff sickness insurance cover. The Headteacher noted that she would be looking into insurance for staff sickness after 10 days' absence rather than the 16 days currently in place because the supply costs had been extremely high in 20-21 and the staff had been under significant pressure trying to provide cover before the 16 days' insurance kicked in.

f) Business manager. The Headteacher raised the option of approaching financial monitoring in house and buying in 15 hours a year from a Business Manager. She added that Business Manager services could be provided by the current Bursar. This approach would ensure specialist support for the Headteacher when developing budget forecasts and ensure more efficient use of the Headteacher's time. Governors agreed that this would be useful and the Headteacher would investigate this further.

Gov 7 Headteacher's update

COVID update

a) COVID outbreak in school. The Headteacher updated Governors on the recent outbreak. She had contacted both Public Health England and NYCC for advice. Following discussions with colleagues in schools locally, the Headteacher decided to inform parents of the outbreak with a view to trying to reduce impact through awareness raising and where relevant further testing. This approach had helped contain the outbreak and had been welcomed by families. All the children in school had had PCR tests except for two children who were repeating lateral flow tests currently. The Headteacher had also taken measures in school to ensure the children in the different classes were kept separate. The children were still having lunch at the same time in the school hall but were being kept at a distance and within their class groups. Staff were generally keeping masks on all the time. Staff were continuing to complete lateral flow testing.

b) Remote learning. Material would be uploaded onto Google Classroom for the children isolating at home. Also the regular pupil tests due the following week would be brought forward for everyone so that this could be carried out at home for children isolating and then new learning be resumed as soon as children return to school.

c) School fair. The Year 5/6 children had worked hard to organise the school fair. This would now take place during the school day and unfortunately due to the COVID outbreak parents would not be attending. The younger children would be able to bring in money to spend at the fair and would be helped by the Year 5/6 children and the staff. Everyone was looking forward to the event and the aim was to make it as enjoyable as possible for the children.

d) Nativity play. Parents would still be invited to the Nativity but would be asked to wear masks. There would be 40 people in the hall each afternoon.

Dr Forsey questioned whether the school had received CO2 monitors. The Headteacher confirmed these were in place and were proving a useful prompt especially to ensure ventilation even in the recent cold weather. The challenge of balancing ventilation and cold weather was discussed and the need for children to be encouraged to dress warmly. The Headteacher noted that the Year 3 /4 classroom had been cold and that the option of moving to the hall would be reconsidered if necessary.

Dr Forsey questioned whether children from families where a sibling/family member had tested positive for COVID should be attending school. The Headteacher stated that according to the government rules in place, family members and siblings were not required to isolate. However, she noted that the school did allow children to be kept at home in such cases in accordance with parental preference and that an absence code was used to reflect this in school records. This was important for example if other family members were clinically vulnerable.

The Chair emphasised the importance of avoiding a culture of blame in these challenging circumstances. The Headteacher agreed and had been reassuring parents that no blame was attached when /if children tested positive for COVID. The Headteacher expressed the hope and belief that the outbreak in school had reached its peak and had been contained.

The Governors expressed support for the Headteacher's decisions and overall approach in these difficult circumstances.

Learning walks

d) The Headteacher reported that she had completed learning walks focused on the classroom environment with a view to ensuring that everything in the classroom was there specifically for the children and fostered curiosity. Actions had been identified for KS1 and for the Year 3 /4 classroom. Overall the Headteacher noted that the learning walk findings had been positive and the children were happy and focused.

Pupil numbers

e) The Headteacher stated that 14 applications for Reception in September 2022 had already been received. It was noted that Governors would need to return to the topic of class structure in a future meeting. The Chair noted that total pupil numbers could not exceed 105 on the basis of available square footage.

FoSS

f) The Headteacher noted that the new FoSS committee had brought lots of new ideas and a positive fresh approach. Dr Forsey described how friendly and inclusive the new committee members were in the playground for example. It was also positive to see that there had been more parents attending the second of the two recent FoSS meetings.

g) The Headteacher and Dr Forsey noted that due to challenges involved with contacting the bank at the limited available times, it had not yet been possible for the previous Treasurer to hand over the bank account to the new committee. Every effort was however being made to resolve this.

Staffing update

h) The Headteacher updated Governors on staff sickness and absence. There were no questions.

i) The Headteacher had decided to cancel the staff Christmas party due to the potential impact of any further COVID infections.

Governors noted this decision and supported the Headteacher, acknowledging that it was unfortunate to have to cancel.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for the update and expressed appreciation for all she and the staff were doing for the children.

Gov 9 School Development Plan (SDP)

The School Development Plan (SDP) had been discussed in the previous meeting, however this was now an opportunity for Governors to comment on the details of the document itself.

a) Reading. The Headteacher noted that reading in KS1 was strong and reported that more volunteers to support reading would soon be coming in to school.

b) Tracking data. Training on the new tracking system would be provided for Governors in the early part of 2022.

c) The Chair noted that he had already discussed the SDP with the Headteacher in detail.

Dr Forsey questioned whether the SDP included outdoor learning and whether it had been based on the previous outdoor learning initiatives having been achieved. Dr Forsey also asked about the extent to which the different year groups were involved in Forest Schools, noting that the definition of Forest School was specific and related to 2 hours of the weekly timetable. The Headteacher stated that Miss Pugh would be leading on outdoor learning and the relevant training had been included in Miss Pugh's personal development plan including bursary-funded training booked, subject to confirmation of the funding, in Harrogate. Miss Pugh would be considering whether the school would offer Forest School specifically. The Headteacher noted that outdoor learning had been included in the SDP spread across the curriculum. The initiatives included in the previous year's plan had been on the whole completed.

Dr Forsey offered to provide input and training on outdoor learning and Forest Schools free of charge. In her professional life she was currently leading the training for the National Stem Learning Centre York. Dr Forsey and the Headteacher would meet to discuss this further.

There were no further comments or questions.

Gov 10 School Evaluation Framework (SEF)

The Headteacher and Chair had met with the School Improvement Advisor to discuss the SEF and noted that it had been positively received.

There were no questions/comments from Governors.

Gov 11 Sports Premium/Pupil Premium update

Nothing new to report.

Gov 12 Wellbeing (staff and pupils)

a) Staff. The Headteacher stated that the staff were all tired and the challenging circumstances felt relentless. Mrs Carter was undergoing training to become a fully qualified mental health lead. She would be working across the cluster to provide support.

b) Children. The Headteacher noted that the children seemed happy.

Gov 13 Health and Safety update

Nothing new to report (see agenda Item 4 update 18).

Gov 14 Safeguarding update

The Headteacher stated that there was nothing to report.

Gov 15 Premises update

a) School condition survey meeting update. Mr Redfern updated Governors on the meeting with NYCC MASS contact Bev Davies. Mr Redfern had raised the following issues: the hall door, external decoration for Yr 5/6 classroom, the main double door and the single door, and the roof. The Headteacher noted that no one had yet been to school to look at the roof.

The Headteacher confirmed that she had reported Mr Redfern's list of issues requiring attention to NYCC MASS, and that Mrs Berthinussen would go through this list with the recently appointed school administrator as part of the hand-over of her role.

b) Electrics. Mr Redfern reported that the school now had documentary evidence that all the school's electrics were safe. This had taken considerable time and determination to obtain and Governors congratulated and thanked Mr Redfern for this.

c) MASS (maintenance and servicing scheme). Mr Redfern had asked Bev Davies whether it would be possible to see amounts spent on the school in recent years, however she stated this would not be possible but commented that all schools had spent more than the scheme cost (overspent). Bev Davies

described the new MASS being introduced by NYCC. Mr Redfern noted that NYCC costs were included in the MASS, and commented that this made it expensive. Mr Redfern reported that in discussing the possibility of working without the MASS scheme, Bev Davies explained that if a MASS consultant were not involved, Governors would be then held liable for any decisions made.

The Chair questioned whether the costs of the recent work done under the MASS could be accessed through a Freedom of Information (Fol) request, however Mr Redfern emphasised that a decision on the MASS scheme would be needed by February 2022 therefore there was not time to pursue this approach.

It was agreed that the Headteacher would contact Simon Quartermaine at the Diocese of York to find out the details of their maintenance scheme. A comparison would then be made with the new NYCC scheme.

Gov 16 Governor monitoring

The Headteacher had circulated the monitoring schedule with the meeting papers. Governors were encouraged to contact school to arrange monitoring.

Gov 17 Governor vacancies

The Chair stated that there were currently 3 Governor vacancies and that these would be publicised in the local parish newsletter. He would be meeting one potential Governor before the end of term (see also agenda Item 5b).

Gov 18 Governor training

No training to report since the last meeting. See update in agenda Item 4.

Gov 19 Policies

The Chair stated that he had reviewed all the policies and uploaded onto the Google Drive updated versions which now included version control (next review date and sign-off date). Governors were invited to raise questions or comments. There were no questions.

Governors approved the following:

- Admissions policy
- Capability policy
- Charging and Remissions policy
- Designated teacher policy)
- Developing performance policy)
- Disciplinary policy
- Induction of NQTs

The Chair noted that the Pay policy required further input from the Headteacher and Governor approval would therefore be deferred until the January Governing Body meeting.

Pay policy 2021-22 (deferred)

Gov 20 Correspondence

The Chair had received no correspondence.

Gov 21 Any Other Business previously notified to the Clerk

None

Gov 22 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19th January 2022

Focus on Resources

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and wished everyone a very Happy Christmas.

The meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Date: