

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
FOCUS ON FINANCE/RESOURCES
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9th FEBRUARY 2022 at 6:00 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 D Craig, Mrs T Comfort, Mrs J Fineran, Dr K Forsey, Mr G Redfern, Ms J Porter

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk)

Minute No. _____

Gov 1 Prayer and Welcome

The meeting opened with the School Prayer.

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

Apologies from Mr Graham were accepted. Mrs Comfort apologised but she would have to leave the meeting at 7pm due to a previous commitment.

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 19th January 2022 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 19th January 2022 minutes and Action Plan

9, 10, 11. Mrs Comfort and HT had met and a Governor training log had now been uploaded for Governors to complete on the Google Drive.

15. Discussion of maintenance scheme on agenda.

16 and 17. Legionella report. Action completed.

18. The reminder for Governors to complete Safeguarding and PREVENT training was no longer needed. All Governors were aware and a log had been set up to record training completion dates.

19. Examples of schools' strategic plans to be gathered. To be done during the Spring Term if possible.

20. Staffing insurance costs. To be included under budget discussions.

21. In house budget monitoring and buying in Business Management services. To be included under budget discussions.

22. Governor training on tracking data. The Headteacher proposed that tracking data training would be easier if Governors were to meet face-to-face. The Chair recommended that meetings continue on Zoom and it was agreed that this training would be therefore tried online.

23. Outdoor learning. Forest School training had been booked. Dr Forsey offered curriculum based outdoor learning training and support.

24,25,26. These items would be included on the March agenda.

27. PSHE for church schools policy was on this meeting agenda.

There were no matters arising from the minutes or further updates to the Action Plan not included on the agenda.

Gov 5 Chair's opening remarks

a) Term of office. The Chair informed Governors that his term of office would end on 6th March and that therefore there would need to be an election for a parent governor. This would be organised by the Headteacher following the NYCC election process (to be sent to HT by the Clerk).

b) OFSTED inspection. The Chair noted the update from the NYCC Spring Term Governor Newsletter, that OFSTED had announced the intention to visit all schools by September 2025.

c) SFVS (School's Financial Value Standard) The Chair stated that this would need to be included on the agenda for the March 23rd Governing Body meeting.

d) Complaints panel. Hubby Primary School had been in contact to request Sutton on the Forest Governors' agreement to join a complaints panel, should the need arise. It was agreed that a reciprocal arrangement would be

established between the two schools. Governors to join complaints panels would be identified if/when a panel needed to be formed.

e) Air purification units. The Chair reported that the school would be provided with air purification units following a successful application to the Government scheme. The Chair emphasised that the units would reduce particulates. It was noted however that reduction in Covid infection in schools was also dependent on other factors eg close contact between children.

Gov 6 Order of business

No changes needed.

Gov 7 Headteacher's update

a) Covid. The Headteacher reported that there were now no cases of Covid amongst school staff or pupils, although one member of staff was self-isolating.

b) Safeguarding. The Headteacher stated that there were no safeguarding issues.

c) Curriculum. The Headteacher drew Governors' attention to the fact that the monitoring timetable had been re-scheduled due to the Covid outbreak in school. The new dates would be circulated to Governors. The NYCC advisor would be in school on 10th February to review Reading. This had been deferred due to Covid.

d) Pupil numbers. The Headteacher updated Governors on an extremely useful meeting with the Bursar (Sue Redfern). The Bursar had provided a detailed review of systems available to the Headteacher which the Headteacher would use going forward through her own login.

There were two questions for Governors to discuss:

- Should the admission of pupils be raised from 15 (PAN) to allow all 17 first choice applicants to join the school in September;
- Should a NQT be recruited.

The Headteacher and Bursar had produced a draft budget for discussion purposes which included the now confirmed sparsity funding allocation and a proposed new NQT teacher. This draft budget had been circulated to Governors and some questions/comments had been raised in emails (shared amongst all Governors) in advance of this meeting. The Headteacher and Governors now discussed the issues raised in this correspondence and continued to explore the two proposals further.

The Headteacher had outlined the situation as follows. The school PAN is currently 15 but there had been 17 first choice applications. The Bursar had drafted a budget for a NQT to go into the Yr1/2 class, to allow over 30 children there. To appoint a NQT would require £37k, including on-costs, for September 22-September 23 (£20k for September 22 to March 23). The

Headteacher noted that this would be covered by the sparsity funding. However, she drew Governors' attention to the fact that sparsity funding was not guaranteed for the following year. The Headteacher had provided Governors with a table showing pupil numbers going forward, which included some bigger numbers in KS2 but classes could go above 30 if necessary in KS2 with appropriate staffing levels and additional adult support.

The Headteacher further outlined the context based on the information provided by the Bursar:

- £40k in the school's account currently with 2 months of this financial year to run;
- The school would therefore most likely not be in deficit at the end of this financial year, despite the current in-year deficit position;
- Mentoring could be provided by a team member working in the classroom with the NQT and the bought in service would provide excellent CPD useful for the staff as a whole;
- If an extra teacher (NQT) were to be employed, they could work in the mornings in the Yr1/2 classroom and in the afternoons with any Yr3 children needing extra input.
- In terms of budget, each child admitted brings an allocation of £3,500.
- There had been significant impact during the pandemic on current Yr2 (next year's Yr3) children and the flexibility in staffing to allow targeted input would be important to remedy this.
- Budgetary uncertainty for future years needed to be borne in mind in making this decision.

Governors discuss these issues.

A Governor questioned whether the Covid catch-up funding could be used to fund the extra teacher. The Headteacher explained that the allocation was £4k and so far £3k had already been used, but that the £1k could be used if necessary.

A Governor questioned whether the proposal to recruit a NQT could be viewed as having to recruit an extra teacher for just two children to be admitted. The Headteacher emphasised that the proposal would allow additional teacher-led input across the school, where most appropriate, and noted the impact of Covid meant that this additional input was needed.

A Governor questioned the impact of budgetary uncertainty going forward, noting the importance of ensuring that the school was properly maintained and that the sparsity funding now allocated could be used to ensure this going forward.

The Headteacher emphasised that there would still be a maintenance budget available for this purpose: £8k this year and £6k next year.

The Chair highlighted that according to government published documents, sparsity funding would continue and there was no evidence indicating that the school would no longer be eligible. The Chair referenced the government

announcements on increasing funding to schools and noted that in this context therefore Governors needed to assume that next year's budget would be increased. The Chair stated that should circumstances next year be other than seemed now to be expected from government announcements, the argument would be that planning in such an environment was impossible.

A Governor questioned whether, if school numbers were to be allowed to increase further in the future, there would be an impact on admissions for siblings at some point and would there be a situation where children were turned away? The Headteacher emphasised that pupil numbers were difficult to predict, and that when she had started at the school the Reception intake had been six, so a very different situation. The Chair noted that the total number of pupils could not go above 105 without sanctions although it was not known what these sanctions would be. There is not space for more than 17 children in each year group in school, so the PAN should be kept at 15. The Headteacher noted the importance of the school's increasing reputation with Forces families in Strensall. She emphasised the importance of not turning children away, noting that this could lead to a drop in applications.

The Chair questioned how many years a NQT would be needed in scenarios with either 15 or 17 children. The Headteacher explained that the appointment would be needed for 2 years because of the maximum number of children allowed in a class in KS1 (30).

A Governor questioned whether it would be an alternative option to adopt an approach of balancing the numbers across classes differently to avoid the costs of recruiting a NQT. Governors were strongly in favour of keeping a single Reception class. The importance of keeping children with their peer group was emphasised.

A Governor questioned the approach of using the sparsity funding to recruit the NQT on the grounds that the sparsity funding should benefit all children in terms of staffing and also should be used to address the many maintenance issues across the school premises.

The Chair emphasised that the Headteacher had explained how the NQT would be used to benefit the children in different classes. The Headteacher provided further examples of how this additional staff member would allow tailored work, such as in providing targeted input on Phonics for children in Yr3 needing extra support.

Governors agreed that all the children had missed out due to the pandemic and that an additional teacher should be used to provide opportunities for as many children as possible, regardless of their ability.

In response to the Governor's concern about the impact on the budget of recruiting a NQT, the Chair highlighted the budget surplus in the current year and following two years.

The Headteacher and Staff Governor described the practicalities of dealing with the numbers of children currently on role and how an extra teacher would be used, including with the TA.

A Governor questioned whether reduced supply costs had been included in this budget. The Headteacher confirmed that a NQT would help keep supply costs down, and this had been reflected in the draft budget. Also insurance kicking in at 8 days was being considered (rather than the current 16 days).

A Governor questioned whether it would be affordable to recruit a NQT and still have a budget surplus. This Governor strongly emphasised that the time to have an impact on education following from these last two years was most certainly now.

A Governor questioned the length of contract needed to recruit a strong candidate for the NQT position. The Governor noted that it might have an impact on the quality of candidates if the school could only offer a one-year contract for example. The Headteacher expressed confidence that the role would be attractive, given that the NQT would be working in a classroom with another teacher. She would confirm the length of contract required for NQT recruitment.

Mrs Comfort had to leave the meeting at this point (7pm).

A Governor questioned whether there were any low birth rate years known to be coming up. The Headteacher stated that this would not necessarily have an impact on numbers in the school and the Chair commented that a number of families with small children had recently moved into the village.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close. He emphasising his support for the additional flexibility which recruitment of a NQT would bring across the school and his agreement with the statement that the time an impact on the children's education was needed was now.

Dr Forsey noted that this discussion ensured that the Governing Body was meeting its core function for fiscal responsibility.

It was agreed that the Headteacher would provide a written response to the issues raised in the meeting and circulate this by email.

Governors agreed to send any further questions /comments to the Headteacher by email.

Governors agreed that the decision on pupil numbers (an intake of 15 or 17) would be finalised by Friday 18th February to allow the Headteacher to respond to NYCC after the half term holiday.

Governors would discuss two budget variants in March FGB: one with NQT and one without. A final decision on the recruitment would be taken in the discussion of the Start Budget in the March Governing Body meeting with final

approval of the Start Budget due in May. The Headteacher would need to recruit for a NQT in May.

Gov 8 Budget update

See agenda Item 7.

Gov 9 Budget Benchmarking

a) The Headteacher introduced the Benchmarking report noting the high energy costs and the lower spend on teaching staff.

b) The Chair stated that teaching expenditure was mid-range and the average full-time staffing level similar to other schools. He noted also that senior leaders in the school teach, which accounted for the benchmarking picture.

c) The Headteacher expressed concern about providing opportunities for teachers to progress. The Chair emphasised that the ethos of the school was very much that staff should be developed and that opportunities were given where possible to support this.

d) The Chair noted that according to the report the school's revenue reserves at 7% were a concern however it was important to emphasise that the school did have reserves (rather than being in a position of having none).

Governors agreed that benchmarking was in line with other schools. It was also agreed that it provided useful information for the decision on recruitment of a NQT

Gov 10 MASS Scheme decision

The Headteacher and Mr Redfern reported on their conclusion that continuing with the NYCC MASS was the preference at this point.

The Headteacher explained that this would be the most straightforward option and no notice period would be involved should it prove unsatisfactory.

Mr Redfern emphasised the difficulty of working outside this scheme, for example the need to meet NYCC surveyors and the difficulties which had been experienced in getting support from NYCC for work on the extension which had not been constructed by NYCC approved builders. Mr Redfern emphasised the importance of the school managing the maintenance needs and that this is the approach with this scheme, which allows discussions with NYCC surveyors, even if this is just a starting point for resolving maintenance issues. MASS is a pay-as-you-go scheme.

The Headteacher referenced having to call out Dyno-Rod to resolve a recent drains blockage as an example of how the school could need to approach problems under the scheme.

Governors had no questions and supported continuing with NYCC MASS.

Gov 11 Governor monitoring feedback and planning

Deferred to March meeting to allow revised monitoring schedule to be circulated.

Gov 12 Governor training

Deferred to March meeting to allow input from Mrs Comfort.

Gov 13 Policies

The policies had been made available to Governors on the school Google Drive in advance of the meeting.

Governors approved each of the following:

- PSHE for church schools
- Data Protection Policy (noted that this was a Veritau document)
- Disciplinary guidance Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Schools Flexible Working Policy
- Smoke Free Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy

The Chair had updated the policy schedule.

Gov 14 Correspondence

The Chair had received no correspondence.

Gov 15 Any Other Business previously notified to the Clerk

There was no other business.

Gov 16 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 23rd March 2022

Focus: School Improvement via Zoom 6pm

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.
The meeting closed at 7:20 pm.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Date: