

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
RESOURCES AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30th NOVEMBER 2022 at 6:00 pm (via TEAMS)

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 (Deputy Chair), Mr M Graham, Dr K Forsey, Ms J Porter, Mrs J Fineran (Staff Governor),

IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Knights (Clerk), Sian Carling (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. 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: Parking.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2022 were approved.

The final version of the minutes would be signed by the Chair and filed in school.

Gov 4 Matters arising from the 21st September 2022 minutes and from the Action Plan

Action Plan update

4 and 5. These actions for the Autumn term monitoring would now be taken forward into the Spring term. The Headteacher would link up school Subject Leaders and Governors to organise learning walks and meetings in the Spring Term. The Headteacher would also put staff and Governors in contact to allow Governor involvement in the Deep Dives currently in progress.

6. This action was updated. The Headteacher would circulate the NYCC advisor's report on her visit focussing on Reading in the school.

8. Ms Porter had discussed fundraising with her colleagues. She noted that her own expertise could be useful but that it would be a challenge to find other contacts with the time to be involved with the school on this.

9. The Headteacher stated that an OFSTED inspection could be expected this academic year, particularly in the Summer Term, therefore ensuring Governors had information to support their involvement in an inspection would be a priority in the Spring Term.

10. The Chair had now received his Insight login.

11. Academisation. See agenda item Gov 9.

12. Insulation. See agenda item Gov 18. Complete.

13. Sports Premium Annual Report. See agenda item Gov 15. Complete.

14. Pupil Premium Annual Report. See agenda item Gov 16. Complete.

15. FOSS Annual Report. See agenda item Gov 13.

17. Appraisal of Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair would look into the documentation for this and confirm whether it was due to be carried out.

18. External review of Governing Body. Mrs Fineran had explored opportunities for Board governance reviews pro-bono through corporate responsibility initiatives but had not managed to find any firms taking forward this type of activity.

19. SWOT analysis re spending of PCC donation. Governors agreed that this approach would no longer be possible given the financial position. The Governors noted that currently the Headteacher had ring-fenced £35k of the £50k donation to be spent on the school eg maintenance and resources and that £15k had been identified as available to "soften the blow" of the current financial environment. The Chair emphasised the importance of this donation being used for tangible investment of benefit to the education of the children. The Chair and Governors agreed that the funding must not go to the energy companies. The Chair emphasised that the Headteacher needed to keep the

Church informed on how the donation would be used. Governors also recommended including information on the use of the donation in the school newsletter.

20. Consider/review risk management. Governors had discussed this in the July governance review. Governors did not consider additional input on risk management by the Governing Body was needed.

22. Staff Governor election/re-election. It was confirmed that Mrs Fineran would be continuing as Staff Governor. The Headteacher noted that another member of staff would be interested to join the Governing Body. There would need to be at least a total of 9 Governors before this would be possible.

24. Circulate article on Governor vacancies. The Chair had written the article and sent it to all Governors. This would now be sent to all parents, and shared on the school's Facebook page. Parents would be encouraged to share the article on nearby villages' Facebook pages. Mrs Comfort informed Governors that the Parish newsletter was no longer delivered to each household.

25. Read KCSIE and Caspar briefing and sign confirmation on the school's Google Drive. The Headteacher would ensure the Google Drive sign-up sheet for staff and Governors was available. All Governors to complete this action as soon as possible.

28. Premises and maintenance. See agenda item Gov 18.

29. Parent communications. A question on preferred methods of communications would be included on the Parent Survey.

32. LA Governor application. Ms Porter updated Governors that the outcome of her application was expected shortly.

All other actions had been completed or were in progress and would be kept on the action list for follow up in the next meeting.

**Gov 5 Annual register of business and personal interests (to be signed)
Disclosure declaration (to be signed)**

Governors agreed to sign these two documents and take them into school to be held in the Governor file. Clerk to re-circulate.

Gov 6 Chair's opening remarks

a) The Chair expressed gratitude to Mrs Craig for her time and hard work as both a member of staff at Sutton on the Forest Primary School and as a Governor.

b) The Chair informed Governors that Mr Redfern's term of office had also ended. The Chair recorded his gratitude to Mr Redfern for his time and efforts

as a Governor, noting in particular his invaluable expertise on the property maintenance.

Governors joined the Chair in thanking both Mrs Craig and Mr Redfern and wishing them well for the future.

Gov 7 Order of business

The Governors had agreed to take the Budget items at the beginning of the meeting, before agenda item Gov 4. *These minutes reflect the original agenda order.*

Gov 8 Headteacher updates including: School Development Plan (SDP) and Self-evaluation framework (SEF).

a) The Headteacher had circulated the latest versions of the SDP and SEF. She had included the Governors' input from the discussions in the September Governing Body meeting.

b) The Headteacher outlined a recent LA planning meeting. There would be three visits by LA advisors in this academic year: Safeguarding focus (December); Inclusion – SEND; Subject leadership.

c) Ms Porter (Safeguarding Governor) would speak to the LA advisor during the Safeguarding visit, either in person if possible or via Zoom/telephone.

Gov 9 Academisation: Diocese meeting feedback

The Headteacher and Mrs Comfort had attended the Diocese meeting led by Andrew Wilson. Both agreed it was extremely useful.

a) The Headteacher described the option of the schools in the cluster joining an academy together as a hub of an academy chain. The Headteacher advised Governors to consider the support that could be available from a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) as compared with the support from NYCC. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors expressed concern about the level of support received from the Local Authority.

b) Mrs Comfort noted that he provided good indicators to consider in choosing an academy. Mrs Comfort emphasised the importance of finding an academy that understands village schools.

c) The Chair emphasised the importance of articulating the underlying philosophy of a MAT and defining the advantages of joining a particular MAT. He would not be in favour of the school joining a profit-making MAT or an academy that would take away the school's autonomy in staffing decisions.

d) Governors agreed that a separate meeting outside the Full Governing Body schedule needed to be set up to discuss academisation. It was agreed that this meeting would also address the issues around establishing a pre-school,

as this would be an initiative MATs would explore. The Headteacher would organise this in January.

Gov 10 Pre-school

See above agenda item Gov 9d.

Gov 11 Budget update

The Headteacher introduced the school's new NYCC Bursar, Sian Carling.

October monitoring reports

a) Income variances

The Bursar highlighted the variances in income as compared with the school's Start Budget. School had received £13,211 funds delegated by the Local Authority (LA) which is a new supplementary grant not included in the Start Budget. The Pupil Premium funding had been higher than had been estimated. The SEND funding is lower, due to a reduction in the level of support.

A Governor questioned whether this supplementary grant was funding to cover the increases in teachers' salaries. The Bursar stated that this was not funding provided to cover this.

b) Expenditure variances

The Bursar noted that staff had been awarded 3% pay increases, with £1925 additional for each spinal point. Teachers' salary negotiations were currently ongoing aiming for 5%. NYCC had already paid this uplift for teachers backdated to September although it has not yet been confirmed.

A Governor questioned whether there would be additional funding to cover these pay awards. The Bursar stated that no extra funding would be provided by the government or local authority for this and the increases would need to be covered out of the school's budget.

The Bursar noted that the NYCC Energy Team had advised increasing the budget for energy costs by a further £2k approximately (see detailed monitoring report line E16). Electricity was now budgeted at £14,453 for the year, but the Headteacher commented that judging from bills now coming in, the final cost could be more.

A Governor questioned whether NYCC negotiated with energy providers on behalf of schools. The Bursar confirmed this is what happens.

The Bursar noted that an increase in the budgeted costs for oil had not been included as there is too much variation day-to-day. The current price is 84p a litre, whereas the school paid 78p a litre last time.

A Governor questioned inclusion of RPA Insurance as a variance. The Bursar stated that this had been omitted from the Start Budget in error and apologised on behalf of the team. She reassured Governors that she had reviewed the Budget in detail when she started to work with the school, and that all variances are discussed with the Headteacher in the monthly

monitoring meetings. The Bursar highlighted her 8 years' experience working on school budgets and expressed her commitment to ensuring accuracy.

A Governor questioned whether there was a checklist of what should be included in the schools' budgets which could be used by Governors to help reassure them that nothing had been missed. The Bursar reiterated that Governors should be able to have confidence in the advice provided to them, but that one approach, should the Governors wish to, would be to compare with the previous year's Start Budget. Governors thanked the Bursar for picking up items which had been missed previously.

c) Donation

The Bursar drew Governors' attention to the impact of the £50k donation on the Budget bottom line. She noted that as yet there were no covenants with respect to how this donation can be spent and that it was artificially inflating the bottom line.

d) Impact of energy prices rises and increases in teachers' pay on schools' budgets without additional government funding

The Chair emphasised his concern that schools were going to be expected to cover the increases in energy costs and in staff and teachers' pay without additional support being provided either by NYCC or central government. The Bursar expressed the Local Authority view which is that although these large expenditures are outside of schools' control, it is the job of schools to "cut their cloth" accordingly and balance the budget. The Chair noted that the reason for the school going into deficit in the 2nd and 3rd year of the Start Budget would be clear and that it would be a waste of time if the Local Authority were to expect a written explanation from the school about how/when they would move out of deficit. He emphasised that he would not be willing to support an approach to balancing the budget which involved cutting staffing to pay for energy costs. Dr Forsey stated that she fully supported the Chair in this and that research provides evidence that teachers and support staff ratios are the primary elements influencing good education. The Chair highlighted that the comparator schools in the benchmarking were in the same position.

The Headteacher described the situation in other schools where there were no class TAs for example and emphasised that it was lucky that such high levels of support staff were currently possible in Sutton on the Forest Primary. The Chair emphasised that actually this was a result of hard work. He noted that when the Headteacher joined the school there were 72 pupils but now there were 94, and this had been achieved through hard work and planning by the Headteacher, staff and Governors. The Chair stated that he found it unacceptable that the government should award pay increases but not provide the funding to cover them.

There were no further questions on the October monitoring report

Approval of Revised Budget.

e) The Bursar introduced the Revised Budget. She stated that the carry forward balance was different from the figure in the October monitoring report because there had been assumptions made on expenditure from the £50k donation in the Revised Budget. Otherwise the Revised Budget reflected the October report. The Bursar explained that the Revised Budget had been based on the October census showing 93 children, and this had been kept as an assumption for the next two years. The Bursar stated that the pay increases discussed above had been factored in to the Revised Budget, as had other inflationary increases, including for example a 17% increase in cleaning costs under NYCC contracts. No further increases in the costs of utilities had been included going forward into Year 2 and 3 because of the volatility in the markets, but there should be more information available on this in time for the next Start Budget. The Bursar referred to £2.3 billion for education included in the most recent government budget announcement, however there was currently no further information on this therefore it had not been possible to include a figure in the budget.

The Chair questioned what the £2.3 billion announcement meant in terms of government funding to schools per pupil and emphasised that without this information the announcement was meaningless in his view. The Bursar committed to provide further details as soon as any were available. The Bursar noted the staff assumptions in the Revised Budget were based on a fulltime staff of 5 and a possible reduction in support staff going forward.

The Bursar noted the £17k deficit in 23/24 and £34k deficit in 24/25. She explained that although the local authority would not ask the school to provide a deficit plan, they would write to the school asking if they were aware of what needs to be done to rectify the in-year deficit.

A Governor questioned how much of the £17k deficit was the result of pay rises for staff and how much the result of the increases in energy costs. The Bursar would provide a comparison of the 22/23 revised forecast with the Start Budget for 22/23 and circulate this to Governors.

A Governor questioned the Bursar's comment regarding reduction in support staff going forward. The Bursar clarified that an assumption of a nine hour reduction had been made in the Revised Budget. Dr Forsey questioned where this reduction would be and whether an analysis of the impact had been considered. She expressed concern about the impact on children with additional needs and middle ability children. The Chair emphasised the importance of not undermining the education of the children, and particularly given the level of variables in the financial situation at the moment. The Headteacher highlighted the current situation: five TAs and four classes, which is more than other schools. Mrs Comfort commented that as an experienced primary school teacher she had never seen this level of TA support before. She emphasised that these are challenging times and that she agreed with the Headteacher that is a luxury. Mrs Fineran emphasised that children with additional needs would continue to have the level of support needed. The Chair highlighted that TA staff cost cutting would not address the issues currently being faced by the school with unfunded pay awards and escalating energy costs. Mrs Fineran noted that the Governing Body had

responsibility for strategic management. However the Chair noted that the figures were not available for this discussion to be carried out meaningfully at the moment.

f) The Bursar stated that at this point the Governors needed to approve the Revised Budget for this financial year. The information on Years 2 and 3 provided an indication of what might be coming so that Governors had this awareness in advance of the Start Budget discussions in the Spring Term.

g) The Bursar suggested that Governors consider making their views known by drawing up a response to a NYCC survey circulated recently to schools questioning what impact current financial pressures will have on their budgets. The Bursar will re-send this to the Headteacher for circulation to Governors.

Governors approved the Revised Budget.

Benchmarking

h) Governors noted that although similar to the comparator schools in all other elements, there was a big difference in the school's LA income at £4595 as against £9,222 for example for an extremely small school or £7194 for a very small school, or the all primaries amount at £6619. Governors requested an explanation for this. Mrs Fineran noted that the numbers of pupils with SEND at Sutton on the Forest Primary was similar to the average across North Yorkshire. This could not be the explanation for the difference in funding discussed above. The Chair expressed frustration that without more information it was impossible to understand any differences in the benchmarking.

i) The Bursar agreed to provide a detailed explanation of what is included in the LA income and why there are such differences.

Governors noted the Benchmarking dashboard.

The Bursar had completed her reports and would take forward the follow-up actions. She left the meeting at 7:15.

Gov 12 Strategic spending update

a) Fencing: outdoor space Year 1/ 2 classroom. The Headteacher reported that she had obtained two quotes but that other appropriate contractors had not been identified. Dr Forsey provided the details of a third contractor to contact for an additional quote. The Headteacher expressed a preference for the more expensive of the two quotes obtained so far, noting that the contractor was the husband of a member of staff with very good skills and experience who could be trusted to carry out the task as requested to a good level. He had previously carried out similar work in school. The Headteacher did not need to take a decision on this at this point.

b) Resources/premises: the Headteacher stated that she would be discussing needs with the staff team and developing a list of ideas to support the children's education ranging so far from storage outside to reading resources for the older children.

c) Strategic spending: Mr Graham referred back to the Governing Body Self-Evaluation discussion and noted that one of the ideas was to look ahead at what would be needed in 6-12 months.

d) The Chair asked the Headteacher to bring these ideas for spending back to the Governing Body after the discussions with the staff. Dr Forsey noted that FoSS would be keen to support some of the spending and sports grants could be sought for equipment.

Gov 13 FOSS Annual Report

Governors agreed that a copy of the report sent by FoSS to the Charity Commission would meet the requirements of Governing Body.

Gov 14 SEND Annual Progress Data Report 2021-22 Update on SEND 22-23

a) Mrs Fineran (SENCo) had circulated three reports: Primary SEND cohort dashboard 2022; Summary SEND report to Governors November 22; and also the Whole School Provision which was approved by Governors in May 2022. She highlighted key aspects of the reports.

b) Primary SEND cohort dashboard 2022. Mrs Fineran explained that this document provided a comparison with schools across NYCC and nationally. The report shows that 13% of the children in school have SEND with 14.8% across North Yorkshire schools and 15.3% nationally. Mrs Fineran had explained in the budget discussion that with 1.1% of children in school with an EHCP, one more child would take the school above the North Yorkshire average of 1.9%. The average nationally is 2.3%. Mrs Fineran noted that different SENCo might define primary need in different ways, and that often children needed support in several areas of need.

c) Mrs Fineran stated that next term two or three more EHCP could be confirmed for children in the school.

The Chair questioned how long the process of EHCP assessment took. Mrs Fineran stated that there would various stages at which appeals could take place but that generally the process would not take more than 26 weeks.

A Governor questioned whether it was taking longer and/or becoming more difficult to get an EHCP, and asked whether the criteria were changing. Mrs Fineran explained her experience, dating from before lockdown, when an application for an EHCP did not go smoothly. More recently she had made referrals for specialist support (RFI – request for involvement) but had had little success. This was also the experience of other SENCo in the cluster. The RFI process is not a legal process and is much more in the control of the local authority. The EHCP process is a legal process with clearer criteria.

d) Progress. The Summary SEND report to Governors demonstrated the good progress made by the children on the SEND register. Mrs Fineran explained how progress was being tracked.

e) CPD. Mrs Fineran drew Governors' attention to the details of staff CPD for teachers and TAs. Next steps would be Graduated response training for TA staff, and one member of staff would attend Unlocking autism training.

A Governor questioned where Mrs Fineran would benchmark staff in terms of knowledge and skills with SEND. Mrs Fineran stated that staff were above average, because they know the children so well and also because they are well advanced in terms of defining and implementing next steps. Mrs Fineran explained her work currently looking at whether the different parts of the curriculum are inclusive for children with SEND. Mrs Fineran had searched for good practise in this but not found any yet, and therefore concluded that work in the school was advancing ahead of others in this respect. Mrs Fineran stated that all staff could talk about steps in place, how they support the children with SEND, and how they can access everything in the classroom. Dr Forsey endorsed this from her own experience.

Gov 15 Sports Premium Annual Report 2021-22 + update on 22-23

a) The Headteacher had circulated the report titled "Evidencing the impact of the Primary PE and Sport Premium" dated July 2022. Governors noted the Annual Report 2021-22. There were no questions.

b) The Headteacher stated that she was currently working with the Bursar to define spending for next year.

Gov 16 Pupil Premium Annual Report 2021-22 +update on 22-23

a) The Headteacher had circulated the report titled "Pupil Premium 22-23" which included the details of plan for 22-23 and the review of outcomes in the previous academic year 21-22.

The Chair questioned the details of the challenges faced by the children. The Headteacher cited the example of there being 16% of the children in school with SEND. The Chair asked the Headteacher to include more information on the children's challenges in the report. Governors noted the report. There were no further comments or questions.

Gov 17 NYCC Governance Service Level Agreement (SLA): decision

The Chair had circulated information on the support and training package offered by the National Governance Association (NGA), with membership fees (£132 pa in addition to the annual membership which had already been paid), and the NYCC Governance SLA (£680 pa). The Chair commented that the only NYCC courses attended recently had been the Introduction to Governance for newly appointed Governors. Governors agreed to take

forward the support and training package offered by the NGA, noting that it would offer good value and meet their needs.

Gov 18 Premises update

The Headteacher updated Governors on recent and planned maintenance.

- a) A local and trusted contractor had fitted the insulation in the Year 3 /4 classroom. The Headteacher had decided not to take this out for quotes from contractors who had not previously worked in the school. She had confidence that the person chosen would provide good quality work at a reasonable price, as he regularly worked on school maintenance.
- b) The problem with the timers on storage heaters in Year 3/ 4 had been resolved and the heaters now worked well enough. The Headteacher had explored the costs of replacement heaters but they were extremely expensive.
- c) In the Christmas holidays the rear windows in the Year3 /4 classroom will be covered to make much needed extra display space. This will not have an impact on the light in the room.
- d) All entrances were now only accessible by fobs and exit was only possible via a button positioned above a height children could reach.
A Governor questioned how children would leave in an emergency such as a fire. The Headteacher explained that there is an emergency button reachable for children but that all children know that this must not be used except in an emergency.

Gov 19 Health and Safety update

The Headteacher had nothing to report.

See agenda item Gov 22 for Health and Safety Policy.

Gov 20 Safeguarding update

The Headteacher reported that Mrs Fineran had attended very useful Safeguarding training. The Headteacher invited Ms Porter to check the Single Central Record in February 2023 (this had been checked by Mrs Craig before she left). It was agreed that Ms Porter would have a meeting with the Headteacher and Mrs Fineran to discuss the role of Safeguarding Governor. Ms Porter would talk to the NYCC advisor during the Safeguarding visit.

Gov 21 Supporting mental health and wellbeing

The Headteacher reported that the children were doing well.

The Chair questioned whether there was anything the Governors could do to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff. The Headteacher noted a survey question could be added in the staff survey. Ms Porter highlighted the importance of identifying a way to make changes.

Gov 22 Policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy – approved pending update of Safeguarding Governor to include Ms Porter.

Health and Safety Policy – approved pending removal of Mr Redfern now that he is no longer a Governor. The Chair noted that in the school policy schedule the H&S policy was listed as due in January 2024.

Relationship and Sex Education – approved.

Behaviour policy – approved. The Headteacher noted however that this policy needed to be amended and would come back to the Governing Body as soon as the amendments are finalised.

The Chair asked the Headteacher to organise a tidy up of the Google Drive to make sure all the latest versions of documents are available and out-of-date documents deleted.

Gov 23 Annual Governance Statement 2021-22

Nothing to report on this. Pending.

Gov 24 Governor vacancies

See agenda item Gov 4 for update on recruitment.

Gov 25 Governor committees and links 22-23 approval

The document needed to be revised to reflect that Mr Redfern's term of office had ended. The Chair stated that committees could be formed on an ad hoc basis if required.

Gov 26 Governor monitoring

See agenda item Gov 4

Gov 27 Governor training

Nothing to report.

Gov 28 Correspondence

None

Gov 29 AOB: Parking

The Headteacher and Chair reported ongoing problems with parents parking across the end of the school drive at drop-off/pick-up times, and complaints were being made by a neighbour. The Headteacher had included a reminder about parking safely and not blocking drives in emails to all parents and in the school newsletter, however this problem was continuing. The Chair committed to contact the newly elected representative on the unitary authority to request

yellow lines (he had previously been shown understanding of the need for this). The Headteacher would again remind parents about this.

Gov 30 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 18th January 6pm

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and for their patience in working through the issues on this long agenda.

The meeting closed at 8:35 pm.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Date: