

COTHAM SCHOOL

Meeting of the Academy Governing Body

Thursday 21 March 2024, 5.00pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Governors Present:		
Sandra Fryer, CG	Jenny Campion-Smith, PG	Ruth Thomas, PG
Gary Rufus, Staff Governor		Jack Barber, Staff Governor
Peter Huckle, Chair of L&WB Committee		Graham Nutbrown, CG
Dora Alderson, Community Governor		Isabel Tobias, MG
Rebecca Reid, PG		Sophie Hamilton, PG - later 6.00 p.m.
Jo Butler, Headteacher/Accounting Officer		
In Attendance (non-voting) Allison Crossland, Director of Finance and Resources Chris Reed, Deputy Headteacher	Apologies Emma Smith, PG Lucy Hunt, MG Richard Puttick, PG Ian Spence, CG Aimi Potter - Post-16 Owen Morgan, Assistant Headteacher Domini Leong, Deputy Headteacher Absent:	Governors in Post: 14/20 Quorum = 5 (1/3 rounded up) MG = Member Appointed Governor CG = Co-opted Governor PG = Parent Governor

Item	Minutes of Meeting
1	Welcome, Apologies for Absence, declarations of interest and notification of AOB SF Welcomed everyone. Apologies received. No declarations of interest or any AOB
2	Minutes of Last Meeting - 7 December 2023 Minutes of last meeting accepted as a true record
3	Matters Arising and Actions No table of actions provided but nothing spotted that is an obvious matter arising
4	Headteacher's Report HT's report circulated and taken as read Q - Are you planning on revisiting some of the KPIS, for example on zero permanent exclusions. That one is aspirational. We have revisited some of the KPI's because we realised they weren't smart. None of them have been abandoned but they could have been tweaked in this report. Q - It can be weary for staff when they are having to continually deal with challenging young people. What do the staff feel? Do they understand the fact that a permanent exclusion has to be absolutely the last resort or do they feel the school should just move these children on?

HT feels that staff at Cotham understand that there is a process we have to work through in particular when a child has special education needs and where that child has an EHCP but also as a result of contextual safeguarding concerns where the school is often under pressure to keep children in school from external agencies.

HT advised that alternative provision in Bristol is full up so schools are being forced to take in students who have been permanently excluded from other schools not knowing the reason until they start why they have been permanently excluded.

SF advised that this is a small number of students having quite an impact everywhere and on everyone.

HT talked about the Accelerate Centre as a suite of support for students, created from a redesign of the Library space. This is our on site alternative provision which started up this week. This is to support children who are potentially at risk of permanent exclusion. This is to get students to a point where they can be reintegrated back into lessons. A revolving door provision. Students are put into provision for a couple of weeks where they receive teaching and specialist input from staff to support them with managing their emotions, social skills, resilience, etc. Very small group teaching. This will support avoiding exclusions and permanent exclusions in the future.

Q - How many students can the provision take?

We have started with 4 but can build up and there will never be more than 12 to 16.

Q - This provision is for KS3 only?

Yes, as we want to catch them early and try to turn students around. Reintroduce after about 6 to 8 weeks. The space will also be used as a nurture space for students in the new year 7 in september 2024 who are not ready for secondary school so they have a gradual integration into a large mainstream school.

Q - Would there be any point in separating out the data for SEND students from SEND students who are also disadvantaged students/PP? Behaviour and Progress data

We don't separate that data but we have a sense of that Venn diagram and what those numbers are of students with SEND and the number of SEND and PP together and understanding their particular barriers but we don't separate out in the sense of looking at their performance data.

Q - Wouldn't you want to know which factor is the most dominant in students not making progress?

CR confirmed it is SEND because that gap is much bigger.

Q - Are you thinking about any mechanisms for recording restorative conversations? How do staff feel about these conversations and whether there's any sharing when it goes really well?

There is no recording mechanism but we try to encourage staff to have those conversations and most staff do. A few years ago everybody had training around how to have the conversation. Alerts go to the teacher to remind them to have the conversation through sims.

Q - There are many positives that the school is involved in. Is there any way of getting those good news stories out into the public and shared more widely than the school weekly mailing

We are trying and we send good news stories out to the press. The digital lead in school is revamping our social media. We now have a TikTok account. We try to get something out 3 times a week. We were disappointed that Bristol press didn't pick up on the good news about our Ofsted inspection.

HT asked Governors if they had any ideas on how we can get positive messages out. Parents advised Social Media including Facebook but also actually visiting the schools in person. Students talking to siblings positively about the school and that positive message being shared

Q - Lots of information on Trips and Events and who is engaging in them but little about who is accessing other diverse activities such as Music. We have no idea who is engaging?

	There currently isn't a mechanism to capture those involved in extracurricular activities but this week a method to do so was launched with middle leadership and so this information will be captured going forward.
5	Management Accounts January 2024 accounts approved by Governors.
6	Strategy update and planning for Annual Governor Conference Proposed date for the Conference is Thursday 20 June, this will take place in the evening. Discussion on what Governors want out of the session:- Reflection on first principles and refresh the school's strategy. Governors to feedback any thoughts and ideas to Chairs to be discussed at the next Chairs meeting. Possibly a contribution from an external person was suggested.
7	Governor Vacancies, Recruitment and Succession Planning Updated table of terms, roles and responsibilities was shared on Governorhub Updated to have 2 x Co-Opted staff (1 x teaching staff, 1 x associate staff) and the third being the Headteacher. Government rationale is that there shouldn't be staff governors SF has received two applications for the co-opted governors. Chairs recommended they could be appointed subject to meeting with them. A third person has approached the school but no CV or application received from them yet but we have enough vacancies that subject to them meeting the requirements they could be appointed. Q - would they offer a variety of diversity in terms of diversifying the board? All 3 applicants are from diverse backgrounds; Polish and Indian. Governors approved recruiting the 3 x co-opted Governors subject to satisfactory meetings. SF announced that if Governors are happy she will not now be resigning and would like to stay on longer as Chair of Governors.
	Break
10.	Cotham Playing Fields Stoke Lodge update Governors note that the litigation process is ongoing. The next step is likely to be meeting with the Judge for the court cost management conference to agree the costs for all parties. The school has taken a licence to use alternative provision at Golden Hill. The school playing field at Stoke Lodge is wide open as the gates were open ensuring accessibility 24/7, which is the requirements of a TVG. However accessibility is now wider than that as the fence has been severely unnecessarily criminally damaged, the police are aware. There will be a further update at the next FGB on this matter.
11	Governance and Compliance Covered in Governor vacancies Discussion on the new Governance role being advertised and whether Governors know of anyone who would be interested in the role. The cut off date for applications has been extended. New role will manage complaints and exclusions so that there can be an annual report of complaints.
12	Committee Chairs Updates and Minutes Learning & Wellbeing - Two meetings since Govs. last met 16 January and 12 March. Chair went through brief highlights of Minutes already presented to Governors. Presentation by Emily Science Faculty Lead was excellent and science appears to be in a very good place in the school. Science

outperforming English and Maths at KS3. Numbers of students taking single science at Post-16 are increasing. Challenge is recruiting staff and Physics in particular.

- Second meeting looked at SEND and possible alternatives for SEND students. Considered why the attainment gap for SEND students has widened since 2016-2017. It was welcomed that the SEND report acknowledged that SEND is everybody's responsibility like Safeguarding. Pupil Premium Impact Report has a similar picture where the attainment gap for PP students has widened. Following a discussion Govs. came to the view that this is more to do with the barriers to attainment for those young people becoming increasingly significant rather than the strategies which have been employed. Strategies for mental health have been very effective.
- At the next meeting on 30 April Govs. will look at progress throughout the whole school. School is working towards becoming a School of Sanctuary which recognises good practice in caring for asylum seekers. Five years ago the school had 4 asylum seekers and now has 45. This good work will benefit many young people at Cotham and not just those asylum seekers and refugees.
- Very successful student leadership initiative providing leadership opportunities for young people, enrichment opportunities and student voice but most importantly provides very positive role models which has had a significant effect on behaviour.
- Safeguarding update was extremely comprehensive. Pleased to know that there is a decrease in the instances of mental health and anxiety but concerned about homophobia and child criminal exploitation including the use of weapons (this is not a reference to weapons in school but outside of school). Students have said they feel safer when they are in school. There is no issue with students carrying weapons in school.
- Equality and Diversity Policy was updated.
- Behaviour summary was shared; progress with Yr. 10 some concerns about Yr. 7. Significant progress has been made addressing attendance, now focusing on late arrivals

Finance, Premises & General Purposes Management Accounts Approval

- Two meetings since Govs. last met. One on 29 January (Minutes in folder) and one on 18 March. Accounts for November and December: no issues raised and approved by the Chair and Sandra.
- Ian Spencer elected as Vice Chair.
- Looked at budget reforecast, surplus predicted now to just over 105,000, conversations around reserves spending, predictions and commitments. Reserves moved from £2.2m to £1.4m. Contingency planning discussed.
- Meeting on Monday 18 March. Looked at draft of three year budget, will review in May then presented to FGB in July for formal approval and submissions. Draft budget is based on best knowledge and assumptions. We are currently using a spending review the government did quite a few years ago which makes it tricky when the Government won't confirm funding. So third year usually looks quite difficult but from September 25, we should be receiving funding under that new spending review. Contingency plans have been put in place where we have a Plan B around increasing class sizes and reducing the number of classes at KS3. Plan C is to do both KS3 and KS4. Went through agreed assumptions on budget forecasting. In 23/24 we will still have a surplus of about £120,000 then from 2024 onwards we are moving into a deficit. 24/25 based on all assumptions and knowledge will be a £120,000 deficit then from 25/26 half a million deficit then from 26/27 almost hitting a million deficit. Running alongside this there has been some mitigation activity. Currently there is a contingency built into the budget around payroll and facilities so we can use that without using the reserves. Alongside that there is a 5 year ICT replenishment plan and comprehensive facilities plan. Even with this it would still leave us in a deficit position so we're looking at Plan B and Plan C as we don't want to risk us not being a going concern with risk which initiates a whole host of activity. Govs. approved this option and were happy with the budget modelling assumptions tabled. Options were to carry on to draft 2 without any additional contingencies or move to a draft with Contingency B which was for increased class sizes for KS3 or going to C which is

	<p>class size increase for KS3 and KS4. Governors asked AC to remodel the budget with Contingency B and C. That will come back to to FP&GP in May. AC advised that this is now become an annual trend needing to look at the 3 year position and having those contingencies and modelling in place especially projecting through to year 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q - Increasing class sizes raises a concern both for the children but also the impact on staff and if the projections of deficit going forward are likely to be realised then the need to reduce staffing is a big concern and could be a cost to the school if there were redundancies. - RR advised that there has been a comprehensive review in the way the school manages vacancies and using individual roles for best value for money. The focus is to reduce the salary bill and that's to reduce the number of staff so class sizes have to increase. There is also some natural wastage. Also as vacancies arise they will be fixed term contracts. Looking at 8 form entry. Would be introduced into Yr. 7 and move through th school. We need to have a balanced budget but there may well be more money for schools in the future. The school has a new agreement with the city council to take an extra 18 students in Yr. 7 in September so the school will get the top level of per capita income. - Q - If we are not advertising permanent contracts is there not an argument that these vacancies will be less attractive to teachers and there will be a higher turnover of staff with additional costs associated with advertising? - The school doesn't have resources or funds to do a restructure. We are only talking about 4 part-time fixed term contracts. Not having a permanent member of staff allows the curriculum to balance for a year so the school can work out resources required going forward. Personnel and Training have previously discussed this and Governors were satisfied there was a good balance of staff. The scale of it is not as first sounded - There was a discussion about benefits for temporary members of staff. - Reviewed the Audit Plan activity - no change on that - Approved the appointment of Bishop Fleming for 3 years as Auditor - Action to review the Governance Review Progress and Risk Register - Personnel & Training - Minutes approved of last meeting 27 January - Report on Staff Recruitment received. Appointments for Maths and Physics continue to be a challenge but it is the same in every school - Appointment of Somali Families Support Worker is really innovative and very valuable in the school - Staff Absence looked at and the impact of that and ways to minimise impact on students - Report in Single Central Register received - Heard about progress of Early Career Teachers and the Initial Teacher training and how much the school values both groups of staff - Report received on CPD plan. Priority of that to increase the consistency of teaching right across the school and strategies used such as the focus on reading and oracy - Conversation about Governor recruitment. Governors feel strongly that we should be continuing the effort to make sure that the governing body better reflects the population of the school - Q - Has there been a trend of higher instances of Staff absence since Covid? - On the day and short term absence is definitely less than it has been last year and the year before. Long-term absence would have to be looked into to be able to answer that question. Governors impression is that absence is well managed with school protocols.
13	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>JB talked about the new Staff Shout Out. Staff can fill in a form via a dashboard saying they have done an amazing job. Their name goes on a list to SLT. At the end of each term there is a raffle. Staff can book in for a day off or have £150 in your paycheck</p>
	<p>Dates of next Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AGM - 25 March

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learning & Wellbeing - Tuesday 30 April● Finance, Property & General Purposes - Monday 13 May● Personnel & Training - Monday 29 April● Chairs - Monday 22 April● Governors Annual Strategy Workshop - Thursday 20 June● Full Governing Body - Thursday 4 July |
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Meeting closed at 19:52