



## Thorner's CE VA Primary School

Minutes of the Full Governing Body online meeting on **29 November 2021** at **5.30 pm**.

**Present:** *Foundation Governors:* John Vercoe JV (Chair); Helen Jones HJ; Anna Morley AM; Caroline Morrish Banham CMB; Heather Goffee HG; Rev. Jane Williams JW.

*Headteacher:* Mike Sitch MS.

*Staff Governor:* Felicity Smith FS.

*Parent Governor:* Lisa Metcalf LM.

*Local Authority Governor:* Peter Strange PS.

**In attendance:** John Alexander JA (Clerk).

### 1. **Welcome and Prayer**

JV welcomed all present. JW said the opening prayer.

### 2. **Apologies**

*Authority Governor:* Nicole Forbes Marshall NFM; *Parent Governor:* Amy Toms AT.

### 3. **Minutes of Meeting on 21 September 2020**

These were agreed as a true record.

### 4. **Matters Arising**

- i) *Governors to email office to indicate they had read KCSiE and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy:* HJ reported that there was one remaining Governor to confirm this, with whom she would liaise outside the meeting. **ACTION: HJ**
- ii) *Governors to send revisions to DBI to JA, or confirmation by email that no revisions are required:* JA reported that several were still outstanding, perhaps because Governors who had no amendments to make had not confirmed this by email. Governors were asked to do so, and JA would contact them before the next FGB to encourage this. **ACTION: All Governors/ JA**
- iii) *MS to make correction to Behaviour Policy:* **COMPLETED**
- iv) *Governors to sign Code of Conduct and return it to school office:* **COMPLETED**
- v) *JV/ JA to summarise/ circulate Governor monitoring arrangements and link roles:* **COMPLETED**
- vi) *JA to research/ report on benefits of NGA Skills Audit:* JA had discussed this at the Dorset Council Clerk's Briefing on 10-11-21. He reported that the chief benefit of Governors completing the NGA Skills Audit was to identify and document the spread of strengths and weaknesses across the Board, which in turn would help identify training gaps and aid succession planning and more targeted recruitment. He also noted that Skills Audits were expected by both Ofsted and External Auditors. JA would prepare the materials and contact Governors with a view to presenting a summary FGB Skills Audit to the February FGB. **ACTION: JA**
- vii) *JW to contact Diocese re. CMB's appointment:* This had been done, and during the meeting JV received an email from the Secretary of the St Mary's Church PCC, asking for PCC approval of the appointment. The process was therefore nearing completion and it was

anticipated that -CMB would soon be approved and duly re-appointed as a Foundation Governor.

5. **Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business**

There were two items: Vision and Ethos; and the school lead on Mental Health. These would be discussed at Item 13.0

6. **Declaration of Interests and Annual Review**

There were no interests declared in respect of the Agenda.

7. **Correspondence**

MS informed Governors of a letter reporting that a former Year 6 pupil who had transitioned to the Studio School at Kingston Maurward College had won an award for effort and work ethic, which Governors agreed was very pleasing feedback.

8. **Headteacher's Written Report**

MS referred to his written report, which had been included in the meeting pack, and highlighted the following:

- *Admissions:* One new family was joining the school with a child in Year 3 and another joining Chesil in September. A younger sibling would soon attend the pre-school. The September 2022 intake was forecast to be at or above the PAN, with 15 or 16 children joining, so the PAN may need to be adjusted and Dorset Council notified once all applications had been submitted. The school was shortly required to consult on its Admissions Policy for 2023-24 as this had to be done every seven years. MS proposed that the PAN be reduced to 12 from the current 15, noting that this did not prevent the school from accepting additional children as they would simply have to inform the Council if this was the intention.

**Q/C:** Governors asked for the rationale in reducing the PAN. MS replied that it had traditionally been 12, but had been increased when the school needed to accommodate multiple members of the same families at the same time. Reverting to 12 meant the school would maintain more control over admission numbers in future.

- *Attendance and Absence:* This was presently 92.9% from the start of the 2021-22 academic year in September. The National Primary School average for same period was 90.6%. There had been several cases of Covid in the school but no further action was required because there had not been five linked cases. MS thanked parents for their patience and thoughtfulness by having siblings tested as well. Three members of staff were also absent with Covid. They had had good supply teachers as well as help from a former teacher at the school. Nevertheless, the school's staff were very stretched, and they were concentrating on essential activities. The Christmas play would however still go ahead unless the situation deteriorated.

9. **Safeguarding and Attendance Reports (HJ)**

*Safeguarding:* HJ reported that she had checked the single central Safeguarding record with the school office. It was fully up-to-date and complete, with all checks recorded. She noted that a number of Governors were likely to need to refresh their Safeguarding training, but that Governors' training records on Sharepoint needed updating and clarifying. JA said he would ensure this was attended to before the next FGB, as he would be reviewing and rationalising the whole Sharepoint site over Christmas. **ACTION: JA**

*Attendance:* HJ reiterated that current attendance was 92.9%, which would be low for a normal year, but better than the equivalent national figure in this Covid year. There was no persistent absence, and all children in receipt of Pupil Premium were attending. One child was taking an unauthorised two-week holiday with family and the parents would therefore be fined, and this was unfortunate. MS acknowledged this.

## 10. Chair's report

*Covid:* JV noted that Covid continued to impact many areas of daily life, and although the school's case numbers had been relatively small, they had had a disruptive effect on activities within the school, increasing the workload of staff and leading to new pressures and challenges for everyone. The school leadership had had to deal with the logistics of Covid testing and reporting, and with providing cover for short-notice staff absence due to the need to isolate. The whole school community had continued to pull together as a team to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and Governors should be proud of them all and thank them again for all that they had been doing.

*Chair's Briefing:* JV reported that he had attended a Virtual Chairs Briefing on 9-11-21. There had been an update on Covid and suggested mitigation measures for schools. The school already had these in place. There had been an update on Dorset Schools Data focusing on attendance, attainment, and OFSTED inspections (75% of Dorset Schools were rated as good or outstanding). However, there was a concern about the high and increasing level of exclusions from Dorset Schools. The rate for 2020-21 had been 2.3% of the cohort compared to 1.5% in 2014-15. This represented 2313 exclusions affecting 1135 children. This concern had been reflected in a session entitled *Strengthening Inclusion in Education Settings* in partnership with the Teaching Alliance of Dorset Special Schools (TADSS). The general principles were that early identification and intervention would improve outcomes for children and young people and reduce the likelihood that a child or young person would go on to require a specialist placement. Chairs were also informed that Ofsted inspections had now started, and they would include looking at how well Governors understood and carried out their roles, particularly in respect of: ensuring the school had a clear vision, ethos, and strategic direction; ensuring resources were well managed; holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and the performance management of staff; overseeing the financial performance of the school and ensuring money was well spent (including the Pupil Premium). Finally, there had been a session about the requirement for schools to have a Designated Mental Health lead. The Department for Education (DfE) was offering a grant for training to develop the knowledge and skills to implement an effective whole school or college approach to mental health and, but this offer was time limited.

*Budget Codes:* JV informed Governors that he had been notified by Dorset Council that certain codes were no longer in use for budget purposes. As the school had put a budget under one of the codes that no longer exists, a Virement was required which needed FGB approval: to reduce Cost Centre 120 (Educational Support Staff Overtime) Code 110521, which no longer existed, by £5,706 and increase Cost Centre 120 (Educational Support Staff Pay, Code 110121) by the same amount. This was agreed. **ACTION: JV**

*Health and Safety:* JV and AM had carried out a Health and Safety Inspection on 4-11-21 and the report was in the meeting pack. there had been no causes for concern.

## 11. Governance Issues

*Governor Monitoring Reports:* Governors noted the reports on Literacy and on Eggardon, which were in the meeting pack. HG's report on Chesil would be done soon, with FS. MS reminded Governors to use the new template for their monitoring reports, which he would recirculate.

**ACTION: MS**

*Committees:* Governors noted the minutes of Finance and Premises Committee (FPC) on 16-11-21, and Staffing, Curriculum, Pay and Attendance Committee (SCPAC) on 22-11-21, both of which were in the meeting pack. The pack also included the November Outturn, discussed at FPC and recommended by them to FGB. This showed an in-year surplus of £48,754 for 2021-22. The school had brought forward a deficit of -£12,903, resulting in a projected an in-year surplus of £35,851 to take forward into 2022-23. For 2022-23 an in-year surplus of just over £10,000

was forecast, which when added to the £35,851 carry-forward gave a projected in-year surplus of nearly £46,000. The Forecast Outturn and the School Outturn Forecast Declaration had to be submitted to the Local Authority by 30th November and JV asked for FGB's approval for this. The Forecast Outturn and the School Outturn Forecast Declaration were approved and would be duly submitted to Dorset Council.

*Instrument of Government:* This was in the pack and was noted. JV commented that since the Instrument of Government was effectively the Constitution for the Governing Body, Governors should refamiliarize themselves with it.

## 12. Policy Review

The following Policies had been discussed and recommended by FPC and SCPAC, and were noted and duly approved by FGB:

- Anti-Bullying Policy November 2021
- Attendance Policy November 2021
- Pay Policy (Teaching Staff) 2021-22
- Financial Procedures Policy June 2021
- Home School Agreement Policy November 2021
- NQT Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Social Networking Policy November 2021
- Admissions Policies 2022-23 and 2023-24
- Whistleblowing Policy November 2021

**Q/C:** Governors questioned why no policies were the responsibility of the Communications and Ethics Committee, as had been the case in the past. JA said he would look into this as part of reviewing and scheduling Policies over Christmas. **ACTION: JA**

## 13. Any Other Business

*Vision and Ethos:* HG highlighted *The Big Q*, a new development during the Autumn Term, also known as the *Messy Church* session, which had been held on Monday afternoons after school. The sessions had been well attended, with 19 children on the register and a regular attendance of at least 15. The children were read a story from the Bible, beginning with the Creation and continuing through the Old Testament. The most recent sessions had been about Moses, the escape from Egypt and the Ten Commandments. After each story there was a discussion about what they had learnt and what they had found interesting and/or surprising. There was then time for them to express some aspect of what they had learnt in a creative way, through drawing or crafts. The session ended with a prayer. JW commented that the sessions were very enjoyable, and in the discussions, the children were becoming increasingly confident and challenging and asking deeper and more profound questions.

HG said that she had received a phone call from James Webster (a member of the Ministry Team) asking if it was still intended to hold an "Open the Book Session" on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December as planned. HG had felt that in view of the constraints imposed by Covid it would be better to postpone but had said she would consult with Governors first. Governors agreed that "Open the Book" sessions should be put on hold for the time being.

HJ reminded Governors that the Communications and Ethos Committee's Terms of Reference stated that the Committee should meet every term. There had been no meeting this term due to Covid but HG said that she would call a meeting early in the New Year. **ACTION: HG**

Governors asked JA to include *Ethos* as a standing Agenda item at future FGB meetings. **ACTION: JA**

**Q/C:** Governors asked MS if the Vision was becoming embedded at the school. MS confirmed that it was. The Vision was repeated during assemblies. This compensated for the fact that Open the Book assemblies, and singing, were currently not taking place due to Covid restrictions.

*School Lead on Mental Health:* MS reported that Minty Biggins had agreed to take on this role and would undertake the DfE training mentioned in Item 10: Chair's Report.

**14. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

14 February 2022, 5:30pm

The meeting closed at 6:45pm.

Item no.	Action	Owner	By when
4	Liaise with remaining Governor to ensure she/he had read KCSiE and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.	HJ	Christmas
4	Send revisions to DBI to JA, or confirmation by email that no revisions are required	All outstanding Governors	Next FGB
4	Coordinate and summarise NGA Skills Audit for all Governors	JA	Next FGB
9, 12	Overhaul Sharepoint site, to include Governor training records and Policy lists, schedules and lead committees	JA	Next FGB
10	Arrange Virement	JV	30 November
12	Circulate Governor Monitoring Visits template	MS	Christmas
13	Include <i>Ethos</i> as a standing item on future FGB agendas	JA	Next FGB