



Thorner's CE VA Primary School

Minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting in school on **14 February 2022** at **5.30pm**.

Z = via Zoom

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

Headteacher: Mike Sitch MS.

Staff Governor: Felicity Smith FS (Z)

Parent Governors: Lisa Metcalf LM (Z) Amy Toms AT (Z)

Local Authority Governor: Peter Strange PS.

In attendance: John Alexander JA (Clerk).

Q/C = Question/ Challenge

1. **Welcome and Prayer**

JV welcomed all present. JW said the opening prayer.

2. **Apologies**

None.

3. **Minutes of Meeting on 29 November 2021**

These were agreed as a true record.

4. **Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

- i) HJ to liaise with remaining Governor to ensure she/he had read KCSiE and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy: COMPLETED
- ii) All Governors to send revisions to DBI to JA, or confirmation by email that no revisions are required: COMPLETED
- iii) JA to overhaul *Sharepoint* site, to include Governor training records and Policy lists, schedules and lead committees ONGOING
- iv) JV to arrange Virement COMPLETED
- v) MS to circulate Governor Monitoring Visits template COMPLETED
- vi) JA to include Ethos as a standing item on future FGB agendas COMPLETED

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

None

6. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared in respect of the Agenda.

7. **Correspondence**

MS informed Governors of a letter from a parent praising the performance of one of the teachers.

8. **Headteacher's Written Report**

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

Attendance: Pupil attendance was currently 93.5%, compared to the national average 91.9%. Older children were more prone to absence at the moment, mainly due to having older siblings in secondary school who were more exposed to Covid and other viruses. There were no cases of persistent absence. Governors congratulated the school on maintaining such a healthy attendance record through such a difficult period.

Salix Decarbonisation: The school's bid for an air source heat pump had been rejected because the buildings were unsuitable, and the existing oil boiler system would be maintained. However, a bid for an extensive solar panel system covering all suitable roof space had been approved, sufficient for 35,000 KWh and with the option to sell unused energy back to the National Grid, which was particularly beneficial given that the school used little energy after 3:30 just as domestic energy requirements rose. The bid was worth £160k, and the work would be completed in eight weeks, providing ample green energy and also inspiration for school project work. Annual energy costs – currently *circa* £5k per annum – would markedly reduce just as nationally energy costs were set to spiral. There would also be investment in more modern, energy efficient classroom lighting. Governors welcomed this excellent news and congratulated MS for pursuing the Salix initiative.

Teaching and Learning: All teachers had now completed their NTP tutoring training for the Breakfast time Covid Catch Up tutoring sessions now in place for Years 1 – 6. The hours of a part time TA in Bredy had been increased to full time to better support Key Stage 2 readers.

Enrichment Activities: MS drew Governors' attention to the range of activities now taking place, which included lunch time and after school clubs, music and sport. He reported that the school felt very busy with so much going on, and the activities gave the school a 'nice feel'. There was also a series of village walks being led by pre-school manager Julie Keefe, alongside parents and babies.

Q/C: Governors drew attention to the previous challenge from Ofsted about what the school could do to better integrate with the community, and said the walks provided an excellent answer to this. One Governor spoke of how lovely it was to see the children out and about in the village.

Health and Safety: The suggestions made by Dorset Council had now been implemented in full and there had also been a Fire Audit. These included: improved record keeping; underpinning to the cabin; resurfacing the path from the carpark to the rear of the school. There remained a concern that the smoke alarms and burglar alarms might be on the same system. MS was checking on this with the supplier, as remedial work would be costly.

Q/C: Governors asked if any remedial work was required following the Fire Audit. MS said that improvements would be made to fire doors, and better lighting provided for the corridor designated as a fire escape.

Curriculum Update: MS gave a PowerPoint presentation detailing the significant advances in curriculum planning that the school had made, details of which were publicly available on the school website. The presentation focused on the new curriculum for the ten Foundation subjects. Each of these subjects was taught as a separate lesson, to ensure equal weight was given to each subject and to enable teachers to focus on the development of subject-specific learning skills.

The new Foundation Action Plans were based on 60 'Big questions' – six for each subject – which were colour-coded so that they represented six learning 'pathways' for each subject, guiding pupils and teachers right through both Key Stages, each supported by high quality pre-prepared resources. This approach enabled children to revisit and expand their skills and knowledge as well as reflect on where they had last encountered related subject matter. They also helped teachers avoid over-generalised assessments but instead to look at strengths and weaknesses in

each individual pathway. Catch-up sessions, pre-teaching and other tailored support could then be offered as appropriate. Governors were very impressed with what they had seen and unanimously voiced their appreciation of the work that had gone into it.

Q/C: Governors asked what form of assessment was linked to the new approach. MS replied that children were tested twice per year based on the 60 questions, and rated as being *at*, *above* or *below* expected levels in each subject. The more granular approach provided by the pathways enabled teachers to look back more specifically at children in all the Foundation subjects, and with more precision.

Q/C: Governors asked how teaching staff viewed the changes. FS replied that the approach was easier higher up the school, as EYFS was topic based so the transition to subject based learning could be challenging. However, teachers appreciated that this transition had huge benefits to children as they approached secondary school, and as the emphasis shifted from development to learning.

Q/C: Governors asked how the approach related to SATs. MS acknowledged that the SATs approach lagged behind the developments that had been made – for example, the concept of ‘Mastery’ in Maths was still not reflected in SATs, which continued to be largely about arithmetic. However, he fully recognised that SATs remained the main criteria upon which the school would be judged, even more so in the aftermath of Covid. The approach to teaching and preparation for SATs had therefore not changed.

9. Chair’s report

JV would be attending the Dorset Council Chair’s Briefing on 14-03-22. All other items were covered by the HT report and elsewhere on the agenda.

10. Safeguarding and Attendance Reports (HJ)

Attendance had already been covered by MS in the Headteacher’s Report, although HJ reiterated that to have no persistent absence was excellent news. HJ had attended the Dorset Council Safeguarding Audit Feedback session via Zoom on 26-01-22 on behalf of MS, which was led by Ann Shaw, the Council’s Education Safeguarding and Standards Advisor. Ms. Shaw had been impressed by the number and quality of the responses to the Audit and said that it was likely the questionnaire would be shorter in 2023. The Council now pursued non-compliant schools individually as this was more effective. She had emphasised the following requirements: to record any staff and governor attendance at mandatory training courses; to confirm that both staff and Governors had read KCSiE Part 1 plus the Annexe; to carry out enhanced DBS checks on anyone who worked with children (not transferrable between schools); and for the Safeguarding Governor to check the SCR termly. Records of all of these points were essential and would be checked by Ofsted. In addition, a new permanent LADO, Martha Sharpe, was confirmed as starting at the end of February 2022. Notes were taken by the course organiser and sent to Headteachers, complete with useful references and contact details. MS confirmed he had received them.

Q/C: Governors asked if any Thorner’s children were now being home educated, in line with the national increase in this. MS said that, aside from one child who was being educated by parents during a year of international travel, none were home educated.

11. Ethos

Chair of Communications and Ethos Committee HG said that as that Committee would be meeting on 21 March she would feed back more fully at the following FGB. In general, the school had been engaged in much activity that contributed to SIAMS, including Messy Church, Open Book Assemblies and Spirituality Club. Governors considered the CEC Terms of Reference and recommended them to the Committee. It was proposed that the ToR specified the

Collective Worship Policy and the Complaints Policy as being reviewed by the Committee. This was approved, and JA would add this to the ToR. **ACTION: JA**

12. Governance Issues

Succession planning: JV reported that he would be stepping down as Governor after 2021-22. HJ would be stepping down on 25-04-22, meaning that she would still contribute to the quorum for the next two Finance Committee meetings. CMB was also leaving at the end of the academic year. There were therefore three approaching Foundation Governor vacancies, and this needed addressing as a matter of urgency. Governors discussed various options, including a possible recruitment event in the summer. They agreed that everyone needed to be proactive in seeking nominees. **ACTION: ALL**

Q/C: Governors asked if departing Parent Governors could be kept on as Foundation Governors, with the agreement of the Diocese. This was confirmed.

Governor Monitoring Reports: Governors noted the monitoring reports for Literacy, ICT, History and Geography. AT would prepare a similar report for Music soon. **ACTION: AT**

Q/C: Governors noted with regret the lack of parental engagement with Catch-Up support and breakfast club sessions. MS acknowledged this, and said they continued to try to find ways to boost attendance.

Governor Training Feedback and Record: Governors noted the updated training record. JV reiterated the importance of Governors engaging in regular training, and of ensuring the written record was up-to-date by notifying the Clerk. **ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS**

NGA Skills Audit: JA reported that most had now been submitted, and the remaining ones were needed as a matter of priority. He would present an analysis report to the next FGB. **ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS/ JA**

13. Finance

JV reported that the Finance and Premises Committee had met on 8-2-22. Monthly outturn figures continued to show the school in a healthy financial position, with a forecast year-end deficit of £33k. The following Virement was recommended to FGB: submitted to county: £11,493 from the Reserve Fund into 4 CAP. FGB agreed to this. The FPC had also approved three Policies: The Charging and Remissions Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Pre School Fees Policy. The Committee had discussed an Upper Pay Scale application for one of the teachers and recommended approval of this to FGB. FGB approved it.

14. Policy Review

Governors approved the SEND Policy.

15. Out of Year Admissions Request

MS reported that it had been agreed that one spring-born child who had missed out on significant Pre-school education due to ill-health would benefit from an additional year in pre-school and would now look to join Reception in September 2023. If the child made sufficient progress the flexibility existed to move him up as appropriate.

16. FGB Forward Plan

Governors noted the new FGB Forward Plan.

17. Clerk's Notices

None.

18. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting closed at 7:30pm.

Item no.	Action	Owner	By when
11	Amend ToR for Communications and Ethos Committee	JA	End Feb
12	Proactively seek nominees for the three Foundation Governor vacancies	All	Ongoing
12	Do Monitoring Report for Music	AT	Next FGB
12	Keep training record up-to-date	All	Ongoing
12	Present analysis report on NGA Skills Audit	JA	Next FGB