

DOWNS INFANT SCHOOL
FULL GOVERNING BODY
Minutes of the conference meeting of the Tuesday July 12th2022, at 6.00pm



Attended by:

Caroline Dean
 Tony Fallowfield
 Jalia Kangave
 Gill Hammett
 Vera Jakimovska
 Hildi Mitchell

Loren Davies
 Aisha Hoten
 Sarah Digon
 Jon Hughes
 Gaynor Newnham

No.	Item
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>1. Welcome TF opened the meeting, as Acting Chair</p> <p>2. Apologies Hesione Quinn had sent apologies</p> <p>3. Review Agenda An item was added to AOB</p>
2.	<p>Register of Business Interests</p> <p>1. Interests related to the current agenda to be declared None</p>
3.	<p>Previous Meeting Minutes</p> <p>1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting May 3rd, 2022 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting</p> <p>2. Review of actions All actions were noted to be complete, or on the agenda, except:</p> <p>It had not been possible to ascertain how much persistent absence is not due to COVID, due to the change of absence coding part way through the pandemic. This was discussed, as governors felt this could be important if OFSTED wants to know more about pupil absence. It was explained, in response to questions, that there is no longer a code for COVID-absence, and it is now coded just as illness. Governors asked if any inspectors have been known to ask about COVID absence and impact on outcomes. HM will follow this up with other schools, as governors advised that there needs to be data to back any reference to COVID affecting data. HM confirmed that teacher absence seems to have had an impact on pupil outcomes, and governors stated that actions introduced to address this will need to be communicated to inspectors.</p> <p>Equality training – most have completed this, and the clerk will chase any outstanding certificates.</p> <p>A governor has contacted the Black Governors' Association but there has been no response so far – this will be followed up in Term 1.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check if any inspectors have been known to ask about COVID absence and impact on outcomes at other recent inspections. • Chase Equality training for governors • Follow up with Black Governors' Association
6.	<p>Headteacher's Report</p>

Plus:

1. HT report + demographics

The report was circulated with the agenda
Headline data was reported, as follows:

	At expected standard %	Exceeding expected %
KS1 Reading	63	21
KS1 Writing	55	1
KS1 Maths	67	7
KS1 combined	46	1
Phonics Y1	58	
Phonics Y2	86	
EYFS GLD	79	

It was reported that KS1 is in line with national and LA data. There is an impact following the pandemic and KS1 was hard hit when compared to the 2019 data. Phonics was disappointing and there is a clear action plan, including a changed timetable, additional staff training and tweaks to the administration of the tests. Phonics will be a focus for next year.

There was a follow up survey on staff and pupil wellbeing. There were mixed responses, but the governors are strong in this area and there is a wellbeing action plan, which governors agreed to be positive. There was a 20% increase in children feeling staff act on information, which was agreed to be positive.

Pupil behaviour was reported to be very good. There was a whole school assembly to remind children of the behaviour expectations and they have risen to the challenge. Behaviour is calm across the school. Assemblies are an opportunity to showcase the excellent behaviour and, though whole school assemblies are planned for Mondays next year, they would move to an inspection day so OFSTED inspectors could see how well the children behave.

Attendance was reported to be improving, though COVID, chicken pox, diarrhoea and vomiting have had an impact, as have unauthorised holidays. Penalty notices have been issued but made little difference. Overall attendance is 94.3%, with Persistent absence at 84.7%. Attendance will continue to be a focus for next year.

Staffing is in place for next year. The new staff came to the last INSET day, one has covered an absence this term, and transition has been good. Y2 face the biggest changes, as there is a new team. The most experienced HLTA will be placed in Y2.

Governors **asked** why the writing outcomes were so low, compared to reading and maths. It was explained that writing has been a challenge and is in line with national. Every teacher found remote teaching of writing difficult, as handwriting and letter form are hard to teach online. To transfer transcriptional skills into composition is a complex process for children. Parents tried to support, but it is hard. 'Talk for Writing' has been introduced. This gives a tight structure for composition and is hoped to be effective. It was explained that in reception, writing links to the physical goal.

2. School development plan (SDP)

In response to a **question**, it was confirmed that data had been considered before the plan was made, which was agreed to be positive.

The data monitoring group had reported that teachers were not clear in reporting reading. There was previously a scheme based on sight reading, and there has been a shift to phonics, where phonemes and skills are learned, and children move through the book bands. Leaders are confident that phonics training for all staff will address this. Phonics and reading will be better monitored by the phonics lead, who will have more time to do this. Moderation sessions will be re-established for reading, writing and maths.

	<p>Governors asked about changes to the maths team, and HM explained that there will be a new maths lead and an action plan has been developed. It was agreed that maths should be a standing item on the FGB agendas next year – GN to action – and governors requested a thrice yearly maths report.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths to be a standing item on FGB agendas for the next year • Maths reports to the FGB to be commissioned three times during the next year <p>Governors asked about HM's workload and wellbeing, and it was reported that a disciplinary action has been time consuming and has been passed onto JH to manage. JH confirmed that his workload is always an issue. SEND need is escalating, though there is a good team in place to provide support. Managing without KC has been challenging, and she hopes to return part time in September and fully by October half term.</p> <p>3. RE Report</p> <p>A governor asked why the curriculum focuses on Christianity and Judaism. HM explained that the school follows the locally agreed curriculum and other religions are covered in KS2, though the school tries to cover other religious festivals. Daily worship should be broadly Christian, but the local community is reflected. There is an emphasis on kindness.</p>
7.	<p>Finance and Premises</p> <p>1. Finance Committee Minutes, 16th June 2022</p> <p>LD, as Chair of the Finance Committee, reported that the April minutes had been circulated, and the budget was submitted. The June meeting discussed a small number of changes and support for HM and JH while KC is off.</p> <p>2. Finance Committee Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>LD outlined the changes to the documents:</p> <p>A line has been added to the Terms of Reference about sustainability and supporting the need to consider the LA's Net Zero agenda. There will be LA training on the Brighton and Hove climate agenda, which is incorporated under SDP area 2 re professional wellbeing, as engagement in these projects helps to manage anxiety. Scheme of Delegation was unchanged other than some controls being delegated to the SBM rather than the DHT.</p> <p>3. Health and Safety Monitoring</p> <p>Premises report (Governor Monitoring)</p> <p>SD had completed the monitoring, and reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All previous actions have been completed. • The rear wall is an ongoing issue and there is no long-term solution. This impacts on the children. • Fire trip hazard has been addressed, with cabling done, and cupboards in good order. <p>Governors asked if anything can be done to progress the work required to the rear wall. HM explained that there have been discussions with the LA and scaffolding has been erected. Temporary fencing has been discussed but would be too dangerous. Governors agreed that the council needs to address as the children are being denied the right to use the space. The school has limited outdoor space and governors need to push this harder. Budgets are tight but the LA have capital funding to support the buildings and upkeep of the schools and this should be addressed urgently. This would also come under the environmental education strategy discussed at the recent Governance Briefing.</p>

	<p>It was agreed that the Chair (either TF/HQ) will write a letter to the council and raise these issues, referring to the square meterage per pupil, as there are 355 children with a tiny outdoor space, a chunk of which cannot be used. LD will also investigate this. The LA may argue that capital is for new buildings, but they have a duty to provide suitable play and outdoor learning space.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue the repairs to the rear wall with the LA
8.	<p>PAN consultation and agreement</p> <p>HM reported that there are currently 108 admissions for September, which is 12 under PAN (120) Some children may be placed elsewhere due to their needs. This has been discussed by the finance committee. The school will be full, with a waiting list, next year. Pupil numbers appear to be continuing to drastically fall and the LA model shows that Downs will be 29 places down by 2025.</p> <p>Governors had told the schools adjudicator that all who want a place should have one, and also mentioned the importance of equality and diversity in the school community but, based on that, 90 YR places would need to be filled in 2025.</p> <p>According to current data, 77% primaries will be deficit on their 3-year budget, and only 22% of primary schools are full for September. Balfour School, which reduced by one form in the recent consultation, is the only local school to be full.</p> <p>HM suggested that the council should be asked to consult on reducing by 1 form, as a partial form is too much of a risk.</p> <p>The positives for the children at the school would be increased space for interventions, music lessons and extra-curricular clubs. It is essential to protect what we have and deliver a good standard of education at the school.</p> <p>Governors agreed that the school must remain financially sustainable. The local school population is falling due to house prices, childcare costs, and the cost of living. Funding would be removed for any classes with less than 27 pupils.</p> <p>The potential timeline was queried, and it was explained that changes requested in this autumn's consultation would take effect in 2025. If numbers are 30 too low in 2024, a cap could be requested. It was also noted that being below PAN leaves the school vulnerable to in-year-admissions, for whom the school would not receive financial support and may be moving due to troubles elsewhere.</p> <p>LD advised that an Equality Impact Assessment will be needed, to consider how the impact on the children and community could be mitigated.</p> <p>The potential impact on teaching and support staff and their wellbeing was queried. A governor asked if there are enough temporary contracts or staff likely to leave before any change, to avoid redundancies. HM reported that there are some staff on fixed term contracts who only want to stay at the school for a short time, and some staff plan to reduce hours / days. Redundancies could be avoided by retaining staff for intensive interventions, etc., and there might be tutoring funding available to mitigate the cost. A governor also pointed out that the change would affect one teacher per year, so redundancy should be avoidable. Leaders need to be able to support staff and be positive about the reasons for the change.</p> <p>The process for the consultation was clarified, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If below 90 pupils next year, a temporary variation can be requested • Formal consultation would begin on the 1st October • A committee paper would be presented to the Children and Young People's Committee in September, followed by consultation and a return to the

	<p>committee in January. There will be work on the autumn paper over the summer, so the LA would need to know by next week.</p> <p>Governors asked how parents would be notified that the school has volunteered to be included in the consultation, and it was explained that the process will begin on the 12th September, so it would be necessary for the SLT and GB to communicate at the start of the new year.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Equality Impact Assessment • Approach the LA re the consultation
<p>9.</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>1. DSL Report</p> <p>JH talked through the report, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A breakdown of need and the action plan is part of the safeguarding report • Neglect, marriage breakdowns and SEMH remain concerns • Access to mental health services is limited (CAMHS has a 2-year waiting list and there is 9 months wait for therapy) • The school is spending on therapists directly – though space for them to work is an issue. The Hive is up and running and supporting with behaviour, proactively. The library is well used, which reduces available space. • Safeguarding continues to be prominent • In-year admissions often struggled elsewhere and often present difficulties. <p>HM reported that the school is successful in keeping children safe – there are prompt referrals and support is made available – vulnerable children are given a safe space and the GB is good at holding the school to account.</p> <p>SD explained that children with speech, language and communication needs might struggle to express a safeguarding concern, meaning that adults need to be able to look for signs. SD will provide details of an initiative that might be useful.</p> <p>2. Safeguarding Monitoring Report</p> <p>VJ reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is doing a good job. • Safeguarding is strong at the school and there are good reports detailing concerns and remedial actions • The safeguarding policy is also monitored • The SCR is well managed and up to date • The level of need is increasing but resources are not, and the school is doing well under these circumstances <p>Governors recorded thanks to VJ for her contribution to governance and safeguarding while she has been a governor.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Policies and Reports</p> <p>H&S policy to be agreed</p> <p>Governors approved the standard LA model H&S policy</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Governance</p> <p>1. Staff Governor update</p> <p>AH reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupil behaviour has been superb this year. Children have calm and good attitude, which is due to the staff keeping expectations high • Transition has been successful. Y2 have visited the junior school all together, and as groups, there have been nursery visits for the new YR intake, the YR-Y1 children have been mixed into classes and there is a transition day this Friday

- Staff are excited for next year and continuing with continuous provision. A governor **asked** how the Y2 children who experienced continuous provision are expected to manage in Y3. This will be checked with the junior school next year, as the Y3 teachers are keen to maintain contact with the Y2 teachers. HM confirmed that transition will be included in the SDP both into and out of the school.

A governor **asked** if the Downs Junior school transition worked well and if it started late/ should have been longer. HM explained that beginning transition too early can make children unsettled, though will be discussed when it is reviewed. Transition cannot start until after half term due to staffing. Parent governors explained that they felt transition to the juniors was more infant friendly and there were opportunities for parents to meet teachers. Children experienced half a day in class and attended the sports day. A governor asked if the Y3 staff should have shown more interest in what the children were doing in the infant school.

2. Governor Day and monitoring reports

Governors noted the range of good reports and agreed that the day was beneficial. HM thanked governors for the reports, which show that governors are knowledgeable about what is going on in school, and challenge outcomes, behaviour, and attendance well. The GB is strong.

3. Governor Self-Evaluation

The updated RAG-rated form was circulated, and GH reported that the website looks amazing but is still not quite compliant, though the ambers are for minor details. HM explained that she has been working on it and it is very close to being complete, but the training for using it is unwieldy. There will be further work on this.

A governor commented that there is a mismatch on the website, re SLT and SMT, and are subject leaders/ co-ordinators. HM will address this.

The GB discussed whether old newsletters should be uploaded to the new website. Governors suggested adding a hyperlink to the old website, as the old newsletters would be evidence of things the school has done over the last 3 years.

Governor photographs and biographies were requested, to be added to the website.

A governor **asked** if there be a working group on the white paper and the PAN. CD confirmed that she would like to be involved in this.

Governors **discussed** whether pupil voice and school council reports should come to the FGB. AB stated that pupil voice should be more formal, as the children need to be consulted regularly, either on the evaluation days or at another time. HM will research best practice on this. It was noted that SEND pupils should be included in pupil voice.

Governors were asked to prepare a brief outline of training, meetings attended and strengths and development areas for the start of September, to be sent to the clerk.

Action:

- **Continue to work on website compliance**
- **Ensure there is continuity of terminology on the website (re. SMT/SLT, subject leaders/ co-ordinators)**
- **Add hyperlink to the old newsletters from the new website**
- **Governors to send photographs and biographies to HM, to be added to the website.**
- **Investigate the best means of receiving pupil voice**
- **Send a brief outline of training, meetings attended and strengths and development areas to the clerk, by the start of September**

4. Governor Training / Networking Feedback

The training reports had been circulated with the agenda.

	<p>TF fed back on the White and Green paper sessions and explained that the green paper is out for consultation and comments can be added to citizen space. The LA approach to the White Paper is to do nothing. HM explained that the Schools Bill does not suggest that LA's run MATs but that they broker them. Schools need to be proactive about exploring collaboration. There is a co-operative model that some schools use, but there is also no need to rush. Governors agreed that it is important to discuss and make informed decisions. Other models should be explored so governors are well informed and do the best for the school.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene working party to look at the White and Green papers <p>5. End of year tea party – Wednesday 20th July Governors were invited to attend the tea party. It was reported that two prospective parent governors have been invited. Emma Smith and Carrie Palmer-Fry are both keen to start in September and buddies have been agreed.</p> <p>6. OFSTED preparation It was agreed that governors will look at the questions from The Key in the autumn and decide if a preparation session is needed in school. CD stated that she would like a session, as she is a new governor. HM explained that she expects an inspection at the end of autumn or early in the spring.</p> <p>A governor asked if mock inspections are completed. These were discussed and agreed to be an unnecessary burden on staff. HM explained that she would like to arrange peer reviews with the PIL group, and there has been work with subject leaders on the sample questions. The staff are not scared and have evidence to back up the narrative. They are confident/passionate about their subjects.</p> <p>The governors are well prepared by governor days, meetings, and external adviser reports.</p> <p>The significance of the inspector was discussed, as an inspection could be led by someone who does not understand primary education.</p>
12.	<p>Meeting dates 2022/23 It was agreed that the clerk will draft a meeting schedule, assuming meetings will be in the morning.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft 2022/23 meeting schedule
13.	<p>Governor effectiveness Governors discussed the impact made at this meeting, which includes governor self-evaluation, the SDP for next year, transition, maths, data and links between the data and SDP, and staff wellbeing. Governors thanked TF for his support and excellent chairing this year.</p>
14.	<p>Date of next meetings: Tuesday September 13th 9-11am</p>
15.	<p>AOB Pay Agreement HM reported that, following the bin strike, the LA made an agreement to address low pay, and the bottom levels of pay have been removed.</p> <p>School budgets were to be adjusted to reflect this but at Downs, revised costs are £25k, which is double what the original budget was said to be. Schools are being asked to carry</p>

	<p>the cost of a council decision and pay differentiation is being eroded, which will impact on recruitment and retention.</p> <p>HM, as NAHT union representative, has been working with GMB and UNITE on this, as the only way to find the money is to cut staff, those who have won the pay award, and education is being put at risk. Across the city, HT's and support staff unions are requesting a solution other than cutting posts, as a stand needs to be taken. Staff should be better paid but schools cannot carry the costs of unfunded pay increases.</p> <p>The GB was asked to support the request.</p> <p>Governors asked whether the LA miscalculated or made a new decision, and HM explained that it is a combination of both. It went to committee and more money was agreed due to backdating payments to last august. Liability for the incorrect advice has been queried and HM has written to Richard Barker at the LA but has received no response.</p> <p>LD added that pay agreements being late is a national issue. The pay structure is being impacted and will be by the ECT uplift. Leadership pay has gone up by half of other staff increases, meaning that leaders have experienced a 30% pay cut over 10 years. HM is happy to field questions out of the meeting.</p> <p><i>SD left at 20.18</i></p>
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The meeting closed at 20.22

Summary of agreed actions

No	Action	By	Notes
1.	Check if any inspectors have been known to ask about COVID absence and impact on outcomes at other recent inspections.	HM	
2.	Chase Equality training for governors	GN	
3.	Follow up with Black Governors' Association	JK	
4.	Maths to be a standing item on FGB agendas for the next year	GN	
5.	Maths reports to the FGB to be commissioned three times during the next year	HM	Request from maths lead
6.	Pursue the repairs to the rear wall with the LA	TF/HQ/LD	
7.	Complete Equality Impact Assessment	HM/JK/SD	
8.	Approach the LA re the consultation	HM	
9.	Continue to work on website compliance	HM/GH/GN	
10.	Ensure there is continuity of terminology on the website (re. SMT/SLT, subject leaders/ co-ordinators) and add hyperlink to the old newsletters from the new website	HM	
11.	Governors to send photographs and biographies to HM, to be added to the website.	FGB	
12.	Investigate the best means of receiving pupil voice	GN	
13.	Send a brief outline of training, meetings attended and strengths and development areas to the clerk, by the start of September	FGB	
14.	Convene working party to look at the White and Green papers	FGB	
15.	Draft 2022/23 meeting schedule	GN	

