

**DOWNS INFANT SCHOOL**  
**FULL GOVERNING BODY**  
**Minutes of the conference meeting of the Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 5-7pm**



**Attended by:**

Tony Fallowfield (TF) (Chair)  
 Sarah Digon (SD)  
 Loren Davies (LD)  
 Carrie Palmer Fry (CP)  
 Emma Smith (ES)  
 Gill Hammett (GH)

Aisha Hoten (AH)  
 Jalia Kangave (JK)  
 Caroline Dean (CD)  
 Hildi Mitchell (HM) (Headteacher)  
 Gaynor Newnham (GN) (Clerk)  
 Amy Filton (AF) (Maths Lead and Interim SENCO)

No.	Item
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Welcome</b> TF opened the meeting</li> <li>2. <b>Apologies</b> Anita Bullock</li> <li>3. <b>Review agenda</b> There were no changes made to the agenda</li> </ol>
2.	<p><b>Register of Business Interests</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Interests related to the current agenda to be declared</b> There were no changes to the previously published interests</li> </ol>
3.	<p><b>Previous Meeting Minutes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approval of the minutes of the meeting, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022</b> <b>The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting</b></li> <li>2. <b>Review of actions</b> The summary of actions was reviewed, and all were noted to be complete or on the current agenda, except the governance section of the website, which has been updated, but not all governor biographies and photographs have been received. Governors were asked to forward these to HM/GN as soon as possible.</li> <li>3. <b>Matters Arising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AH confirmed that children have home logins to Bug Club. Phonics will remain an in-school focus.</li> <li>• TF completed H&amp;S walk with HM and the new premises manager, and there will be a report for the next meeting.</li> <li>• There have been attempts to contact DJS to discuss anecdotal reports about the progress of Y2 children when they reach Y3; the HT's will liaise on this, and there will be a discussion between governors early in March.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governors to forward biographies and photographs for the school website to HM and GN</b></li> <li>• <b>Complete H&amp;S Monitoring Report</b></li> </ul> </li> </ol>
4.	<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>DSL Report</b> AH gave a verbal update as the new DSL, and governors also noted the safeguarding section of the HT Report. It was reported that                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there has been an additional front door referral since the report was written.</li> <li>• AH has attended supervision with a senior social worker</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AH did not have a complete handover as the previous postholder was unwell. HM managed the handover and there have been weekly meetings between AH and HM since the start of the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. DSL Governor</b> AD fed back that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there will be termly check ins between them and the DSL</li> <li>• The SCR is up to date.</li> <li>• The cost of living crisis is not yet showing tremendous impact</li> <li>• Means of making channels of communication obvious to parents has been discussed.</li> <li>• The raised profile of safeguarding for parents has been discussed</li> <li>• safeguarding information will be made more visible in newsletters and signs on site</li> <li>• Many YR children have noticeable speech and language issues – Speech Link and Talk Boost are in use and the school is coping as well as possible. Referrals are taking time to process.</li> <li>• The new door entry system has improved safeguarding</li> </ul> <p><i>HM joined at 17.23</i></p> <p>CD confirmed that she will also be part of the regular meetings.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p><b>1. Math's lead (Amy Filton) feedback on maths and continuous provision</b> AF reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing data to last year shows that there is progress; there has been a 12% increase in Y2 and 45-70% in Y1. YR is in line with last year.</li> <li>• There has been a survey of maths teaching, resources, etc.</li> <li>• A new structure was successfully trialled with Y2 and will now be rolled into Y1. EYFS maths has also been discussed.</li> <li>• Since Christmas, additional afternoon support has been in place, and the quantity and quality of maths teaching has improved.</li> </ul> <p>A document was shared which shows what maths assessment, data, planning, continuous provision, TA support, teaching should look like, and what evidence is required.</p> <p>It was explained that a balance of building on existing good practice and introducing refinement and rigor was sought, especially with White Rose Maths in Y2. White Rose is used through the school, and time is set aside to address weaker areas. There will be further discussion with the Y1 staff to review impact so far. The rigor and structure already appear to be improving. Governors noted that the data seems to be improving.</p> <p>A governor <b>asked</b> what continuous provision in maths look like. It was explained that it is different for each year group. In Y2 there are 3+ weekly challenges for children to complete independently, and at least one is in maths. Currently, Y2 are looking at money and there will be tasks set up for them to enhance their learning.</p> <p>AH shared some YR planning, based on White Rose and her own knowledge, and explained that enhancements to learning will be provided to encourage children to play with the apparatus and stimulate conversations with adults. For example, providing hoops and beanbags led to discussing numbers, etc and drawing out maths learning.</p> <p>Another document was shared, which showed curriculum points for year groups and continuous provision areas, resources, questioning, etc., with maths learning</p>

	<p>through play. It was explained that planning should also refer to the learning from the year before to see what children should already know.</p> <p>A governor <b>asked</b> if there are plans to bring parents in to reinforce learning at home. It was confirmed that there are no plans at present, but this is a great idea. There is a weekly Tapestry update which sometimes highlights possibilities for home learning, but a more formal means will be considered.</p> <p><b>2 Progress report – interim SENCO role</b></p> <p>It was noted that there was also a lack of proper handover at the end of Term 2, but the previous post holder has now been able to share information, and there have been regular check-ins with the headteacher, so that it feels that progress is being made.</p> <p>It was reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning meetings have been held with the external agency support</li> <li>• There has been progress with seeking EHCP's</li> <li>• There have been conversations with prospective parents about the possible needs of their children</li> <li>• Play therapy provision has been reviewed</li> <li>• It is hoped to repurpose the learning lodge</li> <li>• free play therapy has been sourced</li> <li>• Interventions have been reviewed</li> <li>• Talk Boost staff and resources are in use</li> <li>• There is significant need in YR</li> <li>• There will be targeted support for EAL children</li> <li>• SEND training is being investigated with a view to upskilling and supporting</li> <li>• There has been de-escalation training for support staff</li> </ul> <p>HM explained that she is impressed by both AH and AF in their new roles, and she feels supported by them. They have taken on the roles with the right attitudes, and both have been brilliant.</p> <p><i>AF left at 17.46</i></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Headteacher's Report</b></p> <p>HM highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data was affected by COVID, and it is good to be able to see progress.</li> <li>• End of key stage data will be reviewed by OFSTED</li> <li>• Children are making pleasing progress, overall</li> <li>• Phonics was low, below national, and local. Leaders believe the planning and sequencing are in place, and there is now a focus on clear and consistent teaching, via CPD and bespoke sessions with staff. Scores of 80% + in Y2 and 80%+ for Y1 are predicted.</li> <li>• Reading has been addressed with the staff</li> <li>• Writing is showing a shift; governors were asked to look at writing in the books on their next visits. There is improved quantity and quality of work. Talk for Writing is in place and all children are motivated to write, including key target groups.</li> <li>• A 'Good' judgement is expected at the next OFSTED</li> <li>• Some children have significant SEND; there are 2 high profile cases, and external agencies are confident that the school is responding in the right way to these children</li> <li>• Some children are exhibiting challenging/ distressed behaviours in YR – timetabling and provision will be further discussed with the families</li> </ul> <p>A governor <b>asked</b> about the attainment of more able children and it was explained that the data group has not yet met to discuss this. A meeting will be planned.</p> <p>A governor <b>asked</b> if there are enough phonics books in school. HM will investigate, as an action</p>

**1. School Development Plan**

The SDP had been circulated with the agenda.

**2. Staffing update**

A new AHT has been appointed

The new caretaker had a good start and is working well with the team

**3. Staff Wellbeing**

This was not discussed.

**4. Attendance**

Recent surveys show that 80% of families are seeing the impact of the cost of living, and HM has talked to FODIS about this. Costs to the school are also increasing – coloured paper is £12/ream; white is £4/ream.

Communication with parents has been reviewed and a new system has been successfully introduced.

Attendance remains a concern, and there was a lot of illness last term, including STREP A. This is not unique to DIS. DJS also had 25% absence before Christmas, in line with other local schools. OFSTED attitudes to attendance were discussed, and it was fed back that other schools have been challenged around holiday absence at recent inspections, and the school has a range of strategies aimed at improvements. Some parents are finding the pressure stressful.

HM asked governors if they would like reports on different types of absence from time to time. This was discussed, and it was agreed that it would be more useful to prepare case studies showing the impact of attendance strategies.

Punctuality is also an issue. There is ongoing work on this.

Governors **discussed** the cultural shift in attitudes towards attendance since the pandemic. It was suggested that the rise in home working may also have an impact.

It was confirmed, in response to a **question**, that the year on year comparative attendance data relates to the same period.

A governor **asked** about the attendance strategy 'toolkit,' and it was explained that they can be very individualised. There is a joint Attendance Policy with DJS.

A governor **asked** if there is celebration of good attendance, such as reward cards. HM explained that she does not support this approach, as it can impact on children's self-esteem and wellbeing, particularly where there is a medical need. Various means of boosting attendance were discussed, including school pets and therapy dogs. **It was agreed to develop a more coherent attendance toolkit.**

**5. Stakeholder Voice – parent/carer surveys, previously circulated**

A governor asked if the survey response rate compares to previous surveys, which was confirmed.

Governors **asked** about how 2 negative comments in the surveys about playground racism, and bullying are being handled. HM explained that the alleged racist incident was investigated but it was not possible to trace the parents. HM met 2 families to discuss racism but, after some discussions, the parents wanted to move on, and explained that they were satisfied the school did all it could. There was no perpetrator or victim found regarding the second incident. The report of bullying appears to have been anecdotal and the victim has not been identified. Everything has been taken as seriously as possible and the parents are happy. The topics were covered in assembly and the incidents have now been closed.

HM has attended racial literacy training and the school will now be able to do more to support the children.

A governor **asked** if sub-groups could work on some of the survey responses, and HM agreed to put it on the agenda for the class representatives.

A governor **asked what** more can be done to ensure all children feel confident and safe. It was explained that anti-bullying leaflets were sent out. There could be more work through the PSHE curriculum, and reporting procedures could be made clearer to parents.

A governor **asked** if more specific feedback might be needed. This was discussed, and it was agreed to add space for comments to the existing OFSTED – style surveys, and the school could decide on any items to pick up.

#### **6. Impact of cost of living crisis**

See agenda items 4.2 and 6.4

#### **7. Industrial Action**

The HT reported that:

- the NEU has confirmed 4 dates for industrial action, that will impact DIS.
- Not all teachers may strike, as 3 dates are in March and striking teachers will lose pay.
- The NAHT is in dispute with the DfE but the threshold for action was not met. There may be a re-ballot as the postal strike may have had an impact on responses.
- HM needs to be able to communicate with parents and staff have been asked to indicate whether they will strike
- It is expected that there would be 3 teachers in school on the strike days.
- The government advice if that schools should use TA/ supply, but HM is not comfortable to do that.
- It is unclear whether remote provision will be needed.
- Safeguarding checks on strike days will be a priority.
- DJS is also likely to close.
- Some schools choose to open the classes where the teachers are not striking, but HM is uncomfortable with this, at it would disclose teachers' personal information.
- One of the dates is the Y2 Let's Dance event, which could still happen with limited staff.
- The NEU support staff ballot did not meet the 50% threshold. Support staff will be in and can be involved with safeguarding checks and online provision.
- Some TA's will have childcare issues if their children are at other schools.
- Guidance re vulnerable children is awaited. The DfE may suggest COVID style provision, but this will not be possible with the predicted staff numbers. HM will not put large groups of children in the hall.
- Feb 1<sup>st</sup> is a National Day of Action for everybody
- The unions are in talks with the DfE because of the ballot

A governor **asked** if any information has been shared with parents and it was explained that an initial message will be circulated to explain that risk assessments will be completed, and all options will be considered.

**Governors agreed that the Governor Newsletter should state that governors support the teaching staff in striving for financial recognition, improved retention, and funding for schools.**

Any communication with parents will be shared with governors in draft form, before being circulated.

The impact in children was **discussed**, and it was agreed that this is an important teaching moment for children about how change happens. It may be uncomfortable and unfortunate, but change is needed. It is important for children to know that their grown-ups care and want to protect things and fight for them.

The impact on parents was **discussed**, and it was agreed that unnecessary challenge should be avoided. It may be possible for some children to come in for lunch and playtime, for example.

	<p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop attendance toolkit</b></li> <li>• <b>Data Group meeting to be planned</b></li> <li>• <b>Check whether there are enough phonics books in the school</b></li> <li>• <b>Circulate communication with parents to governors, in draft form</b></li> </ul>
8.	<p><b>Finance and Premises</b></p> <p>A governor requested an update on the wall. It was explained that there is now higher-level involvement, and the LA is looking to close the lane to enable structural investigations to be completed. The area remains closed, and reopening may be a FODIS project.</p> <p><b>1 Finance Committee minutes</b></p> <p>LD reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Finance Committee last met in November</li> <li>• There is a predicted surplus of £26,975</li> <li>• There is a predicted in-year deficit of £86,212</li> <li>• The committee discussed teaching cover, in view of rising supply and agency cover costs; governors will be kept informed</li> <li>• A recent outturn report showed that the support staff pay awards led to a huge overspend that needs to be recorded.</li> <li>• The school received £15k unexpected income and budgeted for £12k</li> <li>• There will be ongoing impact into subsequent years – there will be further information at the next meeting</li> <li>• The school has received £17k Devolved Formula Capital to help with energy costs. The school is free to choose how to spend this, on items that would lower energy costs. This will be discussed further at a future meeting. The Business Manager has attended webinars on solar panels, which may potentially be a viable option. Living rooves on sheds will also be considered. This links to the OCOW (Our City Our World) project.</li> <li>• The SFVS and the recent benchmarking report will come to the next meeting for approval</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Premises Manager</b> Covered under agenda item 3.3</p> <p><b>3 Health &amp; Safety</b> Covered under agenda item 3.3</p>
9.	<p><b>Strategic Governance</b></p> <p><b>1. PAN/ Strategic Working Party</b></p> <p>The reduced PAN has been signed off by the LA. A meeting will be planned for later this term to agree a position on academisation, which may also need to be discussed with the DJS governors. A governor asked if the Government White Paper has been shelved, and it was confirmed that it has been reviewed. The LA is not taking any action on academisation, and it would be good for governors to have a thought process.</p> <p><b>2. Governor Day / Week</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the next Governor Monitoring will look at progress against the SDP. Newer governors were invited to submit ideas for areas they would like to look at. Sessions will be arranged, based on governors' availability.</p> <p><b>3. Link Governor update</b> Covered above</p> <p><b>4. School Council / Pupil Voice</b> GH's report was noted. A repeat visit will be planned.</p>

	<p>HM explained that there have been discussions about supply teachers with the school council – to explain the process and garner their views. There was also a review of Christmas.</p> <p><b>5. Succession Planning</b> A governor attended a briefing on succession planning and there will be discussion with her and the chair, early in T4, as an action</p> <p><b>6. OCOW project</b> It was reported that there is an action plan, strategy group, and survey for teachers and governors.</p>
10.	<p><b>Governor Effectiveness – what have we done today to help pupils and deliver on our core functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction</b> Maths leader presentation Discussed OCOW and inclusion</li> <li>• <b>Holding school leaders to account</b> Reviewed maths progression and maths data Discussed anti-racism and bullying</li> <li>• <b>Overseeing financial performance</b> reporting and oversight of financial performance and challenges faced</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder engagement</b> Surveys, OCOW</li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Any additional or urgent business –</b> Governor Newsletter – covered under agenda item 6</p> <p><b>Inclusion and After School Clubs</b> HM explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents, and staff have raised concerns about SEND pupils and those needing 1-1 support being able to attend after school clubs.</li> <li>• There are clubs that are ‘lets,’ where children have been turned away due to lack of supporting adults. The providers will have risk-assessed and feel they have no choice.</li> <li>• There are also internal clubs.</li> <li>• Support staff have supported with Let’s Dance.</li> </ul> <p>SD, as a parent with relevant experience, explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is no easy solution</li> <li>• the LA surveyed parents and carers about childcare, after school provision and holiday clubs.</li> <li>• It is difficult to recruit, and pay is bad</li> <li>• There is inclusion funding of £11 towards a 1-1, at OFSTED registered providers.</li> <li>• There is funding available that is not being accessed due to the providers not being OFSTED registered.</li> <li>• There is some provision available at the DJS.</li> <li>• SD had suggested that the council approach the universities about trainees working in these clubs.</li> <li>• Inclusion is everybody’s business, and SD asked if there could be a tiny incremental increase for all, to fund the special places required.</li> </ul> <p><b>It was agreed to be concerning that this is normalised for the children concerned, and their peers, and highlighting this as a problem to all parents and carers could be a first step.</b> It was noted that the cost of living crisis will exacerbate this. HM will also raise the issue with the NAHT conference.</p>

	<b>Date of next meeting: 28<sup>th</sup> March 5-7pm</b>
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**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19.16pm**

**Summary of actions agreed at the meeting:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>By</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.	Develop attendance toolkit		
2.	Data Group meeting to be planned		
3.	Check whether there are enough phonics books in the school		
4.	Circulate communication with parents to governors, in draft form		