



Date: 8th November 2023 at 4:00pm

Governors Present:
Sean Houlston (SH) – Chair
Amy Brock (AB) – Staff Governor (Deputy Headteacher and SENDCo)
Grace Johnson – Parent Governor
Claire Standley – Parent Governor
Ray Walker – Governor designate
Rebecca Wollaston – Staff Governor (Business Support Manager across 3 schools within the Trust)

Apologies:
Bernice Kostick – Governor

In attendance:
Paul McDowell (PM) – Headteacher
Dr Allan Howells (AH) – Trust Governance Professional
Jo Young (JY) - TLP

Clerk: Sharon Dutton (SD) - Entrust

Administration

1. Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy

The meeting opened at 4:04pm and was confirmed quorate.

SH welcomed all to the meeting and asked each attendee to introduce themselves in turn to the rest of the group. Dr Allan Howells (AH), Director of Quality at The Learning Partnership (TLP) was in attendance to facilitate the recent transition of schools from the Learning for Life Partnership to TLP and to support governing boards within the Trust. He outlined the priorities each Local Governing Board (LGB) within the Trust should be looking at:

- Educational standards performance
- Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
- Community engagement
- Accountability, performance and support
- Monitoring visits

He confirmed that finance and employment are no longer seen as part of the LGB's remit. It was hoped that whilst standardisation should be achieved across the board in terms of, for example, data and report presentation, each establishment should retain its own distinctiveness.

SH thanked AH and JY for their attendance.

SH welcomed the new Headteacher, Paul McDowell (PM) and congratulated him on the huge positive impact he had already had on the school.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the LAB meeting (Summer Term 2) held on 19th June 2023 via Zoom were approved. There were no matters arising.

3. Membership and Effectiveness Update

It was confirmed that Emma Appleyard, Andrea Fisher and Steve Lee had resigned from the LAB (Local Advisory Board) with effect from September 2023 and all new appointees were welcomed.

SH thanked Claire Standley for her invaluable contribution as LAB Chair and welcomed her to the new LGB

AH confirmed that the optimum size of the LGB was no more than 9 and no less than 7 members. There were vacancies for 1 parent and 2 appointed governors. He confirmed that going forward the Trust would prefer not to have staff governors due to a possible conflict of interest but appreciated that this could not necessarily be achieved at this time. The Trust had agreed that staff governors could remain in office during 23/24 to support transition from LAB to LGB.

AH and SH assured the governors that excellent training was available to them from a variety of sources including the National Governance Association (NGA) and The Key on GovernorHub and encouraged governors to use this. PM also offered to conduct governor induction training.

AH asked if all governors could identify people within the community who might be suitable to approach as governors for both Shavington and Wistaston Church Lane Academy.

ACTION: The Headteacher to organise induction training for new governors.

Governors challenge:

Could a list of educational acronyms be made available to governors?

Answer:

AH agreed to share a list on GovernorHub. It was noted that NGA also offered documentation on this.

ACTION: AH to share a list of educational acronyms on GovernorHub.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair. Self-review

Sean Houlston was ratified as the Chair of the LGB with effect from the 13th of October 2023. There was no requirement for a Vice-Chair. He emphasised to the board how important it was for him to receive feedback from them regarding his role within the school and that of the school's within the community.

No self-review was possible at this meeting due to the board's recent formation in its current form. AH offered to share a Skills Audit document with the members and urged governors to be honest when completing it so that gaps could be correctly identified.

ACTION: AH to provide a skills audit document on GovernorHub for board members to complete as soon as possible.

AH reiterated to the new LGB that minutes ongoing should reflect robust governor challenges.

Strategic Direction and Progress Against Priorities

5. Vision, Values and Ethos

The Headteacher outlined these in Slide 2 of the Headteachers report. He confirmed that they did not differ much from the information on the school website but that it would be continuously reviewed and updated with a strong emphasis on inclusivity for all pupils as he had observed that there was a great deal of polarity within the wider school community.

He commented that a recent INSET day at the start of the autumn term had been extremely successful.

The vision, values and ethos were endorsed by the Board.

6. Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)

The Headteacher reported that he and JY from TLP had been collaborating on a self-evaluation update. He praised the staff for their commitment but noted that whilst the school had good resources the Board should be looking at the standard of Writing which was presently not high enough. He asked governors to work closely with him on this area.

The Headteacher also confirmed that he had embarked on a National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)

Governor challenge:

Why is the standard of Writing so low?

Answer:

The Headteacher suggested staff had previously lacked accountability and consistency in this area. However, he pointed out the school was not alone in this trend and that a downward trajectory had begun before Covid

and not as a result of it. JY explained that it was essential for the Trust to identify the correct standard of the Writing framework across its entirety and diagnose the problems attaining this. The Headteacher observed however that the standard in Year 6 was high and that the priority was to get the classes below this to achieve the appropriate standard as they moved upwards.

JY confirmed that the Trust had recently employed a Senior Leader in Education who the Headteacher and met with.

Governor challenge:

Could the SEF have an extra page attached listing actions resulting from the evaluation?

Answer:

The Headteacher agreed to this.

7. School Improvement Plan (SIP)

The Headteacher outlined the SIP priorities in Slide 4 of his report. He observed that there were senior leaders within the school who had huge enthusiasm but lacked experience.

Governor challenge:

How is the school ensuring that the correct standards are met and exceeded?

Answer:

The Headteacher reported that members of the Trust and the Deputy Headteacher were working together to identify areas of concern utilising learning walks, appraisals, accountability methods and where necessary the reallocation of resources. An external consultant had been recruited to identify where external assistance would be beneficial.

Governor challenge:

What is the role of a phase lead?

Answer:

The Headteacher explained that a phase leader was responsible for leading a specific phase, such as Key Stage 2. However, he felt that it was unclear as to what their exact role was and was hoping this would improve once proper appraisal systems had been set up by January 2024.

Governor challenge:

Could the appraisal results be evaluated?

Answer:

JY confirmed that a SIP template was to be introduced across the Trust to evaluate relevant appraisal data. The Headteacher confirmed that he would update and share all SEF and SIP documentation with governors.

Education

The Headteacher announced how excited he was to be working with the school and the Trust and was pleased with how much he had been able to achieve in the short time since his appointment. The Headteachers report to the governors was received in the form of a power point presentation. This was also shared on GovernorHub.

8. Admissions and Pupil Numbers

These were outlined in Slide 5 of the Headteacher report. He was satisfied with the statistics at present but forecast that numbers would start to increase as the area expanded with Shavington being the only school in the vicinity.

Governor challenge:

What is the PAN?

Answer:

The Headteacher explained that 60 was the cohort and 430 the full school.

The Headteacher commented that the school was establishing a good reputation for Looked After Children (LACs) and he would seek funding from Cheshire East to cover this.

Some marketing had taken place on Facebook to promote the nursery. A discussion took place as to how best to communicate with parents in particular and the community at large. It was generally felt that Facebook was suitable but the ability to comment was to be discouraged. Both parent governors reported that Arbor was problematic and CS commented that generally effective communication with parents had previously been lacking. The Headteacher asked for further clarification after the meeting.

Governor challenge:

How does the school communicate with parents?

Answer:

Electronic letters, Arbor, Facebook, weekly newsletters. It was agreed that as many communication platforms as possible be used so that information was shared fairly. The Headteacher emphasised that he would like more feedback from parents.

ACTION CLERK: Clerk to include feedback on Arbor and parental communication on the agenda for the next meeting.

9. Attendance

This was outlined in Slide 6 – 8 on the Headteachers report. It was generally at an acceptable level and the Headteacher was looking forward to a parent's evening in a fortnights time which would give him feedback and would enable him to discuss specific cases with parents.

Governor challenge:

How are holiday requests being handled?

Answer:

The Headteacher confirmed that these applications were steadily growing and would like a nominated co-opted (not parent) governor to countersign authorisations.

In Slide 7 it was clear that persistent absenteeism in Years 1 and 6 was inexplicably high and whilst this is a national issue, investigations needed to be made. AH noted that persistent absenteeism was defined as 90% and above which amounted to 1 day per week.

The Headteacher assured governors that he was looking closely into the situation in Year 1 and reiterated that finding a solution to the problem was a higher priority than the problem itself.

Governor challenge:

What is the process when a child misses school?

Answer:

The Deputy Headteacher explained that the administration team checked the child was absent without notice, sent a text followed by an email, followed by a phone call and, if still no response, then made direct contact with the family.

Governor challenge:

When was the attendance policy updated?

Answer:

It was confirmed that the attendance policy was up-to-date and due for review in a year's time but the Headteacher agreed to look at other expired policies with an emphasis on compliance and update and refresh the website. He requested that governors assist him with particular emphasis on making the website more user-friendly.

Governor challenge:

When a policy is updated, do the governors review and ratify it?

Answer:

SH confirmed this and explained that it could be done through GovernorHub. AH explained that he would like to standardise the review of policies across the Trust and reduce frequency of review where possible. He challenged governors to add value through their engagement with the development of new policies rather than merely checking for compliance with current or historical policies.

ACTION: Governors will review the Pupil Premium Strategy at the next LGB meeting.

10. Behaviour

This was outlined in Slide 9 of the Headteachers report. He pointed out that there had been no exclusions since the beginning of the autumn term.

Governor question:

How does “no outsiders” approach support positive behaviour?

Answer:

The Headteacher explained that pupils who don't feel included will often remove themselves through behavioural issues with particular emphasis on ethnic minorities. Cultural diversity needed to be celebrated, not ignored.

The Headteacher outlined a new positive attitude monitoring system called Snakes and Ladders which was proving very successful within the school. This was enabling data to be captured much quicker and behavioural patterns both in pupils and staff to be tracked. He confirmed, however, that more serious transgressions were always logged onto CPOMS.

11. Curriculum – Progress

This was outlined in Slide 10 of the Headteachers report. As noted previously, Writing was an issue. The Headteacher outlined various ways that this was being addressed in the form of funded courses for staff, literary audits, literary links with other schools, displays and so on. The Headteacher was heading up a new literacy team with appraisals focusing on results in Writing. It was also planned to utilise the CENTURY platform, funded by pupil premium funding, to encourage home learning and parental involvement in this area. Feedback on results would be presented at a later meeting.

Governors observed that slides in future Headteachers reports with feedback on the effectiveness of all the proposed new initiatives would be very useful. The Headteacher agreed to include these.

12. Curriculum – Attainment

This was outlined in Slide 11 of the report.

Governor challenge:

Are the Special Educational Need and disabilities (SEND) children included in the figures presented and if so, could they be separated out in future to make the data clearer?

Answer:

The Headteacher confirmed this was so and explained that he had identified a data lead within the school and was utilising the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) to improve, manage and understand all the data available. Ultimately a number of meaningful reports would generate from this.

Welfare

13. Safeguarding

The Headteacher indicated that he would like to see more training on safeguarding. He confirmed the Trust Safeguarding lead had already visited the school and conducted training with CS, the safeguarding link governor. The health and safety audit had been delayed until a new site manager had been appointed.

14. Wellbeing and Welfare – Students

This was outlined in Slide 13 of the Headteacher's Report. Staff were looking at a variety of external visits and residential were to be prioritised with an undertaking that all pupils would be included in these where necessary.

Governor challenge:

Could the Headteacher include updates in his next report on the impact these activities had had.

Answer:

The Headteacher agreed to do so.

15. Wellbeing and Welfare – Staff

This was outlined in Slide 14 of the report. The Headteacher observed that the staff body had coped very well with the new management with communication channels clarified and improved.

Governor challenge

When was the Bounce Together initiative starting?

Answer:

By the end of November.

Governor challenge:

Is there a link governor for staff wellbeing?

Answer:

A link governor would be appointed in due course.

ACTION: Headteacher to email SH the current list of link governor roles.

Local Matters and Stakeholder Engagement

16. Headteacher to address all policy updates during the autumn term and update.

17. **Stakeholder Engagement - Parents/Carers**

See slide 16 of the Headteachers report.

18. **Stakeholder Engagement – Wider Community**

See slide 17 of the Headteachers report.

19. **Communication to Trust Executive, Board, Education Standards and Performance (ESP) Committee**

The Headteacher confirmed that he was attending a Chair 's forum organised by TLP. He requested that all governors allow him at least an hour each to discuss with him the requirements of the role and he would be in touch regarding this.

20. **Communication from Executive, Board and ESP**

Nothing to report.

21. **AOB**

Nothing to report.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: January 24th at 4:00pm

Meeting Closed at 6:20pm

Minutes approved:

Date:.....

ACTION LOG FOR MEETING 08.11.2023

Minute Ref	Action	By whom	By when
Pg 2 Item 3	Organise induction training for new governor	Headteacher	After meeting
Pg 2 Item 4	Provide a skills audit document on GovernorHub for board members to complete as soon as possible.	AH	After meeting
Pg 4 Item 8	Include feedback on Arbor and parental communication on the agenda for the next meeting.	Clerk	24.01.2024
Pg 5 Item 9	Review the PP Strategy at the next LGB meeting.	All	24.01.2024
Pg 6 Item 15	Email SH the current list of link governor roles.	Headteacher	After meeting