

FOWLMERE PRIMARY SCHOOL
MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Wednesday 8 July 2020
7.15pm in School

Present:

Philip Atkin (PA), Head Teacher
Sarah Burge (SB), Chair
Bruce Gilliam (BG)
Jo Grazebrook (JG)
Gill Heathcote (GH) (until 8.45pm)
Clare Hobro (CH)
Andrew Page (AP)
Nico Schonken (NS)

In Attendance:

Lisa White (LW) (Camclerk)
Lynsey Perkins (LP) (Associate Member)

1. Apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.20pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received and accepted from Ashley Meggitt and Hayley Woods.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3. Minutes of the last meetings and matters arising

Draft minutes of the FGB meeting held on 6 May 2020 were circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting and were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair after the meeting.

Draft minutes of the Extraordinary General Meetings held on 27 May and 17 June 2020 were circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting and were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair after the meeting.

It was noted that an updated copy of the Governing Body Standing Orders to reflect the need to hold virtual governor meetings will also be signed by the Chair. ACTION SB

Matters arising from the meeting held on 17 July 2019

Item 5 Safeguarding

Senior Leadership Team to arrange formal Safeguarding training for regular volunteers. *The Head Teacher explained that the intention is to invite the school's regular volunteers in for some basic Safeguarding training. In addition, the school will provide them with a Guidance for Volunteers Policy.* **ACTION PA/LP c/f pending current situation.**

Signed  Date 23/9/2020

Matters arising from the meeting held on 25 September 2019

Item 16 Urgent Matters

Update the governor email distribution list to include LP. **Ongoing issue. ICT to action. ACTION COMPLETE. PA to also add LW**

Contact from developers has been received asking if the school will support the proposed housing development. Add as an agenda item to the FGB meeting in December. **Contact made but no response received. Pending appeal in progress. ACTION SB c/f**

Matters arising from the meeting held on 4 December 2019

Item 4 Training Module

Governors to complete any outstanding training and confirm to the clerk that they have done so. **ACTION ALL c/f ACTION LW TO CHASE**

Add Jo Grazebrook to the NGA subscription. **ACTION SB c/f**

It was noted that as a follow-on action, it was agreed to include completion of the Governing Body skills matrix for the September FGB meeting. ACTION SB

Item 12 Communication Working Group update

PA to liaise with HW, NS and AM regarding the use of photographs on the Facebook page. ACTION PA c/f pending current situation.

Item 14 Online file storage

Chair to update Governors' area. **ACTION ONGOING – governors and clerk are currently unable to access the 2019/20 files. Files are now being uploaded to Microsoft Teams. ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 15 Urgent matters

School Budget Consultation

Chair to arrange a meeting with the cluster Chairs and Jonathan Lewis. **ACTION SB c/f pending current situation.**

The Head Teacher advised that there has been an agreement to meet with the Secretary of State and propose that there is a reduction in the per pupil minimum funding value which will mean the top slice is spread more evenly across all schools. This should mean that although smaller schools, such as Fowlmere, will still be significantly affected, larger schools will also have to bear some of the cost.

Matters arising from the meeting held on 5 February 2020

Item 3a Safeguarding Training for Governors

AM to complete the NSPCC online training. **ACTION AM c/f**

Matters arising from the meeting held on 11 March 2020

Item 10 Length of School day

Add an item to the agenda for the next meeting for governors to approve the increase in length of the school day. **Agenda item 6. ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 11 School Improvement Plan 2019/20

Circulate an updated SIP to all governors. **Agenda item 4. ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 5 Five year vision

Consider how best to structure future meetings. **Agenda item 11. ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 7 Parent, Pupil and Staff Voices

Parent, pupil and staff voice to be brought to the next FGB meeting. Staff and parent voices shared. Unable to carry out Pupil Voice due to current situation. **ACTION COMPLETE**

As a follow-on action, it was proposed and agreed to add an in-depth discussion regarding staff voice in response to the proposed change in length to the school day to the September FGB meeting. ACTION SB

Matters arising from the meeting held on 6 May 2020**Item 5 School Policies for approval**

Add a paragraph regarding the use of social media to the Communications Code. **ACTION PA to check and confirm to LW that this has been done.**

Item 8 Moving Subcommittees to virtual meetings

Chair to review structure of how the files will be stored on Teams. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Head to set folders / directories up. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Matters arising from the meeting held on 27 May 2020**Item 3 Re-opening of Fowlmere School on 1st June 2020**

Ask for donations for items such as kettles, mini fridges on the school Facebook page. **ACTION COMPLETE**

4. Safeguarding

It was noted that a Safeguarding update is included in the Head Teacher's governor update and will be discussed under.

PA explained that the annual Safeguarding monitoring report would normally be shared with governors but that given the current situation, the Local Authority does not expect schools to complete this at this time. PA added however, that similar information will likely be shared with governors at the FGB meeting in September.

A governor asked:**Question:**

Is there any remote monitoring in respect of Safeguarding that can be carried out?

Answer:

Clare and I have discussed this but due to current capacity it is unlikely to happen before September.

Items for Information or Approval**5. Head Teacher's Report**

- a) Information regarding progress of School Improvement Work

It was noted that the following documents were shared with governors for their review prior to the meeting:

- 200708 Governor update
- 200708 School Re-opening Risk Assessment v1.1

Signed  Date 23/9/2020

PA explained that the structure of his report is slightly different in response to the current unprecedented situation, adding that much of the data that is usually reviewed, is not currently available.

PA drew governors' attention to the background data that was included in his report with regards Covid-19 and explained that this is in the context of a very low incidence level in Cambridgeshire.

PA then referred governors to page 2 of his report and explained that this provides an update in terms of what the bubbles looked like when the school opened to target groups week commencing 3 June. PA advised the following:

- 47 spaces were created, with 34 places taken up;
- Staggered start times and break times work well;
- School has been through a period of trying to get as many pupils back to school as possible with staff spending time to identify children who would benefit from being back in setting;
- Update has now increased to 52 children;
- All but one child in Year 1 has returned to school following an email advising that if families did not wish their child to return to school, those spaces would be allocated to other children;
- Uptake by Pupil Premium children has increased plus one pupil under Social Care is back in setting, so this was a very successful and positive exercise;
- Nine out of thirteen Pupil Premium children are in school. One PP child now lives in Norfolk now and under normal circumstances, would be on roll with a local school but as the admissions process is closed, they are still on Fowlmere's roll and accessing the home learning provided. Three others are accessing learning at home and one family already said they would not be sending their child to school. Staff do not have any concerns over these pupils with regards their learning;
- Social distancing is generally 1 metre rather than 2 metres;
- Resources have been provided to those families who need them and also laptops have been loaned out where necessary. In addition, home learning packs are produced for those families who do not have access to a printer;
- Home learning continues but this is becoming increasingly difficult due to staff's teaching responsibilities;
- Safeguarding continues as before, but with more children in school. There has been a significant increase in reports of concern, but most of them relate to concerns over learning;
- Planning to do some transition for September and inviting each year group back to school to enable this;

Transition

As noted above, the updated Risk Assessment was shared with governors prior to the meeting. PA explained that this updated version (version 1.1) includes the above mentioned transition plans (changes highlighted in purple) and that before the school can implement these plans, they must be approved by the Governing Body.

PA added that although these plans are not technically covered by the guidance, the benefit to the children of them being back in school to socialise with their classmates and to meet their new teacher is important from a social and emotional wellbeing perspective.

In addition, the Year Six pupils will be able to have a chance to say 'goodbye'.

PA then explained that this will take place outside to help minimise any risk.

Signed  Date 23/9/2020

Governors asked:

Question:

If you are only able to bring in one group at a time and the weather is bad, will you have to postpone / prioritise?

Answer:

Yes. We are also planning to hold these sessions as late as possible in an attempt to minimise risk of infection.

Question:

Is this classed as a school event?

Answer:

Yes, but we need governor approval for it to go ahead.

Question:

How confident are you that you can maintain social distancing?

Answer:

Children will arrive at school and we will assign them a space to sit. Children will not come into the building. There will be some socially distanced games that can be played and the sessions will be for up to one hour, so if any problems arise, the session can be cut short.

Question:

How will you manage the staggered drop off and pick up with that many children?

Answer:

We will not be operating a staggered drop off / pick up system. Children will be dropped off in a socially distanced way.

Question:

Has there been any negative feedback from the staff with regards this proposal as the higher number of pupils could increase the risk of infection?

Answer:

The fact that we are holding the sessions outside and that we are doing it on the school premises rather than the Butts is better. An hour may be too long for the younger children but as mentioned before, the sessions can be cut short if necessary. Staff feel that the benefits outweigh any concerns they may have.


It was noted that the Governing Body approved the proposed transition plans.

Transition to Reception

PA then explained that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are in the process of making plans for transition for the new Reception children. PA advised that LP has been using eSchools to communicate with Reception families and that home visits via Zoom have also taken place.

PA added that the SLT are currently considering whether to offer a softer start to the new Reception children as they are concerned that from the start of term, it would be five full days and that this may be overwhelming for some children given that a full transition has not been possible. PA explained that the plan may involve Reception children coming to setting later on in that first week back, or give parents the choice of children being in setting for mornings only if they felt this necessary.

PA explained that a lot of the Reception children already have siblings at the school and so they know the school and the staff a little.

Signed  Date 23/4/2020

Governors asked:

Question:

If you offer this more relaxed start, what are the rules with regards to children being in setting?

Answer:

Legally, children do not have to be in full-time school until the term after their fifth birthday. The LA are however concerned over very protracted starts, so we would need to ensure this is only a short-term approach i.e. that all children are in setting full-time before half-term.

A governor pointed out that for some families a full-time offer may be preferential if parents work as if children were only in school in the mornings, they would then need to go to an alternative provision such as a childminder and that this may be more tiring for the child.

PA then added that in the last round of bringing children back to school, some children who were struggling at home returned to setting, and have settled really well.

School Holidays

PA advised that schools have now been informed that they do not need to be open for the summer holidays.

Statutory Processes

PA confirmed that all statutory processes have been suspended for this year but that the following are expected to take place as normal in 2021:

- Early Years profile judgements;
- Phonics screening tests;
- Key Stage 1 SATs and teacher assessments;
- Year 4 multiplication check;
- Key Stage 2 SATs and teacher assessments.

PA added that there has been some pressure on the DfE to not publish league tables in 2021, but there is yet to be a decision on this.

Training

PA explained that less staff training has taken place this term due to reduced capacity amongst staff.

A governor asked:

Question:

What has happened with regards the Newly Qualified Teacher's (NQT) training?

Answer:

Some of the training has taken place virtually and they have access to different platforms. In terms of the extra time assigned to NQTs, this has still been in place. Targets and meetings have also taken place and they have been receiving regular support throughout the current situation.

September Plans

PA explained that government guidance on plans for schools to open fully from September were received on Thursday 2 July followed by briefings from the LA on Monday 6 July.

It was noted that a summary (A short guide to the Government's plans for schools for September) from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) on the latest guidance was shared with governors prior to the meeting.

PA explained that at some point, the Governing Body will need to review the updated Risk Assessment based on the guidance for schools opening fully from September, but that this may have to take place in the summer holidays as plans have not yet been finalised.

PA added that current concerns are lunchtimes, toilets and staff shared areas. PA explained that any spikes in infection rates in schools thus far have been recorded when staff get together for breaks. PA advised that there is a potential issue regarding the staff break out areas (the library is currently being used as one of them), but that none of the concerns raised are insurmountable.

Furthermore, PA added that there is an expectation that the plan for schools to open fully from September is deliverable although no additional funding will be provided to enable this.

It was noted that an updated Risk Assessment to include plans for September will be shared with governors when available. ACTION PA

Catch-up Fund

PA explained that at school level, this will likely equate to approximately £8k and that is assuming the funding is not weighted to a particular sector i.e. secondary schools or disadvantaged pupils.

A governor asked:

Question:

Do you envisage making use of the tutoring package?

Answer:

Yes. We could use it to do some initial assessment of where children are at once they are settled in order to ascertain which children would benefit the most.

OFSTED

PA confirmed that routine inspections remain on hold for the Autumn term but that there will be informal conversations to check how schools are doing post Covid-19.

A governor asked:

Question:

Do you know the criteria for these informal conversations?

Answer:

These will not be inspections but there is additional guidance available. They will be visiting all 'Inadequate' schools and a random selection of all 'Requires Improvement', 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools.

A further governor asked:

Question:

Can you share information regarding progress of School Improvement Work?

Answer:

There will be four areas to target, with one of these being areas of improvement. There will also be something around the Quality of Teaching including Teaching Assistant provision and meeting pupils' needs. I also expect there to be a focus on school culture that leads into children's behaviour and one on the Curriculum.

It was noted that once this is complete, it will be shared with governors for their review in September. ACTION PA

6. School Policies for Approval

It was noted that there were no policies for approval.

7. Length of School Day – outcome of Staff Consultation

It was noted that the following documents were shared with governors prior to the meeting:

- Responses to Staff Questionnaire 2020;
- Longer Responses to Staff Questionnaire 2020;
- Staff Questionnaire – Google forms.

The Chair proposed and it was agreed that a detailed analysis of the Staff survey will be undertaken in September.

It was noted however that a review of staff's responses in respect of the increase in length of the school day took place during this meeting.

It was also noted that on one particular question, the ratings were the inverse of the rest of the questions, with '1' being strongly in favour and '5' strongly against.

PA then summarised the responses stating that all staff are broadly in favour of increasing the length of the school day.

Governors briefly discussed how the SLT could support the member of staff who is against the proposal and consider the reasons behind their response.

Governors asked:

Question:

Should the plan to increase the length of the school day go ahead in September or because of the current situation and the potential of an alternative start for our Reception children, should this be delayed until January?

Answer:

As there may be staggered start times in September, the length of the school day will vary for our pupils so it may go unnoticed. Once the situation is more settled, it will be more noticeable.

I will still need to inform parents if the proposal is approved and cannot see an issue with this starting from September.

It was noted that the Governing Body approved the increase in length to the school day.

8. Updates regarding Collaborative Working with Local Schools

It was noted that this item is covered by a confidential minute.

9. Minutes of Subcommittees

Approved minutes of the Premises and Finance Committee meeting held on 22 November 2019 were circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting.

Approved minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 15 January 2020 were circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting.

It was noted that governors accepted the Committee reports.

Signed  Date 23/9/2020

Items for Discussion

10. School reopening plans for September 2020

It was noted that this item was extensively covered under Item 5 Head Teacher's report.

11. School Budget

The Chair asked PA to provide governors with an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on the school budget.

PA advised that approximately £500 can be attributed to items such as hand sanitiser, tape, signage etc., but that this cost has been offset against a saving on Supply Cover as it has not been possible to have supply teachers in school.

PA then explained that it is possible to apply to the Covid-19 fund but given the specific rules applied to this fund, he expects that approximately £200 will be recouped.

PA then advised that the main impact is the cost of the continued After School Club provision for key worker children and due to reduced uptake from the rest of the families, a loss of approximately £7 - £8k is expected.

PA added that the DfE has advised that they will not cover any lost income for this area. PA also advised that this will push the school into deficit budget and that the issue has been raised with the DfE and the local Member of Parliament.

It was noted however that despite the cost, the school and Governing Body agreed that continuing the provision was the right thing to do for the Fowlmere community.

12. Governance for next academic year

a. Committee Membership

The Chair advised that Nico Schonken's current term of office ends on 31 August, but that Nico has kindly agreed to continue in the role of Co-opted Governor for a further term if the Governing Body agree.

The Chair then asked NS to leave the meeting temporarily whilst the Governing Body discussed his potential re-appointment as Co-opted Governor.

It was noted that the Governing Body unanimously approved the re-appointment of Nico Schonken as Co-opted Governor.

The Chair then invited NS to rejoin the meeting, thanked him for his continued commitment and confirmed his re-appointment.

The Chair then advised that this would be Gill Heathcote's last meeting as Co-opted Governor at Fowlmere Primary School. The Chair thanked Gill for her dedication and support over her time as governor, adding that it will be difficult to replace her with someone of the same calibre.

It was noted that a gift from the Governing Body was arranged prior to the meeting and this was presented to Gill by her husband.

It was noted that GH left the meeting at 8.45pm.

b. Dates of meetings for 2020/21

Before confirming dates of meetings for the 2020/21 academic year, the Chair advised that she would like the Governing Body to consider a change in the way that FGB meetings take place and proposed that some meetings are held virtually, with others taking place as face-to-face meetings.

An in-depth discussion took place where governors considered how this would work and the benefits / issues of doing this.

It was noted that governors agreed that this would only work if everyone attended either virtually or face-to-face rather than a mixture of the two.

A governor asked whether in specific circumstances, it would be possible for a member of the Governing Body to attend the face-to-face meetings virtually and whilst this conflicts with the agreement to hold either all virtual or all face-to-face meetings, it was deemed possible. A concern was noted that this could lead to a governor never attending a face-to-face meeting.

The Chair proposed and it was agreed that the first, last and the Strategy Full Governing Body meetings all be held face-to-face, with the remaining meetings to be held virtually.

It was noted that this can also be applied to sub-committee meetings but that the Terms of Reference will need to be amended to reflect this change in procedure.

A robust discussion followed during which governors considered whether holding virtual meetings could create a barrier to certain members of the community, for example, Pupil Premium families, from volunteering as Parent Governors, as they may not have access to the technology to enable them to attend virtual meetings.

It was noted that governors acknowledged that holding virtual meetings could preclude sectors of the community who are least represented on the Governing Body. Governors considered the equality implications of opting to hold virtual meetings and it was agreed that if the Governing Body's constitution was different, there could be a need to return to physical rather than virtual meetings.

During the discussion, governors also considered how to ensure this issue would not arise by ensuring that communication with parents with regards governor vacancies explains that there are always ways to make it work to ensure all families can apply / volunteer.

A further discussion followed on how the Governing Body should consider ensuring the constitution is more diverse going forwards. Governors considered how to include representation for Pupil Premium or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) families given that considerable time is spent discussing Pupil Premium spend and achievement of these groups at Governing Body meetings.

A suggestion was made to include a section on this when Parent Voice takes place and PA explained that through the Achievement for All programme, the school has strong relationships with many of these families, and it may be preferable to approach it from this way. It was noted however that whichever approach is taken, it will need to be handled with both thought and care.

It was noted that the Governing Body agreed to also consider including this in their strategy discussions.

Governors then discussed GH's resignation as Co-opted Governor and the fact that this leaves a skills gap for someone other than staff with an educational skillset. It was noted that the new governor does not necessarily have to be a teacher but someone with an educational background, although from a data and personnel perspective, it proved invaluable having a teacher on the Governing Body.

During this discussion, it was agreed that an advert should be placed in the Fowlmere and Thriplow News, The Listing and on the Great and Little Chishill Facebook pages. ACTION SB

The Chair proposed the following dates for FGB meetings for the 2020/21 Academic year:

Wednesday 23 September 2020

Wednesday 10 March 2021 (strategy meeting)

Wednesday 2 December 2020

Wednesday 5 May 2021

Wednesday 10 February 2021

Wednesday 14 July 2021

It was noted that the Governing Body agreed the above meeting dates.

As noted above, the intention is to hold the first, last and Strategy meetings face-to-face but it was agreed that this may not be possible due to the current situation.

The Chair then proposed that dates for the first Committee meetings are set but PA asked if this can be delayed until September given the current situation.

It was noted that the Governing Body agreed and that the Committee Chairs would action this and add meeting dates to the Microsoft Teams calendar. ACTION AP / NS / HW

13. Urgent Matters

There was one other item of business discussed:

- i. Head Teacher and Staff wellbeing

Governors asked:

Question:

How are you and the rest of the team?

Answer:

As the staff representative on the Governing Body, I would say that the team are coping, but are stressed and tired and really looking forward to the end of term. However, it has been great to see the children back in school.

LP added that throughout this situation, staff have been amazing and have adapted well to everything they have been asked to do. LP added that they are coping well, but that there is a lot to deal with.

Question:

Do you feel safe?

Answer:

Personally yes, but I think that those who initially had concerns over returning to school, probably still feel the same.

Question:

Has the information in the Head Teacher's report regarding the prevalence of Covid-19 been shared with staff?

Answer:

Yes, it has.

Signed  Date 23/9/2020

On behalf of the Governing Body, the Chair once again thanked everyone at school for their hard work and dedication throughout the year, especially given the current situation.

Date of Next Meeting: 23 September 2020

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed  Date 23/9/2020