

FOWLMERE PRIMARY SCHOOL
MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Wednesday 2 December 2020
7.15pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Philip Atkin (PA), Head Teacher
Sarah Burge (SB), Chair
Angela Corbett (AC) (from 7.50pm)
Bruce Gilliam (BG)
Jo Grazebrook (JG)
Clare Hobro (CH)
Andrew Page (AP)
Hayley Woods (HW)

In Attendance:

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

1. Apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.15pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ashley Meggitt and Nico Schonken.

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 23 September 2020 were circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting and were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair after the meeting.

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. Training has started with new library helpers but yet to be rolled out fully* **ACTION PA/LP C/f**



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Matters arising from the meeting held on 25 September 2019

Item 16 Urgent Matters

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**

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**

Item 15 Urgent matters

School Budget Consultation

Chair to arrange a meeting with the cluster Chairs and Jonathan Lewis. **No response received. ACTION SB C/f**

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 8 July 2020

Item 12 Governance

Advert for the role of Co-opted Governor to be placed in the Fowlmere and Thriplow News, The Listing and on the Great and Little Chishill Facebook pages. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Matters arising from the meeting held on 23 September 2020

Item 4 Standing Orders

Chair to sign the Standing Orders for 2020/21 as approved. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Chair to set up a form on Microsoft Teams for governors to confirm they have read the Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it. **ACTION SB c/f**



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Item 5 Declaration of Interest

Outstanding forms from PA, SB, CH and JG. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 8 Head Teacher's Report

Schedule a governor monitoring visit on behaviour at lunchtimes. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 13d School Surveys - Governor Self Evaluation Form

All governors to complete SEF for discussion at FGB meeting in December. **ACTION COMPLETE**

Item 14c Governance – Dates of Meetings

Head to arrange for the Clerk to have a school email address to enable access to the governor Teams site, with emails automatically forwarded to her LA email address. **ACTION COMPLETE**

4. Election of Co-opted Governors

The Chair advised that Andrew Page's term of office as Co-opted Governor expires at the end of December and following his agreement to renew his term, asked the Governing Body whether they were happy to approve his re-appointment as Co-opted Governor.

It was noted that the Chair therefore asked AP to leave the meeting while his re-appointment as Co-opted Governor was considered.

Following a brief discussion on this matter, it was noted that the Governing Body approved the re-appointment of Andrew Page as Co-opted Governor.

AP re-joined the meeting and the Chair advised that the Governing Body had unanimously approved his re-appointment as Co-opted Governor.

The Chair then advised that following the advert that was placed in the Fowlmere and Thriplow News, a prospective candidate for the role of Co-opted Governor has been identified. The Chair explained that this candidate has been invited to attend the rest of the meeting, pending their appointment. It was noted that details of the candidate's background and suitability for the role were shared with governors prior to the meeting.

It was also noted that given the candidate is a Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) for Ofsted, governors considered whether this could have a negative impact on staff. During a discussion on this, the following was highlighted:

- Staff morale is low and staff are conscious that with the current restrictions in place, they are not able to do what they want to do to fully provide a high quality education;
- Staff may find it difficult having an HMI in school carrying out governor monitoring visits and this may add to the pressure already being experienced by staff;
- The candidate is also an education consultant so helps schools develop their Teaching and Learning and would therefore bring experience and ideas to help support the Senior Leadership Team;
- A governor's role is to support staff, not criticise them but given the candidate's background, would they be able to bring that expertise to the table, without commenting on the quality of provision that has been seen during a monitoring visit;
- Governors considered whether carrying out governor monitoring could be omitted from the role for this particular governor, but it was felt that the lack of visibility would create a further issue;



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- The teaching / education profession does not have a positive relationship on the whole with HMI;
- Is the Governing Body strong enough in their knowledge that an 'expert' would not dominate any discussion;
- If the skills are brought in an open and supportive way, there are some benefits in having someone with those skills on the Governing Body;
- Concern that no-one on the Governing Body has been able to meet with the candidate apart from via Teams;

Following this discussion, PA proposed that the candidate is invited to join the meeting as an observer. Governors could then ask some pertinent questions to establish whether the candidate foresees any conflicts between their job and the role of governor. It was noted that the candidate also has some links to children in the school through their professional background and that this could have an impact on their ability to be impartial.

Governors considered this proposal and agreed that the Chair would telephone the candidate and ask them if they are happy to join the meeting as an observer and answer some questions.

In addition, it was also proposed and agreed that the confidential discussion under Item 9 of this agenda will be moved to the end of the meeting and will take place once the candidate has left the meeting.

Following this telephone conversation, Angela Corbett (AC) joined the meeting at 7.50pm.

The Chair welcomed AC and asked governors to introduce themselves.

A governor asked:

Question:

You are incredibly experienced and we wanted to know how you would deal with the fact that staff may feel uncomfortable, how you think it might affect staff or whether you can see any issues with your profession as an HMI?

Answer:

I am no longer HMI, but do consultancy work. I like to think that I am not a traditional HMI Ofsted inspector and always try to build a strong rapport with staff. I believe that there is no point in working with anyone in a school if they have a fear as to why you are there and would hope that I would bring that approach to the role of governor. I would like role to be that 'critical friend' and be supportive in times of challenge, as well as bringing the experience and knowledge that I have in order to support the school in the high quality provision of education of children. I do have some knowledge of the school already as I have met a few of the children through my support work.

The Chair then asked AC if she was happy to remain as an observer for the rest of the meeting.

It was noted that AC agreed to remain as an observer for the remainder of the meeting.

5. Safeguarding

As Safeguarding Link Governor, CH advised that the next governor monitoring visit is still to be scheduled.



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A governor asked where the updated Safeguarding checklist has been stored and PA advised that it has been uploaded to the Governor Teams area.

PA then advised that the Local Authority has recently completed a Safeguarding review of the school. It was noted that a few actions were identified during the visit and that a copy of the report has been shared with the Chair of Governors.

A further governor asked when the next Safeguarding audit will take place and PA explained that the last review was three years ago but that the LA advised the next visit would be in two years.

a. Governor Training

In the absence of AM, it was not known whether he has completed the NSPCC online training.

It was noted that BG will be the next governor to complete this training.

6. Covid-19 Related Updates

The Chair explained that this item was added to the agenda in order for governors to discuss any Covid-19 issues primarily in relation to the school's Risk Assessment.

PA advised that there have been no major changes to the Risk Assessment, however the school has introduced a face covering policy following a rise in cases in Cambridgeshire in order to mitigate the risk of infection.

PA added that staff have also completed the process of identifying those children in school who would benefit from extra support, either through the catch up premium or tutoring programme. PA also advised that the school is currently working with one of the local tutoring agencies and asking those staff at Fowlmere who can offer this tutoring to register with this agency. PA explained that 75% of the cost of this tutoring is funded by the Government.


LP further advised that the school has signed up for the Nuffield Early Years Language Intervention programme and has been accepted. LP added that this is a Government funded language development intervention programme for Early Years children.

PA then advised that there have been no positive cases in school to date and that Covid-19 related absences can be discussed under his Head Teacher's report.

7. School Policies for Approval

- a) Special Educational Needs Policy
- b) Pay Policy
- c) Equalities Statement
- d) Anti-Bullying Policy
- e) Positive Behaviour Policy
- f) Collective Worship Policy
- g) Policy for the Acceptable Use of IT, the internet and Communication Technologies

It was noted that the above policies were shared with governors for their review prior to the meeting. Governors highlighted some minor comments / amendments to the



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Policy for the Acceptable Use of IT, the internet and Communication Technologies and the Positive Behaviour Policy.

It was also noted that all other policies were approved by the Governing Body.

8. Head Teacher's Report

It was noted that a Head Teacher's report was circulated to governors for their review prior to the meeting and included updates on the following:

- School data
 - Pupil Numbers
 - Class Structure
 - Attendance
- Staffing
 - Current Staffing
 - Staffing Changes
- Behaviour and Safety
 - Pupil Behaviour
 - Exclusions
 - First Aid
 - Incidents
 - Safeguarding
- Training and Professional Development

The Chair asked governors if they had any questions on the information included in the Head Teacher's Report.

Governors acknowledged the high attendance rate of 96.7% for all pupils despite the current situation.

PA explained however that Pupil Premium (PP) children and children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are heavily impacted by Covid-19 and winter illnesses, adding that this is a national picture. Governors noted therefore that this highlights how vulnerable these groups are, with almost double the absence of the school's non-vulnerable pupils.

JG advised that there are currently 13 children on the school's SEND register with 8 of those pupils registered with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

A governor asked:

Question:

Are there are families who have chosen not to send their children to school?

Answer:

No. We have a few children who have had medical interventions and have therefore had some time off and this is where you will see some spikes in the data. The attendance rate is stable and as mentioned before, we have had no positive cases.

PA then drew governors' attention to the SENCo report (Appendix 1) included with his report and explained that as SENCo, JG has undertaken a significant amount of work during what is always a very busy term.

Governors asked:

Question:



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What does this mean for the school going forwards?

Answer:

It means that we are better placed to meet the needs of those children. As already advised, JG has carried out a significant amount of work and this will have an impact on some of the issues that we are currently seeing in the data, i.e. behaviour, pupil progress. Now that we are getting a bigger picture of the needs of these children, it will make a difference to what we are doing to support those pupils. However, we still do not have the financial resources available to provide release time for JG to carry out her SENCo role.

Question:

Has a SEND governor monitoring visit been scheduled?

Answer:

Not yet. I will ensure that AM is fully appraised of the work that has been done so far in order to focus the visit appropriately.

Question:

What is reasonable in terms of the level of detail included in this report? How practical is it to provide that for every FGB?

Answer:

It is reasonable to ask for this level of detail termly. In addition, you may want to consider if it goes to the Full Governing Body or the Standards Committee.

It was noted that the Governing Body agreed for this report to be shared with the Standards Committee going forwards.

It was noted that there no other comments or questions on the Head Teacher's report.

9. Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Structure

The Chair referred governors to the proposed SLT structure following LP's resignation that was shared along with the Head Teacher's Report, explaining that the proposal is to delay the appointment of a new Assistant Head until the new academic year. The Chair advised that due to the time of year and the current situation, it is likely to be difficult to recruit a suitable candidate with Early Years and Senior Leadership experience.

It was noted however that governors were concerned about the gap that this leaves in the SLT.

A governor asked:

Question:

If the new teacher is on a lower salary, will it be possible to employ an extra person to undertake some of the more mundane items that you as Head Teacher currently have to deal with?

Answer:

As I am not currently full-time, once LP leaves, I will need to return to full-time as you cannot have a school without a SLT in place. The reduction in salary costs will therefore be negligible.

With regards the cover I have been providing at lunchtimes, the new temporary member of staff in Class 4 has been helping and HW has also been volunteering, so the situation is improving.



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A further governor asked:

Question:

How long is this member of staff employed for?

Answer:

Initially until February half term.

Following this discussion, it was noted that the Governing Body approved the proposed Leadership structure and the plan to recruit an Early Years teacher.

It was also noted that discussions are ongoing and that a further item on this matter will be added to the next FGB meeting agenda.

Add an item to the February FGB meeting agenda on SLT Structure. ACTION SB

10. Staff wellbeing, especially concerning COVID-19

a. General staff

The Chair explained that staff wellbeing especially in relation to the current situation is a concern for the Governing Body, and that she is considering surveying the staff to ascertain the current feeling. However, it was noted that the fact that December is always a busy time of year plus the added pressure that the current restrictions are placing on staff, asking them to complete a survey, may add to the pressure.

Governors discussed the merits of asking staff to complete a survey and whether it would be perceived in the spirit it was intended. During this discussion, it was noted that staff are concerned about catching the virus and passing it on to loved ones and this is creating pressure and anxiety. In addition, staff worry about the impact on the rest of the staff should they catch Coronavirus.

It was also noted that those staff present at the meeting felt that staff would be happy to complete the survey as they would see it as governors being supportive. However, governors acknowledged that there is not a great deal they could do to help relieve the pressure and the anxiety currently being experienced by staff.

A governor asked whether the Governing Body are contributing to the stress teachers are currently feeling and it was noted that this did not appear to be the case, especially given the fact that it is a national picture in terms of how teaching staff are feeling.

PA explained that high outcomes for pupils are intrinsically linked with good staff wellbeing, adding that the additional routines in respect of Covid-19, are preventing teachers from doing their jobs fully. PA further explained that as staff are not able to deal effectively with pupil behaviour because of lack of capacity, this has a negative impact on staff wellbeing.

Furthermore, PA advised that with the current level of staff in setting, it is not possible to operate effectively, with staff attempting to cover too many tasks and therefore not being able to do any of them to a high standard as a result.

It was noted however, that the last week has seen an improvement due to the temporary Teaching Assistant in Class 4.



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A governor asked:

Question:

Is there any flexibility in respect of the Covid-19 guidance? Is it possible to change the classroom setup to help with some of the pupil behaviour i.e. provide carpet time?

Answer:

There is some flexibility but the guidance on children facing forward in class is non-negotiable. It is worth noting that children are in bubbles and we are not mixing bubbles. We are also trying to reduce the transmission of the virus as staff. Regular reviews of how we are working are also taking place.

b. HT/SLT

The Chair asked whether as a Governing Body, enough is being done to support the Head Teacher / Senior Leadership Team and in response, PA explained that the current situation is very challenging. In addition, one of the main issues is that there is a significant amount of work to do to achieve the objectives in the SIP and to move the school forward.

A governor asked:

Question:

How much of a difference on SLT workload would it make if you were able to double the amount of time of the extra TA in Class 4?

Answer:

The reality is it is impossible to do the 'normal' things such as policies during the school day. If we did not have to deal with Covid-19 related matters, such as break and lunchtime duties, this will have a positive impact on workload. Both the SLT and staff are having to provide additional cover at break times due to not being able to mix bubbles.

Following this discussion, it was proposed and agreed that the Finance and Premises Committee will consider whether it is possible to fund additional resource, in order to alleviate some of this pressure. ACTION Finance and Premises Committee

11. School Improvement Plan Updates

For the benefit of AC, the Chair explained that there are three core objectives on the School Improvement Plan (SIP) – Behaviour, Quality of Provision and Curriculum, adding that a significant amount of data with regards behaviour was included in the Head Teacher's report.

Behaviour

PA explained that the present focus on behaviour is the 'immediate stage' and that the current approach is to take things one step at a time. PA added that in general this approach has been reasonably successful and there has been an improvement in behaviour at lunchtimes. PA explained that this is largely due to interventions that have been implemented, such as using the therapeutic approach to behaviour.


Governors asked:

Question:

Is this approach taking us in the right direction?

Answer:

Yes. If we were to write a list of achievements in regards to behaviour, it has been successful.



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Question:

Do you think that staff's level of engagement with the therapeutic approach has improved?

Answer:

The therapeutic approach is a shift from more traditional ways of dealing with behaviour. For some staff, it has been more of a challenge. Our Behaviour Policy includes specific 'scripts' to help teachers support children with behavioural difficulties, and we are trying to ensure staff use this consistent approach and this has been a challenge.

It is worth noting that the therapeutic approach is not a quick fix to behaviour, but a long-term shift in pupil behaviour and it will take time to be fully embedded.

Quality of Provision

PA explained that a significant amount of work has taken place on looking at individual lessons and providing feedback. In addition, it was noted that LP will be coming back in January to provide some teacher support.

PA further explained that with more capacity, more could be done to improve the quality of provision.

Following this brief update, it was proposed and agreed that a more detailed discussion takes place at the next Standards Committee meeting.

13. Governance Matters

a. Monitoring Visits

The Chair thanked governors for the visits and reports that have already been completed, adding that once a visit has taken place, the visit report needs to be sent to PA for review within a week.

The following updates were noted:


- i. Behaviour – report has been uploaded to the Governor Teams area and reflects the discussion that took place during the meeting on this matter.

It was noted that the standard question on Safeguarding was not included in this visit report and a governor queried the section under 'What have I learnt as a result of my visit'.

It was therefore proposed and agreed that the Chair will liaise with NS on the above queries. ACTION SB

- ii. Safeguarding – covered earlier in the meeting.
- iii. Early Years – visit to be scheduled.
- iv. Covid-19 – report has been uploaded to the Governor Teams area. General feedback from this visit is that staff are doing the best they possibly can with the limited resource available to them.

A governor asked what the current status is with regards staff having access to break rooms other than the staff room due to current



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restrictions and it was noted that staff are not able to use the library or meeting room as they are needed for other purposes. The staff at the meeting explained that contact with other staff is limited, face coverings are worn and social distancing is adhered to.

v. Health and Safety – report has been uploaded to the Governor Teams area.

b. Governor Self Evaluation Framework results

The Chair explained that the results of the governor Self Evaluation have been uploaded to the Governor Teams area and overall, were positive with no major skills gaps identified.

It was noted that AC left the meeting at 9.30pm.

Following AC's departure, governors considered whether a further discussion on her potential appointment should take place or whether governors should move on to discuss Item 12 of the agenda.

Due to time constraints, governors agreed that a further discussion on this appointment should take place once both PA and SB have had an opportunity to meet with AC again.

12. Updates regarding Collaborative Working with Local Schools

It was noted that this item was taken out of order and is covered by a separate Confidential Minute.

14. Any Other Business

LP asked governors if they could respond to the PSHE questionnaire that she has circulated as governors' responses will help with the work around policy that she is currently doing.

The Chair then explained that this was LP's last Governing Body meeting before she leaves Fowlmere Primary School and wished to note governors' thanks to LP for her commitment and support to not only the Governing Body but also the school during her time at Fowlmere.

15. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on:
Wednesday 10th February 2021 at 7.15pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.35pm.

16. PREVENT Update Training for all Governors

It was noted that PREVENT training for governors took place following the meeting.



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