

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held in the school
at 6.30 p.m. on Thursday 20 September 2012

No. 2012-2013-1

Present: Mark Broadbent (MB, chair), Graham Hughes (GH), Sally Livesey (SL), Barbara Lucesoli (BL), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), Michael McGuinness (MMcG), William Merrick (WM), John Moore (JMo), Janet Muir (JMu), Sarah Slattery (SS), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies: Jo Coward (JC), Fr Peter Leeming (PL), Mary Meakin (MM)

1. **Election of Chair of Governors**

MMcG raised an objection to MB's re-election, feeling that a change could be beneficial. Several governors pointed out that no one else had put themselves forward to stand in MB's place. GH stated that while he would vote for MB, he agreed that organisations like the GB can benefit from change; this should not be taken as a reflection on the previous postholder, but rather an observation that freshness can be good. Often in this kind of situation, people do not self-nominate because there is already someone doing the job. MB stated that he also agreed to a large extent, and had originally not been intending to stand again; however, he would like to seek re-election for one year, in order to complete one project. GH proposed and WM seconded the nomination; MB was unanimously re-elected as chair.

2. The **minutes** of the meeting of Tuesday 17 July 2012 were amended to correctly show BL's attendance, and confirmed.

3. There were no **matters arising**.

4. **Behaviour Policy (house captains)**

JMcC introduced two house captains - Kairo and Kitty (Ephesians) - to represent the children in their contribution to governors' policy. Kairo explained that classes had established their rules through collective discussion; these discussions were then brought together in an assembly, and recorded by Y6. Examples of the rules were: be kind; keep the school tidy; do your best. Awards are given for good behaviour: house points, the Head Teacher's award and golden time on a Friday. Golden time is lost in 5-minute increments, under a 3-warning system. Kitty explained that the children had also aimed to emphasise the Olympic values: teamwork, determination, passion, self-belief and honesty. Wristbands are awarded to the children for exhibiting these. Rules are also expressed positively wherever possible - not "don't run", but "walk sensibly".

JMcC noted that common words arising from the class discussions have been extracted and added to the policy. The aim was to establish principles of behaviour rather than rules. "Values" have also become more important to the children, and have been added to the policy heading. JW queried whether "be careful with personal property and details" meant, for example, avoiding sharing personal details online? JMcC confirmed this; WM felt the wording needed tweaking as this was not entirely clear on a first reading. House captains confirmed that they were happy with the policy, and felt that its values and aims were actively upheld by the school's daily life.

The redrafted behaviour policy will go to a subcommittee for ratification and fine-tuning. SL wondered if it was possible to include something about working hard, in light of the Olympic theme and the huge effort expended by the athletes. Although self-belief, determination and passion are all aspects of this, the hard work is implicit rather than held up as a specific aim. JMcC thanked the house captains for their work.

5. Headteacher's Report

This was circulated in advance to governors via email. BL was surprised by section 6.5 (regarding an investigation by the ombudsman into the school's anti-bullying policy). JMcC explained that JC is handling the issue; she has until 30 September to respond to the ombudsman's recommendations. JMcC noted that although the recommendations provided were not difficult to implement (and had in several cases already been implemented – for example, benchmarking the anti-bullying policy against best practice), it was likely that the school would challenge the process that had been followed; there are concerns about the accuracy of information provided to the ombudsman, the timing of the submission of the complaint, and also the lack of opportunities provided to the school to contribute. MB noted that the ombudsman has no power over the school, but can ask the Secretary of State to request that something is done. JMcC feels the situation is stable and not a cause for concern; parents know that the school is approachable.

JMcC drew governors' attention to the last paragraph of the report, regarding pressures on schools. JW asked whether the school roll number still stood at 207 children, and whether there was a date by which it needed to reach 210? JMcC said that the budget had been built on the assumption of 210, but several children left unexpectedly for the independent sector over the summer. The school has already received calls enquiring about places.

6. Policy Review

MB stated that the Performance Management policy has been reviewed and amended by the Resources subcommittee, the main issue being that teachers and TAs fall under the same conditions for appraisal. JMcC said that the school had used a standard policy created by EPM in conjunction with the unions, but the unions had not yet fully signed up to it. MB explained that in the event of a dispute, the school's legal advisor would be EPM, so it makes most sense to use their policies. It is nearly identical to the county council's policy, and has been nationally negotiated.

MB noted the publication of a slightly updated instrument of governance that takes in academies, but this doesn't really affect St Alban's. The policy had been considered in the drawing up of FMSIS.

The admissions policy was discussed. JMcC noted that the issue of baptism certificates had been brought to his attention: the policy does not specify "originals", but the school asks for them in practice. Should this be clarified? BL noted that in Italy, for example, a certificate is not issued as a matter of course. SL was concerned that this could be a particular problem in the case of refugee children, or children from overseas; JMcC said there had been problems in the past. It was agreed to replace the statement about a baptismal certificate with "evidence of baptism, such as a certificate of baptism"; MB noted that in certain cases, a phone call with the parish priest could potentially serve as adequate evidence. WM asked about the definition of a sibling as "a child living in the same home". MB explained this meant a child does

not have to be biologically related; this is a deliberate 'loophole' to allow for foster children and other such situations.

JMcC has included a statement on equality in his Head Teacher's report, based on a CREDS template. The school is required to publish this, and to demonstrate that it is having an impact.

The establishment of a small working party to put in place a policy review cycle was discussed. JMcC has been collecting together policies with Mr Mellish's help, but would like a governor to review them. MB clarified that this relates to statutory policies; it is the governors' responsibility to ensure the school has them in place. Some policies belong specifically to the governing body, of which most are based on templates supplied by the council or EPM. Governors need to ensure that both statutory and governors' policies are in place and up to date, to demonstrate that the GB is fulfilling its requirements.

WM asked if the GB would be empowering that governor to accept policies on the GB's behalf? MB thought it would be empowering that governor to return to the GB and confirm the policies were satisfactory; the suggested structure should avoid overloading both governors and meetings with lengthy policy discussions. The selected governor will report back to an appropriate committee, or to the full GB, with a recommendation. It was agreed to appoint 4 governors given the number of policies involved: MB, BL, SL and WM. JMcC would like all policies to be in place by October half-term. The process will be co-ordinated by Mr Mellish. MB explained that this process was only for simpler policies; others such as SRE and SEN would continue to be discussed at the full GB. SL proposed that the subcommittee should meet after the FGB meeting had concluded to share out responsibilities.

7. Ofsted New Framework

A pamphlet regarding this was circulated ahead of the meeting. JMcC noted that St Alban's should be focusing on achieving "outstanding" status, though this will be a more difficult ranking to attain under the new approach.

8. Changes to Disclosure and Barring

JMcC explained that the previously-planned central agency (the ISA) has been dropped. MB mentioned the 'universal passport', which ensures that any changes after a CRB check are also reported to anyone who has expressed an interest in a person. The process is now more dependent on CRBs. The Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB) is responsible for ensuring there is a policy in place to support this. There have also been changes to recommendations in terms of disclosure: any allegations against a person are no longer disclosed on an enhanced CRB check. This could mean that a person could be employed while under an investigation, but this can't be disclosed until the process has been concluded. The LCSB should be able to advise the school in such a situation.

9. Review of Subcommittee and Link Governor Responsibilities

Chairs of subcommittees are to be elected at the first meeting of the year. MB noted that the cycle of meetings for subcommittees last year did not function well: there were lots of changes and meetings that did not happen, with dates changed at the last minute. Not everyone is able to turn down e.g. work commitments that arise subsequent to dates having been set. BL felt that too much responsibility had been left to the chair, and that a vice-chair working closely with the chair might help ensure that meetings can still go ahead. MB also noted that taking minutes is

currently left to the chair, which it would be good to correct. While it is unlikely to be possible to have a minute-taker who is not a participant, it should be someone who is not the chair. A vice-chair will be elected at each subcommittee meeting.

Subcommittee memberships for 2012-13 were agreed as follows:

- Performance & Standards: JC, MM, WM, JM, MB, JMCC, BL.
- Resources: GH, MB, BL, MMcG, JMCC, SL, SS, JMo, JW

It was confirmed that those with an interest could attend a meeting even if they are not a member of the subcommittee. WM noted that in such a situation, it could be possible to temporarily co-opt an attendee to ensure the meeting is quorate.

The headteacher's performance management subcommittee last year comprised subcommittee chairs and the chair of the governing body; it was agreed to continue with this structure.

Link governors were agreed as follows:

- Inclusion - MM
- Communications, Language and ICT, including MFL - JMo (taking over from MB)
- RE - PL
- Wellbeing/PE/PSHE - GH
- Environment/Geog/Hist/Outdoors - SL (taking over from JC)
- Skills-based Maths/Science - BL
- Assessment & planning - WM
- Performing Arts – JW (taking over from PL)
- Early Years - MMcG

MB explained that the member of staff should set the meeting; the staff member prepares a vision for the development of their subject, and a plan for the resources necessary to achieve it. The governor should review it, check that it seems sensible and help to produce an entitlement document, to serve as an input to the budget.

ACTION: JMCC will make sure that teachers understand that they need to set up a meeting.

10. Meeting Dates for 2012-13

Thursdays are generally good days for most of the GB.

Resources subcommittee:

- 7 p.m., Thursday 25 October.
- 6.30, Thursday 6 December
- 6.30, Thursday 7 February
- 6.30, Thursday 21 March
- 6.30, Thursday 6 June

FGB:

- 6.30, Thursday 31 January
- 6.30, Thursday 2 May (budget setting)

- 6.30, Thursday 11 July (results and teacher reports)

11. **Termly Briefings**

MB, SL and JW will attend these meetings.

12. **Register of Pecuniary Interests**

Members were reminded of the need to inform the clerk of any entries to the register.

ACTION: WM will send details of his textbook series.

13. **AOB**

School places in the city

In Chesterton, Shirley Infants and St Andrew's Juniors merged to become Shirley Primary, leaving the infant site vacant. The LA are now releasing that site, and have decided it must be a school because of pressure of numbers. It must be a free school or an academy, or an existing school expanding onto the site; Shirley Primary does not want to expand. It is unlikely, however, that it will be possible to use this site to expand Catholic provision, mainly because of the proximity of St Laurence's. St Bede's could apply, thanks to its academy status, but the school could not then be Catholic.

The former St Colette's site (off Tenison Road) has also been redesignated for educational purposes. JMcC has visited the site with Helen Bates to assess the possibility of expanding St Alban's using the site (for example, moving the infants there). It seems very unlikely to come to fruition, but is a very positive sign of the active involvement and concern of the diocese. There are now 315 children at St Laurence's, and pressure is mainly falling on the north of the city. In the south, there has been a lot of construction, but school places are not being filled. The under-filling of sites causes severe funding problems. SL may hear more about progress in both these areas through her involvement in the schools' forum.

NUT "action short of strike"

JM explained that the NUT (which has 8-9 teacher members at St Alban's) has distributed a booklet on conducting "action short of strike". It is not clear yet when this might happen. A meeting is due to take place to provide more information.

Fathers' drinks

MMcG would like to encourage greater participation in this once-a-month informal Monday meeting. JMcC thought this could be discussed further offline.

11 October year of faith mass

One member of staff will be attending and two children. JMcC is unable to attend. If a governor would like to go, there will be a space in the car. JW may be able to attend.