

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 23 January 2014

No. 2013-2014-3

Present: Mark Broadbent (MB, chair), Jo Coward (JC), Mgr Peter Leeming (PL), Sally Livesey (SL), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), John Moore (JMo), Janet Muir (JMu), Sarah Slattery (SS), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies: Graham Hughes, William Merrick.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday 6 November 2013

Confirmed.

2. Matters Arising

Subgroups delegated from the last meeting will convene at the end of the meeting to agree dates.

JMcC had circulated an induction template from the last meeting, and also an equality statement.

JMcC and JC had reviewed teaching and learning policies in the summer term. Statutory policies also need to be reviewed; MB volunteered to do this. JMcC also suggested delegating certain policies to the Resources committee, including Health and Safety. The Resources committee should also appoint a working party.

3. Feedback From Training/Termly Briefings

JW and MB fed back from termly briefings. KS1 results were good across the county, but KS2 "is an area of challenge"; the LA is looking to support individual schools and assess whether it is a general trend. One attendee commented that funding is tight and focused on the Pupil Premium. There was some discussion of poor funding levels in Cambridgeshire, but it was generally agreed that this couldn't be used as an excuse. The gaps regarding expected levels of progress for disadvantaged children are getting bigger. The cohort of free school meals in Cambridgeshire as a whole is being examined to assess whether there are any differences with the rest of the country; the use of the Pupil Premium, and how best to implement it, is also being reviewed.

The LA is producing a document on 'Working Positively with Challenging Parents', which covers such topics as making sure the complaints procedure is up to date and easily accessible, acting early to keep problems at "concern" rather than "complaint" levels, and so on. The LA will be working to help defuse situations when approached by parents. A poster covering what parents and schools should expect from each other should be available in 3-4 weeks. One attendee commented that having an accessible head really helps. The initiative aims to cover a spectrum from people who have genuine concerns to those who are constantly complaining, bordering on harassment. There was some discussion of unsupported children; the idea of having a Family Intervention Officer was mentioned. JMcC noted that the policy is clearly available on the website, and JMcC is always careful to alert parents to its existence when they contact him in these sorts of situations.

Feedback was provided from a pilot study on Gypsy, Roma and traveller children, which had taken place in 4 areas, of which Cambridgeshire was one. The major challenge is attendance. There has been a change in the definition of and funding for 'looked-after children'. The criteria have been expanded to children who were in care but are now adopted. Parents may not wish to share this sort of information, but it attracts significant funding: £1900. St Alban's does not currently have pupils from either of these groups, but the LA recommended that there should be a governor nominated to specialise in these cases, should they arise. JMcC noted that CREDS and looked-after children are both very sensitive topics in Cambridgeshire. £100k funding + £25 per child is put into CREDS; looked-after children absorb a significant portion of funding in the county.

An update on Ofsted inspections was also given. If a school has previously been marked down, this now doesn't count against it in future inspections. Secondary school league tables are very focused on the Pupil Premium and its impact on learning. St Alban's does not have a nominated governor responsible for the Pupil Premium, but the Performance & Standards committee is monitoring vulnerable children extremely closely, including children who attract the Pupil Premium. Inspectors should not be looking for teaching style, but for each child to be learning at every level, including the most able. JMcC noted that St Alban's can provide examples of what it is doing to encourage children to be independent learners. The quality of middle leadership is likely to be looked at very closely. Two levels of progress are now expected in both English and Maths; previously, performing above the threshold for one subject kept a school from being 'below the floor', but progress is now required in both. Heads are encouraged to challenge an inspector if they appear to be using out of date criteria.

The Annual Conference will take place on Saturday 8 March. JC and MB are considering attending. The LA is looking for a Local Authority governor for Northstowe to stand in while the school is being built.

SS attended training on changes to SEN funding and maximising the impact of TAs, but felt that the relevant learning points had been well covered in the TA provision document circulated by JMcC ahead of the meeting.

4. Head Teacher's Report

There are 209 children on roll – particularly significant because of the timing of the funding census (210 is full capacity).

50 SIFs were provided for Reception admissions in 2014-15 (40 had been received at St Laurence's). A couple of families applied after the closing date. Attendance is good. Persistent absence is at 0.6%, due to children with medical needs. Children in Need meetings have been held for these cases. There has been one racial incident (verbal abuse), which was discussed in depth with the child.

The level of EAL has dropped to 38%, although the number of children arriving at the school from other countries is still very high.

Alison West, Link Advisor, provided the St Alban's SEF. The school recently went through a difficult period restructuring the deployment of TAs. JMcC commented in particular on how much he appreciated TAs' flexibility and commitment. JC commented that regarding the external reporting on the impact of TAs, St Alban's has already put in place measures to assess their impact – not just the role, but also the particular mechanisms. FSM children are making as good, if not better, progress as their peers. More midday supervisors have come forward.

The playground fencing onto Lensfield Road may be replaced by a brick wall; the diocese is investigating this. Some tree work needs to be undertaken. The church and school are working together to issue tickets for unauthorised parking in the school car park. Some asbestos management work needs to be undertaken in the boiler room. Fr Henry is settling in well as the school's chaplain. The PFA have performed excellently recently; JC commented that particular congratulations should be made given the impressive amount raised by the Christmas fair. Pax Christi were very impressed with the KS2 Advent service.

Fr Paul Maddison is keen to explore links with Palestine via visits and curriculum resources, and has met MB and JMcC to discuss. The End of the Year of Faith mass went very well. Lots of extracurricular activities have been taking place. Anti Bullying Week focused on cyberbullying. A Y4 reading pilot is using IT to improve reading levels. Reading drop-ins and French observations are due to take place shortly. Many afterschool clubs are now running, including a ball skills session on a Monday, for those who need additional confidence. The school is experiencing a lot of external and internal pressures; JMcC encouraged governors to continue to develop links with subject leaders.

The Schools Forum task group is meeting to lobby ministers regarding the dire state of funding in Cambridgeshire. Secondary schools are seeking a Judicial Review. The Diocese is now reviewing the role of a Teaching School Alliance model, and seeking an accredited person who can deliver this training, with a view to developing a pool of teachers that are in a position to apply for vacancies in Catholic schools.

5. Compliance With Equality Duties

The school's equality statement was published at the start of the academic year. The school is required to continue monitoring equality objectives, and this is being carried out via the Performance and Standards committee.

There are three main objectives, to which the school needs to add. The school is seeking an Equality Award around Easter, with effort being coordinated by Miss Swindell.

6. Entitlement/Link Governors

JMu has asked all staff to ensure they contact their link governor to invite them into the school to work in the classroom during a lesson, and then to meet afterward to look at their entitlements for each subject, explore actions from previous meetings, and look forward to the rest of the year.

Link governor roles were reviewed, and the new curriculum area of Art and Design allocated to JC.

7. AOB

SL wondered if in addition to the induction pack recently circulated, there was a specific job description for governors? It was agreed that GH's suggestion of adding meetings with the chairs of subcommittees to the induction programme was a good one.

ACTION: JMc will investigate whether there is a job description for governors, and insert GH's suggestion into the draft induction pack.