

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 4 February 2016

No. 2015/2016 - 3

Present: Larry Binns (LB, observer), Mark Broadbent (MB, chair), Lia Campos (LC), Patrick Coughlin (PC), Jo Coward (JC), Graham Hughes (GH), Sally Livesey (SL), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), William Merrick (WM), Janet Muir (JMu), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk)

Apologies: Fr Peter Leeming

1. New governor introductions and welcome

MB welcomed the new parent governors, Lia Campos and Patrick Coughlin. Larry Binns, from Sacred Heart School, introduced himself: he has been an LA governor at Sacred Heart for five years, and was also a governor at Warrington Primary School for four years, where he sat on the finance committee. Lia Campos is a member of the City Kids committee and works in the hospital at Bury St Edmunds. Patrick Coughlin has a child in Year 4, and is a vascular surgeon at Addenbrooke's. The rest of the GB introduced themselves to the new governors.

2. Minutes of the meeting of Thursday 26 November 2015

Confirmed.

3. There were no matters arising

4. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

GH fed back from the resources committee on the Budgetary Control Report and key finance issues. The school is on track for a £30k carry-forward in this financial year. There is about £12k in the devolved formula capital pot that can be drawn down for capital projects. £2.5k will be spent this financial year on IT, with the remainder earmarked to improve the conservatory in KS1. A leak had to be rectified recently, and the school may be liable for some costs relating to this. There was a discussion regarding school pay and policies; a policy document on incremental pay for teachers was agreed. The sub-committee also agreed that St Alban's would be a Living Wage school as of that meeting, but that only doing business with companies and organisations that also conformed to this policy would be too difficult to assess. However, the school's policy would be amended to say that it "encourages" all its suppliers to adopt the living wage. The school minibus was discussed. More work is to be done on the business case to determine whether it was viable and appropriate; this will be discussed at the resources committee on 13 April. There was an update on the energy project (solar panels). During AOB, a discussion took place concerning the 10% contribution to the Diocese. Meetings are set for 13 April at 6.30 (budget setting) and 22 June at 6.30. JMcC explained the role of the resources subcommittee within the GB.

MB felt the minibus needed to be addressed before April. LC asked if it could belong to the Foundation rather than the school? JMcC thought there might be insurance issues, but that it might be possible to implement a pay-per-use policy. JC noted that

this would remove the need to resolve the question ahead of the budget deadline in April. GH thought that if the Foundation were happy to do this, it could be an option.

JC updated the full GB on the Performance and Standards subcommittee meeting; full notes of the meeting will be circulated.

MB and JW attended the termly briefings. There was a safeguarding update, and there are some key consultations upcoming in government that governors should be aware of: Fairer Funding; Education Bill to establish "coasting schools" eligible for intervention; a white paper on the future of education; and a rumour that the current government wants all schools to become academies. At present, £75k is spent per family for 2500 "challenging families"; the 'Think Family' initiative tries to bring together information across all bodies that might be dealing with such families. Alison Smith is the 'Together for Families' lead officer; the LA also offers 'Think Family' training for governors. This information was offered in support of the safeguarding discussion. There is information on frameworks and a professional pack available on the portal. JC noted that Miss Swindell will be aware of this via her work on vulnerable groups. JMcC mentioned the family support worker, Jo Ackroyd, to whom the school has access.

'Big Education' was discussed; Ofsted are concerned that schools have become too narrowly focused on English and maths, and will be looking for evidence that pupils are being educated across the wider curriculum. There is additional funding available. JMcC noted that the LA had offered to match-fund events across the county after the selling of a Lowry painting, but there was insufficient uptake; this funding has now been transferred to the Big Education project. JMcC noted that there was nothing available for the promotion of equality and diversity. The school may be required to show more evidence of this in future, and the school improvement board also wants to promote this.

Primary governors are encouraged to think about what will happen at KS3, as primary education forms its foundation; schools are encouraged to consider how to improve links with secondaries. One suggestion was that secondary staff could be given time out to visit primary schools. JC asked whether we could be looking at performance at KS3, assessing whether the school is sufficiently preparing pupils for KS3, and considering what else might be done to improve this? There has been so much emphasis on GCSE results that the early years of secondary have suffered from a lack of focus. WM felt that this reflected the lack of measurement options, and an uneasiness that what is happening is not being measured, and therefore it's difficult to prove that the time is not being wasted. JMu said that some schools send secondary staff in to meet pupils. JMcC said that Sacred Heart have pupils coming in to school; LB recommended trying out the secondary timetable in the summer term after SATs, as it could be effective in managing transition. WM commented that Year 7 could emulate this by making concessions towards a more Year-6-like structure, with a class teacher, to make for a more familiar experience. JMu commented that the subject specialisms at St Alban's meant that pupils were used to a mixture of teaching. WM said that secondary school teachers do not necessarily trust the learning delivered at KS2, and do like to re-tread work.

MB noted that there are currently 5 vacancies for headteachers in Cambridgeshire schools; 7 more are on the radar, and no applicants are coming forward. There are about 220 primary schools in Cambridgeshire, but around 20-25 in our local area. SL pointed out that there are more schools, and the cost of living in Cambridge makes it difficult for people to move in to the area. JW noted that it was stressed at the termly briefing that it was the GB's responsibility to care for the Head's wellbeing.

5. School to School Support

JMcC discussed the developments at the Children and Young People's Committee regarding local authority policy on building new faith schools. The Diocese has put a lot of work into this; St Alban's has also been actively involved. The paper will be discussed at a committee meeting on Tuesday 9 February. The recommendation is not to have an official policy on the building of new faith schools. No one from the Diocese or the school will be speaking at the meeting. JW wondered whether it might be possible for Andrea Squires to present at the meeting? JMcC said that Paul Rossi sits on the committee and will be present, but GH thought that he was there only as an observer. MB noted that diocesan representatives are allowed to take part in the debate, although they are unable to vote. SL asked if we had contacted the CofE representative? JMcC thought this might be possible. SL felt that the advantages not just to the faith community but to the county should be stressed. JMcC offered to talk to Helen Bates as to whether someone should speak at the meeting, to find out what she intended; he noted that the paper had also been circulated to parents at the school. If anyone is able to speak, it should be in support of the paper. There was a discussion as to whether to record the meeting; it was felt that JMcC should do this.

The school improvement board is trying to co-ordinate school-to-school support. The regional schools commissioner has given secondary schools a period of time to improve their results, during which the primary and special schools should continue to work together. There are therefore currently 2 separate boards in operation. Children with free school meals and vulnerable groups are the areas that need to be improved upon in Cambridgeshire, and this needs to be achieved quickly. Only 45% of schools in Cambridgeshire are good or outstanding. SL asked how this related to funding, given the historical underfunding in Cambridgeshire? JMcC and MB are considering attending a February event on academy formation.

MB has received an email from the chair of the board of governors at St Laurence's, asking whether St Alban's might supply governors to sit on disciplinary and appeals panels at the school. JC suggested we could trial the arrangement, considering future requests on their own merits. LB commented that this arrangement had been put in place at Sacred Heart some time ago, although the school had not yet had cause to make use of it. JMcC felt that it was a good sign of proactivity. MB proposed, GH seconded; unanimously agreed. MB will write to the St Laurence's chair to confirm.

6. Headteacher's report

JC felt that the deadline for completion of SIFs was necessary because the school is oversubscribed, and must be fair, clear, transparent and consistent. The policy has never been challenged at Diocesan level, and the school should be clear on how to respond if this does happen.

The school is in discussion with colleagues in neighbouring areas and at St Bede's regarding term dates. JMcC is involved in supporting schools that are aspiring to reach 'outstanding' level. The new IT assistant has started; there are some issues with staffing levels in the kitchen. The school is supporting OLEM's first communion class by providing facilities. Redevelopment of the website is also on the radar.

LB feels that Sacred Heart is doing well, but has ambitions to move to being outstanding. The recruitment issues have caused trouble, but JMcC's arrival has provided good cohesion. The school needs to move now into future planning. SL noted that Westminster Diocese used to run courses for aspiring heads and deputy heads, with adjacent dioceses invited. This was very effective in improving the recruitment of head teachers in London.

JMcC has been asked to follow up better dissemination of information from, and greater input into meetings of, the Diocesan Schools Commission. The Schools Commission is intended to determine the application of Catholic education policy to the Diocese. The Catholic Education Service should be informed by the Bishops.

7. Regular cycle of review of school policies

JMcC and WM will be meeting shortly to continue this rolling review work. A timescale needs to be established. JMcC asked if the new pay policy has been ratified? It was circulated at the Resources committee. Incremental half-point rises have been removed from the policy. SL suggested that the policy should be circulated by email with commentary, providing an opportunity for governors to raise any questions if necessary.

8. Review committee compositions and link governors

Last year's composition:

Resources: GH, MB, JMcC, SL, JW

Performance & Standards: JC, WM, JMu, MB, JMcC, JW

LC decided to attend both sub-committees; PC will attend Resources.

Link governors were redistributed to match the curriculum areas, as follows:

- English - PL
- Maths - PC
- Science - LC
- RE - JW
- Child Protection - JW
- Inclusion - JC
- Early Years - SL
- Assessment & Planning - WM
- Environmental Studies - SL
- PE - GH
- MFL - LC
- Computing - MB
- Performing Arts/Art/DT - JC

ACTION: JMu will update and circulate the entitlement documents to relevant governors.

7. AOB

The Governors' Annual Conference will take place on Saturday 5 March; JC and MB will attend.

Termly Workshops to Improve Governance will take place on Tuesday 23 February.

The statutory SEND information (the 'Local Offer') is available on the school website.