

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 29 September 2016

No. 2016/2017 - 1

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

Apologies for absence: Graham Hughes, Larry Binns (observer)

1. Behaviour policy review

MB welcomed two Year 6 pupils, who presented this year's update to the school's behaviour policy, explaining the process of discussing the rules in class groups and presenting them in an assembly. New rules were circulated to the governors ahead of the meeting. JC asked if the new rules had provoked lots of discussion and debate? Before a rule was added, the old rules were examined to see if new items could be absorbed into an existing item. Persistent offenders have to write lines outside the headteacher's office on a Friday. The governors thanked the 'chaplains' for their presentation. WM asked about other basic rules of the school (to do with uniform etc)? These are stored on the school website, and in the home-school agreement.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Thursday 7 July 2016

Confirmed.

3. Matters arising

JC will look at her notes for dates and attendance records at Performance & Standards meetings; RB will email GH about Resources. SL still needs to contact Paul Barber regarding academies.

4. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

SL and LC attended the termly briefing. The LA talked about how it might co-operate with multi-academy trusts, providing services that schools could buy into. Results for KS1 and KS2 were discussed; the group that combine FSM and SEN are still not progressing well. Trends across the LA appeared to be very similar to those observed by St Alban's. Cambridgeshire is underperforming compared to the rest of the country, with writing being the weakest skill. The LA is looking across borders, not confining itself to Cambridgeshire, and approaching other authorities to place representatives on MAT boards; it is very keen to provide help and support to schools that are embarking on becoming MATs. Five priorities were mentioned: getting schools in the region to reach national averages; increase improvement of vulnerable groups; improve recruitment & retention of teachers; improve writing at KS1; improve KS2 maths. JMcC mentioned schools in Peterborough that had observed the same pattern as St Alban's, in that the writing performance was significantly out of kilter with reading and maths, and one where performance in the teacher-assessed writing was considerably better than that in reading and maths. Keeping in Touch visits can be extended without further cost if it is deemed necessary in order to

provide adequate support. The LA remains a monitor for academies, but cannot take action unless it is invited to do so.

The new Keeping Children Safe in Education document was also discussed. Staff need to be updated at least annually; at least two people must be trained and designated. Reducing teacher workload was also a topic of conversation, and DBS checks for governors were discussed. JC asked whether it was good practice that we should renew them regularly? MB felt that governors should follow the school's policy for staff. Ofsted is very keen that schools should keep a record of how governors prove they are adding value. DfE is conducting a census of all children, taking in country of birth and nationality, and also subdividing EAL categories further to assess capability more precisely. The question of whether there might be funding implications was raised. In analysis of KS1 results, CEE languages had been split out as a discrete group within EAL, which was challenged by others attending the meeting.

An additional meeting of the Performance & Standards subcommittee was held on 11 July to look in detail at the KS2 results and discuss necessary actions. The subcommittee agreed to meet more often in the 2016-17 academic year in order to support the school's efforts, and is aiming for three meetings before March. SL noted that the importance of keeping written records was raised as a key issue at the termly briefing, and that it was very helpful to have such full notes of GB meetings.

5. Foundation governor vacancies

Canon Eugene Harkness has decided to accept the earlier invitation to become a foundation governor. There is still one additional foundation governor vacancy. The GB is in particular need of someone with finance skills. PC suggested someone with corporate legal expertise if the school is approaching the question of MAT creation? MB suggested that we try to initiate conversations with people we are aware of. JC proposed putting an advert in the parish newsletter; SL noted that this didn't always result in ideal candidates, but it was agreed that it was at least worth a try, with appropriate supporting documentation and interviews as necessary to ensure consistent screening. MB suggested a governor recruitment subcommittee; MB, JC and PC will meet to discuss a requirements draft prepared by JC.

ACTION: JMcC and MB to talk to Canon Eugene, with a view to placing it in as many local church and school newsletters as possible.

6. Headteacher's report

JMcC's headteacher's report was circulated ahead of the meeting. The school has overadmitted in KS2, in Y3, to avoid splitting a family that otherwise would have sent a third child elsewhere. JW raised the question of a similar situation in a different class; however, in that particular case the overadmission would have to have been in KS1, which is not possible.

Attendance so far this term is at 98%. 49.5% of the school's pupils have English as an additional language (EAL status), while 6 children are currently receiving free school meals. WM and SL asked if acronyms could be spelled out in full in each report in future, especially as they appear to be changing often. Standardised 'floor' targets set by the government have been comfortably exceeded by St Alban's; scores were positive in reading and maths, and -2.9 writing; the unofficial target for the school was -5, so St Alban's should avoid being a cause for concern.

St Alban's is now an 'amber' school, but JMcC is confident that this is a temporary dip, and the school will be back on track this year. Predictions for 2016-17 have been set with reference to prior attainment. School-wide testing is also due to take place to set a benchmark. PC asked about the methodology compared to last year's predictions; last year's process for obtaining these predictions was not as rigorous, and there are now more resources available to the school in order to assess performance more accurately. JW asked if this would be reflected in a more accurate achievement of predicted results? JMcC highlighted the fluctuation in expectations over the course of last year, while JMu noted that this year's cohort will benefit from an additional year of teaching under the new curriculum arrangements. WM pointed out that standardised scores are not available until all the test results are in. PC asked if the school was confident that the marking system would not change dramatically? JMu said that there was confidence that the new draft for 2017 was correct. JMcC felt that not as much evidence of writing progress had been collated last year as there should have been, which was reflected in the weaker performance, but that the school was acting on this for the year ahead.

The school improvement advisor will be visiting every half-term; the school is likely to be closely monitored. Intensive internal scrutiny and moderation will also be taking place.

JMcC would like governors to consider hosting another Vision Evening to look at future priorities.

7. Attendance targets

This school has never fined parents for unauthorised absence. The attendance target for this year is 96.2%, and JMcC asked for a mandate from the governors to continue to allow him to use his discretion in authorising absence, according to the likely impact on the child's education and the level of engagement between the family and the school. PC asked if the target included children with chronic ill health. Measurements do; the school is then required to demonstrate that it is engaged with the family in such cases and meeting the parents regularly to ensure the child is being looked after educationally.

8. Standards, school targets and KIT visit

The report from the recent KIT visit was circulated ahead of the meeting.

9. Admissions policy

St Bede's has changed its admissions policy this year to include church attendance, and length of time of attendance, with a corresponding scoring system tracked by the relevant priests. Meetings were held with the OLEM priests to facilitate the completion of the Supplementary Information Form for current Y6 pupils. Canon Eugene would like to introduce an attendance card for mass so that when next year's Year 6s come to complete their SIFs, they will be able to provide evidence. JW felt that the dynamic of OLEM has not really been taken into account by St Bede's in producing the form: the large numbers and the thinly-spread nature of the clergy means much of the congregation is not necessarily known to the priests. The policy was introduced as a result of the very high cost of appeals to St Bede's, many of which centred on church attendance versus locality. MB and JMcC are asking the Diocese for their response to this change. St Alban's is faced with a similar situation, and it is sad to be turning away practising Catholics because of distance; however, it must be acknowledged that the school has an important role to play in providing religious education to children who would not otherwise go to church.

Canon Eugene would like to introduce a similar system for the First Holy Communion class, to ensure that children are attending mass. JW noted that the FHC preparation at St Alban's is exemplary, and well above the standard of that taught in most parishes. PC highlighted that the benefit of the school setting is that the discipline is already a given; FHC education within the parish can suffer from being too informal, and also that it wasn't the child's fault if they weren't taken to mass often enough. One possible interpretation is that the parish would like to find a way of ensuring that the priests are getting to know the children. Parents have not yet been informed; a paragraph outlining the scheme is in preparation.

JMcC will raise the SIF question at the Diocesan Heads' meetings.

There is plenty of time to contribute to the consultation on admissions policies; the school will wait to hear for feedback from the Diocese before reviewing its admissions policy.

10. Policy review: equality statement, Pupil Premium, Child Protection

The equality statement, Pupil Premium policy and Child Protection audits were circulated, along with the updated Child Protection policy produced in July. JW and JMcC will revisit the audit with reference to the proposed changes to the policy. MB proposed that this new policy be adopted; all agreed. Pupil Premium is examined by the Resources committee; the Equality Statement also highlights changes relevant to this year.

WM and JMcC will continue their rolling review of statutory policies, and ensuring their ready availability.

11. Schools Financial Value Standard

This was submitted in February, via the head, chair of Resources and the office manager. The process will be repeated this academic year. It would be good practice for governors to examine this at their meetings.

12. Headteacher's performance review

A date in November has been set for this (30th). MB, JC and Graham Hughes were responsible for this previously; all agreed that this arrangement should continue. WM is willing to deputise for GH if necessary.

13. Register of pecuniary interests

Governors are reminded to notify the clerk of any relevant pecuniary interests.

14. PREVENT training

Governors were reminded to complete the online PREVENT training circulated ahead of the meeting.

15. Meeting dates for 2016-17

Full governing body meetings were agreed for:

Wednesday 23 November, 6.30

Wednesday 8 February, 6.30

Thursday 27 April, 6.30

Thursday 6 July, 6.30

Performance & Standards subcommittee first meeting: Monday 14 November, 6.30

Resources subcommittee first meeting: Tuesday 11 October, 7 p.m.

17. AOB

The Keeping Children Safe in Education update was circulated, and governors signed to acknowledge receipt.

Governors were reminded to ensure that their DBS certificates were up to date, as per the new regulations.