

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body  
held in the school at 6.30 p.m.  
on Wednesday 23 November 2016

## No. 2016/2017 - 2

**Present:** 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 for absence:** Jo Coward

### 1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Thursday 29 September 2016

Confirmed.

### 2. Matters arising

Canon Eugene's foundation governor application is being processed. There is one further vacancy. The consensus was that the governing body as it is currently composed functions well, so that there is no urgency in filling this vacancy. However, if an excellent candidate was identified then it would be sensible to approach them.

SL has completed the PREVENT online training. Certificates should be sent to the office once completed.

WM has a new DBS certificate. Governors were reminded to take the required documentation into the office, and also to show certificates, once received, to RB.

### 3. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

The Performance & Standards subcommittee met on Monday 14 November. Recent data was scrutinised, and the shift in predictions in the last quarter was also discussed. Progress will be revisited at each P&S meeting, which will also be taking place more regularly. A Resources subcommittee meeting is due to take place tomorrow.

### 4. Headteacher's report

43 families attended the two Reception Open Days this month. Attendance is so far meeting the target. The maths advisor from the LA has visited. The majority of pupils are "working towards" end of year expectations, but Y6 anticipated attainment is well above the national average.

Mr Gawthorpe will be leaving the school at February half term (discussed at the P&S committee meeting), having given considerably more notice than is required. The school has advertised the position and is trying to spread the word. If it is not possible to recruit a new teacher of sufficient calibre by this point, the school will look to fill the post with a medium-term 'locum', and recruit again for a September start. PC asked if Mr Gawthorpe's strong interest in sport was a key factor in recruiting his replacement? JMcC said that an all-round high quality teacher was the first priority

for recruitment, and that if that person had a strong interest in sport, that would obviously be a great advantage. The school is advertising across the Diocese, and in parish newsletters, in particular to try to attract a Catholic teacher. Which year group that new teacher would end up teaching will depend in large part on the candidate that is eventually appointed.

Water investigations have reduced the school's charges by approximately 80%; thanks to Mrs Munnely for leading this. St Alban's has been assisting OLEM by hosting after-mass events and other activities. The school will continue to host trainee teachers; Miss Waterson has been asked to be part of consultation groups.

Thanks to JW for attending the Diocesan working party meeting on SRE (now known as RSE). The CES has put together a very detailed curriculum; in addition, the Diocese has drafted its own policy. There is a continuing desire to ensure that parental input, and the inalienable parental right to take responsibility for this teaching, is not overridden. The inclusion of elements of reproduction in the Year 6 science curriculum complicates the question. WM felt it was important to develop a policy on how this would be addressed. The next meeting is expected to take place in March. Writing is a curriculum focus, and Mrs Sewell has been working hard on this. Extracurricular Latin and Code Clubs are being supported by stimulus students from the faculty of education. Pupils are learning about the Rosary and the Joyful Mysteries.

JMcC reiterated his desire to hold another Governors' Vision Evening, perhaps in the spring, to explore the future priorities of the school.

Sacred Heart has appointed Mr Cooper, the current Head of School, as their substantive Head from September 2017. JMcC will continue to mentor him over the next two terms.

The Diocese has been accepted onto the development programme of the New Schools Network. This is a critical time for the school and for Catholic education in Cambridgeshire, and JMcC asked for governors' support and prayers in the coming months.

LC commented that since writing is a school priority, might the emphasis on free writing continue in the upper years? JMu said that there is indeed a lot of this happening throughout the school. JW commented that the homework that the children bring home tends not to be writing, but more grammar-based.

## **5. Diocesan new schools bids**

A DfE consultation is currently running on removing the limit on the number of places that can be reserved on grounds of religion in the regulations for a new school. Nicky Morgan explicitly stated that the government wanted to encourage applications from Catholic schools, and it is hoped that the consultation will find in favour of the removal of the cap. The Diocese of East Anglia is putting bids in for a number of new schools (8, including - of most interest to St Alban's - one in Cambridge City and one in Cambourne). It is not expecting all of these bids to be successful, but it is hopeful that some will be. The Regional Schools Commissioner is confident that the bids are addressing the right needs in new developments. St Alban's is supporting the Diocese in putting these bids together, especially where they require detailed local knowledge. The other potential impact on St Alban's is that new free schools in Cambridge and Cambourne would potentially alter the landscape for MAT formation. SL commented that having an all-through school was a very good idea, because of the doubtful financial viability of smaller schools; however, might this mean that children in

Cambridge could potentially be going to a Catholic secondary school in Cambourne? Transport could be a big issue. Anything smaller than a 4-form-entry secondary school is very vulnerable; 6 is generally held to be a minimum. SL noted that schools set up in new developments, where many young families arrive at the same time, are vulnerable to emptying out when the children leave home. JMcC noted that schools are built in a more flexible, modular manner nowadays, and that good demographic data is being employed in the planning process. The LA are being very supportive in getting these bids right. There are implications for St Alban's in relieving the current pressure on oversubscription. It is likely that a large proportion of JMcC's time will be taken up with these bids.

## **6. Admissions policy**

The Diocesan advice is that schools should not require evidence of attendance at Mass to form part of the admissions criteria, although several of St Alban's peer schools have done so. Governors examined the admissions criteria used by a number of other Catholic schools.

SL highlighted that the school is very popular, and is simply not big enough to take everyone that wants to come there. Other schools use a lottery system to address the question of fairness or not. WM asked if there were any interests still in trying to expand? MB said the Diocesan efforts were more towards opening other new schools to relieve the pressure, and the factors that prevented expansion in the past have not changed: the financial implications, supporting pupils through the development, and the requirement for Diocesan support since it is Diocesan land. WM noted that the age of the school was also a significant factor. Will this school building still be fit for purpose in 20-30 years? Expanding in the manner of St Matthew's would be entirely possible in order to achieve a building able to support 2-form entry.

PC asked about how the school stood in relation to the law on admissions policy? MB said that it is fair and transparent, but that the school is allowed to make a choice on the basis of religious denomination. It would be possible to change the policy so that families that had an existing loyalty to the school, but not necessarily a sibling currently studying there at time of a new pupil's admission, were further up the priority order, but there would be a risk that this would be open to challenge. SL noted that devising something that supported that situation penalised pupils in other situations. GH felt strongly that the school's current policy is as good and fair as it can get, after significant debate over the years. WM agreed that on the basis of new school provision this problem will be mitigated. SL felt that the low number of appeals indicated that the policy is pitched correctly, and changing the policy risks increasing this number, which is an important financial consideration.

## **7. Schools Financial Value Standard**

The information on the Schools Financial Value Standard was circulated, and scrutiny officially delegated to the Resources subcommittee. The Resources Committee will consider it at its next meeting; JMcC proposes that it should be examined in sections throughout the year.

## **8. AOB**

Governors were reminded of their duty to carry out link governor monitoring. JMu will remind staff to initiate contact; JW has set up the English visit following delegation from the Performance & Standards committee.

**ACTION:** RAB to email link governor responsibilities to the governing body.

LC reported that there are some parental concerns about year-group-specific issues potentially disrupting progress. JMcC stated that the decision to redeploy teaching assistant resource was as a direct result of these concerns, and designed to tackle this before it becomes a real problem. LC also reported a desire from parents for extension material and advice to be made available to stretch some pupils further. JMcC noted that this has been acknowledged, and the Friday maths homework has arisen as a direct result of this. JW added that parents were looking for more structured guidance to make sense of all the mass of resources out there. JMcC offered to speak directly to any parents affected by this.

JMcC was approached by the PFA with a question about fundraising. Milton Road has been very successful in raising money with parental Gift-Aided termly donations, and the PFA are interested in exploring this option. MB asked how the Milton Road version worked? JMcC said that not many parents had signed up, but he could circulate further information. JW said that the St Alban's Foundation existed for this purpose, and the profile of the Foundation could be raised rather than introducing something new. LC thought that if the St Alban's Foundation became more visible and transparent, that would be helpful.