

Minutes of Ace Centre Nursery School Full Governing Body Meeting held on Monday 11 May 2020 via Zoom Video-Conference due to Covid-19

Present:

Helen Ruff (HR) - Headteacher

Kate Barlow (KB) – Parent Governor (**Chair**)

Georgia Mazower (GM) – Co-opted Governor (joined the meeting at item 2, 7.08 pm and left at 8.22 pm after item 8)

David Quick (DQ) – Co-opted Governor (**Vice-Chair**)

Teresa Morenes (TM) - Parent Governor

In Attendance:

Lexy Tuckwell (LT) – Associate Member

Julie Carvell – Cover Local Authority Clerk

Apologies:

Mike Cahill (MC) – Co-Opted Governor


Absent:

Eve Coles (EC) – Associate Member

The meeting started at 7.06 pm.

Item	Discussion	Action/ Outcome
1.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Quoracy</p> <p>KB welcomed everyone to the meeting, this being the first Virtual Governor meeting. KB welcomed JC to the meeting as cover Clerk. The meeting was quorate. KB reminded governors of the need for discretion and confidentiality during this virtual meeting and also to be aware that any decision to leave the meeting at any point may affect quoracy. Apologies were received and accepted from MC. None had been received from EC. GM arrived at this juncture.</p>	
2.	<p>Notice of AOB</p> <p>No items were received.</p>	
3.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes of the FGB held on 2 March 2020 and matters arising (not already on the agenda)</p>	

	<p>The minutes of the above meeting was agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting, and as such would be signed by the Chair and forwarded to HR to be filed at the school. Action: KB.</p> <p><u>Matters Arising:</u></p> <p>Strategy Group: KB advised that all strategic decisions are on hold for the moment in the wake of Covid-19. HR expressed uncertainty about whether or not the meeting scheduled for 1st June will be going ahead. HR referred to a forthcoming Crowdcast video conference meeting, including representation from the NAHT, Early Years Advisers and the All Party Parliamentary Group to whom she has flagged up a concern about the perilous situation regarding the Nursery School's finances.</p>	<p>KB</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Update</p> <p>a) Current running of the school: HR summarised that the Nursery School has remained open throughout the lockdown period for vulnerable pupils and those who are the children of keyworkers, with 2-3 children a day initially, rising to around 7 a day now. Some vulnerable pupils are not attending due to self-isolation measures at home. KB provided some brief background to the relationship between the Nursery School and the Ace Centre charity; a shared site, with some children coming to the Nursery School setting from the Ace Centre. HR reported on a positive take up of sessions from vulnerable children and staff ratios are also good. Contact with parents has been great via 'Keeping in Touch' letters, phone calls and links to on-line resources and feedback from parents re what their children have been doing. Information sharing has been done securely. Regular risk assessments are also being undertaken. LT commended the strong community spirit and feedback. HR added that staff are working hard to maintain momentum with children's learning journals; each parent has received an email about next steps, ensuring tailored provision for each child, but without putting undue pressure on families. Communication is also strong where there are any difficulties identified from parents. Lots of positive feedback has been received. LT also informed governors that SEND meetings have continued (on-line). Safeguarding meetings are also continuing in this way. KB thanked staff for their huge efforts, both prior to and during the lockdown. In terms of staff wellbeing, it was noted that some within the charity have had to self-isolate, but overall they are doing well. Charity employed staff were not furloughed initially until pupil numbers attending were known. The Nursery School has been operating on a reduced opening hours basis during the lockdown; from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm. Parents have been very supportive.</p> <p>b) Principles of reopening: HR referred to a 50 page Government document she had just received outlining principles for re-opening schools across phases. She has not yet had an opportunity to read this. HR advised that she had attended a NAHT Crowdcast meeting recently which was helpful although light on detail at the moment; the main emphasis being placed on safety for all stakeholders. Different educational provision models were reviewed at that meeting, including overseas examples. Governors discussed a possible model that could work well at</p>	

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020

	<p>this school involving outdoor provision in June and July when the weather is generally better; they observed that there is a good amount of outdoor space and facilities (including outdoor clothing) which could facilitate a small-scale re-opening, with shorter, possibly staggered hours, allowing time to clean surfaces etc between sessions. Governors also noted the current scientific research that being outdoors provides a greater degree of safety than indoors. HR acknowledged that risk assessments will need to be done around these proposals. Consideration could also be given to longer days but less days open each week. With regard to children coming to this nursery school from other settings that are currently closed, HR suggested that this may no longer be feasible in the current climate and other settings may need to reconsider their provision.</p> <p>c) Transitions to primary school: Given the number of pupils preparing to transition, HR suggested that it may be necessary to prioritise this process to vulnerable/keyworkers' children here. LT advised that the learning journals were in a good state to hand on to primary schools prior to lockdown and there had already been a transitioning meeting with St. Mary's. SEND funding is in place for those that require this. HR reiterated that it has been difficult to manage the assessment process post lockdown with other demands on SLT time, including risk assessments and other health and safety activities. HR proposed that children's learning journals be submitted to their primary schools as an entire record up to March including next steps, but that, subject to the agreement of the relevant primary schools, a member of the nursery school staff visits their former pupils' primary schools in the first week of September to help with the settling in process and to iron out any concerns. LT advised that there are plans and activities in place to prepare parents to support their children in the lead up to transfer to primary school, including via the 'Keeping in Touch' letters and conversations with their child's keyworker. Governors concurred that there is a lot of planning to do over the coming weeks.</p>	
6.	<p>Finance Committee Update (<i>minutes of the last meeting, 27 February 2020 and letter from Vicky Ford, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families previously circulated</i>)</p> <p>DQ informed governors that he and Leigh (Lead Administrator) had reviewed a three-year budget plan which had been signed off last week showing an overall deficit of £105k for 2020/21 including last year's carry forward, which, given the particular circumstances re nursery schools' funding was accepted by OCC. HR advised that this structural deficit was due to a growing, national problem of lack of funding. HR confirmed that the school could not run any tighter financially than it does. DQ referred to a letter from Vicky Ford MP responding to a query about financial support available to Early Years providers submitted by KB to the local MP Robert Courts. Governors noted VF's statement that funding levels will be protected via supplementary government funding going forward. Based on current activity around annual carry forwards for nursery school budgets governors were unconvinced that this funding represents an additional source, but rather, a movement of current funds. HR added that</p>	

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020

	<p>nursery school settings require a Headteacher and qualified teachers for which a lump sum is received but this has been ongoing and is necessary to render the setting viable. Thanks to David for his update.</p> <p>[Post meeting note: KB clarified (via DQ) that the 2020/21 budget had been robustly gone through via regular budget monitoring and phone calls and emails with members of the Finance Committee, Leigh, HR and Andy Flowers from OCC due to the need for Leigh to self-isolate for a period of time. There was insufficient time to set up a meeting and circulate documentation for FGB approval prior to the deadline for submission to County. Budget data was circulated after this meeting for governors' information. KB asked that governors note these exceptional circumstances].</p>	
7.	<p>Performance and Standards Committee Update (including reporting Progress and Attainment Data for the current cohort)</p> <p>Governors received an oral summary of discussions from the meeting held on 24 April from GM. The meeting had been attended by KB, HR, LT and GM. That meeting included a discussion of measures and support in place around Covid-19, including staffing for the next academic year, plus curriculum work supported by HR, LT and Lynn Jenkins, OTSA Early Years Director. There had also been a discussion about transition plans to primary schools (also discussed in item 5c) above). HR would be taking this forward and would be speaking to local primary schools. LT commented that the P&S meeting was timely and useful, demonstrating that the Nursery School is carrying on with provision. With regard to progress and attainment data, HR advised that it has been difficult to provide full entry and exit assessments for the children as there is only half a year's worth of data. HR added that children generally make more rapid progress in the second half of an academic year. HR suggested that a data analysis be undertaken based on attendance for the first half of the year and that the position be reviewed in September. The data for this year's cohort will accordingly look different to previous years. Action: GM to post minutes on Governor Hub when available.</p>	GM
8.	<p>Staffing Update</p> <p>Key headlines were noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IR [can put in full if needed?] would join the nursery school as a temporary TA from September 2020 to support SEND; • AH had advised that she was willing to withdraw from her offered temporary contract starting in April 2020 in the wake of Covid-19. The school accepted AH's offer. • ZW would be leaving the school at the end of this academic year to take up a new appointment, after 5 years with us. Governors noted this with a mixture of sadness and delight for ZW's career progression which has been strongly supported by the OTSA/ SCITT programme. ZW is now a NQT. Urgent note: The minutes of this meeting would not be posted onto the School's web-site until this news has been communicated to parents/ carers. 	

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LJ to join the teaching staff of the school for two days per week from September for one year, noting her significant Early Years teaching experience but would retain her OTSA Early Years Director role. • The additional funding available from the changes mentioned above will pay for the appointment of an additional TA as a job-share with LJ. • The 21 hour TA post will be put on hold for the time being; this to be considered further, noting the current high SEND pupil ratio. <p>Governors noted that this coming academic year will be the last year of the Nursery School's Designated Teaching School status, but that LJ's invaluable input as OTSA Early Years Director and contribution to the teaching life of the school will help to inform Early Years practice and pedagogy, a written version of which will be used to develop CPD and supplement funding going forward. This had also been discussed at the last P&S committee meeting re future recruitment process activities.</p> <p>Governors wished GM the best of luck in her interview tomorrow as she prepares to follow the OTSA/SCITT teacher training route. GM thanked governors and advised that she needs to leave the meeting at this juncture to continue with her preparations. GM left the meeting at 8.22 pm.</p>	
9.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Governors noted that this had been covered extensively as part of item 5 above. In addition, HR advised that the planned LADO Safeguarding audit has necessarily been postponed. A new date is awaited. LT informed governors that there have been weekly on-line SLT Safeguarding meetings to talk through any issues. Zoom has proved a useful tool by which to keep in touch.</p>	
10.	<p>Health & Safety</p> <p>DQ advised that he has not been able to come into school to do H&S visits recently due to Covid-19. This will hopefully resume in September. HR reported that there have been lots of risk assessments around hygiene and extra cleaning, with support from Martin around this.</p>	
11.	<p>Policies for ratification</p> <p>a) Governor Virtual Meetings Policy (previously circulated): This was agreed and on Governor Hub.</p> <p>HR informed governors that staff have received a lot of school-related policies recently. These have been read and agreed. KB advised that most of the key policies are now on the school's web-site.</p>	
12.	<p>Governor Business</p> <p>a) Vacancies: Governors welcomed the appointment of TM as a Parent Governor following the departure of RM for family reasons. Governors noted the current list of vacancies as follows: 2 Parent, 1 Staff, 1 LA, 1</p>	

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020

	<p>Co-Opted. There was a discussion around historic difficulties for some re availability to attend physical meetings and it was hoped that, going forward, the new Governor Virtual Meetings policy may facilitate a greater degree of flexibility around virtual attendance. Two possible candidates were noted; KC and SP. KC had expressed interest in joining the Governing Body possibly as an Associate Member and has hoped to have been able to join this meeting as an observer but was not able to do so in the end. KB and HR would follow up on speaking to them as possible Co-opted governors, with a recommendation for MC to transfer from Co-opted Governor status to LA Governor status subject to his agreement; noting that he is a Councillor with West Oxon District Council. [Post meeting note: MC has confirmed that he is willing to transfer, subject to OCC approval. JC to forward this request to Governor Appointments].</p> <p>b) Training: Governors noted that TM has completed the <i>Child Experiences</i> training which she found very interesting. Lucy will upload her certificate. TM and will sign up for the OSCB Safeguarding training as soon as possible.</p> <p>With regard to Finance training, KB referred to negotiations with OCC re support with this as part of a strategic review of the financial deficit. JC mentioned that some OCC (OPL) training is now being offered on-line. Consideration to be given to the best way forward here.</p> <p>Links to training are given below:</p> <p><i>Safeguarding training modules https://www.oscb.org.uk/</i></p> <p><i>Finance module https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/finance-for-new-governors/</i></p> <p>c) Governor roles & responsibilities update (previously circulated): TM agreed to join the Finance Committee as a member. DQ to speak to TM to provide some background guidance.</p>	<p>Clerk TM</p> <p>DQ</p>
13.	<p>Friends Group Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lexi's on-line quiz for staff: this had been well received; • Thanks to Amy (Chair of Friends) for uploading some fun YouTube videos to enjoy; • Outdoor Structure for the children: Thanks to Chris Coulton (parent) for his considerable help in providing time and some of the materials for this, backed by £2k from Friends. KB confirmed that the structure has now been officially signed off by an expert. Two quotes have been obtained for the footings; from Robbie Knight and Cotswold Landscaping. Governors noted that the structure will provide invaluable support to the activities around the Forest School and can be dismantled if it needs to be moved. This will be in situ by the end of the summer holidays, if not sooner. 	

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020

14.	<p>A moment to celebrate</p> <p>HR paid tribute to the way the local community has come together in the wake of these difficult and challenging times. HR thanked KB for her hard work and support and also to the staff and parents for all they have done. This was endorsed by governors. KB thanked HR and the staff for all they are doing in supporting children who need us, whilst potentially putting themselves at greater risk. This, again was supported by governors. LT advised that she is continuing to liaise with Children's Social Care teams and housing organisations during this time and thanked them for their support.</p>	
15.	<p>AOB</p> <p>No items.</p>	
	<p>Future Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGB – Monday 6th July 2020 at 7.00 pm, venue tbc • Committees? 	

The meeting finished at 8.58 pm.

(JC 15.5.2020)

Signed:  Date: 06/07/2020