

## Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting

Held on 29 June 2022 at school

Present	Kate Barlow (KB) – Co-opted Governor and Chair David Quick (DQ) – Co-opted Governor and Vice Chair Helen Ruff (HR) – Headteacher Monica Ferguson (MF) – Parent Governor Alexia (Lexy) Tuckwell (LT) – Staff Governor Mike Cahill (MC) – Local Authority Governor <i>arr. 19:20</i> Cat Hemmings (CH) – Co-opted Governor <i>via Zoom and left 20:06</i> Topsy Fletcher (TF) – Co-opted Governor
Absent	None
Apologies	None
In attendance	Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Associate Member and Headteacher designate Tess Kirkby (TK) – LA Clerk (cover) <i>via Zoom</i>

The meeting started at 19:15 and was quorate

Governor challenge/questions is highlighted in red font

No	Item	Action
1	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> KB welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received.	
2	<b>Declarations of interest</b> None declared for this meeting	
3	<b>Notification of Urgent Business</b> None received.	
4	<b>Minutes from the last meetings</b> The minutes of the meetings of 11 May 2022 and the Extraordinary Governing Body Meeting held on 27 June 2022 were approved. There were no matters arising not already listed in the agenda for discussion.	
5	<b>Finance</b> KB referred to a document circulated prior to the meeting which set out the scope and cost of the work to increase the height of the perimeter fencing. This work was deemed necessary as the current fencing is regarded as a safeguarding concern. If approved, this work will be completed over the summer holiday period. <b>Governors approved this project.</b>  DQ advised that the projected deficit currently stands at £389k by the end of 2024/25. The Deficit Recovery Plan was submitted to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) by the due date, having been discussed and approved by the Finance Committee. A meeting has been arranged for 5 July 2022 with representatives from OCC to discuss the plan. KB explained that the deficit has arisen largely as a result of two fundamental issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building is (and will continue to be) very expensive to run if The Ace Centre is to remain the sole occupant</li> <li>The funding formula does not generate sufficient funding to support nursery schools</li> </ul>	

Signed by Chair:



Date: 5th October 2022

	<p>HR explained that advisors from OCC have visited the school and reviewed the financial management and budget monitoring processes in place; all have agreed that the budget has been managed carefully for a period of several years.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>MC joined the meeting at 19:20</i></p> <p>KB gave an overview of the discussions with OCC to date, including the Department for Education (DfE) benchmarking data which clearly shows that the building costs for The Ace are significantly disproportionate. <b>A Governor asked if more cost-effective accommodation is available in Chipping Norton which could accommodate The Ace.</b> The status of the housing development programme in the area was discussed; Governors acknowledged that there are no existing premises available but it is possible that a venue might be built as part of the housing development plans. <b>A Governor asked if there was merit in reiterating the insoluble nature of the building cost issue.</b> DQ explained that this has featured in the discussions throughout the last several years, but Governors feel the response has not evolved. <b>A Governor asked if OCC has identified a particular priority issue which the Governing Body could seek to address.</b> HR explained that unless the fundamental issues are addressed, it is unlikely that this will be beneficial. The closure of Children's Centres in Oxfordshire has affected nurseries in different ways across the county but the number of nurseries now in or projecting a deficit budget has increased. Governors expressed concern that the issues at The Ace has been evident for some years but there has been insufficient support to help address them. The opportunity to reduce expenditure further is limited and is unlikely to make significant inroads into the deficit. <b>Governors strongly supported the principle that resolution does not sit with The Ace Centre alone.</b></p> <p><b>A Governor asked about the aim of the meeting scheduled for 5 July.</b> KB explained that Governors will reflect the excellent work with children with special educational needs (SEN) and progress in closing the gap for vulnerable children – both are key strengths of the provision at The Ace. HR reflected that if capacity at The Ace (especially funded 2 year old places and provision for SEN and other vulnerable children) was removed from Chipping Norton, it is unlikely that OCC could fulfil its statutory obligations. There is a risk that a new facility could be built in the next five years which would cater for this age group. KB explained that ultimately, a number of proposals have been submitted to OCC and the Governing Body is interested to hear alternate suggestions, particularly in the context of the White Paper and the drive towards federation and academisation.</p>	
6	<p><b>Staffing</b></p> <p>LJ updated Governors on recent recruitment activity. The campaign for a Grade 6 (core staff with both a key person and parent consultation role) had attracted some strong candidates. The workforce plan recognised that an experienced candidate would be crucial given the number of changes in key roles (including in the leadership team). Zoe Wakefield was appointed to the role of lead teacher. HR explained that the plan to integrate the staffing across the Centre had necessitated staff being employed in temporary (or fixed term) flexible roles. This situation had been in place for some time and is now progressing towards implementing permanent, regularised roles. LJ explained the process for moving staff into permanent roles which includes running an internal campaign with applications and interviews. These will be in place by the end of the school year.</p> <p>The Grade 4 staff (one to one staff deployed according to the needs of the children) will be moved from temporary to fixed term contracts with an annual review. The staff involved understand the context of the provision i.e. that the funding for these posts is directly</p>	

	<p>linked to the particular needs of the children attending and the job descriptions flex in response. HR explained that the staffing structure has been reviewed and confirmed that there has been no grade inflation.</p> <p><b>A Governor recommended that the pay policy be reviewed to ensure that the job descriptions and policies are aligned.</b> A Human Resources sub-committee was proposed to conduct this work; MC, LJ and KB agreed to join the committee.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Governors who wish to support the HR committee to contact KB <b>ACTION:</b> Clerk to set up the HR Committee on GovernorHub <b>(completed)</b></p>	<p><b>KB</b> <b>TK</b></p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Governing Body Strategy Update</b> KB introduced the item and explained that the strategy would usually be mapped out by this point in the year. However given the amount of change throughout 2021/22 and in the context of the integration project, KB proposed to defer this discussion until September 2022 when the new headteacher is in post. <b>Governors agreed to this proposal.</b></p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>School Development Plan (SDP) Update</b> HR introduced the update which had been shared in advance via GovernorHub. The SDP has been reformatted to show progress against each of the objectives. LJ, LT and HR are currently reviewing the plan and providing a red, amber or green assessment of progress up to the end of the academic year with the ambition to complete this by the end of term. Progress has generally been positive, particularly around teaching and SEN provision. Some further work will be identified to develop provision further. HR will circulate the updated version via GovernorHub when complete.</p> <p>LT commented that the two-year period covered by the plan shows great progress including how The Ace has recovered from the impact of COVID. The prospect of embedding this work in September is exciting and staff are looking forward to the start of the new academic year.</p> <p>LJ reflected on an Early Years COVID recovery meeting recently held and explained that she will be offering support to other settings in an advisory capacity as well as making full use of the resources available for Oxfordshire. This is part of a national DfE investment programme (£180m) for Early Years provision announced in the White Paper. The advisory work carried out by LJ will generate some additional income for The Ace (£9k per year).</p>	
<b>8.1</b>	<p><b>School Improvement Partner Report</b> HR reported on a School Improvement Partner (SIP) visit which took place (in school) on 23 May. This was the first in-person visit since March 2019; Catherine Hayward is a very experienced partner and well informed on Early Years provision and issues. Changes in leadership and governance were discussed and the SIP proposed that Oxfordshire Governor Services (OGS) be invited to carry out a safeguarding monitoring visit, accompanied by a member of the Governing Body which will help inform the development of a monitoring programme. Teaching and Learning was discussed; observations of the outdoor learning environment were particularly positive. There was a discussion about the tension between the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework and OFSTED expectations in regards to the oversight of children; the EYFS framework stipulates the children must be within sight <u>or</u> sound of staff whereas the OFSTED position requires within sight <u>and</u> sound which may present a challenge at The Ace given the nature of the outdoor space. There was a discussion about the importance of independent exploration in a child's development; LT argued that teaching children to assess their environment and understand what might be a danger and how to be safe is a crucial part of the curriculum.</p>	

	<p><b>ACTION:</b> KB to request a safeguarding monitoring visit from OGS in September</p> <p>Two further recommendations were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors to complete safer recruitment training</li> <li>• Governors to complete educational visits training</li> </ul>	KB
	<p><b>ACTION:</b> TF and MF to contact Leigh Roscoe Styler for access to safer recruitment training</p>	TF/MF
8.2	<p><b>Quality Monitoring</b></p> <p>TF has circulated a report from her recent safeguarding visit; it was a helpful opportunity to see the safeguarding policy in practice ahead of the safeguarding training. <b>Governors thanked TF for a very helpful and informative visit report.</b></p> <p>There was a discussion about visits which could be completed before the end of term and the following were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEN visit – MC</li> <li>• Wellbeing visit – TF</li> <li>• Generalist/familiarisation visit – MF</li> <li>• Safeguarding visit – KB</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Governors to contact LT/HR to arrange a date/time for their visit.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the focus of monitoring activity for 2022/23 and the following key areas were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable children</li> <li>• Closing the gap</li> <li>• Safeguarding</li> <li>• SEN</li> <li>• Wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>KB welcomed suggestions for other particular areas of focus (by email).</p>	ALL
9	<p><b>Safeguarding Update</b></p> <p>HR updated Governors on the handover discussion with LJ and the opportunity to schedule a visit from the OCC Education Safeguarding Advisory Team. These visits are very thorough from which a detailed report and recommendations are generated. The most appropriate timing for the visit was discussed; it was agreed that this should be arranged for September and that the Safeguarding Governor should attend.</p> <p>The potential to purchase Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) was discussed. <b>Governors acknowledged concerns about the integrity and cost of the system and agreed that this should not be procured for The Ace at this time.</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>CH left the meeting at 20:06</i></p>	
10	<p><b>Health and Safety Update</b></p> <p>DQ explained that an update on the audit report is not yet available and should be brought forward to the next meeting.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> To include Health and Safety audit update at the next FGB (September 2022)</p>	CLERK

	DQ will carry out a Health and Safety walk around on 30 June. HR reflected on a recent test of the lockdown procedure which had gone well – the children had responded very positively.	
11	<p><b>Committee Updates</b></p> <p>Finance – see item 5 above</p> <p>Health and Safety – see item 10 above</p> <p>Performance and Standards met on 16 June - the draft minutes have been circulated. The committee had acknowledged good progress, including in the implementation of the new EYFS framework. The committee had discussed tracking data, cross centre work and the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the charity. <b>A Governor asked whether the SLA had changed significantly.</b> KB explained that the document will need to be reviewed, particularly in the context of the start date to ensure that invoices can be correctly generated. The narrative on the OFSTED grading also needs to be reviewed to ensure that roles and responsibilities are realistic and clearly defined. There was a discussion about the support element of the agreement which needs to be structured to include both set/formal and ad hoc/informal arrangements. <b>A Governor asked what support arrangements are needed over the summer break.</b> HR explained that interviews concluded w/c 27 June; one temporary full-time candidate has been appointed and two more offers (for apprenticeships) will be made. If the offers are accepted, staffing over the summer should not be an issue. <b>A Governor asked that the requirements of the administrative role in relation to the SLA be resolved quickly.</b> It was agreed that MC will join the Performance and Standards Committee.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> TK to update the membership of the Performance and Standards Committee on GovernorHub <b>(completed)</b></p>	TK
12	<p><b>Policies for ratification</b></p> <p>Subject to some minor editorial changes, the following policies were approved in principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset disposal</li> <li>• Debtor Control</li> <li>• Financial procedures</li> <li>• Internal Procedures Manual</li> <li>• Premises Hire</li> <li>• School Activities</li> <li>• Terms of Reference and Standing Orders</li> <li>• Children We Care For</li> <li>• School Visitors</li> <li>• Administration of Medication and Child Illness</li> <li>• Bad Weather/Emergency Closure</li> <li>• Equality and Diversity</li> <li>• Key Person</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Governors to email their approval (or any concerns) to KB by 6 July.</p>	ALL
13	<p><b>Governing Updates</b></p> <p>DQ explained that he can no longer guarantee that he will have time to dedicate to the role of Vice Chair but he is willing to continue in this role until a replacement is found. Nominations were welcomed. The recruitment of Parent Governors was discussed, including the possibility of offering the opportunity for an informal chat about the role at key times.</p>	

	<p>KB alerted Governors to the vacancies on the finance committee and suggested that a Co-opted Governor or an Associate Member could join. Expressions of interest have been sought from accountancy firms in the locality but none have been forthcoming.</p> <p>HR reflected on the scope for the Friends of The Ace; two “Chastleton Tea” dates have been provisionally arranged (10 September and 15 October) but HR will ask for the first of these to be postponed to allow time for parents to get involved in the Autumn term.</p> <p>MC updated Governors on a recent discussion with the local Councillor (Geoff Saul) who has agreed to take up issues with the Member responsible for nursery school funding if a briefing is provided.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> MC to devise a one-page briefing on the financial issues</p>	<p><b>HR</b></p> <p><b>MC</b></p>																																
14	<p><b>Correspondence and Chair’s Actions</b></p> <p>None to report.</p>																																	
15	<p><b>Governor Training and Development</b></p> <p>The following training was acknowledged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Induction – completed by MF; TF induction will be arranged for the summer break</li><li>• Safeguarding training scheduled for 1 July for MF and TF</li></ul>																																	
16	<p><b>Any Other Urgent Business</b></p> <p>Governors acknowledged that this is the last FGB for HR and thanked her for her leadership of The Ace Centre since 2007; HR thanked Governors for their support during her tenure. LJ will take up post as Headteacher from 1 September 2022.</p>																																	
17.	<p><b>FGB Meeting Dates 2022/23</b></p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="4">MEETING DATES 2021/22</th></tr><tr><th>Day</th><th>Date</th><th>Time</th><th>Focus</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>5 October 2022</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>23 November 2022</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>25 January 2023</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>22 March 2023</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>17 May 2023</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr><tr><td>Wednesday</td><td>28 June 2023</td><td>7.00pm</td><td>tba</td></tr></tbody></table> <p><b>ACTION:</b> TK to update the GovernorHub calendar with the dates for 2022/23 <i>completed</i></p>	MEETING DATES 2021/22				Day	Date	Time	Focus	Wednesday	5 October 2022	7.00pm	tba	Wednesday	23 November 2022	7.00pm	tba	Wednesday	25 January 2023	7.00pm	tba	Wednesday	22 March 2023	7.00pm	tba	Wednesday	17 May 2023	7.00pm	tba	Wednesday	28 June 2023	7.00pm	tba	<p><b>TK</b></p>
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The meeting ended at 21:08

T Kirkby  
30 June 2022

Signed by Chair:



Date: 5th October 2022