

Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting
Held on Thursday 14th December 2023
at The ACE Centre Nursery School

Present: Sally Purssell (SP) – Co-opted Governor and Vice-chair, Chair of meeting
Cat Hemmings (CHe) – Co-opted Governor
Catherine Hayward (CHa) – Co-opted Governor, (OCC) *via Zoom*
Phoebe O'Donnell (POD) – Parent Governor
Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Headteacher
Isabelle Robinson (IR) – Staff Governor
Zoe Wakefield (ZW) – Associate Member
Rachel Caseby (RC) – Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Apologies: Topsy Fletcher (TF) – Co-opted Governor

Absent:

In attendance Hazel Sheridan (HS) - Clerk

The meeting started at time 6:13pm and was quorate. In the absence of a Chair of Governors, Sally Purssell chaired the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Topsy Fletcher.

2. Notification of any urgent business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

3. Governors

3.1. The Governors thanked Kate Barlow and Mike Cahill for all their time and commitment as Governors of The ACE Centre Nursery School following their resignations.

3.2. Catherine Hayward as a co-opted governor and Phoebe O'Donnell was appointed as a parent governor.

ACTION: Clerk to add CHa, Co-opted Governor and POD, Parent Governor, to Governor Hub and send induction documents. Clerk to ask Richard to update information on GIAS.

4. Declarations of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2023 and matters arising

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to send approved minutes to SP for signature.

Previous actions were:

5.2 Item 2 Governors to read and approve the SEND information report by replying to the Clerk's email – completed.

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- 5.3 Item 4.1 Clerk to send approved minutes of 28th June to KB for signature and filing at the school – completed.
- 5.4 Item 4.8. TF, MC and LJ to agree final version of wellbeing report and send to the Clerk. Clerk to note as FGB agenda item for the meeting on 21st November 2023 – on agenda, item 12.1.
- 5.4 Item 5.1 Clerk to amend details on Governor Hub for SP as Vice-chair – completed.
- 5.5 Item 5.2 Clerk to amend Standing Orders re FGB minutes available on request from school office and send Terms of Reference to KB for signature – completed.
- 5.6 Item 5.11 KB to set up What's App group for urgent communications to Governors – completed.
- 5.7 Item 5.12 LJ to arrange posters to advertise for parent governors – this action is carried forward.
- ACTION: LJ to ask Alison to draft advertisement posters to recruit another parent governor.**
- 5.8 Item 5.12 Clerk to arrange change to Instrument of Government to two parent governors – on agenda, item 13.1.
- 5.9 Item 7.4 LJ to amend children on school roll figure to 42, add an impact column to SDP, add 'last updated on...' to the title page and grey out any items that are not being actioned going forward – LJ confirmed that the school roll figure had been amended to 42. An impact column will be added and completed at the end of the academic year.
- 5.10 Item 10.1 KB to submit safeguarding visit report for FGB meeting on 21st November 2023 and Clerk to note as FGB agenda item – on agenda, item 9.1.
- 5.11 Item 11 Clerk to send approved policies to KB for signature and update policy register - completed.
- 5.12 Item 11.5 Clerk to send draft policy register to Governors. Governors to inform the Clerk of their approval or any changes they would like to make – the draft policy register was circulated, however as two Governors have since resigned this needs to be revisited. Please refer to item 13 below.
- 6. Ofsted inspection and feedback**
- 6.1. The Ofsted report, summary of verbal feedback and Strategic Plan for Interim Leadership Structure were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and copies are filed on Governor Hub. The Ofsted report has also been shared with staff and parents and the school has received positive feedback from parents. LJ added that the inspection was a positive experience, a fair judgement was made and it gives the school a clear direction for the future.
- 6.2. The previous leadership had allowed standards to fall and the Inspectors said the school would have been rated 'inadequate' had it been inspected in July 2022. The inspection on 18th October 2023 was an ungraded inspection so the school retains the 'outstanding' grading until a graded inspection takes place. Inspectors said the school would have been rated as 'good' in October if it were a graded inspection. Verbal feedback included that LJ "has been brave and smart in the decisions and actions taken from Sept 2022"; however, they also stated that the "Headteacher is currently managing the highest level of roles possible - this is not sustainable or ok". They advised that federation should be taken forward to help alleviate the heavy workload of the Headteacher and leadership

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team. Ofsted did recognise all the positive things that have happened and been put in place more recently.

- 6.3. There were two areas that the school needs to improve upon: i) inconsistencies in the implementation of the curriculum, especially when children are engaged in activities they choose themselves, and ii) Governors require further training so they can effectively scrutinise all aspects of school life and hold the school to account. RC will help Governors develop their skills to scrutinise, challenge and question LJ and staff at meetings, visits and on the documentation shared with them.
- 6.4. **Governors asked** that with the improvements that are being made, how will they know that the school is moving forward. LJ answered that discussions take place with the School Improvement Partner (SIP), which can then be relayed to Governors. The school is currently trialling two scenarios: i) children are either all inside or all outside so learning is more supported, or ii) if some children are inside and some outside, the environment is made smaller which helps keep children safe and staff can support learning much easier. The ACE Centre is a big building with a limited number of staff so smaller learning areas and smaller groups of children can enhance learning and development. Feedback and suggestions are being received from staff which will be reflected on at the end of the trial. One suggestion has been to have a sensory area. Governors were encouraged to visit the school to see how this trial is working.
- 6.5. **Governors questioned** if wellbeing and involvement scales were being used. Governors were reminded they need to look at things from a more strategic perspective, for example, are children engaged? Can all children be seen by an adult? Are staff talking to children? Are children happy and confident? Governors need to ensure that strategies are in alignment with the school's vision and scrutinise how effective the strategies are.
- 6.6. **Governors wanted to clarify** that they are holding the operational aspect to account by asking questions and this was confirmed. Governors monitoring the school involves visits, talking to staff, talking to children, seeing how the children are engaged and effective questioning.
- 6.7. As previously mentioned, Ofsted stated that LJ's role as it currently stands is unsustainable and Governors and OCC need to address this situation. LJ attended a focus group with other headteachers and leaders of maintained nursery schools who were at different stages of collaboration or federation. (Research report is filed on Governor Hub and was shared with Governors prior to the meeting.) The collaboration between the two nursery schools is a temporary measure before deciding on whether or not to federate and it will take at least two terms to become a federation if both schools agree. There are currently no nursery school federations in Oxfordshire.
- 6.8. The Governors were surprised to learn that there is likely to be only a small financial benefit to federation in the medium to long term.
- 6.9. TF had asked three questions in her communications and these were answered in her absence. They were as follows:
- Q1. What was the timeline over which your research was carried out?
A1. It was a short timescale and started in November 2023.
- Q2. What timelines were involved in moving from collaboration to effective federation amongst those schools that followed that route or had all schools involved in the research already followed that route?
A2. There is no definitive answer as it was different for different people.
- Q3. How was effective collaborative governance established in federation?

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A3. In a federation there is one joint Governing Board and Governors need to be willing to be Governors of both schools. Some federations have Co-chairs so responsibilities are shared.

Governors asked if it was understood why some schools did not go ahead with federation. LJ replied that some schools felt federation meant it would feel too much like an academy for them.

- 6.10. As a result of the research and also meetings with individuals, LJ produced, and has shared with Governors, a Strategic Plan for Interim Leadership Structure at The ACE Centre Nursery School and Grandpont. The Plan has also been shared with the Chair of Governors at Grandpont and has been agreed with them. This Plan is a temporary measure to build the staffing structure of the Collaboration to meet the current needs of both organisations; address the workload of the executive headteacher and lead teachers; and strengthen the provision and practice at both nursery schools.
- 6.11. The experienced Lead Teacher at Grandpont will become a part-time Deputy Headteacher, including SENCo for both schools (0.5 FTE each). When the Deputy Headteacher is at The ACE, LJ will be at Grandpont and vice versa, thus ensuring a Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher is always at both schools. A supply teacher will be engaged for 2.5 days per week for two terms to cover the Lead Teacher's role at Grandpont. The Deputy Headteacher will deliver leadership support while at The ACE and the Lead Teacher at The ACE will receive leadership development training.
- 6.12. **Governors enquired** about the Deputy Headteacher being at The ACE for two days per week and also at Grandpont and the SENCo coverage. LJ replied that Grandpont does not need as much SENCo time as The ACE. The Deputy Headteacher will also be doing some collaboration work and some work delegated by LJ. RC informed Governors that they were responsible for ensuring the right staffing structure is in place and LJ is recommending this revised temporary structure to Governors to meet with needs of both schools.
- 6.13. **Governors asked** if all staff had also had access to the Strategic Plan for Interim Leadership Structure. LJ answered that they the document was not shown to them as it is for Governors to make the decisions on staffing structure.
- 6.14. **Governors also enquired** about what was happening to the Behaviour Policy that Ofsted said was not compliant. LJ responded that she has made enquiries with other schools about their policies and they have virtually the same as The ACE. What appears to be missing in The ACE's policy is if a child becomes unmanageable, there is nothing in the policy about how this would be dealt with. RC suggested that this is taken up with the Early Years Team at OCC.

ACTION: LJ to contact Early Years Team at OCC about the Behaviour Policy and review. Clerk to add Behaviour Policy to FGB agenda for 23rd January 2024.

DECISION: The Governors agreed to the temporary changes in staff structure as stated in LJ's Strategic Plan.

7. Finance

- 7.1. The budget report for period 6 (up to the end of September 2023) and a new summary compiled by Richard Thorpe (School Business Manager (SBM)) were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and are filed on Governor Hub. An overspend of £183K is brought forward from previous years.
- 7.2. The summary shows that the school is forecast to underspend on this financial year's budget by £49K, which is £10K more than was originally forecast. The current forecast shows a deficit of £133K being carried over to the next financial year. However, although

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the school is due to receive a further £33K, there will be additional expenditure on costs for the collaboration staffing changes (please refer to item 6.10 above). LJ added that some savings have been made following Leigh leaving the school as the SBM is only employed for three days per week.

- 7.3. Governors were informed that the nursery school funding system is complicated, with a termly intake of children affecting the funding received. LJ and SBM are looking to make efficiency savings in all areas. Governors were also reminded that they are responsible for how the funding is spent.
- 7.4. **Governors asked** if the SBM is employed during term time only and LJ confirmed that he was. The SBM is also responsible for maintaining the Single Central Record, HR and Health and Safety, whereas in a maintained primary school these would be separate roles. Alison (admin) is full time but half of her hours are to support child care services. LJ believes that the school has moved to the leanest it can go and this has had an impact on staff wellbeing. RC informed Governors that they need to check that the roles are what the school needs and are comparable with other maintained nursery schools.

At this juncture, due to time constraints, it was decided to concentrate on the statutory items on the agenda.

8. School Development Plan update

- 8.1. This item was not discussed and is carried forward to the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to note for agenda for FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.

9. Safeguarding update

- 9.1. Annual Safeguarding Report: This was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and is filed on Governor Hub. The Safeguarding Audit report lists the evidence for the answers given together with any actions required. **Governors asked** if the Safeguarding Link Governor was involved with this audit and the report. LJ replied that yes, Kate Barlow was involved and it was discussed in depth with her.
- 9.2. **Governors queried** why some answers were given as not applicable, especially the DSL training date for the Chair of Governors, and why some did not show a list of evidence. LJ explained that some parts were not applicable to nursery schools, but that Kate's training date does need to be included. Evidence was not required for all items when a yes/no answer was sufficient.

DECISION: Governors approved the audit report for submission.

ACTION: LJ to add Kate's DSL training date before submitting the form to OCC by the deadline of 20th December 2023.

10. Health and Safety

- 10.1. This item was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to note as agenda item for FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.

11. Governor visits and reports

- 11.1. Wellbeing visit 15th September 2023: This item was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting.
- 11.2. Governor monitoring visit 19th September 2023: This item was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to note as agenda items for FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.

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12. Governance

12.1. Change to constitution of Governing Board (Instrument of Government): **Governors agreed** that they would like to amend the Instrument of Government, with effect from 1st February 2024, to increase the number of co-opted governors from four to six and have fewer parent governors, down to two from four. Four parent governors were considered too many for the size of the school and more co-opted governors would enable the Governing Board to ensure that it had the right breadth of skills required to be effective.

ACTION: Clerk to send amended Instrument of Government as detailed above and minutes to OCC Governor Services to action.

12.1.1. **Governors asked** how more co-opted Governors could be recruited. RC answered that she will be looking at this and also using the Inspiring Governance website to search for candidates.

12.1.2. SP took on the role of Vice-chair on the understanding that she would not automatically become Chair if that role became vacant. It will therefore be necessary for the Governors to elect a chair for each meeting until the role is filled. Governors may nominate themselves as temporary chair or nominate others with their agreement.

ACTION: Clerk to add election of chair as the first item on the agenda (until a permanent Chair of Governors is recruited).

12.2. Expectations of School Governors: It was clarified that Governors are expected to give a time commitment of 10-15 hours per month, to have read all documents prior to a meeting and have questions they wish to ask. Governors were asked to bear in mind that there is a lot of work to do on governance at The ACE so more hours may be required. A document detailing what The ACE expects of a Governor and the NGA Governor role description are filed on Governor Hub and were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. RC added that she will help with drafting a governance monitoring plan.

Governors queried how physically coming into the school is planned. RC responded that the monitoring plan will detail necessary visits and a time can then be arranged with the school. Ideally one visit per term will need to take place.

12.3. Governance updates (including Clerks' briefing): HS reported that the briefing contained reminders about keeping the information on Governor Hub up to date, the Early Years Foundation Statutory Framework has been updated with effect from 4th January 2024 and changes to guidance on suspensions and exclusions. A summary of the briefing with links to documents is on Governor Hub and was circulate to Governors prior to the meeting.

12.4. Governor training – attended and planned: SP stated that was important that Governors take on board what Ofsted said about more training being required and advantage was taken of the training available. The Early Years Team also offer a programme of training. SP has attended the Early Years Foundation Stage Finance, Health and Safety – the Role of the Board and Role of the SEND Governor training courses. HS has attended the Suspension and Exclusion training for Clerks.

13. Policies for approval

With the changes in membership of the Governing Board, it is necessary for Governors to confirm which areas of the Circle of Governance model they wish to take responsibility for. This in turn will mean amendments to who will help review and approve which policies. Staff Governors are not expected to take on any particular aspects of the Circle of Governance as this could create a conflict of interest. They are, however, expected

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to read and help review policies. **Governors suggested** that a buddy system could be used when reviewing policies.

ACTION: Clerk to circulate Circle of Governance subject list and policy register to Governors. Governors to confirm which areas of the school they wish to take responsibility for reviewing and monitoring.

RC recommended that OCC or DfE model policies are used and copies of these can be found on the OCC Insights intranet and the DfE webpages.

ACTION: Governors to research OCC and DfE model policies for their particular areas (according to the Circle of Governance) and compare with the school policies. Feedback to be given at the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.

- 13.1. Child Collection and Uncollected Child Policy: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.2. Code of Conduct for Staff: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.3. Complaints Policy and Procedures: RC commented that the complaints policy did not use the DfE model policy and the different stages of progressing a complaint were not clear.
ACTION: LJ to look at DfE model complaints policy and amend The ACE's policy accordingly. Clerk to note for agenda item for next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.4. Grievance Policy: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.5. Missing Child Policy: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.6. Safer Recruitment Policy: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.7. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy: In light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.8. Whistleblowing Policy: in light of the above information this policy was not discussed and will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting on 23rd January 2024.
- 13.9. Pupil Premium Strategy Statement: The Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2023 – 2024 was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and is filed on Governor Hub. **Governors asked** what has changed since the last statement. LJ replied that the number of children has changed (now fewer children receiving EYPP funds) and more emphasis has been placed on offering extra sessions or differently timed sessions for EYPP children. The number of children eligible for EYPP funding will change on a termly basis and the school ensures that all EYPP children have the same opportunities. A series of **questions were asked by Governors** and these were answered to their satisfaction.

Qa. What research-based evidence do you use?

Aa. EPPSE report information is used to help with strategies. There is a greater impact on their later life when children receive good quality nursery education.

Qb. Is there anything you would like to do that you have not done previously?

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Ab. The impact of the Big Experience programme was significant and is a priority this year for EYPP children. For example, visits to libraries and theatre trips. Some staff used their own time to hold activities for the children during school holidays. It was also noted that some parents gained confidence when accompanying their children on activities such as theatre trips.

Qc. How do you make sure that parents know about EYPP funding for their children's education?

Ac. The school asks all parents to complete a form. This also ensures that there is no discrimination. ZW informed Governors that a couple of parents missed the deadline for returning the forms, however LJ added that the school still received funding for these children; LJ undertook to investigate this.

Qd. Where does the information on the form go?

Ad. The information is input onto the school system and then OCC pay the school any EYPP funding due.

Qe. What was the most successful strategy last year?

Ae. Offering different session times to parents. One child's attendance improved greatly when session times were adjusted to when the parent could bring and collect the child from the nursery school more easily.

Qf. Did this improve the child's performance?

Af. Yes, the child's performance improved as they were attending regularly.

DECISION: Governors approved the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement for publication on the school's website.

13.10. Pay Policy for Support Staff 2023 (OCC model): No questions were raised and **Governors approved** this policy.

13.11. Pay Policy for Teachers 2023 (OCC model): No questions were raised and **Governors approved** this policy.

ACTION: Clerk to send the two pay policies to SP for signature, then to LJ for school records and update the policy register.

14. Any other business

14.1. No items of any other business were raised.

15. HR / Personnel

15.1. LJ confirmed that there was nothing to discuss at present.

16. Next meeting date

16.1. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 6pm at the school.

Tuesday 12th March 2024

Tuesday 14th May 2024

16.2. Tuesday 25th June 2024 Future meeting dates are as follows:

The meeting closed at 8:12pm

Hazel Sheridan
18th December 2024

Sent to Chair/Head on 18th December 2023 and FGB on 8th January 2024.

Signed (by Chair): *Sally Russell*

Date: *8/2/24*