

## Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting

Held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 6pm

### The ACE Centre Nursery School

Present	Catherine Hayward (CHa) – Co-opted Governor & Co-chair of Governors Sally Pursell (SP) – Co-opted Governor & Co-chair of Governors Topsy Fletcher (TF) – Co-opted Governor Phoebe O'Donnell (POD) – Parent Governor Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Headteacher Isabelle Robinson (IR) – Staff Governor Zoe Wakefield (ZW) – Associate Member
Apologies:	Rachel Caseby - OCC
Absent:	Cat Hemmings – Co-opted Governor
In attendance	Hazel Sheridan (HS) - Clerk

The meeting started at 6:06pm and was quorate.

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Rachel Caseby. Cat Hemmings did not attend the meeting.

#### 2. Election of Chair

2.1. CHa and SP proposed that they be Co-chairs of the Governing Board and informed Governors that their experience, knowledge and skills complemented each other to form a good team.

2.2. CHa and SP temporarily left the meeting while the Governors discussed this proposal.

**Decision: CHa and SP were elected as Co-chairs of the Governing Board.**

2.3. The Governing Board also need to elect a Vice-chair. It was suggested and agreed that as all Governors were not present an email be sent requesting volunteers.

**ACTION: Clerk to send an email to all Governors asking for volunteers and note as agenda item for the next FGB meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

#### 3. Notification of any urgent business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

#### 4. Declarations of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

#### 5. Minutes of the meeting held on date and matters arising

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**ACTION: Clerk to send approved minutes to SP for signature and filing at the school.**

Previous actions were:

- 5.2. Item 3.2 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 – completed and GIAS updated.
- 5.3. Item 5.1 Clerk to send approved minutes to SP for signature – completed.
- 5.4. Item 5.7 LJ to ask Alison to draft advertisement posters to recruit another parent governor – Due to workload issues this action has not been completed. POD volunteered to draft a poster for approval by CHa, SP and LJ.  
**ACTION: POD to draft advertisement poster to recruit a parent governor and send to CHa, SP and LJ.**
- 5.5. Item 6.14 LJ to contact Early Years Team at OCC about the Behaviour Policy and review. Clerk to add Behaviour Policy to FGB agenda for 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 15.1.
- 5.6. Item 8.1 SDP update; Clerk to note for agenda for FGB meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 7.4.
- 5.7. Item 9.2 LJ to add Kate’s DSL training date before submitting the Safeguarding Audit Report form to OCC by the deadline of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023 – completed.
- 5.8. Item 10.1 Health and Safety: Clerk to note as agenda item for FGB meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 8.
- 5.9. Item 11 Governor reports: Clerk to note as agenda items for FGB meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 11.
- 5.10. Item 12.1 Clerk to send amended Instrument of Government and excerpt of minutes to OCC Governor Services to action – completed and on agenda, item 12.1.
- 5.11. Item 12.1.2 Clerk to add election of chair as the first item on the agenda (until a permanent Chair of Governors is recruited) – completed.
- 5.12. Item 13 Clerk to circulate Circle of Governance subject list and policy register to Governors. Governors to confirm which subject areas of the school they wish to take responsibility for reviewing and monitoring – subject list circulated on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Also on agenda, item 13.10.
- 5.13. Item 13 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 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 13.10.
- 5.14. Item 13.3 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 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – on agenda, item 13.2.
- 5.15. Items 13.10 & 13.11 Clerk to send the two pay policies to SP for signature, then to LJ for school records and update the policy register - completed.

## 6. Finance

Budget papers and the SFVS are filed on Governor Hub and were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

- 6.1. Budget and forecast: The revenue and capital budgets and actual spends up to period 9 (31<sup>st</sup> December 2023) were shared with Governors. LJ reported that the original budget for this academic year showed an overspend of £10K, which was accepted by OCC, and the actual forecast is now for a £71K underspend. The reasons for this underspend include the redundancy of the senior teacher role, LJ’s role being split between The Ace and Grandpont (2.5 days per week at each school and therefore salary costs shared),

the four-month vacancy without a full-time School Business Manager (SBM), and the new SBM recruited for three days per week term time only. Some additional income was also received from OCC and from core funding due to higher pupil numbers and an increase in the universal funding rate. There was an overspend brought forward from last year of £183K so with the forecast £71K underspend, the forecast carry forward to next year, 2024 – 2025, will be £112K. LJ assured Governors that any adjustments for revenue and expenditure not yet received or spent have already been made by Andy Flowers at OCC.

6.1.1. **Governors asked** a series of questions that were answered to their satisfaction.

**Q1. Is the nursery school expenditure linked to the school's vision and School Development Plan (SDP)?**

**A1.** LJ replied that yes it is, however the majority of the budget is spent on staffing. It is usual for 80% - 85% of the budget to be spent on staffing and at the moment the school is spending less than this.

**Q2. Are most of the savings made from reduced staffing costs?**

**A2.** Yes they are, however this will change going forward.

**Q3. How do you know that the expenditure is having an impact at the school?**

**A3.** LJ acknowledged that at present it is probably a negative impact as the reduced staffing levels have affected staff wellbeing. LJ stated that although a £20K saving was made while there was no SBM in post, some SBM tasks had to be undertaken by other staff which added to their workload which is not desirable. (Some support was also received from OCC.) As already stated, RT works three days per week during term time (compared to the previous full-time SBM), which is line with nursery schools of a similar size. The aim is for the school to be in financial balance over the year. LJ added that lots of learning is going on and feedback from parents has been positive.

**Q4. Has Richard Thorpe's (RT) role been upskilled?**

**A4.** Yes it has. The SBM role is grade XX and he has responsibility for HR and health and safety as well as finance.

**Q5. Previously, have there been KPIs or measures for costs and the output of children?**

**A5.** LJ answered that any impact is recorded in the SDP, however she acknowledged that there are currently not enough KPIs in place for expenditure and what is measured. The school receives Early Years Pupil Premium and this is reviewed against what progress has been made by the children.

**Q6. Can you use the curriculum steps as a measurement?**

**A6.** Yes, the school can look at how many children were at the baseline and then review later to see what progress has been made. However, it is difficult to equate this with having another member of staff in the class, for example.

**Q7. Does the SBM have a standard set of measurements to use for assessment?**

**A7.** LJ did not know of any such measurements and undertook to ask the National Network of Maintained Nursery School Headteachers what they use.

**ACTION:** LJ to ask the National Network of Maintained Nursery School Headteachers if they have standard measurements for the SBM to use, and if so, what they are and report back to Governors.

**Q8. Is the Early Years Single Funding Formula included in the budget?**

**A8.** It was confirmed that this is included in the budget. LJ informed Governors that there is a gap between the SEND funding received and the cost of providing the required

support. With 52% of the children at The ACE having additional needs, the school must be mindful of how SEND support is utilised.

- 6.1.2. Governors asked for their thanks to be passed onto RT for all his work on the school finances.
- 6.2. School Financial Value Standard (SFVS): RT drafted the SFVS with input from LJ. **Governors** requested that they would like to meet with RT to discuss financial matters. Some **Governor feedback and queries** were raised prior to the meeting and have either been dealt with or will be discussed at a future meeting with RT; they were not concerning matters that would need the SFVS to be amended before submission. LJ informed Governors that RT was appreciative of their feedback. **Governors commented** that some comments in the SFVS appeared to be generic and in future they would like to see a more detail.
- 6.2.1. **Governors asked** if the SBM Ltd resource was used, bearing in mind RT only works three days per week during term time. LJ answered that SBM Ltd were used in the interim period between the previous School Business Manager leaving and RT starting and are also being used as support for RT while he gets himself established as the School Business Manager.
- 6.2.2. **Governors also questioned** the mention of integrated curriculum planning and if this needs to be in future SFVS submissions. LJ responded that she had looked into the integrated curriculum planning tool, however it was something which was more useful for larger schools and not for the size of The ACE.

**Decision: Governors approved the SFVS for submission to OCC by the deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

## 7. **Driving Progress Forward at The ACE**

The Programme of Support and Governance Action Plan were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and are filed on Governor Hub.

- 7.1. Long- term strategic plan: Governor were sent a link to information regarding the difference between a long-term strategic plan and a school development plan prior to the meeting; this was not discussed at the meeting.
- 7.2. Programme of support from OCC Strategy Group: At the ungraded Ofsted inspection on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 an outcome of 3 was given, which means school remains outstanding, but with evidence it may receive a lower grade in a graded inspection. At The ACE inspectors felt that the outcome would have been 'Requires Improvement' if it had been a graded inspection.
- 7.2.1. However, the Inspector stated that they did not wish to undermine the work already underway to improve the school and so left the grading unchanged and spoke to Michelle Jenkins, OCC Foundation Years Leader, about their concerns. This resulted in a support programme being drafted using priorities from the Ofsted inspection, from the most recent SIP visit and objectives from the school SDP. The support programme is led by Sam Bartholomew (School Improvement Officer), together with Karen Locke (School Improvement Partner (SIP)) and Rachel Caseby (Governor Services). In the support programme OCC has listed three priorities with bullet point details and expected outcomes for March and July 2024. Priorities 1 and 2 are focussed on school provision and the progress of children; priority 3 focuses on strengthening governance at the school and the skills and training required.
- 7.2.2. **Governors asked the following questions:**

**Q9. How will the expected outcomes be measured?**

**A9.** The SIP will be monitoring the progress made against the expected outcomes and she will be visiting on 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> February. Sam Bartholomew will also be visiting the school at some point. Andy Flowers (OCC finance), LJ and Governor visits will also feed into this programme.

**Q10. Does this feel like continuous pressure or support?**

**A10.** LJ answered that it feels like a bit of both. CHa added that any support and challenge should be appropriate to individuals and what action is needed.

**Q11. Will this be a two-way conversation with the OCC support group?**

**A11.** Yes, definitely. LJ will be looking at how relevant some of the measures are to nursery schools and feeding this back. For example, in nursery schools it is often difficult to say what a child is learning at any particular moment; this is ascertained through interactions and conversations rather than a lesson.

**Q12. Will responses to your feedback be fed back to Governors?**

**A12.** LJ will look at the support programme and feedback to Sam after half-term. Following the next visit in March the support programme will be finalised and it will then be shared with Governors.

**Q13. Do Governors have any say in the expected outcomes listed under Priority 3, especially those expected by March 2024?**

**A13.** LJ will let the support group know that the draft support programme was received at the beginning of February which does not leave sufficient time to complete everything requested by March.

**Q14. Do all the actions required in Priority 3 match those in the Governor Action Plan (drafted by Rachel Caseby) (please refer to item 7.3 below)?**

**A14.** On the surface it appears they match, however CHa and SP will go through both documents to see if they match and feedback any differences to LJ so she can feed this back to the support group.

**ACTION: CHa and SP to scrutinise the Support Programme and Governor Action Plan for differences and confirm to LJ.**

- 7.3. Governance Action Plan: The Governance Action Plan drafted by Rachel Caseby was considered by Governors. The importance of Governors being properly trained was emphasised and that Induction A, Induction B, Safeguarding (Level 2) and Prevent Duty training must be completed as soon as possible if it hasn't been already. SP informed Governors of three other useful training courses that were coming up: 1) Safeguarding in Early Years Foundation Stage 20<sup>th</sup> February; 2) The Role of the SEND Governor 26<sup>th</sup> February; and 3) Monitoring the Early Years Foundation Stage 20<sup>th</sup> March. The Clerk also let Governors know that information about who had attended what training and when can be downloaded from Governor Hub; **Governors requested** that the list is brought to the next FGB meeting.

**ACTION: Clerk to download training list from Governor Hub and add as an agenda item for the next FGB meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

- 7.3.1. Whilst there may be some items that the school can push back on or get further clarification on in the support programme, it is not expected to change drastically and the governance work is what is needed to bring it into line with expectations of school governance and Governors being able to hold the school to account. **Governors asked** how actions will be prioritised and LJ answered that the measures requiring action will be dealt with in order of date priority.

7.3.2. Governors were asked what should happen during a Governor visit. CHa answered that a mutually convenient date for the visit is agreed, the Governor will visit and talk with relevant staff, maybe visit a class and look at some of children's work and then write a report that is submitted to FGB.

7.3.3. There was a discussion about what was expected of Governors and maintaining a work-life balance, especially when Governors have full-time jobs and family commitments. In general, Governors are expected to spend 10-12 hours per month on governance work, however with the amount of work needed to strengthen governance at the school it was acknowledged that more hours may be required. Aside from attending FGB meetings, Governors are expected to read meeting papers, review policies, attend CPD training and make monitoring visits to the school and write up a report for FGB.

7.3.4. It was suggested and agreed that the Support Plan and Governor Action Plan will be standard items on future FGB meeting agendas until the end of the academic year. CHa and SP will complete the evaluation column.

**ACTION: Clerk to note as agenda items for future FGB meetings.**

7.3.5. It was also agreed that all updates to the Governor Action Plan are sent to the Clerk who will maintain a master copy. This will ensure that no updates are lost when multiple people do updates.

**ACTION: All Governors to send updates to Governor Action Plan to Clerk. Clerk to maintain master copy for uploading onto Governor Hub.**

7.4. School Development Plan: The SDP was not discussed at this meeting. Item carried forward.

**ACTION: Clerk to note as agenda item for next FGB meeting.**

## 8. Health and Safety update

8.1. The Health and Safety audit is due to take place in May 2024 and LJ will be looking at any action required during the next term. CHa, as Link Governor for health and safety, will need to visit the school before the audit to do a review.

**ACTION: Clerk to email CHa regarding a health and safety visit to the school before the audit.**

## 9. Safeguarding update

9.1. Governors noted that a Link Governor safeguarding visit had not taken place since the last Chair of Governors resigned. SP volunteered to conduct a safeguarding paperwork check.

**ACTION: SP to carry out a check on safeguarding paperwork and report back to FGB at the next meeting. Clerk to note as agenda item for 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

## 10. HR matters

10.1. This was a confidential matter for which IR and ZW were not present. The minutes can be seen in Part 2 Confidential Minutes.

## 11. Link Governor reports

11.1. Wellbeing visit 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Governors noted this report and there were no comments or questions.

11.2. Governor monitoring visit 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Governors noted this report and there were no comments or questions.

## 12. Governance

Signed (by Chair): Catherine Hayward

Date: 24 March 2024

12.1. Instrument of Government: A revised Instrument of Government has been authorised by OCC effective from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024. There are now two parent governor and six co-opted governor places on the Governing Board (changed from four and four respectively). Two Co-opted Governors, one Parent Governor and one LA Governor need to be recruited (OCC has been informed of the LA Governor vacancy). The skills gaps of the Governing Board need to be ascertained, however there is an immediate need for governors with HR and IT skills (to also update the school website). SP informed Governors that it would be useful to have a Governor Induction Policy and she had found a template on The Knowledge that can be used. The training required for new Governors needs to be agreed and entered into the policy.

**ACTION: SP to complete Governor Induction Policy template and submit for next FGB meeting. Clerk to note as agenda item for 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and inform OCC of skills needs for LA Governor.**

12.2. Governor training: This was discussed during the Governor Action Plan item; please refer to item 7.3 above.

12.3. Clerks' briefing: A one-page summary of items and links to relevant documents is filed on Governor Hub and was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The Clerk highlighted that the National Governance Association (NGA) has produced a report on governor workload and its pressures and there is now a new EYFS Statutory Framework that is effective from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

### 13. Policies

13.1. Behaviour Policy: During the Ofsted inspection on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 it was stated that the Behaviour Policy was not compliant due to a lack of information about exclusion. LJ's research showed that The ACE policy was virtually the same as other maintained nursery schools. She has contacted the OCC Early Years Team about this, who in turn will contact the Exclusions Team, and then respond to LJ. LJ expects the policy to be ready for Governors to review, comment and approve at the next FGB meeting.

**ACTION: LJ to complete review of Behaviour Policy when response received from the Early Years Team. Clerk to note as agenda item for next FGB meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

13.2. Complaints Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

13.3. Child Collection and Uncollected Child Policy: **Governors commented** that Appendix 1 regarding the OSCB protocol appeared to be missing.

**ACTION: LJ to locate and add Appendix 1 to the policy and resubmit to FGB for approval. Clerk to note as agenda item for next FGB meeting.**

13.4. Code of Conduct for Staff: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

13.5. Grievance Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

13.6. Missing Child Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

13.7. Safer Recruitment Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

13.8. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.

- 13.9. Whistleblowing Policy: **Governors approved** this policy and there were no comments or questions.
- 13.10. Policy register and Circle of Governance Subjects: **Governors agreed** that they will review all policies that fall within their Circle of Governance lead areas and do not need to be submitted to FGB for approval. **Governors queried** if there were too many policies especially given Ofsted's comments about LJ's workload. LJ stated that it was important that everyone knows what is expected of them, what they are doing and that they are compliant with all regulations. The Clerk clarified that the policy register had been checked against a policy list supplied by OCC and the DfE list of statutory policies and the frequency of review and level of approval was compliant. SP added that policy review checklists are available on The Knowledge via Governor Hub.

**ACTION: Clerk to send approved policies to SP for signature and update policy register.**

#### **14. Any other business**

- 14.1. Collaboration with Grandpont: Governors noted that the collaboration with Grandpont had become untenable due to a key member of Grandpont staff resigning with immediate effect and the needs of both schools. The collaboration will cease at the end of this term and OCC is aware.
- 14.2. School email addresses: **Governors queried** if they should have school email addresses instead of using their personal or work ones. It was agreed that school email addresses for Governors was preferable so work, personal and school matters can be easily separated.

**ACTION: LJ to ask IT provider to set up school email addresses for Governors.**

#### **15. Next meeting date**

- 15.1. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm at the school.
- 15.2. Future meeting dates are as follows:  
Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The meeting closed at 8:18pm

*Hazel Sheridan  
9<sup>th</sup> February 2024*

*Sent to Chair/Head on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and FGB on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024*