



MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF ABBEY COURT SCHOOL

MINUTES

Date 26th January 2021
Time 11.00 – 12.45
Location Remote conferencing
Clerk Tim Packham

Attendees

Jean Kerr (Chair)
Karen Joy
Derek Blease
Jane Heyes (Vice Chair)
John Huntingford
David Lane
Tim Walker
Claire Richards

A	STANDARD ITEMS	Action
A1	Administration The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.	
A2	Virtual Meeting Protocols. It was noted that the virtual meeting protocols had not changed and Governors agreed to work within the protocols.	
A3	Apologies and absences. Apologies had been received and accepted from Matthew Powell.	

A4	<p>Confirmation of quoracy The meeting was quorate.</p>	
A5	<p>Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest in regard to any item on the agenda. There were no declarations of any hospitality or gifts received or given. Governors were reminded of their requirement to read, sign and return the Declaration of Interests.</p>	<p>Governors to complete and return declarations and other associated papers asap.</p>
A6	<p>Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to a few typing errors including accurate designation of which governor made comment.</p>	
A7	<p>Matters arising from the minutes. There were no additional matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
B	GOVERNOR BODY MATTERS & STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES	Action
B1	<p>The following questions were asked prior to the meeting:</p> <p>Q: JHe: Nursery places – Does the LA underwrite the vacant nursery places? Will the nursery fill during the year? Do the vacancies impact on the school budget?</p> <p>A: KJ: The funding accompanies the pupil joining. The nursery does fill during the year although rarely to capacity. (Maximum numbers usually total 16). We staff according to the numbers on roll in the nursery term on term.</p> <p>Q: JHe: Congratulations to the school on managing to function with an average staff absence of 20% and 10 vacancies. How is this currently impacting on staff and pupils? Good to see absence is now reducing.</p> <p>A: KJ: Pupil absence is reducing. Staff absence is fluctuating but averaging around 20%. There is a big impact on staff and the development of the school. Pupils in school miss those that are at home. Where class sizes are small, those in school get more attention but the curriculum remains restricted. We will need to monitor the impact on those at home closely when they return.</p> <p>Q: JHe: What can governors do to contribute to the celebration of John’s retirement and 25 years of service?</p> <p>A: KJ: We need a plan. John will leave at the end of the Autumn Term at Christmas, so we will need to include this in our Christmas events programme.</p> <p>Q: JHe: Is the school happy with the revisions to the original designs?</p> <p>A: KJ: Yes – so far, but when tenders are received this may impact on the design and what will be built.</p>	

	<p>Q: JHe: Given the recent negative publicity, is the school happy with the food parcels for children?</p> <p>A: KJ: Yes – because we order, pack and supply our own hampers to the Government guidance.</p> <p>Q: JHe: Do we need a special meeting to discuss ways forward for the phase 2 development?</p> <p>A: KJ: Maybe not a separate meeting, but I would be happy for it to be on our next agenda to allow for more detailed discussion.</p> <p>Q: JHe: Can the Headteacher offer our thanks to Zoe Silvester for her fabulous and exciting Farm Curriculum and can the school please remember to invite us to a lesson when the time is right?</p> <p>A: KJ: Yes, of course.</p> <p>Q: JHe: The plan on the full re-opening of schools is thorough and detailed and shows that there has, and continues to be a great deal of extra work for school leaders and staff. Can we thank all staff for this and ask if there is any more that governors can do to show support?</p> <p>A: KJ: Thank you. Another “open” letter to staff from the Governing Body would be helpful.</p> <p>It was noted that the answers received were accepted in full.</p>	<p>Clerk - Add Phase 2 development to the next agenda</p> <p>KJ – Thank Zoe Silvester</p> <p>JK to write to all staff</p>
<p>B2</p>	<p>Membership and Governance matters.</p> <p>Governors had received a CV from Kristal Clark , a potential governor A proposal for appointment of Kristal as a new governor was presented to the board by the Headteacher.</p> <p>Governors were informed that Kristal Clark, a Human Resources advisor, has a high level of HR experience and formerly worked for Medway. This experience will bring a new dimension to the board supporting children in the school.</p> <p>Q: JK: Are governors happy to invite Kristal to join the board?</p> <p>Governors unanimously approved that Kristal should be invited to join the board.</p> <p>JK will write to Kristal inviting her to join the board and will tell her how delighted the governors are.</p> <p>Governors were informed that Barry Kemp still hopes that, when he has the opportunity, he will offer to join the board as an associate governor. It was noted that he will be a great asset.</p>	<p>JK to write to KC and invite her to join the board.</p>

	<p>JHe had shared a paper with governors regarding the issue of what happens when any governor’s four-year term of office comes to an end.</p> <p>Q: JHu: There are no arrangements for governors continuing a four-year term of office. I have looked at the Instrument of Governance and the constitution of the board and it covers procedures. The proposal doesn't apply to elected governors (staff and parent governors). Should there be a right to appeal for suspending or removing a governor?</p> <p>A: JHe: I have phoned the National Governance Association for a definitive answer, it’s not a procedure. Governors , at the moment are noddod on for an extra four-year term, however they may not want to continue. All have different skills and skills gaps. The board needs to identify what we need to do and the people we need to help achieve it. The needs of the board changes over time. It is suggested that the chair will approach a governor and see if they are prepared to carry on or not. This might also be the time when the chair can raise the issue of any missed meetings which therefore might cloud any re-appointment. The chair will have a private conversation with the governor and then can report back to the board for a re-appointment to be ratified or not</p> <p>Q:TW: Where's the right of appeal if the governing body doesn't want or need them? It guards against the Chair of Governors creating their own empire. If a governor is turned down for re-appointment, should this be a discussion for governing body?</p> <p>A: JHe: If I set out the process out in a linear way. If a governor wishes to continue, advised by the Chair, they submit a statement to the Board, and the Board ratify the decision. I will look at paper re write and bring back the next board meeting</p> <p>DB stated he was impressed with the paper and expressed his thanks.</p> <p>KJ informed governors the driver for this is for the school to have the right people, in the right place, at the right time. Governors need to be on the Board because they have relevant skills to bring.</p> <p>JK gave examples such as: medical support is provided by TW and finance support from JHu.</p> <p>JHe stated she would reword the paper and bring it back to next meeting</p> <p>KJ stated the committee membership list would be circulated with the proposed membership.</p> <p>It was suggested that Kristal Clark could be the governor for wellbeing.</p>	<p>JHe to rewrite paper and bring to next board meeting.</p> <p>KJ to circulate the committee membership.</p>
<p>B3</p>	<p>Finalising of Governor Action Pan 2020/21</p> <p>It was noted this has been completed and is now on the Website.</p>	

<p>B4</p>	<p>Governor CPD</p> <p>It has been agreed that each governor will complete one CPD course per year plus there is mandatory training to be completed by all governors. DL suggested he would do the Health & Safety module.</p> <p>Details of courses that have been completed by governors are to be sent to JHe.</p> <p>The following training was noted: - JK- NGA Pandemic. Train the trainer course. Diocese of Canterbury TW- Prevent & Safeguarding</p> <p>It was noted that the Skills Audit will be coming out prior to the next FGB meeting. Also, a course evaluation form will be sent out to identify “How suitable the training is for special schools?” These answers will be analysed. Evaluation is very important as we are paying for these courses.</p>	<p>All Governors to complete one CPD course per year. Course choices to be provided by next FGB meeting.</p> <p>Details of completed courses to be emailed to JHe</p> <p>JHe Send out skills audits and evaluation form</p>
<p>B5</p>	<p>Chairs Correspondence and actions.</p> <p>The Chair update the board. She had been to numerous meetings mainly concerning the nursing provision and the start of phase two</p>	
<p>B6</p>	<p>Policies for review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education Needs Policy <p>JHu- identified that some of the names contained within the policy were out of date. Governors were informed by KJ that policies are revised on a school cycle and that documents will always show anomalies and that all policies will have a review date on them.</p>	<p>KJ Action names etc. to be updated as the next cycle requires</p>
<p>B8</p>	<p>Finance.</p> <p>It was noted that a finance meeting had taken place with JHu TW and JK. This meeting was to monitor the budget to ensure spending was in line with that planned. Covid had impacted on the budget and some planned items could not be undertaken. Some savings had been made on staff headings where there had been delays in recruitment.</p> <p>The finance committee considered the schools current needs and agreed expenditure against headings as appropriate. Some items on the school’s “wish list” were given approval. These included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Another minibus to complete the school’s fleet. 2) I.T. Equipment 3) Investment into the farm. <p>Governors were informed of the following two issues.</p>	

	<p>Firstly, regarding employing 3 Health Care Assistants (HCA's). It was agreed at the last board meeting that the school would fund 1.5 posts and the local authority would also be asked to fund 1.5. However, this was not supported by the Local Authority. The school still needs to find another 1.5 posts and this needs to be progressed.</p> <p>It has gone through the Finance Committee to fund 3 HCA positions to deal with medication and ancillary tasks as required. It is a slow process to employ 3 HCA's and will be for term time only to support the school.</p> <p>JK: Do governors agree to fully fund three HCAs?</p> <p>Governors unanimously agreed to fund 3 HCAs.</p> <p>Secondly, regarding a pay claim for 'term time only' staff on the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales. There was a miscalculation and a number of local authorities are being challenged. This could be back dated for four years. It is possible that each member of staff is owed £270 per year for the last four years. Medway have challenged this and suggested going back one year. This will cost Abbey Court approximately £50,000 per year with the total bill approximately £200,000 pounds.</p> <p>Governors were informed the bill could be colossal due to the high number of TAs employed. Prudent management of finances at Abbey court are second to none. £200,00 pounds cannot be paid from our funds in one amount.</p> <p>Medway have asked if schools wish them to negotiate on their behalf.</p> <p>Governors agreed that they are happy for Medway to act on behalf of Abbey Court.</p> <p>JK: We would possibly need Medway to loan the repayment monies .</p> <p>Q: JHe: Presumably any back pay of any possible loan from Medway will not be paid with interest? We will need to look carefully at any interest payments.</p>	<p>KJ – inform LA of our wish for them to negotiate</p>
C	LEADERSHIP MATTERS	Action
C1	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>The Headteacher confirmed with governors that the pre-meeting questions had all been answered and that governors were satisfied with the answers. It was noted the management of Covid 19 continues to be difficult.</p>	
C2	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Governors were informed that staffing continues to be difficult with 20% of teachers out every day. All classes are open and the attendance of pupils is between 55% and 60%. Nationally the figure is 30% so Abbey Court's attendance is almost double for similar schools across the country.</p>	

	<p>Q: A governor asked: Has there been any further discussion on the staff parent survey?</p> <p>A: JK: it is very difficult at this time as we do not know how much the parents are willing to tell us if they are struggling. All parents get very regular personal contact from the school.</p> <p>It was noted there has been a 49% take up of home learning. Covid takes up a lot of time as a large amount of reporting is required including attendance and free school meals. Some parents wanted vouchers and are not happy. IT support has been provided to every parent that has asked for it. It has been really hard for teachers. They have had to teach all day in school and provide home learning too. We are mindful of the welfare of staff.</p> <p>Monitoring calls are happening weekly, although some parents feel checked up on. It is quite difficult to get calls made using the right tone.</p> <p>The issue of Covid testing has caused difficulties. It is very difficult to test children in a special school. Staff are being asked to attend community centres for lateral flow tests. The government are not issuing home testing kits to staff in special schools at present. Staff in special schools are to be offered vaccinations. The school continues to focus on the mental health and well-being of staff, and Karen expressed thanks to governors for all of their support.</p> <p>CR: I have received a lot of good feedback from parents. It is about pitching it right.</p> <p>DL: I would like to thank Karen and the staff for their management of learning during C19. There is an informal parents Facebook page. It is positive. This is not a school run Facebook page and I do not think this has been fed back to the school.</p> <p>DL: A massive thanks to KJ and staff for providing some normality for our children. Life at home is less normal than school life.</p> <p>DB: I am wholly amazed how KJ and team have kept things going with uncertainty, changes from government, and changes to requirements.</p> <p>It was sadly noted the school has had the death of a child to deal with, and that it affected the whole school (not C19 related).</p>	
<p>C3</p>	<p>Staffing position and proposed structure to support leadership transition.</p> <p>It was noted that the farm manager resigned whilst on maternity leave. Through a restructuring process we learnt a lot and we have changed the position.</p> <p>We are going to appoint a finance manager. Governors were informed the Finance role is growing and there is a need for a finance manager. This appointment will help alleviate pressure on Linda.</p>	

C4	Update on Free School Meals Covered under Item C1	
C5	Update on Laptops. Covered under item C1	
D	OTHER MATTERS	Action
D1	<p>Governor Monitoring Report - Home Learning.</p> <p>JHe: added to the written monitoring report she had written by saying how difficult it must be for the school to get trends and data as all family circumstance are so different: parents with Covid 19, bereavements and parents working from home, most had reasons why it is challenging for home learning to occur.</p> <p>JHe informed governors that two new documents have been produced. One shows the annual governor tasks, set out in Autumn, Summer and Spring. The second is a scheme of delegation showing a list of responsibilities and at what level they must be completed. There will be a section on the website for a new Governors Handbook, so that all documents can be stored in one place.</p> <p>JHe informed governors that The Key has questions that could be asked when carrying out monitoring visits. She has summaries this as a tool for governors and will distribute it.</p> <p>It was suggested that governors could choose questions and email the person so that they can answer. This can be followed up with a Zoom call.</p> <p>Race equality on the governing body. Item carried forward to next meeting.</p>	<p>JHe Send out curriculum monitoring questions</p> <p>C/F to next meeting.</p>
D2	Date of next meeting 16th of March 11:00 o'clock	
	Meeting closed at 12:45	