



## **Minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting of Archbishop Runcie First School**

**Held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, at 5.30 pm in the school.**

### **Present:**

Paul Baker, Jonathon Booth, Gregg Farrell(on-line), Katie Hogg, Sarah MacRae, Kate Massey (Headteacher), Andrew McCabe, Cecilia Pacitti, Sarah Pickett (Chair), Lonie Sebahg, Andrew Shipton.

**The meeting was quorate.**

### **In Attendance:**

Bob Wilson – Governor Services

### **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence.**

- The Chair invited Rev Andrew Shipton to open the meeting with a prayer.
- The Chair welcomed Rev Paul Baker and Lonie Sebahg to the meeting as recently appointed Governors.
- Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Sarah Hawkins and Ted Thomas.

### **2. Declaration of interests / sign annual register of interests for 2022/23 / code of conduct.**

- There were no declarations of any interests in relation to the business of this meeting.
- The Annual Register of Business Interests and the Code of Conduct were signed by the recently appointed Governors.

### **3. Identify any additional / urgent items not on the agenda.**

The Chair advised that she was finding that communication with Governors via their personalised school email address was proving to be difficult. Her messages which requested responses were often not answered. For example, she was still waiting for answers to her message concerning the skills audit. The Chair queried if 'WhatsApp', would be a better method of making contact. This was discussed and **accepted** as a way forward by Governors. To move this forward, the Chair **agreed** to establish a WhatsApp link with Governors.

**Action: Chair to set up a 'WhatsApp' communication link with Governors.**

### **4. GB appointments / membership update.**

- The two new Governors had been welcomed under Item 1 above.
- There still existed a vacancy for a Foundation Governor. A suitable person had been identified for this position and would be **approached** by Rev Shipton on

behalf of All Saints PCC, to see there was an interest in joining the Governing Body.

- The term of office of Cecilia Pacitti as a Governor would expire on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2023. She advised that she wished to continue as a Governor and would **chase** up the required paperwork for this to happen.
- Lonie Sebagh had completed induction training with Governor Services. Paul Baker would need to **sign up** for this training.
- In connection with the need for some members to complete the Skills Audit – the Chair would **resend** her email to Governors.
- The Headteacher **requested** that those Governors who had still to let the school know their next of kin details, that they now do so by contacting the School Business Manager.

**Actions:** a) Rev Shipton to approach the person who had expressed an interest in becoming a Foundation Governor.

b) C Pacitti to chase up the necessary paperwork to be completed for her to continue as a Governor.

c) P Baker to sign up for Governor induction training.

d) Chair to resend Skills Audit message to Governors.

e) Governors to send next of kin details to School Business Manager in cases where this had yet to be done.

#### 5. Draft minutes of the previous GB meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

- The draft minutes of the Governing Body that had been held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 has been circulated to Governors. These were considered and **agreed** as a true record of the meeting. Action points had already been addressed or were covered elsewhere within this meeting.
- One Governor questioned the inclusion of individual names at points where a query had been raised or discussion had taken place during the meeting. This point was considered, and it was agreed the names of Governors should be excluded from the minutes as suggested. The clerk agreed to **amend** the minutes accordingly.

**Action: Clerk to amend the minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022 to exclude the names of Governors from the body of the minutes.**

#### 6. Headteacher's Report.

The Headteacher's Report had been circulated and was considered by Governors. The Chair enquired if Governors had any questions about the report. The following points were raised:

- A Governor **asked** about the situation around staff vacancies. The Headteacher responded that there was a considerable struggle to recruit new staff. This seemed to be an issue throughout the region – particularly in connection with Teaching Assistant posts. She advised that the existing HLTA had been redeployed to provide cover in Reception. As a result of this the school was currently spending a great deal of money on supply staff to provide PPA cover. Unfortunately, even obtaining supply cover was proving to be difficult. A Governor expressed the view that the school was taking the right option by ensuring that proven resource was being put into Early Years.

The Chair **queried** the impact on the budget of providing the PPA cover. The Headteacher advised that both she and the School Business Manager were concerned about the situation and that they would be meeting to discuss the

overall budget position and to identify any corrective action that may be needed. Also **queried** was the level of skill that was needed by a person to take up the position of a TA. The Headteacher advised that for a Level 3 TA a person had to have the relevant Level 3 qualification. For Level 2 posts, there was some level of flexibility.

A Governor **asked** if there was competition between the local first schools for staff. The Headteacher thought that this was not the case and that the level of pay on offer was a real issue. She had even extended the number of paid hours available to see if that would provide a greater incentive to recruitment but so far that had not proved to be successful. Having said this, Governors should be assured that the support required by all High Needs pupils was fully met.

- The Chair **raised a query** concerning Leadership Development. The Headteacher advised that the Gosforth Schools Trust Subject Meetings had re-commenced. Unfortunately these various meetings were all held on the same evening of the week during term— meaning that staff leading more than a single subject area (which was the situation at this school), being able to access more than one meeting was impossible.
- The Chair **queried** the situation concerning pupil absence. The Headteacher advised that poor attendance was a huge issue across the City. Work was being done to tackle the issue at Archbishop Runcie by Dan Tolan from Clennell Education Solutions. Where there were cases of persistent absence, Dan would write to parents and where suitable, would draw up parental contracts. Governors should note that the Local Authority are not routinely issuing fines to parents due to staff shortages although they are looking to fill the vacant posts by January 2023.

The Chair **requested** that the Headteacher put together a note, in the name of the Governing Body, to be included in the newsletter to go out to parents/carers to remind them of the important need to ensure good attendance of their children at school.

Governors **advised** that they were **satisfied** with what was being done by the school to tackle absenteeism.

- There then followed a discussion concerning collective worship within school. The Headteacher advised of the significant calming effect that this had on the pupils. Rev Shipton agreed to carry out monitoring of a sample of collective worship evaluations within the school. He would arrange to **do this** when next in school.
- The Chair **queried** the School SEF Evaluation as shown on page 10 of the report. This indicated the school to be 'good' across the 4-point scale. The Headteacher gave an assurance that Alison Stephenson (School Improvement Partner), agreed with this evaluation. A Governor, who had been at a feedback session provided by the SIP advised that this had been very positive and that the school was heading on the right direction.

The Chair **thanked** the Headteacher for her comprehensive report.

**Actions: a) The Headteacher was requested by the Chair to put together a note, on behalf of Governors, to be included in the newsletter to parents / carers, to raise the importance of good attendance by pupils.**

**b) Rev Shipton to carry out monitoring a sample of worship evaluations when next in school.**

## 7. Financial Items.

The Financial Report Headlines and Expenditure Report for Period 7 together with the Three-Year Budget Report had been circulated to Governors.

The Headteacher made the following comments:

- The salary uplift, together with increased NI contributions for both teaching and support staff had been significantly higher than originally been anticipated. The higher figures were now shown in the revised budget.
- Gas and Electricity prices were increasing significantly.
- The Local Authority was encouraging all schools to review and if necessary reset their budgets.

The Headteacher stated that in the light of the above, she would be going through the budget in fine detail with the SBM to see where savings could be made.

The Chair **asked** if it would be possible to make cuts should this be necessary to balance the budget. The Headteacher **advised** that the situation was difficult but that some adjustments could be made.

Governors **accepted** the budget figures as presented and **approved** the sign-off of the Financial Report Headlines document.

Three SFVS documents had been circulated to Governors for consideration. These were the SFVS Checklist, the SFVS Report and Self Assessment Dashboard. Governors **raised** a number of queries re: SFVS as follows:

- Checklist Question 9: This was to do with the school requiring brought forward balances in order to balance the current year budget. It is not sustainable to use a previous surplus in this way. Equally, having a high forecast contingency was considered to be unacceptable by the LA. The Headteacher **advised** that the budget was under constant scrutiny and was classed as being 'keeping under review' by the LA – meaning that the LA had no immediate concerns about the budget.
- Self Assessment Dashboard: The Chair thought that this was a useful document and the narrative added by the SBM was helpful in understating the financial situation and why some areas were showing as red in the document.

Governors **approved** the completed SFVS Checklist, and the Chair **agreed** to sign this document when she was next in school.

**Action: Chair to sign off the SFVS document when she was next in school.**

#### **8. Policy Review.**

- The policies as agreed at committee level were **approved by Governors**. These policies were:  
FSP – School Teachers Pay and Conditions  
FSP – Health and Safety  
TLA – SEND and Inclusion.
- The Chair referred to the Equality Objectives 2022 – 2026 document that had been circulated. These Objectives were considered and **agreed** by Governors.

#### **9. MAT Focus Group.**

- The Chair opened the discussion of this topic by reminding Governors about the Government White Paper which requires schools to be converted to academy status by 2030. The Headteacher advised that there was a need to look at the options for the school going forward. Governors had recently attended an information session in school about academisation with LA and DEB representatives (a GST representative was also in attendance). There had also been a GST meeting that two Governors and the Headteacher had attended where there had been DfE representation. The GST were keen to form a MAT – but the DEB would not necessarily support this option for ARFS due to the church foundation. The Chair expressed the view that at this point, the school was in an information gathering phase. She also felt that the GST were feeling the same way. The Headteacher advised that every single option needed to be explored. Broadly this included:
  1. Choose an academy route and convert (based on pupil numbers), this could include establishing our own MAT.
  2. Join an existing MAT (this could include the ‘hub’ model).
  3. Join a LA MAT (not currently and option in Newcastle).
  4. Bide our time and consider options (but bear in mind that the situations of other schools may change in the meantime).
- To move this matter forward and to take the initial exploration work away from the Governing Body, the Chair advised that a focus group should be established to include some Governors and also some representation from beyond the Governing Body.

After discussion, it was agreed that the membership would be made up as follows:

Sarah Pickett – to Chair the group

Kate Massey (Headteacher)

Jonathon Booth (Deputy Headteacher)

Sarah MacRae (Parent Gov.)

Rae Lowe (SBM) - Staff Rep, non-teaching.

Kathleen Francis – Staff Rep, teacher.

Katie Hogg (Gov. and PCC Rep for All Saints)

1 rep from St Nicholas Church PCC

**Action: Sarah MacRae agreed to organise the initial meeting of this group.** It would be up to the group to **organise** the frequency of meetings.

**10. GST – update.** The Chair advised that the next meeting of the GST was due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> December and following this an update would be provided to Governors.

**11. Promise Board – update.** The Promise Board update had been issued to Governors via email. The Chair advised that this item needed to stay on the agenda of Governing Body meetings in order to raise the profile of the Board.

**12. Reports from GB committees.** The following reports were presented to Governors:

- FSP, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022
- Admissions, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022
- TLA, 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022

These reports were considered and approved by Governors.

### 13. Governor monitoring.

A number of Governing Monitoring visits had recently taken place and the reports circulated to Governors as follows:

- SIP – the SIP had recently delivered her report. The SIP visit and feedback session had been attended by two Governors and was confirmed as giving a positive position of the school. SEND / EYFS had been the focus of her visit in Autumn term 1 - this visit had demonstrated all values were in place and being followed through. Full inclusion of SEND pupils had been witnessed (see SIP report).
- SIAMS – this had been a very positive visit. The school had made a lot of good progress as shown by the report.
- Safeguarding – a recent audit had been carried out by Dan Tolan from Clennell Education Solutions. Dan had reported that he had been inspired by what he had seen and that there were very few action points. In addition, there had been a recent check of the single central record carried out by the SIP. The Chair advised that safeguarding threaded through all aspects of the school. The Headteacher spoke about the possibility of booking a safeguarding review in future.. She expressed some concern that Dan was acting as a consultant and an auditor to the school on safeguarding. Clennell did not see this as a particular issue, but the Headteacher agreed to **raise** this with them again. The concern was to ensure that good safeguarding challenge was in place. The Chair considered a review would be a good idea but proposed that this be booked for next year at a point to be agreed. Governors were in **support** of this proposal.
- Health and Safety - this report showed that all was up to date and looking good. Of concern was traffic outside of the school. This prompted discussion between Governors and several solutions were proposed. There was concern about emergency vehicles gaining access down Christon Road at drop off and pick up times. A Governors **agreed** to ask her husband if the Fire Brigade could carry out an audit of access. She **agreed** to email the Headteacher about this.
- A second SEND visit had taken place that morning with a focus on Middle Leadership and a 'deep dive' into Reading and Maths. A governor had attended the feedback session and a report would follow in due course.

These reports were considered and accepted by Governors for information.

**Action: Governor to email the Headteacher about the fire brigade carrying out a safety audit re: parking on Christon Road.**

### 14. Governor Training.

The Chair requested that Governors email her to **inform** when they had attended a training course. This was for a record of training to be developed as part of the report to demonstrate the impact made by Governors.

P Baker, C Pacitti and G Farrell left the meeting at this point.

### 15. Impact of Governors

Several items were identified as evidence that the Governing Body made an impact – as follows:

- The reports from Link Governors were very insightful and were good evidence of challenge.
- The Headteacher thought that her meetings with Chair and Vice-Chair each fortnight were useful and gave opportunity to raise issues.

- The new focus group set up to look at academy status should have a significant impact going forward.
- It was good that some Governors attended the feedback sessions from the SIP to get an objective view of the school.
- A Governor thought that the Governing Body meeting today had been well chaired, and that the business of the meeting was covered in a timely manner.

**16. Confirmation of meeting dates and times:**

Meeting dates and times were agreed as follows:

**Governing Body Meetings:**

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 at 5.30pm

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 5.30pm.

**Vision Day:**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 1pm – 4pm. (All Saints Church to provide the facilities / location for this meeting).

The meeting ended at this point (7.55pm). The Chair thanked Governors for their attendance and for their input to the meeting.

Item	Action	
3	Chair to set up a WhatsApp communication link with Governors	
4	a). Rev Shipton to approach the person who had expressed an interest in becoming a Foundation Governor. b). C Pacitti to chase up the necessary paperwork to be completed for her to continue as a Governor. c). P Baker to sign up for Governor induction training. d). Chair to resend Skills Audit message to Governors. e). Governors to send next of kin details to School Business Manager in cases where this had yet to be done	
5	Clerk to amend the minutes of 5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022 to exclude the names of Governors from the body of the minutes	
6	a). The Headteacher was requested by the Chair to put together a note, on behalf of Governors, to be included in the newsletter to parents / carers, to raise the importance of good attendance by pupils. b). Rev Shipton to carry out a sample check of 'worship evaluations' when next in school.	
7	Chair to sign off the SFVS document when she was next in school.	
9	Sarah MacRae agreed to organise the initial meeting of MAT Focus Group.	
13	Governor to email the Headteacher about the fire brigade carrying out a safety audit re: parking on Criston Road.	

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Chair of Governors**

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