

Approved Minutes
Meeting of the Governing Body (GB) of
ARCHBISHOP RUNCIE CE (AIDED) FIRST SCHOOL

Wednesday 23 November 2016

Present:

Mrs S Hawkins (Chair),
Mrs D Bunn (SBM - Associate), Mrs K Massey, Mr A McCabe, Mrs H Miller,
Dr S Pickett, Cllr D Raymont, Canon J Robson (Headteacher), Mrs B Scott-Harden,
Mrs J Senior, Rev Canon A Shipton, Dr C Tompkins

Governors in post - 13; quorum – 7; governors present – 11 (and 1 Associate)
The meeting was quorate

In attendance:

Mrs D Cranston ~ Foundation Governor Elect
Mr N Sanders ~ Governor Services

In attendance for part of the meeting:

Ms H Balmbra, LA
Ms D Tyler, LA

1. Welcome / Opening Prayer

The meeting opened at 6.20pm with a prayer from Andrew Shipton.

As this was Diane Bunn's last GB meeting prior to leaving the school, she was thanked for the invaluable contribution she had made to the school and to the GB.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were **accepted** from Philip Cunningham and Phil Moorin.

3. Declaration of Interests

The annual register had been signed by everyone at the previous GB meeting. There were no interests declared in the business of this meeting.

4. Identification of Any Additional / Urgent Agenda Items

5. Expansion of the School / Admissions

Diane Bunn gave apologies and left during this item (7.30pm).

It was **agreed** to take this item earlier than scheduled on the agenda. Deb Tyler and Helen Balmbra introduced themselves and were welcomed and there was a verbal presentation to the GB, the main areas of which were as follows:

- The ongoing process of planning for future school places in Newcastle, and the background to the situation regarding the additional school places created in Gosforth and other areas of the City over the previous few years and the larger cohorts currently moving through the system.
- The LA's continuing statutory duty around school organisation / school place planning (including the principles it followed and the strategic approach it had

developed for the next 5-10 years looking at demographics / pupil numbers, future housing strategy / planning, land / site development) and the desire to work together with schools on this.

- The work done on the expansion of school places over the past few years, specifically in the Gosforth first schools, and the rationale behind this. All of the first schools had been asked about their interest in expanding; Archbishop Runcie had been one such and there had been some initial discussions.
- The potential scenarios for Archbishop Runcie First School, including re-location to a new school site, build / expansion, creation of additional places / capacity. Examples were given of how the scenarios might work. **In response to a query, this latter option was explained in terms of the need to create places / ensure capacity (in the right place in the system to meet needs) in the event of another Gosforth first school re-locating. There were also queries / discussion about the potential problems with local provision if Archbishop Runcie were to move, and the implications for the community the school currently served / the future community it would be serving in the longer term.**

Queries / discussion were noted as follows:

- Potential elements to consider as part of any consultation on admission arrangements, which would include the purpose and vision for the future for the school, the nature of the new school. There was also reference to possible transition / feeder arrangements.
- The practical implications for expansion of the school on the existing site. It was noted that some work had been done on the parameters / constraints around existing school sites / buildings, including Archbishop Runcie.
- Timescales were queried / discussed around the delivery of new places by September 2020 and also issues around sufficiency from now until 2020.
- If there was to be a new school built for 2020, there was a query about whether it was hoped to look at expansion of schools (such as Archbishop Runcie) before then. It was explained that the LA would have to work with schools collectively on all of the different options / combinations; there was no specific plan but the LA was conscious that there might be a need for places before then. It was hoped to have a clearer plan in place this academic year on next steps, admission arrangements, consultations etc.
- The notion of taking account of school sustainability when making these decisions; the greater vulnerability of Archbishop Runcie as a single entry school was also noted. The notion of whether the cost of losing a school was greater than helping ensure its sustainability.
- There were queries and discussion around the extent to which the school's current Admissions Policy (the faith-based criteria) was a barrier to the school expanding or re-locating. There was some discussion of the faith-based criteria within the policy. It was pointed out that, in relation to expansion of places in the local area, there would need to be some reassurances around selection and evidence to demonstrate that they were 'open' places. It was further pointed out that it would be more helpful without faith-based criteria but it would not

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stop the process if there was evidence to demonstrate that the places would not be filled up and prevented local children from gaining admittance. It could be more beneficial not to have faith-based criteria but this would not necessarily be a barrier. Other physical / practical elements that might provide a barrier to expansion and would need to be thought through, particularly on such a constrained site, were highlighted (for example, as well as planning and parking issues, the requirement to apply to the Secretary of State if there was to be any build on school playing fields).

- The work done by the LA on the 'expandability' of existing schools was highlighted.
- Where the cost of expanding a VA school would fall. There was also reference to the implications of the National Funding Formula; the full implications were not clear until more detail was available.
- There were queries and discussion about consultation regarding changes to the Admissions Policy. Consultation would need to be carried out as widely as possible and the GB was advised to be very specific and clear about the definitions within the admissions criteria and the changes that were proposed. Potential ways of notifying everyone about the consultation were highlighted.
- At this point, both officers were thanked and left the meeting (7.50pm); they concluded by confirming that the LA did wish to look at finding a good solution, both for Archbishop Runcie and the other schools in the area.

Following on from the previous GB meeting, there were a number of queries and discussion points to do with the school's possible involvement in a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The following areas were highlighted / discussed:

- The Chair referred to the main points arising from a Diocesan meeting she had attended the day before.
- The need to ensure finances were balanced and the school was viable going forward.
- The implications for the GB in joining a MAT, including creation of a Trust Board and scheme of delegation for the LGB (Local Governing Board). It was suggested that it would be important to clarify governors' skills set and look at expressions of interest for potentially serving on the Trust Board / LGB. It was further suggested that it might be useful to speak to schools that had already gone through the process.
- It was proposed to advertise for / recruit a teaching Head for the school; this was felt to be a necessary proposal in any case (in terms of helping to balance the budget), outside of the discussion about potential MAT conversion. The implications of replacing the departing SBM with a Finance and Admin. Officer were also raised.
- Taking into account the above discussion, governors agreed to express a firm interest to the Diocese in pursuing MAT conversion as an option.

Caroline Tompkins referred to a recent Chairs' Forum she had attended at which the LA's Lead Assistant Director for Education and Skills, Dean Jackson, had presented a session about Ofsted inspection. It was suggested that arrangements could be for an in-house Ofsted session for governors.

Sarah Pickett gave her apologies at this point and left the meeting (8.15pm).

There were further queries and discussion about the consultation process regarding the school's admission arrangements, the need to be clear (and to take account of the previous guidance) and to ensure that consultation took place within the prescribed timescale. It was **agreed** that the Chair would take account of the previous advice from the LA; she would re-write the proposal and circulate to governors for comment, prior to the consultation proceeding.

Action: As above

Andrew Shipton gave his apologies at this point and left the meeting (8.25pm).

6. Gosforth Schools Trust (GST) Items

The Chair was to attend the next Trust meeting in December and would report back.

Action: Chair

7. Draft Minutes of the Previous GB Meeting

The draft minutes of the GB meeting held on 10 October 2016 had been circulated and were **approved** subject to a section being declared to be confidential.

8. Matters Arising

GB Membership and Appointments (page 1)

The Headteacher was to raise the matter of the confirmation of Dawn Cranston's appointment at the next Diocesan Education Board meeting the following week.

Action: Headteacher

Publication of GB Details (page 1)

The Headteacher confirmed that she had updated the Edubase system.

GB Handbook (page 2)

The Chair was finalising the updated GB Handbook and would arrange for it to be circulated in due course.

Action: Chair

GST Items (pages 3/4)

As mentioned earlier, the Chair would be attending the next Trust meeting (19 December).

Hyde Terrace (page 4)

It was understood that the closure of Hyde Terrace was temporary for six months from January 2017. Reference was made to the potential for the expansion of the school on the existing site, and to the possibility, therefore, of the closure of the route being an issue in this respect. It was suggested that a letter might be submitted about the need for the GB / school to be consulted about how this might impact on plans to do with the development of the school; it was further suggested that such a letter might be submitted jointly (by Archbishop Runcie First School and GCMS).

Action: Consideration of submission of letter as above

Curriculum and Performance Committee (page 6)

It was confirmed that the CP minutes of 21 September had been circulated.

It was also confirmed that Andrew Shipton had led some RE training for staff; the training had been excellent and well-received and he was thanked.

Safer Recruitment Training (pages 6/7)

Several governors were to attend training on 8 December (S Hawkins; K Massey; H Miller; A Shipton).

Expansion of the School / Admissions (Confidential section)

There were some queries and discussion about the best way of sharing the discussions / options around expansion / academisation with the school's staff. It was **agreed** to arrange a face-to-face session with the staff, which the Chair and Caroline Tompkins would lead on behalf of the GB.

Action: Face-to-face session for staff

8. Reports from Committees / Individual and Link Governors / Governor Visits / Governor Development and Training

Governor Visits

A written report from Andy McCabe of a visit he had made on 7 November had been circulated. The visit had been to observe a Forest School session and gain information about the content and quality of the services provided by 'Grow and Learn Outdoors'. The report was noted and he was thanked.

Finance and Staffing (FS) Committee – 7 November 2016

The minutes of this meeting were not yet available and would follow in due course.

Action: FS minutes to be circulated

The chair of the committee, Dominic Raymont, gave a verbal report of the main points of the meeting:

- There were areas to look at in terms of cost reductions.
- The health and safety annual review had been completed.
- The pay policy had been agreed for 2016/17.
- There had been some discussion of staff structure review, and further consideration of the Newcastle Living Wage increase.
- The school's SBM post was to be replaced with a Finance and Administrative Officer post (following the departure of the current SBM, Diane Bunn, at Christmas). So far, there had been 60 requests for application packs for this post.

Curriculum and Performance (CP) Committee – 14 November 2016

The minutes of the above meeting were tabled, supported by the following attachments: assessment headlines for 2015/16; FFT school dashboard 2016 (KS1). The main points from the minutes were highlighted as follows:

- It was evident from the latest RAISE data that the school's performance was not where it needed to be in terms of the percentage of pupils working at greater depth (particularly regarding the outcomes in Maths and Writing). The school would need to look in detail at its assessment procedures / curriculum to ensure pupils were being provided with the opportunities to achieve; the school was already working to address this and the Diocese was providing support.

9. Financial Items / Budget Monitoring

This item had been covered through the consideration of the FS Committee minutes earlier in the meeting.

10. Headteacher's Report / School Improvement Priorities

Copies of the Headteacher's report had been circulated; governors were asked for questions / comments.

Reference was made to the 30 hours per week childcare arrangements and there were queries and discussion about whether this might be applicable to the school's Nursery provision going forward. It was noted that the school would be writing to parents about eligibility.

There was a query about the current catering arrangements (specifically the post of cook) and whether the school would be able to retain the services of the present post-holder. The Headteacher reported that she had written to the catering service to highlight how happy the school was with the current cook and asking whether the post had to be advertised; she was awaiting a reply.

There was some discussion about the current situation regarding staff morale. The Headteacher referred to the impact and pressure on staff as a result of, for example, the uncertainty of the financial / budget situation. Governors also discussed the way in which they, without necessarily being able to change the situation, might help matters by being more visible around school, acknowledgement and recognition of staff, showing their appreciation etc. It was felt that it would be helpful to have these kinds of messages from the GB.

Sarah Pickett was to be asked about her willingness to be appointed as Pupil Premium Link.

Action: As above

11. Policy Review

It was noted that a pack of school policies had recently been sent out to the governors, some of which had been agreed by the CP Committee. It was **agreed** to adopt all of the policies as circulated.

12. Budget Items / Financial Monitoring

This item had been covered through the consideration of the FS Committee minutes earlier in the meeting.

13. Safeguarding / Health and Safety / Risk Management Items

The Headteacher had circulated a safeguarding audit / report recently. It was noted that Sarah Hawkins and Andrew Shipton were to carry out a safeguarding walk in the near future.

Action: S Hawkins / A Shipton

A health and safety management report (dated October 2016) was tabled by the Headteacher; she explained that she had drawn this up using a template from the LA to ensure the school was reporting on all of the necessary areas. The conclusions / actions within the report were noted.

14. Any Other Business

A card / collection for Diane Bunn was discussed, and for Phil Moorin for his service as Chair of Governors.

It was **agreed** that the Chair would share the notes of a recent meeting to discuss MAT status; the possibility of a MAT working party was raised again (and the possibility of a separate meeting for further discussion).

Action: Chair

The Headteacher reported that she would be writing to the Chair formally in the next week to tender her resignation; parents would be informed thereafter as appropriate.

There was no further business; the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.05pm.

Sarah Harding
15th February 2017

