



## Minutes of the Governing Body (GB) meeting of Archbishop Runcie First School held on 30 March 2022 in school

### Present:

Sarah Hawkins (**Chair**), Jonathan Booth, Marian Coulson-Cave, Craig Dallison (CD), Greg Farrell (GF), Sarah Macrae (SM), Kate Massey (**Headteacher**), Andrew McCabe, Cecilia Pacitti, Sarah Pickett (SP), Andrew Shipton, Ted Thomas.

**The meeting was quorate.**

### In attendance:

Kathleen Francis – Early Years Leader  
Alison Stephenson – School Improvement Partner (AS)  
Ruth Corless – Governor Services

### Annual report to governors from School Improvement Partner (SIP)

The meeting opened with a prayer and the Chair welcomed all. Alison Stephenson (AS), School Improvement Partner, presented her findings from the visit that day to Early Years. Kathleen Francis was present to receive feedback directly.

The feedback from the deep dive for Early Years (EYFS) was very positive. AS was pleased to report that Early Years provision had 'moved to a new level'. The journey into Year 1 was clear to see and the team that had been created to support the children had been strengthened in the past year. The documentation for Early Years was "very, very strong" and non-Early Years specialists had been given an opportunity to support to develop the progression of children into Year 1. Effective partnership, practice and relationships with parents was clearly evidenced and staff had been upskilled to develop in this area.

AS reported that every child in Reception had a correct pencil grip and the rich environment of EYFS allowed children to work happily and cooperatively with each other. All children were highly engaged. There had been rapid improvement in the setting. Huge congratulations were extended to Kathleen Francis and the EYFS team.

Governors **congratulated** Kathleen Francis for her success.

*Kathleen Francis left the meeting at this point.*

AS had reviewed RE and reported that Jonathan Booth as an experienced leader, knew the RE curriculum well and had strengthened plans and resources across school. The intent was reported as 'very clear'. Teachers were making the children think hard and there was an inclusive feel around school. Leaders were very aware of the next steps needed to implement next steps

AS commented that there has been a strong start to Assessment in RE and staff next need to consider how gaps in learning are addressed.

AS noted during her visit that:

- Standards in books have strengthened.
- There was consistent and clear improvement in handwriting and spelling.

AS had also carried out a SCR check

- The single central record was fully compliant.
- Systems had been tightened and personnel files were well maintained and organised.
- Safer recruitment questions were asked and logged at interviews showing strong practice.

The decision to have the Deputy Headteacher (DHT) non-class based had strengthened teaching throughout the school and given support to new members of the staff team and curriculum development plans.

A very positive picture was evidenced, and leaders were working hard to maintain this.

*Andrew McCabe joined the meeting at this point: 17:49*

**A governor asked for clarity on the agreement with the School Achievement Partner.** The Headteacher explained the service previously through Newcastle City Council. AS had visited as Ofsted inspector and maintaining this link with Alison had been decided by governors in order to ensure robust challenge to the school and to support rapid improvement to EYFS (graded RI).

**A governor asked whether expectations were lower for SEND pupils?** AS confirmed that SEND would be revisited in summer term visit, which would determine the progress made from earlier visits and allow assessment of the training and implementation that had taken place.

*Craig Dallison joined the meeting at this point 17:50*

**A governor confirmed how useful it was to have the external perspective on the school and for governors to hear how school was developing in line with the Ofsted framework.**

**A governor highlighted that good RE needed to encourage the children to ask the 'big questions'.** JB confirmed that the teachers were passionate and supported pupils in this.

**A governor asked whether comparisons with non-Church of England (CofE) schools in RE could be done?** AS advised, this would not be usual since SIAMS judged the quality of RE in C of E Schools.

**A governor asked what RE would look like in a non-church school?** AS advised that the ethos and commitment to teaching time in the subject would vary. JB advised RE was a core subject in a CofE school and linked to collective worship.

The Chair thanked AS for her report and the support and challenge given to school during her visits. The Chair also thanked the school for their hard work.

*AS left the meeting at this point.*

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

The Chair welcomed Greg Farrell, newly appointed governor to the meeting. A round of introductions took place. Greg introduced himself and shared his experience and skill set.

The Chair invited Greg Farrell to attend committee meetings ahead of being allocated to one of them.

It was confirmed that Sarah Macrae was now on the Finance and Staffing committee.

## **2 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were submitted. All governors were in attendance.

## **3 Declaration of interests**

No declarations of interest relating to the agenda were presented.

The clerk confirmed the annual register of pecuniary interest was complete and had been returned to school for publication.

**A governor raised the recognition of staff at this point noting that many positive aspects had been mentioned in the School Improvement Partner's report.** Governors discussed the ways in which appreciation was already shown in school and the implications of selecting one member of staff. The Headteacher confirmed that all staff worked hard, and a general acknowledgment would be advisable. Governors agreed to deliver an appropriate whole-staff gift.

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

**A governor suggested that the Chairing of committee meetings be shared with all governors.** It was agreed that a rotating Chair would be initiated, and CD and SP agreed to prepare a timetable and assignment of the Chairing and secretary role for the rest of the academic year.

**Action: GD/ SP**

Governors agreed this would support time management and succession planning of the FGB. The clerk asked whether terms of reference would need to be reviewed? SP advised they would not need to be.

The clerk advised it was not recommended that School Business Manager took minutes at the finance committee. This was confirmed post meeting with the Chair of Finance.

The Headteacher explained the arrangements with the SBM for attending meetings out of hours.

## **5 GB appointments / membership update**

Governors considered the FGB vacancies and **agreed** the existing co-opted vacancy would remain until a suitable candidate with matching needed skills was found. The clerk agreed to resend the completed skills audit returns to the Chair post meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

Governors considered the promotion of governor vacancies and the diversity of the board. Governors agreed to consider local companies and promote the roles in the community with people with financial backgrounds.

**Action: All**

The Headteacher agreed to approach qualified individuals directly if the opportunity arose. The clerk agreed to look for suitable candidates with accountancy backgrounds within the LA gov volunteers.

Governors discussed induction of new members and TT, GF and CD agreed to meet for support.

No changes to contact details were reported.

## **6 Governance documentation and requirements**

The changes to committee membership were noted and the clerk agreed to update the list.

### **Action: Clerk**

It was confirmed that the Headteacher's performance management review had taken place September 2021.

## **7 Draft minutes of previous GB meeting 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

The minutes were reviewed, and a governor raised an amendment on page 9 of the minutes and asked for correction to the question submitted.

It was unanimously agreed that future minutes should be a summary of the discussions after they had finished rather than a record of every comment.

A governor had sought assurance in the previous meeting about recruitment of staffing and how they were appointed and raised the issue again. Governors were assured by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher that all interview processes were robust and would seek suitably qualified candidates that were aligned to school ethos and culture. The best person would be appointed. All due processes were followed, notes were taken and kept throughout the shortlisting and interview process, should a challenge be made.

CD assured governors that the finance committee considered staffing need as part of their role. The needs of the school would determine the recruitment decisions in line with any limits on budget.

The Leadership Team assured the FGB of the robust recruitment process in place which followed all due Employment Law expectations.

*Greg Farrell left the meeting at this point for a short time 18:40*

Governors discussed the details of the minutes and agreed to

- Add timings to the agenda to provide focus for discussions
- A summary would be recorded, not all detail of conversations
- Actions would be clearly stated for the minutes from any discussions

### **Action: Clerk**

The following actions were agreed:

- The Chair would review the skills audit
- The Chair would collate and review the admission consultation returns and communicate these to governors
- The Chair would work with committees for SIAMS coverage

### **Action: Chair**

Governors agreed to update the visit template to include a regular safeguarding question when visiting. **Action: Clerk / All**

*Greg Farrell returned to the meeting at 7pm.*

SM confirmed a website audit had been completed. All governors were required to send photos where needed to the SBM.

**Action: All**

A governor advised that Jane Natrass's details needed removed from the website.

**Action: SM/ SBM**

## **8 Headteacher's report**

The Headteacher gave an overview of her circulated report. The following was noted:

Support staff for children with high needs had been increased until July 2022. The needs in Year 1 and Year 2 were recorded as 'high'. Sustaining the required staffing level long term was not possible.

Staff absence has been challenging. Whilst cover had been supported from within school, this had impacted staff. Recruitment to vacant posts had not been easy. **A governor noted that recruitment and supply generally at this time were difficult.** The Headteacher confirmed that additional staffing continued to support the high number of SEND and high needs in school.

Nursery numbers are high and from the applications received leadership were confident that all 30 places for Reception would be filled in September.

Attendance throughout the city was low and school reflected a similar pattern. In January one third of the school had been absent and one time. Covid and general childhood illnesses had impacted attendance. Persistent Absence (PA) was currently very high, as was the case in other schools. Dan Tolan, Clennell Education Services, would continue to visit every half term to review attendance.

**A governor asked for details of PA.** PA in schools was reported as below 85%. This related to a small number of children. Covid had compounded reasons for staying off school and parents were wary.

Safeguarding training continued regularly and a series of referrals had been made this term. The Headteacher informed governors there had been a significant amount of work undertaken recently on safeguarding.

**A governor commented that the report of SIP's visit had been very reassuring, and that the decision to take the DHT out of class had benefitted school widely. Governors extended their congratulations to the DHT in gaining a national SENDCo qualification.**

**A governor asked when an Ofsted visit could be expected?** 2023-2024 was suggested. The SIP continued to support leadership in the preparation of the expected inspection.

Gosforth Schools Trust was discussed, and a series of sporting events was reported as due to take place. Governors were advised of the recent meeting and plans to re-establish shared events post lockdown.

Premises and Health and Safety reports updates were presented. The following was highlighted:

- Fire review actions had been completed.
- Plans for the removal of ash trees in the summer holidays were in place following advice that they were in poor condition.
- The strategic re-planting of trees was being considered.

Finance was reported as 'healthy' with the projected surplus to be used to continue with the current levels of staffing. A capital funding grant application had been made for landscaping in school, refurbishment of toilets and an accessible toilet.

**A governor asked about the decision to relocate the fence creating a smaller outdoor classroom for Reception.** This had been consciously done to manage the space effectively and create purposeful indoor and outdoor use for Reception children. The gate to the new porch was locked to help reduce footfall to the office.

*Cecelia Pacitti gave her apologies and left the meeting at 19:34*

Storm damage repairs to the roof were now completed.

**Governors discussed the club provision and affirmed the decision to increase lunchtime club provision.** The Headteacher confirmed that the clubs being offered were good quality activities for children.

**A governor congratulated school on the good uptake of clubs.**

The Headteacher confirmed the school fund was due to be audited by Newcastle City Council.

The Headteacher shared the recent extracurricular events that had been planned and delivered. All were pleased to see the children enjoying and engaging with these.

**A governor noted that Science Week, Reading Week and World Book Day activities should be commended.**

## **9 Finance, Staffing Premises**

The Chair of Finance Committee summarised the minutes of the recent meeting for governors and noted that headline reports for Period 10 and Period 11 had not been provided by the LA. The service was considered unacceptable, and a complaint had been made to the service lead. The budget for next year was still not available and another governing body meeting would need to be convened. Governors agreed to use MSTeams if needed for this meeting. Budget agreement was required by May 31, 2022. The Chair of Finance informed governors that all budget assumptions were correct and based on full-year groups.

The renewing of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) had been **agreed** at Finance Committee. This decision was **ratified** by the GB.

Surplus income created from wraparound was reported as £19k and governors were advised that this would be reinvested in the school.

Despite overspends on the budget the school was reported as having 'never been in a healthier financial position'. Any outturn would be within the 8% contingency allowed.

Governors discussed the finance SLA held with the LA and concluded that it would be counterproductive to seek support elsewhere. Due to the absence of the headline reports, Annex D had not been signed.

It was agreed at committee that the cost of the long-term staff insurance was high and had not been covered in claims income. A decision was made to not buy long-term staff insurance next year but to set aside money to cover staff absence.

An extra ordinary meeting to approve the budget would be arranged.

### **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLA)**

The Chair of the TLA informed governors that attendance and safeguarding had been discussed at the meeting. Recent data presented showed that reading and writing remained a high priority in school. The Pupil Premium (PP) strategy had been approved and was published in December 2021.

The uniform policy had been discussed at the last TLA committee meeting and the policy would be re-drafted to reflect proposals.

#### **Action: TLA agenda**

Governors were advised that secondhand uniforms were available in school through the Parent Teachers (PTFA) association.

Sarah Macrae (SM) advised governors of the Gosforth Schools Trust Board meeting which had taken place. Discussions had covered, Broadway East First School's move to Great Park, approval of land transfer and legal advice available for schools. SM also advised governors that a similar pattern for catchup was in place for all trust schools and a trust development plan was being developed. Wellbeing and senior leadership development were reported as continuing to be priorities for all schools.

Sarah Hawkins agreed she would resign as Trust Director at the next meeting. Sarah Macrae would be invited to represent Archbishop Runcie on the Gosforth Schools Trust board.

#### **Action: SH/ SM/ Clerk**

The SFVS benchmarking submission was **approved** pending any feedback to the Headteacher by 1 April 2022.

### **10 Reports from GB committees**

The reports had been shared as part of the last item.

### **11 Planned link gov visits**

Governor visits had taken place in line with the FGB planner.

### **12 Admissions Policy Consultation Outcome**

The Chair agreed to circulate policy consultation results. The Chair enquired if an extension was available for policy submission. The clerk advised it would need to be forwarded to the LA as soon as possible.

**Action: Chair**

**13 Gosforth Schools Trust (GST) update**

Sarah Macrae had provided a summary earlier in the meeting.

The Headteacher confirmed that GST Headteachers continued to meet, and some other network groups continued. Subject networks were due to restart.

**14 Governor training**

Governors were reminded of the training available to them and that no charge would be made since this was part of the school's SLA. No training attendance details were submitted during the meeting.

**15 Agree school term dates for 2022 / 2023**

The following staff training days: were **agreed** by governors:

- Mon 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022
- Mon 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022
- Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2022
- Fri 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023

The Headteacher agreed to publish these dates in the newsletter.

**16 Governance guidance report – spring term 2022**

The guidance report was received and noted by governors.

**17 Impact – what difference are governors making to outcomes for pupils?**

Governors noted the following impact:

- Decision to release DHT from being class based for this school year
- Impact of liaison investment
- Agreeing TLR expenditure
- Budgeting of additional teaching assistants for short term impact on SEND provision in school
- Continuous Professional Development (especially DHT SENDCo qualification)

**SIAMS preparation**

Governors were already linked to the following SIAMS strands:

- 1) Vision and leadership – All governors, led by Craig Dallison
- 2) Wisdom and Knowledge – Sarah Hawkins
- 3) Character development - Sarah MacRae (including links with School Council)
- 4) Community- Ted Thomas
- 5) Dignity and Respect- Marianne Coulson-Cave
- 6) Collective Worship (including links with Worship Council) – Sarah Pickett
- 7) RE – Andrew Shipton and Cecilia Pacitti

**Confirmation of meeting dates summer term 2022**

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May – TLA Cttee

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July – FSP Cttee

13<sup>th</sup> July 2022 – FGB

There being no other business the meeting closed at 20:20