

Minutes of the "Teams" meeting of the Governors of ST GILES SCHOOL held on
Wednesday 2nd December 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Part A Minutes

Present:

Michael Swadling – Chair
Paul Thirkettle – Vice Chair
Peter Denman
Karen Skeets
Neal Fraser
Beverley Hayllar

Kathleen Shields - Vice Chair
Curlita Campbell
Ken Morcombe
Katherine Lewis
Caroline Horgan

Also Present: Callton Young – Associate member
Colin Milsom – Clerk to the Governors

Absent: Sharon Newton

The planned presentation of the MLD case study had been deferred to a later meeting

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Sharon Newton.

2. Term of office of chair and vice chair and election of chair

The current term of office for both post holders was one year and it was agreed that this should continue to be the case.

The clerk reported that Ken Morcombe has withdrawn his nomination for the post of chair and Michael Swadling had agreed to stand as chair of the board. There being no other nominations Michael Swadling was elected as chair.

3. Membership

Callton Young was standing down as an elected governor and the board members thanked him for his work as a member of the board and as its chair. It was agreed that Callton Young be made an Associate member of the board.

This left a vacancy for a co-opted board member and Sue Appleton was being proseed to fill this vacancy. This was formally agreed and the chair welcomed Sue back to the board.

There were no other vacancies on the board at the present time and no other changes to membership.

4. Election of Vice Chair

In addition to the nomination of Paul Thirkettle as vice chair there was also a nomination for Kathleen Shields to be a vice chair and the board agreed to elect both governors as joint vice chairs.

5. Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests

The annual form had been sent to all board members for completion and return to the school office.

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any of the agenda items.

6. **Committee Structure, Membership and Terms of Reference**

There were no proposals to amend the current committee structure and all current members of the board were allocated to a committee. The chair would be in touch with all board members to see if they wished to change their committee allocation.

The current committee membership was:

Strategy – Chair and vice chair of the board and either the chair or vice chair of the Resources and Achievement & Standards Committees, head teacher and deputy head teacher.

Resources - Michael Swadling - (Chair), Katherine Lewis, Neal Fraser, Caroline Horgan, Kathleen Shields, Curlita Campbell, Peter Denman

Achievement & Standards - Ken Morcombe – (Chair), Katherine Lewis, Paul Thirkettle, Caroline Horgan, Sharon Newton, Beverley Hayllar, Karen Skeets.

Membership of the statutory committees for Discipline and Appeals would be decided when required.

The Pay committee formed part of the work of the Resources committee.

Terms of Reference – There were no proposed changes to the terms of reference for either the board or its committees and these were agreed.

7. **Minutes 15th July 2020**

The minutes of the last board meeting held on the 15th July 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the chair.

8. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were two identified actions arising from the last meeting.

1. Rainbow Nursery equipment inventory and related information – This had been provided to the school
2. Bespoke training autumn – This had been provided and feedback would be discussed later in the meeting.

There were no other actions arising that were not covered by the agenda.

9. **Correspondence and Chairs Action**

The chair had nothing to report.

10. **Head Teacher's Report**

The report had been sent to board members. The following key areas were highlighted. Early Years Curriculum Support – As part of the continuing development of the curriculum the school had hoped to be able to engage with Pam Sokhi but this had not been possible to date. The board had identified this as an area for its second bespoke session for the spring term 2021.

Pupil baselining – This had been discussed by governors at the A & S meeting and Caroline Horgan gave the board an update on the completion of the process, the comparisons with the expected levels and the setting of the individual pupil targets for

the current academic year. This process had also identified the degree of catch up that would be required. The school was now in the process of planning the use of the government catch up funding to meet these identified needs. The first tranche of funding had been received.

Therapy support – Concern was expressed at the possible reduction in the level of speech and language sessions resulting from a reorganisation of the service and a higher need for the service across the borough. This would have an impact on the pupil's education but was referred to in more detail in another report presented to the board for discussion.

Pupil absence – The data presented compared 2 complete years and the comparable data for autumn 2019 and 2020 as the school had been in either covid 19 lockdown or restricted attendance in the spring and summer of 2020.

Q. The pupil absence rate is higher than the previous annual or comparable term data. Is this covid related?

A. Yes it is. There are some parents who still have concerns about returning pupils to school and there is also the need for some pupils to isolate from time to time. In some instances this does relate to the need for pupil aspiration which the school is now able to undertake although not all of the identified spaces have yet been converted to undertake this.

Ken Morcombe expressed the thanks of the board members to the staff for the outstanding level of support provided to pupils during the summer term when the school was either closed or only partially open.

The board noted the use of the additional inset day which they had approved.

Staff absence – A separate report had been provided which covered the autumn term up to the 30th November.

Q. This does seem quite high. Taking out the covid data how does it compare to previous periods?

A. It is higher than previous periods but the school has been able to reassign staff to cover some absences.

The school will be looking again at its absence and discretionary leave policies as compared to other schools they may be more generous. In discussion with other schools the criteria for staff being out of school differ and in some cases are linked to the type of pupil who attends the school.

Q. What is the mix of staff absences?

A. Some related to part time staff such as lunch time staff. This is looked at on a daily basis to see who is not in and to see where other staff can be moved to, in order to provide the necessary cover.

Safeguarding – Kathleen Shields had visited the school to look at the safeguarding procedures and risk assessments and would be submitting a report to the board on her visit.

Health & Safety Committee – The minutes of the last committee meeting would be circulated to the board.

Pupil numbers – At the present time the school was being funded for 114 pupils although there were 112 on roll. The 2 additional places were in the nursery where the parents had only recently been able to complete their DLA applications and the 2 pupils were expected to start in the spring.

Year 11 leavers – The school had started to look at transition arrangements for the pupils due to leave in July 2021 in order to find suitable placements. At this stage it was not anticipated that there would be any issues arising.

Site – The conditions survey and suitability assessment documents had been noted and the overall assessments were noted. There would be further discussion of this at a subsequent committee meeting.

Q. What is the current status of the proposed installation of the nursery and reception class building on site?

A. According to the LA the plan is still that this will be available for school use after the February half term and Lisa Negus is checking the progress with the LA every couple of weeks.

Q. Is the general view that this time scale is optimistic?

A. Yes it is.

It was agreed that Peter Denman and Michael Swadling would liaise with the head teacher and if necessary hold a virtual meeting with the LA representative to clarify the time scales and progress.

Q. What is the current plan and funding arrangement for Malling Close?

A. Initially it was up to the February half term but it appears that the agreed occupancy has been extended to Easter although this is not included in the original funding calculation or allocation so there will be an additional cost to the school if the occupancy is extended.

It was agreed that the point about additional costs accruing to the school if the installation and occupancy of the on-site facility was delayed needed to be made to the LA at the joint meeting and the need for the LA to meet these additional costs.

Restructuring Report

In the summer the chair and vice chair of the board requested a report on the current financial position and options which would reduce the projected deficit over time to bring the budget into balance but which would not have an impact on the outcomes for pupils as a result of the education offered to the pupils at the school.

The report covered different options related to staff restructuring and a range of options showing how the restructuring process could take place as well as current costs and other saving options.

Funding & Finance - As part of its budget setting process the Governors agreed an in-year deficit in July of £309,957 but this had risen to £323,681. Based on current data, during the financial year 2021/2022, the school is projected to have a deficit figure of -£220,391.

The report noted that the funding for each pupil place has remained at £35,518 per pupil since September 2018.

Staff costs as a proportion of total expense had increased to 88%.

Using some comparable data the average cost of a place at Rutherford School, a school for pupils with PMLD, is £60,000. This does not include the cost of individual pupil equipment.

At St Giles the average cost of a pupil with PMLD in one of the PMLD classes is currently £39,887. This rises to £42,656 for a pupil who requires 1:1 support at all times for medical reasons e.g. suctioning.

For an SLD or PMLD pupil placed in a mixed SLD / PMLD class the average cost was currently £41,167.38, and for a pupil with MLD or SLD placed in a mixed MLD / SLD class was currently £35,950.89.

The report showed that the school budget was overspent in a range of areas the following areas which included some salary budgets, services, occupancy costs and energy. Spending in a range of areas had been frozen in the short term which would save in the region of £40k but the school had been required to use over £40k of its reserves in the current year to carry out essential health and safety building works which had not been funded by the Council.

It was noted that Croydon Council was effectively bankrupt and as such had frozen some expenditure and ring fenced other budgets so at the present time there was no additional funding being provided to support the needs of the pupils by the LA.

Pupil population – the report noted that not only had the population increased by 17.5% over the last 5 years but the changing make-up of the pupils in the school had resulted in a much higher level of need and support, while the funding per place had remained the same. In addition the school had been required to fund all necessary equipment, its repair and replacement from within its budget and all of this equipment was specified in the EHCP so had to be provided at an average cost of £46k per year over the last 5 years.

The current level of funding was an average band value which did not reflect the changes to either the pupil population of the school or the increased cost of providing the necessary support required to enable pupils to access education. The board was advised that the LA was currently consulting on a review of the bands but that even the 4 bands that were being used did not reflect the level of needs identified at the school and an additional element had need to be included in the schools pupil needs assessment for this exercise. However even if there was an adjustment to the funding and the school was allocated a higher unit value for the different types of pupils it catered for, there was still only a very limited and ring fenced budget so this would not resolve the funding issue faced by the school. It was noted that no value had been attached to these 4 bands at the present time.

A recent visitor to the school had observed that the school was closer to being a hospital school given the level of medical intervention that was provided for pupils not just in the school but in class during lessons. This meant that there was a very high level of health and social care intervention provided for pupils.

It was suggested that if not already done, there needed to be a list of all pupils with their identified needs and the costs associated with that provision where this could be calculated. When compared with the current average level of funding this would identify the actual funding gap and any overall shortfall in funding. The board was informed that this exercise was underway.

Site – The site report highlighted how inappropriate it now was for the current pupil population and although some staff could undertake shared responsibilities in general the size of the class bases would preclude this in many cases.

Nursery – The requirement to take over the nursery, either off site or on site had laced an additional burden on the staff and the finances which was not reflected in the level of funding being provided.

Covid 19 – Although there had been some additional funding provided this did not and would not cover the additional costs the school was incurring and this was an ongoing situation.

The report did identify a range of options that other schools could adopt in order to save money but these were not open to special schools like St Giles where the educational and

Staffing – In discussion of the staffing implications with Judith Lunnon the LA Link Adviser, it had been pointed out that the board would need to engage HR specialists to deal with any staffing restructuring and it would be appropriate to go out to tender for this service.

The reports had identified the possible staffing reductions that might achieve some of the savings required. The board questioned whether it would be appropriate to reduce the staff by up to 10 TA's or 6 teachers as this could have a significant impact on not only the curriculum delivery but also the care requirements.

The view was expressed that if the school did need to lose some staff it would be necessary to minimise the impact.

The school would not in the short term make any permanent appointment but place staff on short or fixed term temporary contracts so that if required these staff could be let go.

Q. What about the physical support the pupils require and the delivery of the curriculum?
A. The report does address some of these points but there would still need to be a basic level of cover to provide educations and staff available to deal with pupils physical needs. Even areas such as health and safety which involved evacuation of the premises would require a fixed number of staff as some pupils in wheel chairs needed to be physically wheel out of the building.

Q. What about restructuring the school day?

A. Any changes should not have an impact on pupils and there would still be a need to ensure that there were sufficient staff to support pupil's needs.

Q. Would it be possible to deliver the teaching in a different way rather than actually cut it down? Covid resulted in remote learning. Could this experience be used as part of the curriculum delivery?

A. Yes this can be looked at as everything will need to be considered but there will still be the need to meet the requirements of the EHCP.

Q. The report refers to a teacher covering 2 classes. Is this allowed?

A. Yes but there would need to be an HLTA dealing with the delivery being supervised by the shared teacher and some of the classes are very small. PMLD has 6 or 7 pupils in each class.

While it might work for some PMLD pupils that might not be the case for SLD pupils who were autistic.

The concern expressed by the board that there was a need to make significant savings which would be difficult to achieve.

The board felt that a review of the workload of staff and rationalisation of that and some of the staff in the grades as well as the savings in section 10 relating to social and personal are should be looked at in more detail.

It was agreed that there would need to be a more detailed discussion with HR on these points to see what other implications there might be.

The report highlighted the cost of running the pool and the provision of swimming as part of the therapy offered to pupils. In addition to the direct cost there was the

incidental cost related to staff who prepared the pupils for swimming. This presented a significant cost in staffing as well as its basic costs but was also part of the EHCP requirement for pupils. The other point was that the pool did generate income for the school which was used to support other areas and indirectly the education of the pupils. Even given this, the cost of the pool, and removing this from the school budget would represent the biggest and most effective saving that the school could make.

Q. Could the cost of the private hire of the pool be increased? If there was a loss of hirers it would have the same impact as not having the pool

A. If the school dispensed with the pool there would still be a need to provide a similar facility as part of the therapy provision identified in the EHCP.

Q. What about the IT support and a reduction in this provision?

A. This will be looked at to see if there is an effective option via Octavo but the school has a very high level of communication equipment that supports pupils education and an on-site technician does meet pupils needs which might not be the case under an off-site part time contract even if it presented cost savings.

In summary it was agreed to review the IT support element, and possible rationalisation of the role of the TA's in the short term.

That the Actual individual pupil costs be completed so that this could be presented to the LA when they came up with their model costs for the bands.
This would need to include an identification of the high level of needs and the complex issues which the LA appeared to be unaware of.

The use of some shared office services could also be considered.

The head teacher was also asked to identify what she would consider a staffing structure in an ideal situation.

There was the suggestion that there could be a reduction in the number of pupils by looking at the admission numbers given the physical space issues now highlighted in the building report but that was a matter that rested with the LA as the admissions authority.

The head teacher was thanked for her report.

11. Committee Reports

The following committee reports had been circulated to all board members and there were no questions or matters arising from these reports.

Strategy Committee 29th September 2020

Resources Committee – 12th October 2020

Achievement & Standards Committee – 20th September and the 11th November 2020

Other Reports

Link Adviser Report – This would be circulated when it was received.

The board expressed their thanks to Judith Lunnon for the presentation on OfSTED which had taken place earlier in the week.

As part of the preparation for an inspection it was suggested that arising from the identified question in the presentation there could be a sheet with basic information which board members could refer to which could be kept up to date.

Governor Monitoring Report – The report from Michael Swadling following his Financial spot check had been circulated. There were no questions arising from his report.
The governor's visit planned for Ken Morcombe and Beverley Hayllar was moved to the following week.

12. Items for Approval

The following were formally approved by the board:

Teachers Pay – Cost of Living Increase

Q2 financial reports

Staffing Structure 2020/2021 – There were no changes to the 2019/2020 structure but the structure for the current year would be circulated. **Action**

School Fund & Friends Account

Pupil Premium / Sports Premium Reports 2020 – The Pupil premium report had been completed and would be circulated to the board. - **Action**

School term dates and inset dates for 2021/2022

13. School Policies

The following policies had been considered in committee and were formally agreed;

Resources

Emergency evacuation plan - main site

Emergency evacuation plan - Malling Close – Arising from the questions raised in committee the necessary amendments had been made.

Fire Safety Plan

Fire Safety Strategy

Fire Safety Policy

Governors' Allowances Policy

Swimming Pool Lettings Policy

Lettings Policy

Business Continuity Plan

Pay Policy – (Changes to Teachers Pay Grades)

Achievement & Standards

Safeguarding Policy & Procedure

14. Governor Training and Visits

This had been covered earlier in the meeting.

The planned bespoke training for the Spring was Nursery Education and the board was requested to let the chair know which days in weeks commencing the 8th or 22nd of February would not be convenient.

Training Attended - Board members had attended the following training in addition to the Bespoke session on Ofsted in the last two terms:

Curlita Campbell – Effective Governing board self-evaluation, Head Teacher

Performance Management, Welcome to Educational Governance, Mental Health in

schools for governors, Safer Recruitment, Understanding the fundamentals of Health & Safety, The role of a designated Safeguarding governor

Beverley Hayllar – Complaints Training for Governors

Kathleen Shields – Chairing and effective Meeting, Understanding School Finance

Michael Swadling - Chairs Briefing (2)

15. Any Other Business

Thanks – The board wished to formally record their thanks to Callton Young for his work on the board and as its chair.

There was no other business.

16. Publication of Minutes

As there were no matters of a confidential nature contained in the Part A Minutes it was agreed that the Part A Minutes could be published after they had been agreed by the Chair.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

The Governors agreed the date of future meetings which will be held at 6.00 p.m. but it was recognised that these could be subject to change. Initially these would be virtual meetings.

2020/2021 Academic Year

Spring 2021

Strategy - Tuesday 12th January

A & S - Wednesday 20th January

Resources - Tuesday 17th March

FGB - Thursday 25th March

Summer 2021

Strategy - Tuesday 27th April

Resources - Wednesday 14th July

FGB - Wednesday 21st July

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.22 p.m.

Date

Chair