



The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

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Minutes of a meeting of the Full Governing Board held on Thursday 9 March 2017 at Post 16 Castle School

Present:	Wendy Batchelor (Chair of governors), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher), Roses Parfitt (staff governor), Averill Hewitt (co-opted governor), Georgie Woods (co-opted governor), Alison Eade (parent governor), David Greenway (parent governor), Ursula Codrington (co-opted governor), Katherine Wilkes (co-opted governor), Shannon Booth (co-opted governor) and Vicki Murphy (clerk to governors)
Apologies: Manager)	Tracy Warwick (parent governor) & Atul Attra (School Business
Absent:	Malcolm Pullinger (parent governor)
In attendance: Team)	Rhona O'Neill (Deputy Headteacher) and Jackie Hogg (Pastoral

Introductions

At the start of the meeting WB introduced new co-opted governor Averill Hewitt to the board. Averill has been co-opted to the governing board, with start date effective as of 9 March 2017. All colleagues welcomed AH to the board.

1. Apologies (VM)

VM noted she had received apologies from TW and AA prior to the meeting. VM noted that neither she nor WB has heard from MP for some time, despite repeated attempts to contact him. On that basis WB to write to confirm that MP is stepping down as a parent governor as he has been absent from a number of committee and FGB meetings.

2. Any other business (AOB) items for the agenda (WB)

- Recruitment of new governors (WB)
- Change of governor status (WB)
- Approval of online BACS payments (WB)
- Thank you to colleagues (WB)

3. Declarations of interest (WB)

None noted.

4. Presentation – Work of Pastoral Team

Jackie Hogg – who leads pastoral support at the school had been invited to give governors an introduction to this area. JH gave a short overview of the pastoral function to include their role and ways in which they work to support families and pupils at the school. JH noted that to date this school year the team has worked with 78 families to offer support or make introductions to support that may be available to help them. JH

noted that the team had built on already successful work in the school and is constantly developing new ways to work with families that have previously been 'hard to reach' or not receptive to joining in with activities and events. Staff added how well the pastoral function works across the school, and governors agreed it presents as a successful and well run function in the school. All thanked JH for this insight.

**JH left the meeting at this point.*

5. Minutes from 10 November 2016 and matters arising (WB).

The minutes were agreed and a copy signed at the meeting. Governors then discussed the following matters arising from 10 November:

- *Update on music scholarship programme*
RON noted that the programme was moving forwards and following publicity in school, there have been 20 applicants for this year. RON noted that applications are to be reviewed with a panel of staff (including a parent governor) and auditions held on 2 May for the first round of those shortlisted. It was noted that the child's parent or carer could attend in support if liked. Staff noted that they hope this will develop into an annual event – with the application process to start again each September. **ACTION: Update on progress at June meeting.**
- *Update on parent training for Tapestry, Dynamo Maths and Education City*
AE updated governors that she had arranged to observe use of these programmes in class, and has spent time in school recently to see how this is used as part of the pupil's learning. AE also noted that she had started to explore how the parent login access can be used – but noted that some parents have lost log in details. **ACTION: SB to follow up and re-issue log ins. WB asked if AE can feedback on Tapestry and Evisense programmes once these are explored. Update at the next meeting.**
- *Movement of pay banding – support assistants*
In AA's absence, JH was able to give an update to inform governors that the increase to pay banding for support assistants had been agreed and would be backdated to 1 September 2016. JH noted that all support assistants would be briefed on this next week and payments made thereafter.
- *Use of pay as you go mobiles for school trips*
RON noted that she has had initial discussions with AA about this, but not yet concluded as there were some issues with pay as you go versus contract phones with current supplier. **ACTION: Agreed to defer discussion and update to June FGB.**
- *Training for pupil progress & achievement*
SB noted that she had canvassed governors and equal interest in evening and afternoon training sessions. SB offered to run both, and will circulate suggested dates in due course. **ACTION: SB to confirm dates with governors for training.**

6. Committee reports

a. *Curriculum*

GW gave an update to all from this committee which had met in January. GW noted that this had included an informative presentation from middle leaders, and the next meeting would include a book review to enable governors to see a sample of work books. GW noted that the issue of link governors had been discussed, but was agreed that this would now form part of activity for strategy day.

b. *Staffing*

GW noted that the committee had also met in January and received an update on staffing issues via the Headteacher's report. GW also confirmed that they had reviewed the Performance Management policy, which would be considered again in May – as some additional information needed to be added to the current version.

c. *Pay panel*

GW reported that the pay panel had met today (9March) and had discussed the interim report and progress made.

d. *Premises*

KW updated colleagues that the committee had met in February, with site walks completed at main site and Post 16 by AE and DG. It was noted that both sites were in good shape, with some minor improvements noted which were now in hand. KW noted that the walk at Victoria Park site would take place in the summer term.

KW noted that the committee had discussed current parking issues, in light of managing overflow parking arrangements since the spaces at the Castle Pub may no longer be available due to closure of this venue for the time being. AE reported that an agreement had been made and was now in place for a small number of staff / visitors to use nominated spaces at St Joseph's Church. KW noted that AA continued to update the committee with current and planned projects. KW updated that there had been a discussion about possible options for a reading room space at Post 16 which were being considered, and further updates to be given in due course. KW also noted that JH had provided an update on discussions with West Berkshire Council re: feasibility of three new classrooms for the main site- with a view to complete these by 2018. JH noted that the feasibility study was now underway.

KW noted that the planned works to upgrade play areas would be completed once these decisions had been confirmed on location of the new classrooms. DG asked about impact on pupil numbers and JH noted that the school would do all possible to accommodate new pupils but to meet future provision, the new classrooms would help to ensure sufficient space.

e. *Finance*

KW updated colleagues on this term's finance committee. KW noted that the gas works on site came to just over £15k in total, but some costs were shared with Castle Gate.

KW noted that AA had shared the draft audit report which showed the school finances to be in excellent order. KW also noted that the finance committee had continued to review school budget and spend, discussing any variances of over or under 10% (or £5k) with clear and explained responses from AA on these areas. KW noted that governors had also had a discussion on surplus – and looked to keep this to around £2k if possible.

JH noted that following a recent virement approval from WBC, the school had received a letter from Rachel Wardell to note importance of having some reserve for future plans and so all agreed that this could be useful evidence if any questions were raised about surplus levels in the future.

KW also noted that the committee had discussed areas of spend for pupil and sports premium funding, plus an update on the private fund was given.

KW noted that she has now completed a 'how to' guide for reconciliation which is currently completed monthly with the finance team. KW has now delegated this to others members of the finance committee to complete, and AE has just completed the first round of this.

KW also noted that she has worked with AA on the SFVS documentation which will be submitted to WBC at the end of March.

Finally AE noted that the H&S audit, which was last completed in October 2015, may be due later this year (usually every two years). All agreed that this area of review has vastly improved, and feel current measures in place put the school in a good position for a future audit.

7. Headteacher's report (JH)

JH had circulated his latest report ahead of the meeting and invited questions to governors. Governors asked about leavers this term, as noted that two exclusions had taken place. Governors had a short discussion about exclusions and staff noted that in both cases they had worked as far as possible to support pupils and their families in arranging other suitable and appropriate placements to continue to support learning. Staff noted that it was not always possible to meet needs if engagement is challenging, but by working with partners and other agencies some support and progress can still be made e.g. with support work placements or progression to other forms of study.

In the absence of AA, JH noted that governors could see an update on school finance on p.18 of his report. He noted that at end of P10, the target spend was 83%. He noted some variances to this but reasons explained e.g. lower maintenance and staffing costs than expected at this time. JH also noted that as majority of funding has already been received, this was slightly over target at this point in the year.

Governors thanked JH for his updates.

8. Progress & achievement update (SB)

SB shared a current update on progress and achievement with governors. She noted that last term there had been some areas of the school that had not been updating data on a regular basis and so improvement had been introduced. This included the purchase of iPads for each teaching room so that real-time updates can be made by teaching staff. Staff feedback so far was positive and noted that this would certainly help to increase frequency of updates. SB shared that based on data so far it showed that 75% of pupils are on target or working above for their English, and 82% are on target or working above for their Maths. Governors agreed this continued to show good progress and thanked SB for her work on this. SB noted that the next full update would be given in Autumn term to show end of year progress for 2016/17, and to update on success of Evisense trial.

9. Policies for ratification

Following review by this term's committees, the following policies were discussed and agreed by governors. A copy of these will be signed and filed in school and on web (if required). **ACTINO: VM to update in school.**

- Admissions
- Education of Looked After Children
- SEN and Disability
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions
- Persistent Complainants Policy
- Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing)
- Flexible Working Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Co-location Management Agreement

The Performance Management policy will be taken back to Staffing Committee in May, and then brought to June FGB for ratification.

10. Safeguarding update and signing of central register (RON / WB)

WB signed a copy of the central register at the meeting.

RON updated colleagues that the safeguarding information for school continued to be reviewed regularly and rigorously. RON noted that she is looking into options for recording safeguarding items via an online management system 'My Concern', as this would allow updates to be received instantly by designated persons. All governors agreed this would be a positive step. **ACTION: RON to agree funding for this with AA and can then move ahead. JH/AA to give update on this at the next meeting.**

11. Governor visits, training and development

Governors noted that visits to the school continue on a regular basis, and are encouraged to complete a 'visit form' for each event attended (can be used for all site visits – except governor meetings). AH noted that she has received a date for governor refresher training with West Berkshire Council. AE has recently attended a Health & Safety course which was useful. UC has also recently attended a safer recruitment course. JH and WB had recently attended a briefing on academisation. **ACTION: VM to continue to send out WBC course info to governors and updates on available school training for governors. Update on any training at the next meeting.**

12. Enterprise project update

RON noted that the gardening and enterprise project is still running with classes and clubs focusing on growing seeds and nurturing plants, that can be used for cookery club and other meals e.g. lunchtime soup club. Staff governor RP noted that cookery and gardening clubs continue to run successfully and will now alternate weekly between Post 16 and Main site. RP also updated that a volunteer gardener was working with the school to help with soil preparation, poly tunnel maintenance and preparation of plug plants for pupils to grow.

13. AOB items

WB update that in light of SB and MP stepping down, the board will need some new governors. WB asked all to consider possible sources of recruitment for new governors, noting that experience in local community / not for profit sector would be useful. **ACTION: Staff noted that World of Work event on 10 March may present some opportunities for networking. Feedback at the next meeting, or before if any interested parties come forward.**

WB also informed colleagues that her status will change from a co-opted to a local authority governor, and this change has gone through West Berkshire Council. Governors were asked to ratify this change and all present were in agreement with this. This means that there are now two vacancies for co-opted governor to join the board. **ACTION: VM to update governor services of this change.**

In absence of AA, WB noted that the governors had been asked to approve the use of online BACS payments through the school's Natwest account. This would enable prompter payments to suppliers and less reliance on signature of cheques, which can be time consuming. Governors agreed to this change, and paperwork was signed by WB. KW noted that this should be included in the next review of the FMS policy that this change has been made. **ACTION: Paperwork to go to AA for action. VM to note need to update FMS policy in due course, and bring draft to next Finance Committee meeting in April.**

Thank you to SB and RON

Finally, WB gave thanks to SB who is stepping down as a co-opted governor. All thanked SB for her amazing contributions to governors and a small gift was presented.

WB also gave thanks to RON from governors as she will be leaving the school at the end of the next term to take up a new job role in another school. All gave thanks and a small gift was presented.

The meeting closed at 7pm.

Date of the next meeting

The governors strategy day is being held on Tuesday 21 March from 3-7pm.

The next FGB meeting is being held on 27 April, 4.30pm (this is for budget sign-off only).