



# The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

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## MINUTES of a meeting of the Full Governing Body, held on Thursday 23 June 2016 in the Jane Evans room at Castle School (main site)

- Present:** Wendy Batchelor (Chair of Governors), Ola Cassels-White (co-opted governor), Georgie Woods (co-opted governor), Ursula Codrington (co-opted governor), Roses Parfitt (staff governor), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher), Alison Eade (parent governor), Katherine Wilkes (co-opted governor), David Greenway (parent governor), Shannon Booth (staff governor), Brian Connolly (local authority governor) and Vicki Murphy (clerk to governors)
- Apologies:** Tracy Warwick (parent governor) and Malcolm Pullinger (parent governor)
- In attendance:** Atul Attra (School Business Manager) and Rhona O'Neill (deputy headteacher)

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tracy Warwick and Malcolm Pullinger.

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

Funding request for music tuition - RON

### 3. Declarations of interest

N/a

### 4. Minutes from 10 March 2016 and matters arising

#### a. Updates from Friends of Castle School

RON updated that the Friends were organising a number of family events for the summer break. SB suggested including this information to new parents with children joining the school in September – agreed information to be available at new starters coffee morning in July. **ACTION: RON to update on summer activities at next FGB.**

#### b. Use of mobile devices in classrooms for progress data (JH/AA)

JH noted that devices had been costed, and will be presented for agreement via the Finance Committee in the autumn term. JH noted current issue with data which is only compatible with iPads (and these are too costly). **ACTION: JH to update at next FGB.**

#### c. Adding 'how to help at home' section to website (JH)

JH noted this had been prepared as part of School Transformation Plan (STP) and would be launched to parents in September.

#### d. Business interests summary for website (VM)

VM confirmed that a summary of relevant business interests for governors was the only requirement for the website, and would next be updated in autumn as part of annual checks. **ACTION: VM to update at next FGB.**

#### e. Exclusions training for governors (OCW)

All agreed that a further session on exclusions would be useful for governors. Training available via WBC was not relevant and so JH to arrange a session for governors.

**ACTION: VM to arrange training date for governors with JH.**

f. *Fairer funding link (JH)*

JH noted that full outcome of this is not yet known as budgets not yet released. JH to update governors in due course.

g. *Site walk at Victoria Park Nursery*

KW noted that she had visited VPNSCC on 9 June to complete a site walk with JH. KW noted that there is free movement between Castle room and the main nursery which presented some challenges but these were to be expected of a nursery setting. KW noted no major concerns on site (only one small plug socket cover), but updated governors that site parking continues to be an issue for staff at this location. JH noted this is an ongoing problem for the site as historical disputes with neighbours. Governors suggested exploring links with other local business to see if other options for parking.

**ACTION: AE to ask BST Fitness if any arrangement for use of parking space/s and update at next Premises Committee.**

h. *Temporary parking arrangements at main site*

JH noted that this was still being explored. AA noted that he had met with WBC on 22 June to discuss options but was advised that no viable options for long term solution to parking. Governors agreed a letter to Mark Lewis (WBC) copied to Ian Pearson (WBC) to be drafted by end of June ahead of next project meeting. **ACTION: AA/JH to assist in drafting letter to be sent to WBC and update at next Premises Committee or via email as appropriate.**

i. *Policy mid-term reviews*

WB noted that the arrangements for mid-term policy reviews were still being considered, and would update governors again at the next meeting. **ACTION: WB to discuss with VM ahead of next FGB.**

j. *Prevent training*

JH noted that a date for Prevent training for governors would be scheduled for autumn term. **ACTION: VM to agree date for this with JH and inform governors.**

k. *Parent governor update*

VM noted that DG had been re-elected this term as a parent governor.

Governors agreed with the minutes and a copy signed by WB.

## 5. Minutes from 21 April 2016 and matters arising

a. *Budget approval for 2016-17*

Governors agreed with these minutes and a copy was signed by WB.

## 6. Committee reports

Committee chairs gave updates from this term's committees:

a. *Curriculum*

GW updated that the committee had continued to review pupil progress with updates from SB. Governors asked about gap in KS4 data that had previously been raised by curriculum committee – and SB noted that work on this data was continuing and the gap was narrowing. GW also noted that complaints policy had been reviewed and brought to this meeting for ratification.

b. *Staffing (GW)*

OCW noted that the staffing minutes noted 'level 4' training but this should read 'level 2'.

**ACTION: VM to update and arrange signature of corrected minutes.**

RON noted that a partnership with Newbury College for level 2 training was also discussed and would be progressed, alongside other arrangements with Henley College.

GW noted that an amendment to the Pay Policy was reviewed and agreed, subject to ratification.

OCW also noted that a date for staff and governors tea had been set, and all were welcome to attend. This will be held on 28 September at 3.30pm.

c. *Pay panel (GW)*

GW noted that the pay panel had met this term and all was in order. GW noted there would be two meetings for this group next term.

d. *Premises (KW)*

KW noted that the data protection policy will now be reviewed in autumn. KW clarified that the committee agreed that there would be one site walk per site, per year and this would be in place for 2016-17. KW noted that the committee had also discussed the possible installation of a multi-use games area – but this was costly vs. income that could be generated from lettings. KW noted that committee would continue to review possibilities. KW also noted that the committee continued to get updates on site projects and priorities from AA.

e. *Finance (KW)*

KW noted that the committee had discussed data integrity and a letter had been sent to WBC to suggest way forward with this. KW noted that the group had also had updates on school inventory and new vehicle purchases. KW updated that there had also been discussions around rising numbers and school accommodation, plus opportunities of academisation to re-set the financial year and enable smarter budget planning that would allow teams to plan with known funding. KW noted that the period 13 reconciliation would be completed by the end of this term. RON updated that the £3k funding agreed for drama club by private fund, would now be met by WBC and so no monies required from private fund for this activity.

## 7. **Headteacher's report**

JH invited questions on his report which had been sent to governors in advance.

JH noted that the school was now reaching capacity due to accommodation and a letter from governors to WBC may help to stress the case for agreement on long term solution to this.

**ACTION: WB / JH to draft and update governors at next FGB.**

DG asked about whether pastoral team could present to governors next academic year about their work. **ACTION: RON suggested short slot in Spring once new manager is in place. VM to add to Spring FGB agenda.**

DG asked about some acronyms in 'world of work' section. JH to feedback to James Whybra about clarifying use of these.

WB asked about note re: decreasing levels of family support. RON noted that this is not because less support is available, but shows the impact of programme to date and how liaison team are giving strategies to families that help them to cope more effectively in some cases.

Governors asked about QCF training, and OCW confirmed that levels 2 and 3 were currently available, but may offer level 4 in due course.

Governors asked about role of counselling, and staff noted that elements of this were used daily to deal with behaviour and friendship issues. RON noted that teams at each site have training in this area which helps to deal with situations as they arise. UC noted that she had recently been to Post 16 site and seen this in action. All agreed very useful support for pupils at all levels.

BC asked about current financial position and AA noted that a fuller picture would be available at P6 onwards. BC asked if currently on target and AA confirmed yes. AA noted a further update would be given in autumn term committee. Governors asked for clarification on whether items noted apply to current or previous periods – and AA to adjust this for next report.

Finally, JH encouraged governors to continue to visit the school website and blog to gain current updates and school news. Governors thanked JH for his report.

#### **8. School Transformation Plan 2016**

JH had circulated the STP for information and invited questions from governors.

Governors noted that it would be useful to share the discussions from all groups at recent strategy day on FADES as part of this process, and JH agreed this could be built into next year's session.

Governors asked about 'Education City'. RON noted this is an IT package which is used to support English and Maths training for early years to year 6. JH noted that it would be fully launched to parents in due course, and AE noted that this would help to encourage use at home as well as school.

Staff discussed benefit of including outcomes related to STP in their evidence folders – and agreed to start this for the new academic year.

OCW noted that it would be useful for governors to fully understand outcomes and data.

**ACTION: Governors to view Tapestry and Education City as part of site walk next term.**

RON noted that key stage 1 pupils will take part in 'community grow' initiative for next academic year which will present a variety of outdoor learning opportunities in a 'forest school' environment.

Governors had a discussion about long-term high level vision for the school and discussed re-wording of 'paid employment' in final section. Governors felt this opportunity might not be available to all pupils, but they would progress and thrive through other meaningful opportunities e.g. taking part in day centres and structured activities. JH agreed to review this section.

Governors thanked JH for his work on this and agreed with the plan for 2016-17.

**ACTION: JH to update and circulate to governors for the next FGB meeting in autumn.**

#### **9. Progress & achievement update**

SB presented data to governors based on current pupil progress.

SB noted that staff continue to embed this into school culture and she noted targets were being made smarter and more child friendly so that pupils can also continue to be involved in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Governors discussed benefits of further training to fully understand data and monitoring processes. SB noted a further training session for gobs could be set up in the new term.

**ACTION: SB to suggest date for governor training.**

SB noted that end of year data on progress would be presented in next term's committee meetings.

## 10. Policies for ratification

*WB noted the following policies had been discussed by curriculum and staffing committees this term and were brought for ratification. Governors agreed the following policies:*

- a. *Complaints procedure*
- b. *Pay policy 2015 (amendment)*
- c. *Code of conduct*
- d. *Grievance procedures*
- e. *Disciplinary procedures*

JH noted that he still needed to clarify Sickness Absence policy with West Berks HR. It had been discussed by the staffing committee about flexibility to add / amend minor information in this policy, while ensuring that this did not affect the cover? **ACTION: VM to send JH policy to enable checking on these points with WBC.**

## 11. Safeguarding update and signing of central register

RON updated that she had met today with governors re: safeguarding and the single central register had been signed. RON noted this was a comprehensive document. RON noted that one new member of support staff is awaiting DBS certificate – but this is expected soon. RON noted that certificates for governors UC / KW and MP were not on file. **ACTION: These governors to check details with Lexi Thornton by end of term.**

## 12. Governor visits, training and development

OCW updated governors that 39 visit forms had been received from governors this academic year to date (although it was expected that slightly more visits had taken place). **ACTION: VM to send visit form to governors by email (copy to Becki / Liz M for info as reminder to send a form for each visit.**

OCW noted that a summary of the Strategy Day feedback had been circulated to governors, along with an updated newsletter rota.

Governors discussed process for booking training and OCW noted that termly school training updates would continue. Governors are welcome to attend any school training event. Governors agreed that VM to keep governors up to date with relevant WBC courses and all to review other relevant training as appropriate e.g. academisation. A record of governor training should be kept up to date in school to reflect ongoing skills development.

## 13. Academisation update

JH updated colleagues that he discussions around academisation were continuing, although this was now not compulsory (until 2022). JH noted that a sub group of governors (WB, KW and AE, plus himself) are developing detailed knowledge of this area to be able to provide an in depth update to governors in due course. The sub group will attend training sessions, visits to special

schools (already academies) and to consider parent views on the subject. **ACTION: This item to stay on agenda for the time being, with next update in Autumn 2016.**

#### **14. Enterprise project update**

RON updated governors that the growing project is going well and fruit trees are now in bloom. RP noted that pupils who were previously involved in cooking club were spending time in polytunnels to support gardening efforts now that club has finished. RP also noted that a rota would be in place over the summer break to ensure plants are tended. RP noted that next focus is to plant root vegetables to provide crops for the longer term soup kitchen plans. RON noted she has applied for a £10k grant to support the gardening club and related works.

Governors agreed the project had been a success to date and asked about future plans. JH noted that not currently in a position to move towards running own catering provision on site, but this was certainly considered as a future aspiration.

AA noted that he has costed some improvements to secondary kitchens – and currently looking at costs of about £40k. Further details of this to be discussed with Premises Committee in due course.

#### **15. AOB items**

##### *Funding request for music tuition*

RON updated governors that the current arrangements in schools for music tuition were very successful and lessons for many pupils to develop talents. All agreed that existing staff had been very successful in attracting funding to bridge shortfalls, but noted that a more structured approach could be considered.

Firstly – RON noted that this year – there would be a £412 shortfall and asked for governor approval for this amount from the private fund. Governors agreed this should be supported.

**ACTION: RON to progress with AA.**

Secondly, RON asked governors to consider possibility of setting up a ‘scholarship’ fund for music to enable keen and talented youngsters to access help for music lessons. All agreed this was a worthwhile project that should be explored. **ACTION: Agreed that this should be further discussed with the finance committee – or delegated sub committee and then a proposal brought back to the FGB in autumn so an ongoing strategy can be agreed.**

Finally, KW asked AA for a short update on the recent audit visit. AA confirmed auditors had visited and report was expected by start of autumn term. He noted only a couple of minor issues, but expecting a good report as visit was short and team were able to deal with queries satisfactorily.

#### **16. Meeting dates 2016-17**

VM had circulated a list of meeting dates for 2016-17 and governors agreed with these. It was suggested that the dates should be updated termly, to provide a rolling programme of meetings for at least 15 months. **ACTION: VM to update list of meeting dates and book rooms, then forward to governors for info – and arrange for upload to school website.**

Finally, WB led thanks to BC from all governors as this was his last meeting as LA governor.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.