



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 12th November 2020, from 5.00pm, Virtual meeting

Present: Wendy Batchelor (LEA governor), Marie Verney (parent governor), Joan Sargent (parent governor), Nicola Markham (co-opted governor) Charlie Kowalski (co-opted governor), Helen Cabell (co-opted governor), Giles Francis (parent governor), Roses Parfitt (staff governor), Luke Adams (parent governor), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher) and Jayne Tomlinson (clerk).

Apologies: None.

In attendance: Atul Attra (School Business Manager), Caroline Whitlock (Deputy Headteacher),

1. Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

JT asked for nominations from the governing boards for the position of chair and vice chair. JS nominated WB for chair and CK seconded this nomination. WB nominated GF for vice chair and JS seconded this nomination.

3. Any other business (AOB) items for the agenda

- School Development Plan
- Luke Adams as a newly elected parent governor was welcomed to the meeting and all in attendance introduced themselves to LA. LA stated that he was Branch Manager for Skipton Building Society in Oxford and Northampton and that he has a son who had recently started at the Castle School.

4. Declaration of interest at this meeting

No declarations were made.

5. Minutes from the last meetings (25th June 2020) and matters arising

Governors agreed with the minutes from the last FGB meeting and they will be signed when it is possible for the chair to do so. The following matters arising were discussed.

- *Alison Eade*

WB confirmed that AE had decided to resign from the governing board and stated that she would be missed as she was a very committed governor and thanked her for all her hard work.

- *DBS checks*

AA stated that he will restart DBS checks as new guidance had been issued that stated that scanned documents can be accepted. AA also stated that people will be given the option to do the update process. **ACTION: AA to restart DBS checks..**

- *NM enquiry to the school nurse*
NM explained that she was due to meet with the school nurse but because of the COVID 19 situation this meeting did not go ahead however NM will organise a meeting with the school nurse next year. CW added that since the school nurse was currently shared across sites at the moment it would be good to leave it until the new year. **ACTION: NM will meet with the school nurse in the new year.**
- *Freedom of Information*
JH explained that a separate Freedom of Information policy was not needed as it was covered by GDPR.
- *Signing of Policies*
WB stated that she had signed all the policies that were ratified at the last FGB meeting.
- *Thank you to Pastoral and Senior Leadership Team*
WB stated that she had written emails to the Pastoral Team and the SLT thanking them for all their hard work through a challenging time.
- *Governors Meeting Dates*
JT confirmed that she had sent out the governors meeting dates for 2020-2021.

6. Committee reports

a. *Finance (HC)*

HC stated that HC had been elected as chair and GF as the vice chair of the Finance Committee. HC explained that there were no accounts discussed as it was Period 6 however the school had spent an extra £5,000 on PPE items which AA would reclaim back from the government. The Private Fund account currently has about £55,000 in it. The Pay and Private Fund policies had been approved for ratification. An extra 20k had been raised for the World of Work car. JT confirmed that 10k had been raised from the VINCI Foundation and 10K from the Clothworkers' Foundation. HC stated that 5K had been raised from a Double Matched Funding Day from Greenham Trust on the 24th July for the revitalisation of the hydrotherapy pool project. HC continued that the FMP would be discussed at the next meeting.

b. *Premises (HC)*

HC stated that HC had been elected as chair and GF as the vice chair of the Premises Committee. HC explained that the Health and Safety walk had agreed to be postponed until the situation changed but that it was firmly on the agenda for next year. The primary building roof had been finished. The GDPR and the Governor Visits policies had been approved for ratification. HC explained that AA had been investigating new cleaning companies and had come to the committee with 2 recommendations. The governors had decided to go with Rapid as looking for a cost-effective company. AA stated that he was working on a contract with a start date of 2021.

c. *Pay Panel (HC)*

HC stated that the Pay Panel had a meeting with JH to review his objectives in this strange year and had updated his objectives accordingly.

d. *Curriculum (MV)*

WB stated that as MV was not able to attend the meeting, WB had chaired the meeting. WB noted that MV had been elected as chair and NM as vice chair. WB explained that the main focus of the meeting had been to discuss with JH about how the reopening of the school was operating, investigating whether they had enough PPE and how the plans for curriculum and assessment were developing as they had been put on hold for COVID. WB noted that most of the staff had not had to shield at home at the time of the meeting and the procedures put in place were working well. It was also noted that there were not many work placements at the moment as companies are reluctant to take on work placements currently. WB stated that Child Protection and Safeguarding, COVID 19 Safeguarding Policy Addendum, Equality Information and Objectives and LAC are all West Berkshire policies and they were approved by the governors for ratification. The committee had an update on Safeguarding from CW.

e. *Staffing (WB)*

WB stated that training is continuing and more on-line training is happening which is a positive out of the current situation. No policies were discussed at this meeting.

7. Headteacher's report

JH had circulated an updated report in advance of the meeting. JH asked for any questions the governors had in regards to his report.

WB asked JH to outline curriculum plans and pupil assessment.

JH stated that with the curriculum, classes were moving from a recovery curriculum to a more academic curriculum. Assessment data was starting to be used this term and some assessment data will be used from last year too. The SLT had had a recent meeting where they discussed the 5 areas of curriculum with the aim of rolling this out in September 2021. Training will be given to staff this Spring and Summer so that they are all prepared for the roll out in September 2021. With regards to the assessment tool the school is moving away from B squared and going for Earwig. The assessment roll out will be September 2021 but the school will start training early so the staff don't feel overwhelmed. WB asked if the governors would have training so that they would be able to understand the assessment process. JH explained that he wanted governors to have oversight of the process and to make the school accountable but he was mindful that he did not want it to become too much and so a balance would need to be found. JH continued that he wanted governors to be able to explore, question and discuss the assessment process. JH added that governors are very welcome to join in the zoom training should they wish to but to realise that it is intended for a different audience. WB asked that if any governor wanted to be involved in this area then to let either herself or JH know. MV asked what level of involvement it would require, as herself and JS are joint governors on the quality of education. JH stated that when they have a finished product it would be good if they could be a sounding board. GF questioned how quickly the school can move the children from the recovery to the normal curriculum. JH stated that some of the classes have already started to move towards the normal curriculum, whereas they had anticipated it would be January. GF wanted to know then if the school was going fast enough or could it go faster with regards to adopting the normal curriculum. JH said that was a decision for teachers to make, some classes will move quicker than others and it depends on factors such as ability and age. GF asked if all classes would be off the recovery curriculum by Christmas. JH stated that Post 16 are doing functional skills now, Primary are doing

their encounter skills, so most classes have moved on. He continued that pupil attendance had been high although many children had been off for isolation purposes. The school currently has not had a positive case and the parents had been very supportive. He hoped that a different Spring would allow the school to drive forward and move towards some kind of normality.

ACTION: Governors who wish to be involved in pupil assessment should contact either WB or JH.

MV commented that Shannon Booth's retirement was sad and surprising news. JH explained that SB had been planning her retirement for a while and it is a lifestyle choice. JH that there would be a recruitment process to replace SB. WB stated that all governors had received an email regarding the recruitment process for the new Assistant Headteacher post and any governors who wished to be involved should get in contact with JH. JH explained that the recruitment would be done virtually by zoom, involving a group exercise, reverse interview, a standard panel and a pupil panel. CW explained how a reverse interview would work and stated that it would really test the candidates. JH explained that he had written the group exercise for 6 people however if 10 people applied then it will be changed to adapt it. He stated that there had been a lot of interest in the position, that they would be a shortlist by Tuesday and that the process would run from 8.30am-6pm with breaks in between. JH stated it would be good to have a governor helping with the recruitment to prevent any bias .**ACTION: Governors who wished to get involved in the recruitment of the Assistant Headteacher post should contact JH.**

WB asked AA about the current situation with the catering contract. AA stated that Dulce had been appointed the interim catering contract for 1 year and that they were doing a good job, the uptake of the meals was good with about 600 meals being produced every week (40-60 of those were for Shaw Cum Donnington). The school was still part of a tendering group involving 16 schools and the group was meeting every Wednesday. The aim is to get a tender out and to appoint a company by April 2021.

JS asked how the children were coping with the bubble system. CW replied that the children were coping with the bubbles very well, a few can't cope with the boundaries but on the whole the children had coped amazingly and she was enormously impressed with them JH stated that due to national restrictions some things had changed but there was loads of good work going on and still some mixing within the classes in the bubbles. RP added that even though the restrictions are in place, through zoom, it had been possible to still do assembly and be inclusive. The children have adapted very well and understood that the measures in place are to keep them safe. CW explained that the new starters usually have a transition plan but that this year that wasn't possible to do however the starters have done very well .LA added that his son had transitioned to the school very well, they had the school pack and they showed him the photos and he was surprised how well it had all gone.

CK asked about the staffing numbers and how many were self – isolating. CW replied that the school hadn't had any issues with staff self-isolating and that the bubble system had worked well and staff could be moved within the bubble to manage the situation. JH stated that all other special schools in the area had closed classes at some point. The Castle School have had 33 staff in total who have had to self-isolate and 70 pupils. One member of staff had tested positive for COVID 19 but that member of staff had been off for a long time so it didn't impact the school. JH stated that Public Health England had told him only to phone if the school had a cluster or an outbreak of cases. Mark Lewis at West-Berks had been brilliant and that all the team and staff at the school have worked hard as they understood that extra staff can not be provided. JH stated that one set of parents had removed their child from school as he has a lung condition. JH had put this absence down as X which is due to COVID 19. In addition, another child will have an operation shortly and this will be classed as X.

8. Policies for ratification

The following policies have been discussed by committees and come to this meeting for discussion and ratification. WB asked if there were any additional comments to be made regarding the policies.

Child Protection and Safeguarding
COVID 19 Safeguarding Policy Addendum
Administration of Medicines
Equality Information and Objectives
LAC
Pay Policy
Private Fund
GDPR
Governor visits

ACTION: Governors noted these had all been reviewed by committees this term and ratified them. WB will sign a copy of all the policies when she is next in school. JT to update school files and to place them on the intranet.

9. Safeguarding update and signing of central register (CW / WB)

CW stated that the systems were continuing as normal, she had increased the number of Universal Safeguarding training sessions and was running an evening safeguarding governor's session. With regard to online pupil sessions and recordings she had had confirmation that these sessions could be deleted after 28 days. Keeping Children Safe had been updated in September with the main focus being on mental health and well-being. CW and WB had met and noticed a spike in the concerns regarding mental health and well-being as they are key concerns on people's radars at the moment. CW stated that the school had good relationships with both social workers and mental health support services. The updated Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the COVID 19 Safeguarding Policy Addendum have been approved and ratified. CW stated that no children were on the Child Protection Plan, there is one new child who is a LAC, there had been 3 referrals to the Children's Services, there was no change in reporting and none anticipated. WB stated that MyConcern is a good safeguarding tool and that it provides a lot of information. CW stated that she will show how it works at the safeguarding evening session for governors. CW informed the governors that MyConcern have a way of managing the single central record and CW and AA are looking into it. It requires uploading data into the system but currently CW is not happy with the printable record so waiting for that feature to be improved. **ACTION: WB to sign the single central record when next in school.**

10. AOB items

School Development Plan (SDP)

JH explained that the SDP focuses on what the school needs to do and started but couldn't complete because of COVID. The focus is to get the children back to school and safely. JH stated that the staff are exhausted due to the amount of thinking that needs to take place to keep things COVID safe and that there was 5 main areas to concentrate on in the SDP. HC asked what SIMS stood for and JH explained that it was an information management system that was currently used for registers but that there are many ways it can be utilised and the school is looking at how staff could access it to get parents phone numbers and addresses etc. CW stated that a Christmas there would be remote carols and the big man from Lapland would be visiting. JS wanted to thank all the staff for all their hard work and commented on how well they had done.

11. Date of next meeting. JT confirmed the date of the next meeting as Thursday 25th February 2021