



The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

Love Lane, Newbury, RG14 2JG

Tel: 01635 42976, Fax: 01635 515725

MINUTES of a meeting of the Full Governing Board held on Thursday 18th November 2021, from 5.00pm, Virtual meeting

Present: Wendy Batchelor (LEA governor), Nicola Markham (co-opted governor), Helen Cabell (co-opted governor), Roses Parfitt (staff governor), Luke Adams (parent governor), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher) and Jayne Tomlinson (clerk).
Apologies: Marie Verney (parent governor), Giles Francis (co-opted governor), Charlie Kowalski (co-opted governor), Philip Jackson.
In attendance: Atul Attra (School Business Manager), Caroline Whitlock (Deputy Headteacher)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from MV,GF,CK and PJ.

2. Election of Chair and Vice- Chair

JT ask for nominations for the position of chair and vice –chair. HC proposed WB as the chair and this was seconded by NM. The committee appointed WB as chair. WB proposed NM as vice-chair and this was seconded by HC. The committee appointed NM as vice-chair.

3. Appointment of New Governor.

JT confirmed that PJ was on the New to Governance Training on the 23rd November and AA also confirmed that PJ had shown his identification documents for his DBS check. WB proposed PJ to become a co-opted governor and this was seconded by NM. The committee agreed to PJ becoming a co-opted governor for the Castle School.

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

- Castle@Theale Update
- Recruitment
- COVID
- Transfer of Capital Revenue
- Cleaning Contract

5. Declaration of interest at this meeting

No declarations were made.

6. Minutes from the last meetings (17th June 2021) and matters arising

The following matters arising were discussed.

- *NM enquiry to the school nurse*

NM stated that had spoken to the school nurse and had asked the original question about the insurance however, it was so far out of context now, so the school nurse was unable to answer it. However NM spoke to the school nurse about her area of work and was confident in what she was saying. WB suggested that this item now be removed from the agenda moving forward.

- *Training for Governors on Pupil Assessment*
WB asked when a training session for the governors on pupil assessment would take place. JH replied that it would happen in the New Year, probably at the spring FGB meeting.
ACTION: Governors training session on pupil assessment to be organised for the Spring FGB meeting.
- *Health and Safety walk around both school sites*
HC stated that herself and CK would aim to do the health and safety walk around both school sites after Christmas. WB asked what the current school procedure was for allowing visitors on site. JH replied that visitors were allowed on site if it was seen as an essential requirement. **ACTION: HC and CK to do the health and safety walk around both school sites after Christmas.**
- *Clarification of the procedure for the approval of policies and the minutes*
WB stated that the correct procedure for the approval of the meeting minutes and the policies by the governors, were that they would be proposed by a governor and seconded by a governor. **ACTION: Meeting minutes and policies to be proposed and seconded for approval by the governors.**
- *Feedback on online training by the National Governance Association(NGA)*
NM stated that she tried some of the online training courses provided by the NGA which she thought were very good. NM asked if the courses were updated regularly. JT stated that different courses were provided on a regular basis. WB added that she had recently attended a Head Teacher Review training session which was also very good.
- *Governor Meeting Dates 2021-2022*
JT had recently circulated the governor meeting dates for 2021-2022 to all the governors.

WB proposed the minutes for approval and the NM seconded the motion. The Governors approved the minutes and they will be signed when it is possible for the chair to do so.

7. Committee reports

a. Pay Panel (HC)

HC stated that the Pay Panel had met earlier in the term and today with the aiming of setting JH's objectives which had now been set. HC stated that there had been a pay freeze across the board. HC stated that the committee will review the pay scale in June 2022.

b. Finance (HC)

HC stated that she had been voted in as chair and CK as vice-chair of the finance committee. The terms of reference had been agreed. The school's budget is on track at this current point. NM questioned the minutes and asked if regular donations from the governors were not allowed. HC explained that in a previous role as a treasurer, trustees used to donate their expenses and the gift aid, but she stated that this system didn't work in the same way for the school.

c. *Premises (HC)*

HC stated that she had been voted in as chair and CK as vice-chair of the premises committee. The terms of reference had been agreed. AA had requested for some funds to be moved which will be discussed in AOB.

d. *Curriculum (WB)*

WB stated that MV had been voted in as chair and RP as vice-chair of the curriculum committee. WB stated the new curriculum and the PHSE topics were discussed. CW would be sending out a list of PHSE topics to the governors. RDA funding was discussed and the fact that funding has been found to make this happen. Policies had been reviewed with a lot of discussion about the behavioural policy and the new thinking behind it. WB added that there had been a lot of ancillary documents to go through with this policy and confirmed that the committee were agreed that the policy states what it needs to, having a different focus on exclusions.

e. *Staffing (WB)*

WB stated that MV had been voted in as chair and RP as vice-chair of the staffing committee. WB continued that JH would update the FGB on recruitment later in the meeting. WB confirmed that the policies had been reviewed and agreed. WB added that Castle@Theale would also be discussed under AOB

8. 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 if the COVID booster had been made available to all staff. JH stated that the staff had been told to go through the booking system and to take their badge. JH added that the school were not keeping records of those that had been vaccinated. JH continued that the vaccine uptake in the children had been low, CW stated that consent was a problem for a lot of pupils, the school didn't have a lot of time to prepare for the vaccine roll out, so many pupils would now have to go to their GPs to get the vaccine. WB asked about the pupils visit to the Food Bank. JH stated that the school tended to do it every year, in lieu of a Harvest Festival and that it was a nice way to connect to the community. WB asked about the percentages stated in pupil progress in Appendix B. JH explained that the percentages originated from meetings between staff and the pupil progress team. JH continued that through the year the targets will change and the aim is to focus on the individuals themselves and what progress they have made. CW added that within a step there might be 12 sub steps. WB stated that she looked forward to the presentation on pupil progress at the next FGB meeting. WB stated that the ELSA staff seemed very busy and questioned whether they had enough resource. JH replied that Jackie Hogg is the manager for the ELSA staff and meets with them very two weeks, they are very good at supporting students day to day in classes. JH continued that they were busy, but they were also well supported. WB thanked JH for his Headteacher's report and his overview.

9. Policies for ratification

The following policies have been discussed by committees and come to this meeting for discussion and ratification.

Child Protection Policy- proposed by WB, seconded by NM.
Digital Safety- proposed by WB seconded by RP.

Behaviour- proposed by HC and seconded by NM.
 Provider Access- proposed by WB and seconded by JH.
 Whistleblowing- proposed by NM and seconded by HC.
 Social Network Guidance- it was agreed to remove this as a policy since it is guidance but to ensure the governors see it.
 ECT Induction- proposed by WB and seconded by RP.
 Induction and Probation Policy for Support Staff- proposed by WB and seconded by NM.
 Pay Policy- proposed by HC and seconded by NM.
 Private Fund- proposed by HC and seconded by NM.
 GDPR- proposed by WB and seconded by NM.
 Lettings- proposed by WB and seconded by NM.
 Terms of Reference for Finance, Premises, Staffing and Curriculum committees- proposed by WB and seconded by RP.

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. Clerk to update the school files and to place them on the intranet.

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

CW stated that she and WB would be meeting to go through the safeguarding audit. CW stated that identification and support of asylum seeking children might be one of the issues raised in the audit and the school had no experience in this area so CW had contacted the Children Support Services with regard to this issue. CW stated that the annual update training on Keeping Children Safe for staff had taken place. In terms of my concerns reports there had been 228 this year compared to 256 last year. CW observed there had been no spikes or changes in safeguarding issues. There had been 5 referrals to Children Services but that they had not progressed further. The school has 2 children who are Looked After Children, there had been 3 but one had been moved out of the area and the school were supporting him with tutoring. A survey with parents had been carried out and the results were positive but the main finding was to ensure that parents know who the DSL is. The next step is to carry out the student survey. WB added that she had signed the single central register last week.

11. AOB items.

- *Castle@Theale update*

CW stated that Castle@Theale was looking to open in September 2022. The need for temporary accommodation on the site had gone to the feasibility board and passed, so now working on the design for 2 classes, an office, a breakout room and toilet facilities. CW continued that there was reasonable amount of outdoor space but looking to timetable other outdoor sites too. Recruitment plans are currently being worked on. JH added that the sign off for the project would not be until January/February 2022 but that it was looking very promising. CW stated that it was very exciting and key people in West Berkshire were involved. CW mentioned that the accommodation in September 2022 would be bespoke and up to standard, the only issue would be that builders would be working around the staff and pupils however, CW added that she would be getting the children to be involved with small decisions in the build. **ACTION: CW to action for the subgroup for Castle@Theale to visit the site.**

- *Recruitment*

JH stated that nationally there is the biggest worker shortage since 1987, other schools in the area are already in crisis. He added that the school are trying new ways of doing things such as a leaflet drop in the local area for support staff. JH added that his first priority is to keep the children safe however if the school does not have enough staff then some things may not

happen. JH stated that CW would become the lead at Castle@Theale so this would leave a Deputy Head vacancy which he would be interviewing for on 14th December. He added that it would be good to have governors involved in the interview and asked all governors to consider whether they could attend on the 14th December. NM stated that she would be happy to attend and asked JH if he would consider some of the external candidates that applied before. JH stated that he started with the new list of applicants each time. **ACTION: NM to attend the interview process for the Deputy Head vacancy on 14th December. JH to email all governors to ask if they can attend the interview process on the 14th December for the Deputy Head vacancy.**

- *COVID*

JH stated that the school had sectioned zone areas but no bubbles and generally in the secondary area, children are allowed to mix. He added that children can go on trips and have educational visits. Masks are still being worn in corridors and in the common room by staff. The cleaning around the school is enhanced. JH stated that if nothing changed the school would have a review with the team in the last week of term and it was likely that some form of restrictions would stay in early January. JH stated that he was mindful of flu and COVID cases rising. He added that the staff had been brilliant and the majority of staff were vaccinated.

- *Transfer of Capital*

AA asked the governors to approve the transfer of £165K to the Capital fund to fund the following projects:

Magnetic Door Swipe systems Post16 and Main Site: £10K

Ceiling Hoists Main Site: £10K

Site Van £20K

Tarmac- Main Site (Primary footpath, Top Car Park, outside Library and Pendennis, Chillingham Courtyard) £30K

IT (smart screens, replacement class computers and staff laptops 5 year plan) £60K

Muga Spray Paint, Rubber mulch Primary/Secondary) £15K

Hydro Pool (lighting and floor refurbishment) £20K.

AA also added that Post 16 were looking for more space and the school have approached the Local Authority to convert the bungalow on site. The school will commit £50k to the project and the Local Authority will fund the remaining amount. JH added that it was important to spend the money so that the children are safe and the buildings are up to standard. HC stated that she was very supportive of the capital transfer. All governors formally approved the transfer of revenue to capital as proposed by AA. **ACTION: AA to write a letter next week regarding the transfer of £165K to Capital.**

- *Cleaning Contract*

AA stated that the cleaning contract was coming to an end on the 31st December with the current provider and the school had decided not to renew the contract with them due to staffing issues and the school having to get the site team to do a lot of cleaning themselves which has not been completed by the company. 3 quotes had been obtained from providers which included Service Master, Minster Cleaning and Insite Managed Services. AA proposed that the school changed to Service Master as they had given a competitive quote, they had heard good reports from other schools who had used them for many years and in addition they offer a mobile unit in the area. All governors approved the change of cleaning provider to Service Master.

- *Clerk to the Governors*

WB thanked JT for being the clerk to the governors. WB added that an advert had been placed in Green Pages but as yet there had been no responses so she asked governors to encourage applicants to the position.

12. Date of next meeting. The date of the next full governing board meeting is Thursday 10th March 2022 at 5pm.