



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 17th November 2022, from 5.00pm, Held at Castle School, Jane Evan's Room

Present: Wendy Batchelor (LEA governor), Helen Cabell (co-opted governor), Charlie Kowalski (Parent Governor), Philip Jackson (Co-opted governor), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher), Nicola Markham (Co-opted) Jo Davies (Staff Governor), Arianna Loconte (Co-opted Governor), Adrian Crawford (parent Governor), Helen Amner-Munslow (Parent Governor), Jane Gray (Clerk)

Apologies: Giles Francis (co-opted Governor), Caroline Whitlock (Deputy Head)

In attendance: Atul Attra (School Business Manager), James Whybra (Deputy Head)

1. Apologies Received (JG)

Apologies received from Giles Francis.

2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022/23

WB expressed her desire to step down as chair to the Board of Governors later this year and pass the baton on to someone else. She said that one person had expressed interest in stepping up and that if anyone else was interested, they should contact her in the next few weeks. For the first part of the year, JH nominated WB, seconded HC. WB nominated HC for the role as vice chair, seconded by NM.

Therefore, the results are as follows:

Wendy Batchelor voted as Chair (nominated by JH, 2nd HC)

Helen Cabell voted as Vice Chair (nominated by WB, 2nd NM)

3. Appointment of new Governors

The start of this academic year sees us welcoming four new governors. Jo Davis (Staff), Arianna Loconte (Co-opted), Helen Amner-Munslow (Parent) and Adrian Crawford (Parent)

WB asked all current board members, in attendance, to show their hand if they are in favour of Jo, Arianna, Helen and Adrian to join the board. The current board voted unanimously two each of our new members. **Action: JG to send out governor induction packs and AA to ensure DBS checks. New governors to do safeguarding training.**

Charlie was a co-opted governor, however his term has come to an end but as he now has a child at Castle School he will continue as a Parent Governor. Again, the current board members voted unanimously for him to continue.

4. Declarations of interest for this meeting (Chair)

None declared. JG reminded the Board that they need to complete the 2022/23 declarations and return them by 1 December 2022.

5. Any other business (AOB) items for the agenda (Chair)

6. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising (Chair)

JH informed the Board that the Boost is now up and running and this programme supports pupils in the morning to transition into the school day. This programme is run by two ELSA's who have recently started at the school. JH and JW explained what ELSAs and BOOST were for the benefit of the new governors. **Action: JG to send out acronym sheet to assist new governors.**

Now that we have additional governing board members, WB suggested that now might be an ideal time to conduct a skills audit to see if there are any gaps in experience that could be filled in the future. WB is to progress this further with JH. Additionally, we felt a site visit to Castle@Theale and more Earwig training would be useful for governors over the next year. **Action: WB and JH to organize governor skills audit.**

7. Committee reports

- a. *Curriculum (NM)* It was reported at the curriculum committee that the My Concern system is being used efficiently. Also Earwig is providing useful information on the progress of the children. This system can provide real time results and also captures everything the child does whether it be academic, non-academic or as part of the EHCP. Currently a few parents have access to this system and can view their child's progress and it is hoped that all parents will eventually have access at some point.
- b. *Staffing (NM)* Play awards for non-teaching staff have been agreed and backdated to March which has already been budgeted for. The salary rise for teachers is with the unions for further consideration at this time and will then be backdated to March. Governors discussed the increases and the pressures on recruitment and retention which were being felt by all schools with the cost of living crisis.

Recruitment is still ongoing for an admin role based at the post 16 unit and a number of other vacancies are still to be filled

- c. *Finance (HC)* AA provided a summary on the budgets up to P6. As the school summer holidays take up a large portion of this spending period very little was reported back.

The BMF report is due to be sent shortly.

AA, JH and senior leadership need to meet so they can investigate the possible 5% to 7% pay increase for teachers which is currently unfunded by DoE. The outcome of this will be reported back to the Finance Committee at their next meeting.

- d. *Premises (HC)* The majority of works to all sites have been completed over the school summer holidays. However, they MUGA will be completed late spring/early summer along with the school Kitchen's being refurbished during the summer.

H-AM Congratulated the school for the tarmac works which were done at the love lane site

Health and safety will need to be kept on the Premises Committee agenda. AA will be setting up a Ledger for checks and reporting of any issues. We are currently awaiting the HASE report on the asbestos at the school's sites. H&S walks by governors to continue.

8. Headteacher's report (JH)

The student and staff absence rate is higher than normal. Some children have been reluctant to attend school following the various COVID lockdowns. This is more of an issue especially within mainstream schools. Our own pastoral team do support those children and families alongside relevant bodies for any nonattendance.

Development of language and communication. We are currently looking at collecting the right kind of data for the EAL Trial. This is where English is not the first language spoken at home.

WB asked about WOW and asked for an update. JW reported that WOW, world of work, was impacted by COVID and lockdown's but where possible WOW continues during this time but in a reduced capacity. This this scheme provides fantastic training to students and we are getting new placements all the time with local companies. It may also be possible for any governors to attend any assessments out on site that are undertaken with the students and JW will follow up on this. In the past, normally in April there is a WOW event for members of the WOW community to attend and WB said that it was a good event for governors to attend too. It is hoped that it will continue this year but no date has yet been set. **Action: JG to ensure that all future wow newsletters are sent out to all governors so they can keep up to date with what's going on with this programme. Action: JW to update governors on next WOW event and possible governor placement visit.**

AC asked how the school went about recruiting Tas and AA and JH explained all the various on-line and other publications and avenues which are used to ensure that the Castle have a wide range of applicants such as Green pages, Job Centre and Indeed. Parents of post 16 children can now apply for a discretionary bursary. This is to assist with paying for transport, clothing, and any other school bits that are required.

There is also a vulnerable bursary for those children in care. AA applies for this automatically and he just needs the relevant supporting documentation when making the application.

9. Policies for ratification

The following policies were agreed and ratified.

Policy Document	Proposed	Second
Child Protection and Safeguarding	JH	WB
Behaviour	WB	PJ
Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school	JD	HC
Exclusions	NM	PJ
ECT	PJ	JD

First Aid	JH	NM
Manual Handling	JD	PJ
Pay Policy	HC	NM
Private Fund	HC	PJ
16-19 Bursary	JH	HC
GDPR	WB	PJ

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

All staff should have now completed their safeguarding training updates and returned their completed forms to confirm this.

To date there have been 357 reports logged into My Concern. We currently have 6 referrals to social care which includes one child protection plan. There are currently three children in care.

Since Smoothwall was installed on all PCs to monitor the searches pupils make on the school computers, so far, the system has not flagged any searches of concern.

The single central register needs to be signed off. However, at times there can be a possible conflict with GDPR and safeguarding with this data. WB agreed to come in separately to sign the SCR and check the progress of DBS updates for agreed renewals.

11. AOB items

Castle@Theale Update

The new unit at Theale opened its doors in September for two classes in the temporary accommodation. Unfortunately, the staff weren't able to access the new site due to works over running however they did a sterling job in getting everything set up and ready for the first day of term. The governors wanted to show their thanks to the staff at Theale for all their hard work and getting everything set up and best wishes for the future of the school. **Action: NM agreed to send this on behalf of the Board of Governors**

The new pupils all seem to be getting on well with staff and in general each other however there are some conflicts that occur from time to time which is to be expected.

The paperwork for the completion of phase two, which is the refurbishment of the original school on the site, is due to be signed off. JH met with the LEA a few weeks ago as he was concerned that the site will not be fully operational next September. The LEA have understood the priority and confirmed that they will ensure everything is done to be ready for hand over in July. JH explained that it was very important to have the site up and running for the new pupils and he asked for the support of the governors should it be required in ensuring this project is completed on time.

New Governors and Training

JG will inform the new Governors of any training that will be coming up and ensuring that they are set up on GovHub. **Action: JG to set up new governors.**

Part 11 Pay Panel Meeting

All staff governors including JH then left the meeting and the other governors discussed and approved the pay panel and HT salary increase which is a confidential part of the meeting.

Meeting finished at 7PM