



BENTHAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

MEETING OF THE FULL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Date: Tuesday, 21 November 2017
Time: 18:30
Location: Benthal Primary School, Benthal Road, N16 7AU

MINUTES

Present:	Jo Carter	Chair	Chair
	Susannah Barker	Parent Governor	SB
	Matilda Astle	Community Governor	MA
	Louise Drew	Head Teacher	Head Teacher
	Nick Harvey-Jones	Community Governor	NH
	Christiane Nkaka	Community Governor (Staff)	CN
	Ebru Oz	Staff Governor	EO
Attending:	Calvin Henry	School Improvement Partner	CH
	Maggie Kalnins	Hackney Learning Trust	MK
Clerk:	Kathleen Formosa		Clerk

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting at 18.32, welcoming the governors and others in attendance.
- 1.1.1 Maggie Kalnins of Hackney Learning Trust (HLT) was introduced to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies received from Sem Moema (SM) and Jeremy Gilpin (JG) were **accepted**.
- 1.2.1 It was **noted** that Nathan Waddington had intended to attend by telephone, but that a connection could not be established.
- 1.3 The meeting was **confirmed** quorate and accordingly proceeded to business.
- 1.3.1 It was **agreed** that items on the agenda would be taken out of their usual order to allow more time for discussion of the main items of business. Routine matters requiring less discussion would be addressed at the end of the meeting.

2. SIP Annual Report

- 2.1 CH reported that the school's annual report would be circulated following the meeting.
ACTION: Head Teacher to circulate the school's annual report.
- 2.1.1 CH reported that the school has been rated "good" by Ofsted in all areas according to the framework. HLT considers the school to need core support, and this is delivered only to good or outstanding schools within the borough.
- 2.1.2 Highlights from last year's results were **reviewed**. The following were **noted**, in particular:
 - Teaching and learning was considered to be strong.
 - 74% of EYFS pupils had a good level of development against the national average of 71%. The Hackney average is 78%.

- The school should continue to improve its monitoring of pupils' baseline level of attainment as they come into the school and their attainment over time.
 - Phonics results were strong with 87% passing the Year 1 reading check and 92% cumulatively of Year 1 and Year 2 passing the reading check.
 - KS1 scores were 70% or above across reading, maths and writing. They were slightly below the national average in reading and maths, but have improved over the previous year.
 - KS2 scores exceeded the national average in Reading, Maths, Grammar & Punctuation with writing being at National Standard. RWM Combined showed a significant improvement to 69% which is above the National Standard of 61% and was 33% over the previous year.
 - Progress scores were strong, particularly in reading and maths, placing Benthal in the top 20% of schools nationally and writing in the average band of schools nationally.
- 2.1.3 CH recommended that the school continue to work on improving its outcomes for disadvantaged pupils whose scores lag behind non-disadvantaged pupils.
- 2.2 CH reported on the school's teaching and learning assessment.
- 2.2.1 He reported that the school has a strong SENCO and teachers are well supported. The school should continue to work to support the most able students so they also achieve good progress and attainment.
- 2.2.2 It was **recommended** that the school focus on improving its communal and classroom environments as part of its teaching and learning improvement strategy as some areas are looking tired and worn, this would mean allocating money from the budget to improve in this area.
- 2.2.3 CH reported that behavior within the school is a particular strength, as are good pupil/staff relationships. Attendance continues to be below the national average, but is improving.
- 2.3 CH reported on the school's leadership and management, stating that this continues to be strong across the school. He reported that middle leaders and SENCO are increasingly involved in the school's plans, and this has helped with strengthening this area.
- 2.3.1 He reported that PPG funds are well targeted, but measured outcomes could be improved.
- 2.4 The previous head teacher was commended for leading the school to achieve these results.
- 2.5 CH reported that the SIP visit for this year has already taken place.
- 2.5.1 He reported that he has observed some issues in a lower KS2 year group at the moment, and noted that there is a higher proportion of SEND in this cohort. There are also some issues in teaching which are currently being addressed.
- 2.5.2 CH stated that there are some significant gaps in outcomes between boys and girls which the school is addressing proactively.
- 2.5.3 CH reported that he has observed good systems in place, a greater range of engagement with learning resources, and good learning behavior across the school.
- 2.5.4 He reported that areas of improvement for the school include consistency of marking across the whole school, making communal spaces more attractive and classroom learning environments consistent, including maximizing the use of outdoor areas (especially in Early Years). He stated that he would be looking at these areas specifically during his next visit.
- 2.6 **A governor asked if it would be helpful for the governors, particularly those on the Finance & Premises Committee, to align budget priorities with areas of improvement noted in the SIP.**

- 2.6.1 CH stated that there are areas around the school that need refurbishment, and money could be spent here to assist with delivering improvement.
- 2.6.2 The Chair **confirmed** that the Finance & Premises Committee would be asked to review improvements recommended in the SIP as it sets priorities for the budget.

ACTION: F&P Committee Chair to include in committee discussions.

- 2.7 CH was excused from the meeting at the conclusion of these discussions.

3. Governing Board Organisation Proposal

- 3.1 The Chair introduced a proposal to strengthen the governance and leadership of the Benthall Primary School, which included proposals for reorganising the governing body.

- 3.1.1 It was **noted** that there are two staff governors who are coming to the end of their terms, and one parent governor has relocated and therefore resigned from the Board. These vacancies have opened opportunities for the school to think about reshaping its board in the interest of strengthening governance.

- 3.1.2 The Chair reported that there are increasing demands on school governors, and that there are areas where the board needs more expertise, or expertise in different areas. Specific areas of expertise needed were **noted**.

- 3.1.3 In the interest of giving the board the ability to ensure that it has the needed expertise around the table from year to year, it was proposed that there should be a reduction in the number of elected parent governors. The Chair **confirmed** that the school will still rely on parent governors, but that these will be parents whose skills are in the areas where the school needs support.

- 3.1.4 The written proposal circulated with the board packs was **reviewed**. Additional copies were made available at the table.

- 3.2 The Head Teacher presented the proposal to strengthen the governance and leadership of Benthall Primary School. She reported that there have been significant recent changes in how Ofsted view governors and the role of governors. She stated that there are increasing expectations that governors will work alongside school leaders and assume greater responsibilities.

- 3.2.1 She explained that there are two parts to the proposal presented. Part 1 is to review the current Instrument of Government and review the skills capacity and training for governors. Part 2 is to review the business of governance and ensure it provides clarity on the scope of each role, including anticipated time commitment and skills required.

- 3.3 Part 1 of the proposal was **discussed**. It was stated that the proposal is to reduce the size of the governing body from 15 governors (as per the governing instrument) to 12 governors.

- 3.3.1 The mechanics of reducing the size of the board were **discussed**. It was stated that as several governors were reaching the end of their term, the reduction would be achieved through attrition, with the board taking a view on if and how to fill these vacancies.

- 3.3.2 The Head Teacher reported that hand in hand with the reduction in the number of elected parent governors would be the implementation of a Parent Council supported by committees responsible for various areas of support (e.g., fundraising). She stated her view that this is a more effective way of achieving parent engagement with the school.

- 3.3.3 The particulars of how the Parent Council might be structured, the size of the group, the number of committees, etc. were briefly **discussed**. It was **noted** that more work still needs to be done to shape a specific proposal for the constitution of a Parent Council.

- 3.3.4 MA stated her support for the Parent Council, noting that this was a point of discussion several years ago that was sidelined by other issues. SB also stated her support for the constitution of a Parent Council.

- 3.3.5 The reasons why parents have sought to join the board in the past were **discussed**. It was **acknowledged** that the motivation is often to address current operational or managerial issues or concerns arising within the school, and that such parents are frustrated when they realise that it is not the job of the governors to deal with such issues.
- 3.3.6 The role and responsibilities of the board were **discussed**. Key areas of expertise needed on the board at the present time were identified as: safeguarding, finance, policy/legal, HR, premises development/H&S, funding/bid writing, SEND, and education. The Head Teacher stated that attracting governors having these key areas of expertise and experience will assist school leaders in finding funding for large scale projects, developing policy, restructuring staff, etc. This will drive the school forward in its school improvement journey.
- 3.3.7 A governor asked how the board would deal with skills that might be needed to support current board initiatives but may not be needed over the longer term.
- 3.3.8 The Head Teacher stated that there was provision for appointing an associate governor for a set period of time to deliver a particular skill needed.
- 3.3.9 A governor asked whether there would be a plan to tackle the problem of poor attendance at meetings. A concern was expressed that in decreasing the size of the board and relying heavily on specific skills sets to drive improvement and ensure accountability the board may find that absences will have a larger effect on its effectiveness.
- 3.3.10 It was stated that skill sets may need to be prioritised during recruitment, or the board kept larger in the short term until the issue of non-attendance can be resolved.
- 3.4 Part 2 of the proposal was **discussed**, with particular attention to clarification of the link governor roles, accountabilities, committee remits, and the management of key risks.
- 3.4.1 The Head Teacher stated that the proposal includes a programme of four meetings of the Full Governing Board each year, each centred on a key task. As follows:
- September – to review headlines and administrative matters;
 - November/December – to review the single action plan, SEF, committee reports;
 - March – to review progress with the single action plan, committee reports; and
 - July – to review the SAP results, review pupil outcomes, committee feedback.
- 3.4.2 The Head Teacher stated that the proposal also includes a reduction in the number of link governors from 12 to 8, with each link governor role having a particular relationship to a specific area of the SIP. As follows:
- Leadership & Management
 - Pupil Outcomes
 - Teaching & Learning
 - Safeguarding & Pupil Welfare
 - Stakeholder Voice (this role is proposed specifically to listen to pupils and parents, address their concerns, and act as a communications link between parents/pupils and the school leadership and board)
 - Inclusion
 - Finance, Property & MIS (this role is proposed specifically to deal with property development, premises improvement and finance matters)
 - H&S in the workplace (this role is proposed specifically to deal with premises safety and maintenance).
- 3.4.3 A schedule of the proposed link governor roles, including specification of the committee to which each link governor would be attached, the required skill set, Ofsted and policy matters to be dealt with, etc. was **reviewed** and **discussed**.
- 3.4.4 It was **noted** that the schedule of link governor skills sets and expectations would also feed into the identification of governor training needs.
- 3.4.5 MA stated her support for the plan, noting that it provides important clarification to the scope and expectations for each link governor role, and for governors in general.

- 3.4.6 The staff governors stated their view that the plan would be helpful for new staff governors in understanding the separation between their governor responsibilities and their staff responsibilities, and help staff governors to become more active governors.
- 3.4.7 A governor asked how link governors would be expected to handle their responsibilities. For example, will the governor be directly responsible, or will they oversee a member of staff? A concern was expressed that it may become more difficult to attract new governors if they are directly responsible for things like writing a five-year finance plan.
- 3.4.8 It was clarified that governors' roles are to check that staff are doing what needs to be done (e.g., writing finance plans) and to provide oversight for these roles.
- 3.4.9 A governor asked if an organised induction of governors will be offered to support the ambitious plan.
- 3.4.10 It was **noted** that the current governors have not had a formal induction. The Head Teacher stated that this has been identified as a need and will be addressed.
- 3.4.11 A governor asked how the recruitment of new governors, and particularly those with specific skill sets, will be handled. A concern was expressed that people who have these skills may be busy professionals who will not have the time to devote to the role.
- 3.4.12 Various approaches to governor recruitment were **discussed**, and in particular whether it would be of more benefit to the school to identify those who have the time and then develop their skills, or the other way around. It was stated that parents may be the first choice of prospective governors identified for new roles, and then professionals in the local community. It is hoped that prospective governors with an interest in the school and/or the local community will make the time needed to serve as a governor.
- 3.4.13 MK stated that HLT should also be looked to as a resource, as it maintains a list of individuals who have an interest in being governors. She clarified that HLT is not just a source for local authority governors.
- 3.4.14 It was **agreed** that the new governor roles should be publicised as soon as possible, and that the Head Teacher and MA should lead on this.

ACTION: New governor roles to be publicised as soon as possible.

- 3.5 The Chair called for the governors to make a decision about the proposals.
- 3.5.1 The proposals were **agreed in principle**. The Head Teacher stated that she would be working closely with the governors through the remainder of the year to implement the key elements of the proposal.
- 3.6 The terms of reference for the Board of Governors were presented, and it was **agreed** that these should be updated in line with the proposal to strengthen the governance and leadership of the school.

ACTION: Chair and Head Teacher to update the terms of reference and seek the agreement of the board by circulation.

- 3.7 The new Instrument of Government was **accepted** and will be reported to HLT.
- ACTION: Chair to report as required.**
- 3.8 The Head Teacher was commended for her work on the proposal to strengthen the governance and leadership of the school. The amount of work she had put into the proposal was **acknowledged** with thanks.

4. Governing Board Organisation

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 4.1.1 It was **agreed** that the Chair should sign off the register of interests following the meeting.
- ACTION: Chair to sign off the register of interest.**

4.2 Jo Carter was nominated and **agreed** as Chair of the Board of Governors for the year.
4.2.1 The Chair noted that as she had served as Chair for the previous two years, she would not be seeking a further term as Chair after this year.

4.2.2 It was noted that NW is the current Vice Chair for the Board of Governors. It was proposed that he should continue, subject to his agreement.

ACTION: Chair to seek agreement from NW regarding the proposal that he continue as Vice Chair.

4.3 With reference to the new schedule of governor roles and responsibilities, and the schedule of link governors discussed previously in the meeting, the governors were asked to **review** the skills profile of each link governor role and to identify areas where they believe they would fit in.

4.3.1 The link governor roles were **agreed** as follows:

- Leadership & Management – JC
- SEND
- Whole School Curriculum
- Safeguarding & Pupil Welfare – MA
- Pupil/Parent Voice – SB
- Inclusion
- Finance, Property & MIS – NH
- PPG & Reduction of Gender Gap

4.3.2 The chairperson for and membership of the committees was **agreed** as follows:

- Finance Committee – The committee chair shall continue to be NH. Membership will include the Chair, Head Teacher, and the Health & Safety link governor.
- Curriculum & Standards Committee – The committee chair is TBC. Membership will include the Chair and Head Teacher, and the following link governors: Whole School Curriculum, PPG & Reduction of Gender Gap, and Parent/Pupil Voice. It was agreed that until the link governor roles are filled, all governors are welcome to attend this committee.
- Personnel Committee – Membership will include the Head Teacher. Chair and others TBC.

4.4 The Chair **confirmed** that her DBS check will need renewal this year.

4.4.1 It was **confirmed** that all other governors have current DBS checks in line with DfE requirements.

4.5 MK was commended for her assistance to the school in making positive change, with special thanks from the Head Teacher.

4.5.1 MK was excused from the meeting.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

5.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board of Governors, held on 4 July 2017, were **reviewed** and **confirmed** for signature by the Chair.

5.2 It was **noted** that all matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting were complete, or would be addressed as part of the agenda for the meeting.

5.3 The Chair reported there were no urgent actions taken since the last meeting.

6. Head Teacher's Report

- 6.1 The Head Teacher's report was circulated at the table. The Head Teacher **confirmed** that much of the substance of the report and the items listed on the agenda as part of the Head Teacher's report had been addressed previously in the meeting.
- 6.1.1 With reference to the data dashboard report, the Head Teacher expressed her thanks to CH for his support in helping the school to more effectively track its results and target areas for improvement. It was **noted** that in addition to his role as the School Improvement Partner, CH is also offering headship support at the Leadership and Management Advisor.
- 6.2 The Head Teacher reported on the whole school context for her report. She **noted** that in addition to her appointment as Head Teacher this year, there is now a new leadership team in place (Head Teacher, Deputy Head and Assistant Head) and five new teaching staff (4 NQTs and one second year teacher) have been appointed.
- 6.2.1 It was **noted** there are still a few pupil places throughout the school with significantly low numbers of pupil places in EYFS.
- 6.2.2 It was reported that the school vision was shared at the staff INSET meeting in September.
- 6.3 The Single Action Plan for 2017-18 was **reviewed** and **approved**. It was **noted** that the document as circulated includes some unconfirmed data, and this was highlighted in the report. An update will be circulated once this data is confirmed.
- ACTION: Head Teacher to circulate an updated report when available.**
- 6.3.1 The appointment of a new creative curriculum (i.e., humanities) leader was **noted**, as was the appointment of a RE & PSHE leader. It was **noted** that the science leader remains vacant. Other vacancies and recruitment needs were **reviewed**.
- 6.3.2 Staff long-term sickness absences and disciplinary issues were **reviewed**.
- 6.3.3 Pay decisions were **reviewed** and **supported**, along with performance management for teaching and support staff.
- 6.3.4 CPD that has happened so far across the school was **noted**.
- 6.3.5 The Head Teacher highlighted to the governors the areas of development noted by Ofsted, and requested that governors keep these top-of-mind throughout the year. She requested that these are explicitly addressed in committee and full board discussions this year.
- 6.4 Pupil outcomes across the school were **noted** with specific reference to the "data wall" for June/July. The data wall was **reviewed** in detail.
- 6.4.1 The Head Teacher reported that the data wall is compiled termly and also presented to governors on a termly basis.
- 6.4.2 **A governor asked if the data wall sets out the results the school expected to see at this point in the year.**
- 6.4.3 The Head Teacher stated that the results for boys was surprising, but that other results are broadly in line with expectations. She **confirmed** that addressing the gender gap in outcomes is a key focus for the school this year.
- 6.4.4 **A governor asked if the school is using benchmarking data from other schools and otherwise taking note of work being done elsewhere to address the gender gap, and also the particular gap between Black Caribbean boys and girls.**
- 6.4.5 The Head Teacher **confirmed** that benchmarking data is used regularly, as is Fisher Family Trust data to track progress and anticipate results.
- 6.5 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was **reviewed**. It was **noted** that there is generally strong teaching across the school. The Head Teacher reported that the five new teaching staff this year have inducted well.

- 6.5.1 The Head Teacher reported that one teacher within the school has been identified as needing improvement and is receiving NQT support. Another teacher has been identified as inadequate, and is receiving informal support to get back on track.
- 6.5.2 The EYFS provision was **reviewed**. It was **noted** that there is a large cohort of pupils at this level who are EAL and entering the school this year with a low level of attainment.
- 6.5.3 The Head Teacher reported that a new spelling programme had been purchased and the Literacy Leader, AHT and a Year 4 teacher had attended training. Details of the new programme were presented and **discussed**. It was reported that spelling was found to be an issue across the school, and to be a contributing factor to the below standard writing scores for some pupils within the school. The programme would be rolled out across the school in the Spring Term.
- 6.5.4 Personal development, behaviour and welfare were **reviewed**. It was **noted** that this area is a particular strength of the school. The Head Teacher stated her view that the school could achieve an outstanding rating in this area if pupil attendance can be improved.
- 6.5.5 The Head Teacher reported that no pupils have been excluded this term. This follows on from last year where there were no exclusions.
- 6.5.6 The Head Teacher reported that there is a family who has enrolled three children in the school. The children's attendance is irregular, and services have been involved in the issue.
- 6.5.7 The Head Teacher reported that all staff have had safeguarding and CP refresher training. New staff have been fully inducted into the safeguarding and CP procedures.
- 6.5.8 It was reported that the school has six children currently on the CP register and 10 children on the children in need register. There are a further 17 children known to social services who are not currently on the CP register.

6.6 The school's after school club activities were **noted**.

6.7 The school's fire safety provision and heating issues were **noted**.

7. Finance & Premises Feedback Matters

- 7.1 The minutes of the Finance & Premises Committee held on 17 October 2017 were **noted**.
- 7.2 NH reported that the school is anticipating a budget short-fall of £30K for the year. Steps are currently being taken to fill this gap.
 - 7.2.1 The Head Teacher reported that head teachers within the borough have rejected HLT's proposal to top-slice school reserves to pay for SEND provisions across the borough.
- 7.3 The Head Teacher reported that since the last meeting of the Finance & Premises Committee, the school has been informed that its move to a new facility will be postponed to 2023. For this reason, she recommended that the Finance & Premises Committee de-prioritise this matter for the time being, and shift focus to petitioning the local authority to address the current premises' maintenance and repair issues.
 - 7.3.1 The Head Teacher stated her view that there has been a lack of investment in the school's current premises because the move was thought to be imminent, however if the school will stay in its current premises for the next five or six years, then investment in repairs and improvements to the premises must be treated as a matter of priority.
 - 7.3.2 The governors **agreed** that an investment in repairs and improvement to the school's current premises should be prioritised, noting that the condition of the facilities had been raised earlier in the meeting as part of the school improvement partner's report. The Head teacher also stated that it is an Ofsted area for development action point.
 - 7.3.3 The status of the following premises maintenance and repair issues were **noted**:
 - The asbestos that was found in the school has been cleared.

- The school's heating issues are currently being addressed. It was noted that the local authority has agreed to pay for the pipework that has been done in order to get the heating working in the building again.
- The boiler is no longer fit for purpose and will need to be replaced.

It was **agreed** that these matters would be addressed by the Finance & Premises committee.

ACTION: F&P Committee to address current premises maintenance and repair issues.

7.3.4 The Head Teacher reported that she will meet with the chair of the parent steering committee to determine how to share the news of a delayed school move with parents.

8. Link Governor Feedback: Safeguarding

8.1 MA reported with reference to the safeguarding information provided in the Head Teacher's report. She reported that the school has seen an increase in the number of children on the CP register this year.

8.1.1 She reported that all teachers are up-to-date with their safeguarding training. A short presentation on safeguarding will be delivered at the next Board of Governors meeting.

9. Governance Matters

9.1 It was **noted** that the board's work plan and scheme of delegation had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

9.2 It was **agreed** that board training needs in the immediate term should be identified by the governors individually with requests made to the Chair and Head Teacher. Any training undertaken should be reported to the Clerk.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Head Teacher invited the governors to attend the school's Christmas lights switch-on at 15.45 on 1 December 2017. This event kicks off the school's Christmas festivities.

10.2 The Chair signed off the Single Central Register for this term.

11. Confidential Business

11.1 There was no confidential business discussed.

The business of the meeting concluded at 20.45.