

ELM GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Full Governing Board Meeting



14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 6pm

**Present:** Diana Boyd (Chair), Louise Willard (Head Teacher), Hugh Mehta, Chris Adams, Laura Haynes-Copp, Natalie Dodds, Chris McNeill, Emma Sutton, Phil Kelly, Sue Margolis

**Quorate:** 11/12

**In attendance:** Anna Johnson, Clerk

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were accepted from Leigh Ward

- i. Declarations of any Interest in the Meeting - None
- ii. Notice of any Urgent Other Business

**2. Approval of Minutes of last FGB & Matters arising**

i) The minutes were **agreed** without amendment.

ii) Matters arising from the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019

The chair noted that some actions in relation to governance development had been put on hold due to the absence of the clerk. The chairs of committees would meet at the end of the month.

A candidate for staff governor had come forward and it was expected that appointment would follow before the next FGB. **Action**

The new venue for the Christmas performance had solved the safety issue and raised money for the church's charity.

Nadia Atkins was unable to present the equalities report to the board, it was agreed that Laura Haynes-Copp and Natalie Dodds would present an item on equalities at the next meeting. **Action**

The Head proposed that governors use a session with Simon Chandler, School Partnership Advisor to hear his current assessment of the school directly and to gain expert understanding of how the school would be judged under the new Ofsted Framework. It was agreed that if possible this would be arranged for Governors Week. **Action**

It was agreed that a declaration form in relation to Keeping Children Safe be brought to every committee until completed by all governors. **Action**

**3. Head Teacher's Report - Questions**

Attendance

Q. *What is the analysis of the current dip in attendance?*

A. The Head noted that it was a particular concern that Pupil Premium attendance had fallen below 90% for the first time. Attendance in one class is having an impact on the figures with a number of children who are on part-time timetables and this must be recorded as absence.

*Q. How was the decision about part-time attendance of children made?*

A. For two children this was made by the school with other professionals in order to avoid exclusion and a plan to build up attendance was put in place at the same time. The other two moved to part-time at parental request; the school is supporting these children to reenter school full time.

*Q. Have absence figures been affected by the absence of the SENCO?*

A. No, there was the usual impact of illness late in the autumn term and there were a number of children from traveller families with poor attendance who have now moved on. A number of children with low attendance have anxiety, some suffering from trauma and appropriate support continued to be offered to these children. The Head stated that the increase in the inclusion team was having a positive impact.

*Q. How does the school balance academic expectation against reducing demands for the children suffering anxiety?*

A. There is bespoke provision and targets for all children with experience of trauma and the Nest supplies additional support.

The Head explained that it was expected that the introduction of the Study Bugs app for attendance would allow data to be analysed quickly and in a more sophisticated way so that the school could review its approach to improving attendance.

*Q. Does the school use individual education plans as a tool to discuss attendance with children?*

A. The Head felt that improvement of attendance was largely influenced by parents. She noted that in working with children the attendance cup had been effective but it was a sensitive issue for parents and so was not being used currently.

The Head confirmed that the school was prioritising attendance especially of Pupil Premium children. Governors requested that the Head report to the board on whether data showed the attendance cup had had an impact on these children specifically. **Action**

Governors discussed how anxiety and mental health issues in children may not be best addressed by a reduced timetable, acknowledging that it was difficult for schools to persuade families of this.

### Pupil numbers

*Q. Is the current level of pupil numbers sustainable?*

A. In the context of city schools, Elm Grove has comparatively good roll numbers. The census for Pupil Premium funding would take place in the current week which was very significant for income. Following the primary school application deadline, it is hoped the initial reception figures for the school will look positive. The concern continued to be a trend of children leaving at the end of Year 2 to move away, resulting in low class numbers in Year 3. The planned reduction in roll numbers across the city would improve the situation for all schools.

### Extra-curricular programme

Governors praised the extensive and varied offer for after school and extra-curricular clubs, in addition to the excellent sports provision.

*Q. Does the school publicise this benefit to prospective parents?*

A. This had been highlighted to prospective parents in the new format of small tours carried out by the Head. The new approach was perceived by the Head to be an improvement on the previous prospective parent visits.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors were requested to consider if they could attend any of the PTA events coming up. They were also encouraged to attend Pupil Premium or SEND review meetings if they had not already as these were excellent learning opportunities. <b>Action</b></li> <li>• The Head highlighted the impressive amount fundraised by the PTA in the previous year - £13,500. It was agreed that a letter of appreciation would be sent to PTA from the governors. <b>Action</b></li> <li>• All governors were requested to join School Ping if not already on it as this would provide up to date information on school events.</li> <li>• The Head confirmed that data from the autumn term would be ready for next TLS meeting in February.</li> </ul> <p><i>Q. Is the school ensuring that staff will have training to ensure ongoing effectiveness and use of the donated iPads?</i> The Head would check with the IT lead that this was the case. <b>Action</b></p>
4.	<p><b>Monitoring of school improvement plan</b></p> <p>The Head explained that the new system of half termly reviews of the SIP with the leadership team was proving useful and the discussion was generating numerous ideas. Feedback within the leadership team confirmed that the plan was focused on the correct issues within the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team plans to review the homework policy but the Head noted that feedback from the parent consultation group on the current homework policy in the school had been positive.</li> <li>• Subject leaders were in the early stages of building progression of skills into the curriculum across the school as required in the new Ofsted framework and will present at a staff meeting shortly and to the board at the end of the academic year.</li> <li>• The Head had met with kitchen managers to arrange full meetings on behaviour.</li> <li>• The team was reviewing monitoring systems for teaching and learning in response to teacher feedback moving towards increased peer mediation and monitoring. This would include a visit to a school in Three Bridges acclaimed for teacher wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>Governors discussed the link between feedback on homework and motivation, with the Head explaining the increased use of stamps as a way of providing feedback while controlling teacher workload.</p> <p><i>Q. Why doesn't the SIP include engagement with SEND parents?</i> A. This is happening but is built into how the SEND team works and so is not included as an area for development.</p>
5.	<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <p>The Safeguarding link presented their report from the autumn term noting the benefits of the cyclical review of the Safeguarding Audit report. This ensured continuous work towards meeting the actions in the reports.</p>

	<p>Following a challenging transition, the new SEND team was working well. This would continue to be monitored closely when cover was introduced for the upcoming maternity leave of two members of the team.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Reports from committees</b> All terms of reference for the committees were <b>agreed</b>.</p> <p><b>- Finance and premises</b> Hugh Mehta, chair of Finance noted the positive position the school was in with an underspend of £51,027 predicted in November. This was due to savings in support staffing and improved pupil numbers following the census. As predicted at year start, agency staffing costs were high but this had been balanced by careful staffing decisions by the Head and School Business Manager.</p> <p>Members of the committee agreed that receipt of monthly budget reports was helpful as was the new report providing monthly comparison over the year.</p> <p><b>- Teaching, learning and standards</b></p> <p>Diana Boyd, chair of TLS commented that it had been very useful to hear from Millie Watts (Senior Inclusion Mentor) and Carla Kemp (Senco) on SEND provision, as well as Hannah Tucker (Maths lead) and Christine Phillips (English lead) on priority initiatives in Maths and English that have been implemented this year.</p> <p>Year 3 and Reception were the cohorts where there was some concern (and to some extent Year 2) and the School Improvement Plan addressed this with monitoring and support for these classes.</p> <p><b>- Staffing Pay and Appraisal</b></p> <p>Chris McNeill explained that the committee reviewed appraisal targets to ensure they were differentiated by grade and that progression up the pay scale was justified and approved by the committee. The committee had agreed the 2019-20 Pay policy which required formal ratification at the meeting.</p> <p><i>Q. Why would teachers not rise up the pay scale and what would follow?</i> A. If teachers don't meet their targets they would be given a support plan and if this was not effective eventually capability procedure would follow. However, some staff choose to stay on the mainscale and don't want to take on the whole school responsibilities of the upper pay scale.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Schools' Financial Value Standard</b></p> <p>Hugh Mehta explained the new Department of Education format which provided immediate comparison with other similar schools.</p> <p>Overall the "dashboard reflected positively on the school, with most areas showing green indicating it is in line with other schools or recognised standards. There was a high expenditure on staffing which the board was already aware of, but it was expected that this would change in the following year's report.</p> <p><i>Q. Is it a concern that the staff to pupil ratio is 12:1? There is a lack of evidence that SEND children do better when receiving more Teaching Assistant time?</i> A. The Head responded that she believed the school had an appropriate number of staff. It was noted that the definition of similar schools might not encompass the high level of SEND need at Elm Grove. It was also agreed that this would be more of a concern if the school was in or approaching deficit.</p>

	<p>Governors noted that the school's employment of part-time teachers had been commended in the Pay Committee demonstrating the school's support of flexible working and therefore high staff numbers should be evaluated with this in mind. The staff:pupil ratio on the SFVS dashboard does not take part time workers into account.</p> <p>Governors <b>approved</b> the SFVS for submission to the local authority.</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Communications</b>  <b>- Parent Consultation Group</b></p> <p>Governors discussed the fact that the group's membership had a very positive outlook on the school and whether it would be valuable to try to broaden membership or engage with more 'critical', and a wider diversity of, parents. The parent survey obtained a wider range of feedback but was anonymous and so could not develop into engagement. The Link governor explained that the group was useful in providing ideas about new ways of working.</p> <p>The importance of stakeholder engagement in the new Governor Handbook and Ofsted framework was emphasised and the group was valuable as a way of establishing this.</p> <p><b>- Upcoming PTA events</b>  These had been listed in Head's report. The Head noted that the PTA was focusing on working with the younger year groups to support continuity.</p> <p><i>Emma Sutton left the meeting at 7.30</i></p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p><b>Complaints policy</b>  This was a new model provided by the Local Authority and would be reviewed by Head and Diana Boyd, adapted to Elm Grove house style and come to the next meeting for approval.</p> <p><b>SEND Information report</b>  Carla Kemp was working on this report which had been delayed by resignation of the SENCO. It was noted that this was a retrospective report and would cover the academic year 2018-19.</p> <p><b>SEND policy</b>  This was <b>approved</b> without amendment. It was agreed that it would be reviewed in September and then annually following new DofE guidelines.</p> <p><b>Governor Code of Conduct</b>  This had been further amended to include variations in the new NGA model. Governors discussed the new responsibility to engage with stakeholders and how far this role went. It was <b>agreed</b> to amend the Governor Visit report to include consideration of 'pupil voice' and to try to build this into future governor monitoring. <b>Action</b>  Amendments were <b>agreed</b> and the code approved.</p> <p><b>Pay Policy</b>  The board <b>approved</b> the 2019-20 Pay Policy.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Upcoming opportunities for governor visits</b>  <b>- Governor week and other visits</b></p> <p>Phil Kelly would send a timetable with various areas that governors could opt to cover: areas that had been discussed were teacher wellbeing, pupil feedback, a celebration</p>

	assembly/lunch/together time by the start of February half-term. <b>Action</b>  The Head would try to schedule the Learning Walk/Session with Simon Chandler during the week for all governors to attend.
<b>11</b>	<b>AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following concern about the classroom temperatures during a summer visit, Sue Margolis had met with Katie Bennett the Health &amp; Safety Competence and Transformation Manager at the council. Sue had then arranged a school visit by the councillor John Allcock, Chair of the Children, Young People and Skills Committee at which the Head was present. The councillor had asked Sue to send a proposal regarding citywide measurement of classroom temperatures with the intention of sparking national debate. Governors agreed this was an important issue affecting learning outcomes for children.</li> <li>The Head invited governors to the next OPAL meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> January.</li> <li>The Head reported on a recent Partnership meeting which had defined priorities for the schools in the partnership as a group (circulated). No new projects were planned.</li> </ul>
<b>12</b>	<b>Next meeting: 4<sup>th</sup> March</b>

Chair's signature: .....

<b>ACTION LOG</b>				
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1.	14.01.20	Head confirm staff governor or if there was other interest hold election for a new staff governor	LW	Asap
2.	14.01.20	Item on the Premises 3 year Priorities plan to be added to agenda of December TLS committee	AJ	Feb
3.	14.01.20	BHCC complaints policy to be brought to next FGB for approval.	LW/DB (AJ)	Feb
4.	14.01.20	Laura Haynes-Copp and Natalie Dodds would present an item on equalities at the next meeting.	LHC/N D	04.03.20
5.	14.01.20	Session with Simon Chandler to be arranged in governors week (if possible)	LW	Asap
6.	14.01.20	Declaration form on Keeping Children Safe be brought to every committee until completed by all governors	AJ	Ongoing
7.	14.01.20	LW to check past impact of attendance cup on PP children	LW	24.02.20
8.	14.01.20	Governors to consider attending PTA events coming up, also Pupil Premium or SEND reviews via LW	All	Ongoing
9.	14.01.20	Letter of thanks to PTA re fundraising	DB	Asap
10.	14.01.20	Head to check/encourage on ongoing use of iPads in class	LW	24.02.20
11.	14.01.20	Governor Visit report to include consideration of 'pupil voice'	AJ	24.02.20
12.	14.01.20	Governors week timetable to be sent by 14.02.20	PK	14.02.20