



ST JAMES' R.C. ACADEMY TRUST

Maybury Close, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1BL

Faith in Action, Working Together, Walking in the Footsteps of Christ

Minutes of the 114th meeting of the Governing Body which took place on Thursday 26th March 2015 at the school starting at 1700.

Present:

Mary Hutchinson (Chair of Governors)	Kevin Moon
Anna Boshier (Head Teacher)	David McCabe
Bruno Cotta	Father Tom Cooper
Austin Barradell	Elizabeth Woodhoo (co-opted)
Robert Jasper	Lisa Weeks (Deputy Head Teacher)
Jo Gibson	

In Attendance: Dominique Wells (Clerk to the Governors)

Papers relating to the meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

1. Opening Prayers

The opening prayers were led by Father Tom Cooper.

2. Apologies for Absence

Peter Gudge and Toni Paris sent their apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest in items in this Agenda.

None.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting, held in November 2014, were reviewed page by page.

4.1. Confirmation of Accuracy.

The minutes were deemed to be an accurate record.

Minutes agreed by all.

4.2. Matters Arising. None.

5. Governors' Visits/Subject Ambassadors

The scope of this item was to note the new guidelines for Governors with subject responsibility, which had been issued by the Chair of Governors following the meeting in December 2014 to discuss Governor Roles and Responsibilities. Such Governors would be renamed 'Subject Ambassadors'.

It was stated that the aim of the guidelines was to make it as easy as possible for Governors to meet and keep in touch with their subject teachers. All agreed that these guidelines would be trialled for one year, with a review in Summer 2016. If such meetings proved difficult, Governors were asked to contact the Head Teacher who would arrange an alternative suitable time.

One Governor requested to be reminded of when subjects would be covered at staff meetings. **Action: AB.**

6. Head Teacher's Report

The format of the report, based around David Gosling's suggested feeding questions, was discussed and considered more systematic. However, caution was drawn against relying on these questions too much and it was stated that Governors should still be sure to generate their own questions.

On a similar subject with regard to minutes of Governor Meetings, it was noted that the statement of Questions and Answers within the minutes was a good development, and that a Decision Log should now be developed. **Action: DW.**

The Chair reported that she had acquired a Governor Year Planner template which would be tailored to the School and circulated in due course.

The Head Teacher led the Governors through the report, which had been previously been emailed to all prior to the meeting:

- **Attendance**

The Head Teacher reported that four persistent absentees had been highlighted by the EWO - two of these needed regular visits to the hospital and two had been ill on and off. In the case of the former two, the Head Teacher confirmed that plans have been worked out with their families.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: What happens if children are ill but come into school when they should clearly be at home?

A: This has been known to happen. There is a 48-hour rule for sickness bugs and the school will ring the parents if the child returns to school too soon.

- **Achievement**

This was considered outstanding during the review by David Gosling.

Questions asked by the Chair:

Q: Are all Year 6 children on track to meet their targets in the forthcoming SATS?

A: (Deputy HT) Yes, all Year 6 children are on track to meet their targets, which are aspirational. Although these children are considered lower attainment, they will be well above the national standard, having achieved more than two levels of progress and in some cases three levels. Of the 8 children receiving extra support, all of these are expected to achieve level 4. Some of the class are being challenged with level 6 as 'enrichment' with 2 being close to achieving this.

Year 5 – The Head Teacher noted that the tracking data shown in the report was Spring Term data, and that it has continued to improve. Where this particular group of children who have been identified as having low prior attainment in the ROL, the tracking data also demonstrates proof of progress.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: What measures are in place to help targeted children?

A: - Regular interventions – additional prior learning

- Maths Fun Club – for Years 4 & 5

- Paid one-to-one tuition for two children in Year 4 – funded by the Pupil Premium.

As Year 4 approach Years 5 & 6, a plan for targeting would be discussed.

Q: Are more resources needed?

A: No, the staff have often been in more challenging settings and feel well-equipped to deal with these situations.

The Head Teacher distributed RAISE Online transitional matrices and explained to the Governors how to read them. She reported that 100% of Year 2 had passed the phonics screening, with one child passing second time. This child's progress has since improved.

In terms of Value Added, the progress was reported to be significantly above the national average, with the School being in the top 8% of schools overall.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: Is progress in terms of Value Added likely to be maintained in the forthcoming year?

A: (HT) Yes, it is.

• **Quality of Teaching**

- It was reported that, through paired observations with the Head Teacher, David Gosling had confirmed 100% of teaching staff were Good or Outstanding. The assessment process looked at all aspects (including data, books, environment) while putting these into context and progress over time.

- The need to ensure that there continues to be focussed marking was emphasised, with not only the teachers giving focussed marking but the children providing feedback on this marking.

- Mrs Weeks and Mrs Richards were reported to be moderating at other schools, for which special training had been given. This is positive for the School as it is promoting partnerships and supports other schools.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: What notice is given to moderators and how does it impact the School?

A: The moderators have to do four visits in the space of three weeks in the summer term. Dates can be chosen so that the impact is not significant, and the School is paid for the supply teachers covering.

- Development and training of staff was noted as key for morale, sense of fulfilment as well as bringing more skills into the School.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: Are there common areas of weakness across schools?

A: Middle Leaders are often lacking, and this inhibits the Senior Leaders. To this end, one teacher at the School is currently embarking on the NPQML for Middle Leadership.

- Staffing was reported to be good in all areas and the School was considered to have currently a strong team.

• **Behaviour and Safety**

This area includes attitudes to learning and expectations. David Gosling had noted that the School has good high expectations of the children. In particular, the choir were praised for standing out with their exemplary behaviour at the recent Fairfield Halls concert and other visits led by the school.

David Gosling was reported to be appreciative of all the School is doing with regard to British Values and had requested a termly report on activities which promoted British Values (eg. assemblies). The Chair requested that an audit to this effect be a termly item in the Head Teacher's Report. **Action: AB.**

The Safeguarding Training for Governors was well-attended.

One Governor expressed concern over whether situation where parents were parking in neighbouring car parks had been resolved. He emphasised that it was important how the community views the School, as the School may need the community to support it in the future. It was suggested that the registration numbers of persistent offenders should be noted and identified as such as a deterrent.

• **Other items**

- RE – A Muslim girl, and faith leaders have been welcomed to the School to give talks to the children.
- Partnerships with other schools are being promoted via the Umbrella Trust (the schools under which attended one of St James' inset days with positive feedback), and the Catholic Teachers' Alliance.
- The bid for buildings and maintenance was reported to be unsuccessful, but the Head Teacher assured Governors that a 'Plan B' was in place and a committee would be elected to discuss this.
- The handwriting scheme was reported to be making a difference. The Power of Reading is in place to help improve writing. Mathematics was working well, and access to this did not seem to be a problem for children. The Philosophy for Children is encouraging creative thinking, development of questions and discussion of right and wrong.
- In PE, Mrs Connolly was praised for her work in this area. There are now dance sessions, children involved in cross country were improving and the netball teams competing with other schools. The request for parent

volunteers to offer sports skills had a huge response. Some concern was expressed over how to track children who were not taking part in activities. It was suggested that a children survey could be beneficial in this respect.

- The website would be redesigned by a new web designer who would build the website and then see how it could be moved. The suggested timescale was for the website to be in place by September. A Twitter account is also in the process of being set up.

Questions asked by Governors:

Q: Have levels of service been discussed with the web designer?

A: Yes. He is based in Beckenham, so support should be easier.

- Concerns expressed by parents in the parent questionnaire were being addressed. It was suggested that an ongoing link to ParentView could be put on the website for parents to give positive responses while negative views should be addressed to the School. The Head Teacher said she would mention this in the next Newsletter. There was a request for Governors to be included on the Newsletter mailing list. **Action: AB.**

The Chair thanked the Head Teacher for her thorough report.

Jo Gibson left the meeting at 1840.

7. Budget Monitoring Report

It was reported that the School had, in the week prior to this meeting, been subjected to a robust audit from Baxters, which was very thorough and took three days instead of the previous two. The School would have a good report and was reported to be in a strong financial position. Thanks were given to the Finance Officer and Head Teacher for their hard work in this regard. Particular praise was given to the Finance Officer for her hard work in preparing for and dealing with the audit.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Resources and Audit Committee/8.2 Children & Learning Committee

The draft minutes of the recent meetings of these committees were presented and any queries to be emailed to the Chairs of the respective committees directly.

The Terms of Reference for both committees were ratified.

8.3 Chair's Report

The Chair reported that she had visited Years 4 & 5 and found them to be very well-managed. The Chair together with the Head Teacher had undertaken a work scrutiny of Maths and Literacy books. Progression in both subject areas was evident. Work was well marked with evidence of children responding to teachers' comments. The Chair hoped to look at writing in books other than literacy books in the near future.

9. Reports from Governors' Visits

One Governor reported on his attendance at the recent Improving Governance Course led by Ofsted and held at the EDC, at which over 100 Governors were present. He drew attention to the last page of the presentation where it was emphasised that

schools should be able to demonstrate the link between leadership/management and the impact of decisions on pupils. He reported it to have been an excellent session by two knowledgeable inspectors.

10. Safeguarding Update

The recent e-Safety talk given by Mrs Woodhoo was praised for having been excellent.

Questions asked by the Chair:

Q: How many Children Looked After are on the roll, and how many CAFs have been completed this term?

A: (HT) There are two Children Looked After on the roll, and no CAFs have been completed.

A Governor gave details of a link which would facilitate easier access to the Secure Access Society.

11. Website Update

Discussed under Item 6 'Other Items' above.

12. Umbrella Trust Update

The Chair, Head Teacher and Toni Paris reported that they had attended the first meeting at which David Gosling had given a presentation about what makes an outstanding school, and talked about 'stringent governance'. He was considered to have credibility. The meeting was considered valuable but in need of 'tidying up'.

It was agreed that David Gosling should visit the School in the Autumn Term to talk to Governors specifically, and separately from his visit.

13. Succession Planning

It was discussed that any Governor wishing to give up their Terms of Office should give sufficient notice so that shadowing by a successive Governor could take place one year prior. Stability was agreed to be important for a Governing Body.

It was also discussed that in replacing Governors, the question should be asked of what skills people can bring to the School, and therefore professions rather than people should be targeted.

One Governor offered to send a link on Succession Planning to the other Governors.

Action: DMcC

14. Any Other Business

One Governor referred to the document from David Gosling entitled 'Holding the School to Account'. He wished to know how the school was going to proceed with this document and use it in the light of David Gosling's visit to the school.

The Chair confirmed that it was a very useful document with challenging questions to ask at meetings and said that she was working on it. Her plan was to divide it up into termly sections which could be incorporated into the Governing Body's proposed

Governor Year Planner. She suggested also that it would be more manageable if the sections were further divided up for discussion by the Children & Learning Committee, Resources & Audit Committee and the Full Governing Body as appropriate. This would also be reflected in the Governor Year Planner.

15. Date of next meetings

Resources & Audit Committee	5 May 2015, 4.30pm
Children & Learning Committee	19 May 2015, 4.30pm
Governor Morning	9 June 2015, 9.15am
Full Governing Body	18 June 2015, 5.00pm

15. The Closing Prayer was led by Father Tom Cooper.

The meeting closed at 1905.