

**Minutes of the meeting held at school,
on Monday 18 December 2023 at 7.00pm**

Acting Head Teacher (1) Helen Graff (HG)	Community Governors (8) +Paul Dossett (PD) Steve Miller (Chair) (SM) Brian Lerner (BL)	Co-opted Governors (3) Simone G Newton (SN)
Staff Governor (1) Vacant		Others +Deniz Ozturk (SBM) (DO) Mark Jackson (Azets) (MJ)
Parent Governors (2) Amelia Lasserson (AL) Celia Newman (CN)		Clerk Chris Lambert (HEP) (CL)
+denotes absence		

Part 1 – Public matters

0. Trustees thanked the Chair for his insightful Dvar Torah which was appreciated.
1. **Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations**
 - 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, which was quorate.
 - 1.2 Apologies for absence had been received and accepted from PD and DO
 - 1.3 It was noted that CL was standing in on this occasion for the substantive clerk.
2. **Declarations of Interest, Pecuniary or otherwise in respect of items on the Agenda**
 - 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest made.
3. **Minutes of the Meeting of 27 September 2023**

The Minutes were accepted as being an accurate record of the meeting and were **Approved**; to be signed online by the Chair.

 - 3.1 **Matters Arising from the Meeting of 27 September 2023**
 - (7.3) Monthly management accounts are now produced and circulated to Trustees.
 - (7.4) HG wrote to parents re parental donations. It was noted that the school was now benefiting from parental Quality Contributions.
 - (7.5) AFS Committee received the Auditors Report at its meeting on 22 November.
 - (8.1) HG reported that following senior level discussions with the catering company (Caterplus) there had been a significant improvement in the catering service. Governors were pleased to note the improvement and recognised the efforts being made to provide the children with the best possible daily meal service.
 - (9.1) HG reported on her discussions with Turn It On (IT provider). Some progress has been made on issues of IT security but more discussions still required to satisfy the school on its resilience against issues including cyberattacks and ransomware.
Action: DO to report to the Board on IT security at the March 2024 Board meeting.
 - (10.3) Trustees had confirmed their acceptance of the key 2023 governance documents on Governorhub.
Action: SM and CN to discuss the SEND Link role.

4. **Chair's Items**

- 4.1 SM updated the Board on the ongoing discussions with ESFA.
- 4.2 SM reported on the performance of HG as acting HT, noting:
- a) the Board was delighted with the performance of HG in the role, to date
 - b) the school morale was high with good satisfactions levels reported by pupils, staff, and parents
 - c) HG will now remain as acting HT for the full academic year to July 2024
 - d) The Board had agreed by email that the Appraisal Committee will review HG's performance during the balance of this academic year. If HG's performance remains at the current high levels of achievement HG will be confirmed in post as the substantive HT at the Board meeting in July 2024.
- 4.3 HG thanked the Board for their confidence in her and reported on how much she was enjoying the role. She thanked the Board and the pupils, staff and parents for their support in helping her to settle into the role as Headteacher.
- 4.4 The Board agreed that parents should be informed before Term end of the outcome of the Pikuach review (being held on 18/19 December), the outcome of the financial audit for 2022/23 and the latest development regarding the Headteacher's role.
- Action: SM and AL to finalise the Parents Newsletter to be circulated before Term end.**

5. **Annual Report and Accounts**

- 5.1 The Trustees received a verbal report from Mark Jackson (Azets) on the Annual Report and Accounts for 2022/23. MJ reported that the school's financial position had improved on the previous year and the financial outcome for y/e 31 August 2023 was satisfactory. There was clear evidence of an improvement in the school's financial management process. The Auditor was able to issue an Unqualified Report and confirmed the school as a Going Concern.
- 5.2 Trustees noted that the actual Reserves of £227k (13% of Expenditure) was mid-range between the two levels set by ESFA of 5% - 20%, and exceeded the school policy of having Reserves of 4 weeks of Expenditure as agreed by the Board.
- Action: Reserves Policy to be reviewed by AFS Committee**
- 5.3 MJ gave a detailed review of the Annual Report highlighting the activities and achievements of the school. The Board were pleased to receive and note the Report and suggested that a fresh approach to the format of the Report might be considered for this year's Report.
- 5.4 The Board noted the financial outcome for the year with a small surplus of £50k (deficit of £134k in 21/22) resulting in a positive movement in year of £180k. It was noted that additional income from ESFA, lettings, wrap around provision, grants, and insurance claims had boosted Income. Expenditure was reduced by £165k including £80k of reduced staff costs.
- 5.5 On the Balance Sheet the Current Assets were £227k with Creditors of £370k including a yet unclaimed sum due to LBH for staff salaries. The Bank balance was a healthy £500k.
- 5.6 It was noted that the monthly management accounts were providing more regular financial information although the issue of managing accruals remained problematic as this was preventing an accurate report on the school's financial position at each month end.
- 5.7 MJ reported on the various points detailed in the Audit Report and the Board was pleased to note that DO had already set out the school's response and action plan.
- 5.8 Having received the Auditor's report the Board **Approved** the Annual Report and Accounts for y/e 31 August 2023.

MJ left the meeting at 20.05

6. Committee Reports

- 6.1 AFS Committee: SM reported that the Committee had received the November management accounts. The school was broadly on track with its annual budget although some uncertainty remains as to the year-end outcome. It was noted that the Agency staff costs were higher than budget. HG explained the reason for the use of agency staff in the current context with permanent staff being difficult to recruit to some roles. Trustees raised a concern at the presentation of the monthly financial reports and asked that they be simplified to improve the transparency of the school's financial situation.
- 6.2 For the benefit of the Board SM will set up a new folder on Governorhub containing the monthly accounts.
Action: SM to set up a new folder on Governorhub containing the monthly accounts
- 6.3 Achievement Committee: AL reported that some Trustees had still to sign to confirm acceptance of the SEND Policy. The Sports Premium statement was now on the website.

7. Headteacher's Report

- 7.1 The Board was pleased to receive the HT's written report which was commended for its clarity, breadth of information and concision. Trustees raised a series of questions on issues detailed in the reports and were satisfied by the answers. It was noted that the feedback from the recent Parent survey had been very positive.
Action: Parent Survey to be an agenda item for the next meeting of the Achievement Committee. HG to circulate the review of the survey to the Board in January 2024 and report to the next Board meeting in March.
- 7.2 The Board reviewed the SDP 2023-24.
- a) It was noted that delivery of Outdoor Education would be enhanced using a programme - "Alfresco learning" – which followed the national curriculum with topics set in an outdoor woods-based setting.
 - b) The Board acknowledged the generosity of the former Headteacher and her partner in providing a sizeable donation towards staff CPD.
 - c) HG described the focus on staff training on issues of social, emotional, and mental health. It was expected that some of the training would be extended to parents, via webinars.
 - d) The Board noted the various developments being introduced to support raising awareness of issues of spirituality and culture.
 - e) HG described the range of trips and external events undertaken by pupils including visits to St Pauls and to Chester Cathedrals. The visit to the school of a diverse range of spiritual leaders was being planned.
- 7.3 PIKUACH: HG reported that the inspection was underway and would be completed on 19 December. By the end of the inspection the school would receive a report highlighting strengths and areas for further development. A report to the March Board meeting.

8. Policies

- 8.1 None presented for review.

9. Governance

- 9.1 GDPR: there had been no breaches of governance since the previous meeting.
- 9.2 The annual review of the Risk Register would be made in January 2024 by Trustees BL and PD with the Headteacher. On completion the updated Register would be presented to the Board in March 2024 for discussion and approval.

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 All staff will have completed PREVENT training by 31 December 2023
- 10.2 The Safeguarding Policy had been updated and posted to the website.
- 10.3 An independent assessor had undertaken an audit of the safeguarding processes. Actions identified in the review had been actioned.

- 10.4 There was no further business under Pt 1 of the agenda and the meeting closed at 21.00

11. Date of Next meeting

The next meetings of the FGB will at 7pm in school on Monday 4 March 2024;

and then on: Wednesday 15 May 2024 and Monday 8 July 2024

There were matters to be considered under Part 2 – Confidential matters.

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Signed:
Steve Miller,
Chair of Governors

Date: 18.12. 2023

Actions - from the meeting of 18 December 2023

- 3.1 (9.1) DO to report to the Board on IT security at the March 2024 Board meeting.
- (10.3) SM and CN to discuss the SEND Link role.

- 4.4 SM and AL to finalise the Parents Newsletter to be circulated before Term end.

- 5.2 Reserves Policy to be reviewed by AFS Committee

- 6.2 SM to set up a new folder on Governorhub containing the monthly accounts

- 7.1 Parent Survey to be an agenda item for the next meeting of the Achievement Committee. HG to circulate the review of the survey to the Board in January 2024 and report to the next Board meeting in March

Agenda items for the March 2024 FGB

Parent Survey
PIKUACH Inspection – outcome
Risk Register