



St Mary's Church of England School, Truro

Full Governing Board

Thursday 16th November 2023

Minutes (Autumn Term 2)

GOVERNORS PRESENT	
NAME	ROLE
Mr Nigel Machin	Chair
Mrs Nicola Bray	Headteacher
Mr Bill Robinson	Governor
Mrs Mary Ann Trethewey	Governor
Mrs Louise Stevenson	Governor
Mr Simon Treganowan	Governor
Reverend Andy Boorne	Governor

OTHER ATTENDEES PRESENT	
NAME	ROLE
Mrs Laura Calcraft	Clerk
Mrs A Spencer	English as an additional language lead

APOLOGIES	
NAME	ROLE

COLOUR CODE	
BLUE	Governor Challenge Question
GREEN	Governor Comment
RED	Action

ACTION WORKSHEET				
NO	AGENDA ITEM DESCRIPTOR	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	STATUS
Autumn Term 2	Governor Visits	Circulate visit dates	Mrs Bray	Pending
Autumn Term 2	14. Governor Impact Document	Add Staff Wellbeing actions and attendance decisions to be added to document	Mrs Stevenson	Pending
Autumn Term 2	10. Safeguarding	Governors to complete the KCSIE quiz if they have not already done so.	All Governors	Pending
Autumn Term 2	6. Attendance	Governors voted unanimously to proceed with speaking to Cornwall Council about fining with a view to introduce fining for absences	Mrs Bray	Pending
Autumn Term 2	4. Curriculum and Policies	Safe Recruitment policy to be circulated	Mrs Calcraft	Pending
Autumn Term 2	3. Matters Arising	Share validated SATs data	Mrs Bray	Pending
Autumn Term 1	10. Section 175	Add action points as standing item to the agenda	Mrs Calcraft	Complete
Autumn Term 1	13. Governor Visits	Circulate dates	Mrs Bray	Complete
Autumn Term 1	17. Staff Wellbeing	The offer to have a flu immunisation paid for will be added to staff briefings.	Mrs Stevenson	Pending
Summer Term 2	5. Academisation	To investigate putting a covenant on the land	Mrs Bray	Pending

Summer Term 2	5. Academisation	Governors to visit existing Rainbow MAT schools	All Governors	Pending
Spring Term 1	5. Governor Training	Research into governor training on school exclusions	Mrs Bray	Pending
Autumn Term 2	9. Attendance	Calculate data trend of holidays versus non-holidays	Mrs Stevenson	Complete
Spring Term 1	10. Staff Wellbeing	Governors to see questions prior to staff survey being circulated	Mrs Stevenson	Complete

Part 1

1) Apologies: None

2) Interests in matters to be considered at the meeting

No additional interests were declared at the meeting.

3) Minutes of the last meeting

I) Matters Arising: A Governor asked if anything had come back from the SATs paper remarks? Mrs Bray said that the validated data will be out at the end of the month, and she will update the group once it has been received.

A Governor asked if any visits to Rainbow school had been arranged? Mrs Bray said she had not done so yet, but that she had a meeting with Sam Jones on Monday and would arrange some visits then.

A Governor asked if many staff had taken up the offer of reimbursement for flu vaccinations? Mrs Stevenson said that there had not been a high uptake, however quite a few staff were eligible for vaccinations via the NHS. She will reiterate the offer at staff briefing.

II) Approval: The previous minutes were unanimously agreed and ratified.

4) Committee and Working Groups:

I) Finance and Personnel/Premises: Mr Treganowan updated the group from the previous committee meeting. A mid-year review highlighted where we are heading with short and medium term expenditure. There are considerable arrears owed to the school which are being chased. This makes

the picture look bleaker and it is hoped that things will improve in the spring. Both the barrier repairs and the installation of a pod building are moving forward, albeit slower than hoped. A requirements list was shared looking at supporting special educational needs across the school. The committee agreed an overspend of the agreed deficit which can be well managed with reserves.

II) Curriculum and Policies: Safer Recruitment policy to be circulated.

5) EAL: Mrs Spencer joined the meeting to talk to the governors about how the school is supporting children with English as an additional language. She highlighted that it is an important area of focus as sometimes the struggles with language can be accompanied by trauma, feeling unsettled, feeling frustrated and poor concentration. Currently the school has 14 children whose first language is not English. This number is especially high in our Early Years class. There is also a variety of languages.

Mrs Spencer informed the group that current strategies are:

- Learning through play and supporting talk
- 1:1 phonics intervention and assessments
- Bilingual storybooks through mantra lingua
- Widget app
- Attachment-led practice and quality first teaching

The school requested help from Andrew Beasley at Cornwall Council to train teachers to improve how they communicate with children whose first language is not English. He is looking to create a network for education staff as this is not currently in existence. He conducted a learning walk of the school and helped suggest strategies. He suggested trans-language learning. He said that things we could develop were:

- Use of primary fund scheme in future (no pot currently available)
- Create multi-lingual welcome packs
- Put up inclusive posters around school
- Utilise resources and assessments from Bell Foundation
- Hold festival of diversities

[A Governor asked if they publish mantra-lingua books in all languages?](#) Not currently, but we are investigating resources. [A Governor asked if each book contains both languages?](#) Yes, and they also have great online support. [A Governor asked what type of stories are included?](#) Mostly traditional tales. [A Governor asked if parents can use Google translate instead?](#) Yes, but this is a nicer way of sharing a story as it is in both their home language and English. The children are really excited to get the books. [A Governor asked if the children pick up English quite quickly?](#) Certainly some of our older children have, but it is very child specific. [A Governor asked how the children mix with other children?](#) They have all settled really well and our children are very inclusive.

Mrs Spencer ended the talk by saying how important it is that families can understand information we are sending out and we have done this with the attendance letters we have sent out. We are ultimately here to support the families.

The Governors thanked Mrs Spencer for her informative talk and the work she has done.

6) Attendance Talk: The Education Welfare Officer met with Mrs Stevenson and Mrs Bray. The school is currently slightly above the national average across the school for absence. On investigation there are specific groups that are showing low attendance as a result of an unauthorised holiday followed by sickness, and this is more apparent in our lower performing groups. The Governors discussed moving towards fining. More schools are choosing this option. One of the big factors is that many PPM children have additional needs and they are missing quality first teaching affecting their long-term outcomes. We do have good relationships and communication with parents, but if anything the absences have increased. When inspected, we will be asked 'have you put everything in place?' and we need to be able to say we have. Regulations around when you fine differs geographically.

A Governor asked if Rainbow have a trust-wide view? Schools can make their own decision.

A Governor asked if Cornwall Council will still control the fining? Yes.

A Governor asked how bad the picture is? To be classed as a persistent absentee, a pupil will miss ten days of school. Do we have many pupils that meet this? Yes. Pre-covid our persistent absence sat at around 4%, but last year it was 21%.

A Governor said that we have to look through two lenses; there is a cost of living crisis, there is trauma from Covid and parents value quality time with their children however as educators we can't sit in front of an inspection team and not take action.

A Governor asked if illness has an impact? Yes. Every situation is assessed on an individual basis. However, a family could take a child out of school on a holiday for just four days and then the child could have chicken pox or a bad case of tonsillitis and this will massively affect their attendance.

A Governor asked if parents and carers know what persistent absence is? Yes, the school sends out rigorous communication and tries to alleviate concerns and offer support.

A Governor asked if we introduce fines, are we to give warning? Yes, there is a specific communication process that the school will need to follow and this will introduce a start date. This will likely see a spike of people putting in requests for holidays prior to fining starting.

A Governor asked if there are any other options prior to fining? The school have tried everything else, using text message, letters and Education Welfare Officer involvement.

A Governor asked if there are any exceptions? There is already guidance in what headteachers can allow and we always look at this.

A Governor asked what the motive is for introducing fines? Outcomes for children. It damages their life chances.

A Governor said that some schools have a reward system, is this something that we would do? No, research shows this has a negative impact and penalises children that genuinely can't access school.

After much discussion, the governors voted unanimously to proceed with speaking to Cornwall Council about fining with a view to introduce fining for absences. Timeframes to be confirmed.

7) Headteacher's Report: The report was circulated prior to the meeting. The following questions were asked:

- **What were the reasons for the exclusions?** This academic year there has been one fixed term exclusion for one day due to violence towards a member of staff. There have been 5 fixed term exclusions in the last three years involving four pupils. The school does not suspend pupils lightly and support packages are put in place. A reintegration meeting is always held and support is always put in place to minimise the likelihood of it happening again. We want to avoid children missing education. The school's behaviour and attendance message have to go together. **A Governor asked if fixed term exclusions work?** Yes, in several ways. It gives us time to put things in place. The message has to be clear that violence is not ok and there is a consequence to that behaviour.
- **How did Terrifying Tales go?** It went really well. We had to be really careful with wording due to the time of year and closeness to Halloween. The Diocese Director of Education gave guidance. The time of year lends itself to the thriller genre because of the nights drawing in. The school will then celebrate World Book Day in spring and an adventure theme in the summer. Terrifying Tales was linked to All Saint's Day. There was a real buzz around the school. Lots of children fed back that they really enjoyed it and it really encouraged their love of reading. Each class had a class book that represented the genre in an age-appropriate way. Year R read Room on a Broom, Year 1 read Funny Bones and Year 2 read a pumpkin mystery. The junior classes shared a suspense story that was rotated through each classroom.
- **Did SLT observations raise any behaviour concerns?** There have been some low level behaviour issues that we have been working through. This has led to ensuring classroom engagement, ensuring manners at family dining and ensuring lining up and walking to class nicely.
- **Has a replacement been found for Mrs Marples?** There was an interview today, although we only had one applicant. There were queries over pay as the applicant was paid more in the private sector. There may be other issues that may delay the start. We will be holding further discussions and putting a plan in place.
- **Has there been integration with Rainbow staff?** Yes, Sam Jones is visiting again on Monday and staff have been doing training together.
- **What are the next steps on academisation path and is it running smoothly?** Rainbow are instructing Browne Jacobson solicitors to liaise with the Cornwall Council legal department. We have some steps to work through. It all seems to be going smoothly and on time.
- **A Governor asked for reassurance on sustaining links with Kenwyn Church once the school have joined Rainbow MAT.** Rainbow is a predominantly church MAT and will be openly encouraging the relationship. Askel Veur approval was a key part of the decision making process.
- **Was the new Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre visit a success?** Very much so. The Year 5 class visited as part of their residential and really enjoyed it.
- **Do our children react well to online assessments?** Yes, many of them start from Year 3. Other assessments are conducted with teachers for example the Year R Phonics Test.

8) Section 175 Action Point: Audit of actions circulated. We have submitted an application for a grant for mental health lead training, as the previous mental health lead moved to another school. Document with next actions circulated.

9) Health and Safety: The car park barrier being non-operational has been a concern. Having chased up with Mitie, we now have a date that it is going to be replaced.

10) Safeguarding: Following on from Level 2 Safeguarding training in September, there are two further videos for staff and governors to watch on Loom. Kim Rundle completed Level 3 training yesterday therefore she is now an administrative DSL. Laura Calcraft will be completing Level 3 training in December to help with My Concern record keeping workload. The school website will be updated with this information. **Governors to complete the KCSIE quiz if they have not already done so.**

11) Staff Wellbeing: Mrs Stevenson has been conducting a lot of reading and research on this topic. She has developed a staff survey from the University of Warwick led by the Anna Freud charity. It gives you a clear, anonymous survey to complete that you can compare to a national average. **A Governor asked if there was a way of determining which responses were support staff and which were teaching staff?** No, it is not education restricted and can be used in any workplace. Responses can change on any given day and therefore it should be conducted regularly. Nationally, men have a slightly higher wellbeing score than women. Mrs Stevenson went through research on teaching staff. She then discussed how the results are interpreted and the meaning behind the questions. This analysis will feed into a policy and how we move forward. There are lots of actionable things that we can do.

12) Multi-Academy Trust Update: Discussed at an earlier point in this meeting.

13) Governor Training: Mr Machin and Reverend Boorne attended the recent Governor Conference. It was a good networking opportunity and there was lots of discussion, especially on SEND. Reverend Boorne has also completed his Governor Induction training. Mrs Trethewey took part in a Younger Leaders course.

14) Governor Impact Document: **Staff wellbeing actions and attendance decisions to be added to the document.**

15) Governor Visits: The Governors wanted it noted that the recent reading visit was fantastic, and they were really pleased to see what the children have been learning. They were impressed with Miss Vowles' (Literacy Lead) presentation.

Mr Robinson attended a School Council meeting and thought that the children were very enthusiastic. He will continue to visit these meetings as it is a good way of triangulating.

Mrs Trethewey attended a meeting with Mrs Bray to look at alleged bullying incidents. A Governor asked if the incidents were usually raised by children or parents. Mrs Bray reported that it was usually parents. They looked at examples of the process which are recorded in chronological order. Sometimes parents want to go straight to the headteacher, but it is important to follow the escalation process so that all stages are followed. There were six incidents recorded before half-term which have all been resolved. There have been no incidents so far this term.

Governor visits to be arranged are to see Power Maths in action, to observe a Jigsaw PSHE lesson and to complete a further SIAMs inspection question. Mrs Bray to circulate the dates on Monday.

The meeting was brought to a close by the Governors being invited to attend the Church Service and the nativity.

Part 2 Confidential Matters: Nil.

