

**Minutes of the Meeting of
St Matthew's Primary School Local Governing Body (FGB)
at 6.00pm at St Matthew's on Wednesday 6th March 2024**

Present: Christina Bates, Debora Lucarelli (Co-Chair), Riccardo, Simon, Katie, Chris, Andrew, Aditi, John, Elizabeth Steel

Online: Sonia Ingersent, Kate Spencer-Allen

Apologies: Linda, Neil, Rosa, Ananay

Attending: Sarah Barratt (Head of SEND), Anthony Davies (Headteacher, HT), Daisy Lawrence (Clerk)

[Names and titles to be amended anon]

Actions:

[To be copy pasted]

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 6pm and all participants were welcomed. Apologies were received and accepted from L N R and A.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no new specific declarations of interest.

3. FGB Administrative Matters

The new clerk was welcomed to the role.

4. Pupil Premium (PP) Strategy Statement

The Head of SEND presented a written report to the FGB.

Comments and Challenges:

There are a lot of statistics; is there any local or national bench-marking? When making comparisons across years how does it work and what is used to capture and compare the data especially as various children may leave or join the school? Has the school seen noticeable differences since pre-pandemic? With the rag-rated colour coding it is great to see so many areas with such good progress. What are the biggest challenges since the pandemic? Is the value of parental support under-estimated? When will there be a review of the PP Strategy?

There are issues with bench-marking between schools as some are working with such small numbers eg 6/7 and others 17/18. This makes it very difficult to make meaningful comparisons but the school has done well in recent years in this area. The Sonar system is used to show progress made from year to year. No system is 100% right but it does a good job in highlighting the areas that need to be investigated and worked on further. The school can gain PP children on a daily basis although there is always a lag between the arrival and when they can be added officially to the PP register or, for

children with significant special educational needs, gain an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The school is able to monitor the general progress of each cohort going through the school. Early years and Year 1 are a particular challenge although KS1 has improved since last year.

The pandemic has had a huge effect and staff are experiencing more children with vulnerabilities and children with far greater complex needs than pre-pandemic. The longer the children are at the school the stronger the improvement levels seen. Attendance continues to present as a national issue for schools post-Covid. Resourcing continues to be the most significant barrier. There are now fewer teaching assistants (TAs) and they therefore have to cover more than previously. The budget went in to deficit last year largely due to the inflationary costs of staffing and the national lack of funding in education. Parental support and engagement is always key and particularly where there are low levels of attainment. The entire team work on this and there is always someone with a good relationship with parents and carers within the school. New unit lead posts are also gradually being developed.

The PP Strategy is coming to the end of a three-year period and the plan is to draft a new strategy for the next three-year period adapted to changing circumstances.

Action Point: The new PP Strategy will be drafted for the FGB to review in Autumn.

18:30 SB leaves the meeting.

5. SEND Information Report

The SENDCo presented a written report to the FGB.

Comments and Challenges:

Firstly, very well done to all involved as it seems an enormous amount of time, work and consideration goes in to ensuring the correct provision and its very impressive. What is the level of parental involvement? What is the balance of SEND across classes? How can teachers be supported? What's the teacher feedback? Why is it such a heavy workload and why has this gone up at the higher end? What do other schools use?

Parents and carers are integral the whole way through the SEND process. Early identification and intervention whilst empowering parents is vital. A conversation to establish the parental view first is always the start, followed with tactful, slow and steady progress as well as providing longer and additional parent consultations. The balance of SEND children in classes is always changing and the number of children with EHCPs does not necessarily reflect how many children are actually requiring additional help. Sometimes those without EHCPs offer more challenges and require more staff time to manage and this is why the new provision maps have come about in order to focus more on the child and their needs than the paperwork.

Teachers need constant training and there will be more in place this September. The teacher voice highlighted how the quantity of paperwork and the duplication of paperwork needed to be minimised in order to spend more time on the children. Developing the whole-school provision map has helped with this and provides a graduated response. This was always in place but the new model has provided a clearer guide which is universal, targeted and providing enhanced support that is achievable and specific to St Matthew's. Teachers have reported that it is easy to use and very helpful. It also includes the pupil voice so is equally liked by the parents. As a live document, it means teachers are also accountable and need to show what they're doing to support each child at all times.

The financial restraints mean that there reducing resources. The concern going forward is a national problem. Teachers have become much better at identifying the needs but are aware it is so difficult to get the support, for example the lack of special school places. Many of the big schools have a full time SENDCo, information reports and provision maps. The St Matthew's provision map is partly based on one from a London school that Christina found as part of her extensive research.

The SEND Policy and Information Report was approved subject to adding one other member of staff's name.

6. Minutes of the Full FGB Meeting of 13th December 2023

It was agreed that the minutes of the previous full FGB meeting were both a true and accurate record. Action points from the previous meeting were discussed and would continue to be actioned.

Action Points: Co-Chair to sign meeting minutes and send to the Clerk/as appropriate.

Clerk to send details of website which recruits new governors to the HT.

7. Head Teacher's Report

The HT shared their written report with the FGB prior to the meeting and talked through a number of highlighted areas.

Comments and Challenges:

Governors asked about the challenges of recruiting staff and the current vacancies. Why is there a shortage of TAs locally and nationally? Is it better to use TAs from agencies? The attendance levels of students is great. The new school library that is up and running is amazing and Fiona Harris and other staff have done a wonderful job with this and the creation of the literary festival.

There is a national shortage of TAs and some schools have huge vacancies. Once TAs are in place they find the school a great place to work. The quality of teaching staff from agencies can not be guaranteed and can sometime be poor and expensive, but in these instances staff can be quickly replaced. Sometimes temporary contracts can be made into permanent contracts.

8. Resources for Learning

The relevant governors talked through the minutes of the last Resources Committee Meeting.

Comments and Challenges:

Is the budget situation as expected? How is the school faring compared to other schools? If (Ray) the Local Authority (LA) Head of Financial Advice(?) leaves, will the advice remain the same? Would it be cautious not to plan to save money? What is the situation regarding heating and air-conditioning costs? How has this affected the budget?

The school has already done a lot of hard work and the restructuring of staff has helped massively. The situation looks promising and better than anticipated. The financial adviser said that an increasing number of schools are in or approaching deficit and if schools are able to break even in-year in the year ahead they are doing well. There is no way of knowing how things may change over the next 12 months or 3-4 years. Schools in deficit are required to produce a 4 year budget plan demonstrating how they will eradicate their budget by the end of that period.

Without the additional costs and with the additional SEND provision there could have been a surplus next year. The school is beholden to itself and the pupils and also to the LA. The first priority is to

always to maintain a safe learning environment and to cover statutory provision. It will continue to work to the advice given at the time. Energy costs have been capped but standing prices continue to rise substantially. Costs are on target and it is hoped will be less volatile in the future as the UK buys gas bulk at fixed prices. An in-year positive balance overall seems realistic.

Action Point: the relevant governors will look at the budget and prepare a report for the next full governor meeting.

9. Raising Standards

The relevant governor talked through the minutes of the last TLOC Committee Meeting.

There were no questions.

10. Safeguarding (SG) Update

There is now a further fully-qualified designated safeguarding officer to support managing increasing caseload.

There is bi-annual training (next on 4th September 2024). There will also be an update on PREVENT training. A governor may attend that training. Good practice and important case updates are shared between safeguarding officers at the Supervision meeting which usually occurs on a weekly basis.

Action Points: R? to set up a meeting after Easter and speak to the H&S Manager in school.

Discuss the SG Policy for monitoring and filtering.

11. Governance Part II

This is the Co-Chairs' last meeting as chairs. One member of the FGB has volunteered interest in taking over the role either by themselves or with a Co-Chair. The current Co-Chair agreed to return for one more meeting. The new Chair/s will be voted in at the beginning of this next meeting.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

1st May 2024 – Resources committee – to consider financial year end and draft budget.

8th May 2024 – considering a draft budget recommended by the Resources committee for ratification.

Close of meeting:

19:59 the meeting ends.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____