

ST JOHN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL N20

MINUTES OF THE CHAIRS STRATEGY MEETING **HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON FRIDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 07:45**

MEMBERS

FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

Mrs Lynne Evans (*PCC*) (Chair)
Mrs Imogen Hall (*PCC*) (Vice Chair)
Mr Jaime Goumal (*PCC*)

EX OFFICIO HEADTEACHER

* Mr Curtis Sweetingham

PARENT GOVERNORS

Mr Ben Pullenayegum

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Mrs Catherine Mitri

* Denotes member NOT present

MINUTES

PART I

1. Attendance/Apologies

No apologies for absence.

2. SIP Strategic Priorities for Sub Committees

a. TLS

The Chair raised that the committee dealing with the majority of the SIP is the TLS Sub Committee, so handed over to Chair of TLS.

A governor explained that because all priorities on the SIP fall under TLS, she has put them all at the top of the agenda for the coming TLS meeting. She explained that the forthcoming TLS evening meeting will be focused on data, a safeguarding update from the Safeguarding Governor, a SEND update from the SEND Governor and a Pupil Premium update from the PP Governor. The governor also explained that the previous Equalities Governor (now resigned) has confirmed that she will still work on some of the equalities ideas she had said she was going to do and that this will be done in collaboration with the SLT.

A governor highlighted that it is important for this not to slip from the agenda, so she will keep it as an agenda point and check in to ensure progress.

The DHT advised that the Equalities work would probably consist of staff training.

A governor ADDED that the Equalities Governor had previously commented that equalities was already very good at the school, but that perhaps she could help take it to another level with her expertise with a view to possibly making the school a training hub for e-learning.

It was CONFIRMED that equalities will remain on the agenda.

The Chair AGREED that with the idea of the school becoming a hub for learning and sharing expertise, maybe other schools could come in to benefit from some sort of equalities workshop or session, which could potentially be chargeable, or be part of a Mag 7 arrangement to further develop links and share expertise.

A governor REPORTED that in terms of religious life in school, the SLT highlight anything that's an issue or not on track at the TLS meetings, rather than necessarily going through every single point, and Governors ask questions about specific activities.

A governor explained that the evening TLS meeting will take place the week before November's FGB meeting, and that she is going to propose the TLS meeting takes place directly before the internet safety presentation, so that Governors only have to attend on one evening. The week before the TLS evening meeting is the Pupil Voice and Subject Focus session, and a governor explained that she has proposed a short learning walk could be added to that meeting so Governors can visit the classrooms before talking to children, as it's quite good to get all Governors in to the classrooms to see the displays and see what's going on, as well as talking directly to children. The DHT was asked for thoughts on this.

The DHT ANSWERED that the previous year the concern was that the SLT hadn't done as many observations and learning walks as they would have liked to have done. She added that this year, with so many new staff, that will have to be quite a priority, so they need to be careful that the SLT aren't observing and doing learning walks and then the Governors are coming also and doing learning walks, because it might be a little bit too much.

The Governors and DHT discussed that when the Governors come in for a learning walk they are observing the SLT, not the teachers, and the necessity of Governors coming in for at least two learning walks a year.

Governors discussed what the focus of the upcoming learning walk should be, and the challenges of focusing on SEND, which can't be monitored through Pupil Voice.

The Governors and DHT discussed that it might be useful to talk to the Inclusion Leader as the next leader, as SEND is a huge focus of the SIP.

A governor ASKED whether it would be possible to address SEND through Pupil Voice and whether they could speak to the SEND pupils about some of the interventions.

The DHT ADDED that morning interventions will have started by that time, and that specific children will be being brought in from 8:30 in the morning, for interventions to be started from 8:30. The DHT explained that going forward, these intervention will run for six to 12 weeks, it's a bought, published or

researched scheme, and it shouldn't be running every week, all year, for the same children, whereas the afternoon interventions will be in the classroom, rather than taking children out, or could be just a quick ten minutes, where something might not have been understood in a morning lesson, a pupil could be taken out for a quick one-to-one, or with a couple of pupils.

The DHT ADDED that those pupils coming in for the morning interventions might be good pupils to ask about their experience of the morning sessions, what they've been doing and how it's helped them, so it's targeting their enjoyment and what they're getting from it, rather than targeting SEND.

Governors AGREED that with a new intervention type being introduced, it's very positive to follow up and find out how the children are finding it, to get immediate feedback.

The DHT RAISED that this isn't making SEND pupils stand out, and that they are entitled to get their voice across as much as any other child.

The Governors and DHT discussed the logistics of the morning "booster" intervention sessions, which teachers will be running which subjects for which years. The DHT explained the TAs have all been trained, and it's a prepared scheme, so it's just a matter of delivering it. The DHT explained that TAs will have planning time each week to prepare resources and lesson plans.

The DHT explained that they plan to give the TAs ownership of their individual interventions, which they're hoping will have a positive impact.

The DHT ADDED that the morning is a better time for interventions as children are fresher and have more energy, where by the end of the day they're tired.

A Governor ASKED how long the morning interventions will run for.

The DT ANSWERED that the interventions will last 30 minutes, so they'll be ready and join collective worship.

The Governors AGREED that this sounds like a really positive approach.

The Governors and DT discussed renaming the "learning walk" as a "governor visit" or similar, as it is the term "learning walk" which makes teachers anxious. They discussed that when they visit it's not to make any judgement of the teaching.

A Governor ASKED whether teachers are aware of what the expectations are when the Governors visit.

The DT ANSWERED that they are, but that it's just that they want it to be right and they do get a little bit anxious.

The DT RAISED that the new Ofsted framework is coming out, and there is a big focus on a broad and balanced curriculum.

The Chair RAISED that this should be brought in to TLS agendas, so it's evidenced, as Ofsted will be coming up again soon.

The Governors and DT discussed the many elements of the school's already broad and balanced curriculum, and that they don't need to change what the school is doing, but knowing the Ofsted framework means they can gather the evidence in preparation.

IH ASKED what time it would be possible for the Governors to come in for a visit, to walk around the school before meeting the children and possibly some teachers.

The DT ANSWERED that straight after lunch at 1:30 would probably be the best time.

IH and the DT discussed the timings and logistics of the Governor visit, to include a walk, meeting the children and meeting the Inclusion Leader.

A Governor CHALLENGED that the timing might not be feasible for members of the TLS Sub Committee.

IH ANSWERED that it's already booked in, explained the new format of the split TLS meetings, and that it's understood that all Governors may not be able to attend all of the afternoon meetings, but hopefully all will be able to attend one or two.

IH REPORTED that there are quite a few policies for TLS to review, with Safeguarding, which will have to be updated with the new Keeping Children Safe.

The Chair ANSWERED that it's only Part 1 and Annexe A that's changed, so the changes can be tracked on that so Governors can see. The Chair ADDED that the updated policy needs to be published, and have to get CONFIRMATION that all Governors have read the policy.

IH ANSWERED that in her role as the new Safeguarding Governor, Reverend Lynn Davidson will circulate the updated policy.

IH reported the following policies due to be reviewed: Collective Worship, Acceptable Use, SRE.

A Governor ASKED what SRE stands for.

IH ANSWERED that it is Sex and Relationships Education.

The DT CHALLENGED that it should be RSE, as the LDBS like the R to be put first rather than the S word.

IH CONCLUDED that it is going to be a busy period for the TLS Sub Committee.

The DT ADDED that she has been holding off on the Relationships and Sex policy, because it was going to be made statutory in 2019, but it's now been pushed back to 2020. She added that she will speak to Mrs Panteli, as she has a lot of PSHE experience, so might have some materials already to share.

b. Finance

BP REPORTED that the Finance Sub Committee has introduced a different approach for the meetings, to try to get full attendance for the meetings. This was partly to help EB, who will be leaving the board in December, but BP added that they should try the approach for a year and then see if it's working or not.

BP explained that the challenge in the meetings is that there are a lot of finance items to go through, and there is a massive maintenance list, and it's not possible to do the two in the same meeting, as even in a two-hour meeting you run out of time.

BP reported that in the first term there are three meetings scheduled to talk about the Priority List, and one F&P meeting. He explained the F&P meetings are more about policy, budget, and anything else, so Priority List will not be discussed in the F&P meeting, but will be done separately. The challenge with the Priority List is it regularly changes, and unless you have time to focus on it, by two months later, you've forgotten what you talked about.

BP RAISED that the minutes for the Priority List don't really work, because the Committee talks through the Priority List Excel spreadsheet, but then also talk through the minutes of the previous meeting, which has matters arising which are in the Priority List, which makes it really hard to read the minutes.

A Governor ASKED if the minutes could be typed in to the Priority List.

BP ANSWERED that it might be better not to minute the F&P meetings, as unless there's something in there that's specifically statutory, everything is already being noted in the Priority List, and being tracked that way.

The Governors CHALLENGED that the F&P meeting does need to be minuted, but the Priority List meetings do not.

BP AGREED that that was what he meant, as the Priority List meetings are conducted via phone call, and documented during the course of the meeting through updates in the comments on the Priority List spreadsheet itself. The F&P meetings are face to face and should be minuted.

A Governor ASKED whether the Priority List phone calls need to be the full Finance Sub Committee.

BP ANSWERED that he thinks it does, because you end up discussing spend, but also in practice, there hasn't been full attendance at the F&P meetings, and the problem is that while you need quorum and enough to have a good discussion, but too many, and it slows everything down.

The Governors discussed the challenges of dialling in for morning meetings, and having to do school runs, etc.

Action: LE to join the dial-in Priority List meetings from the school office to help fit around school run

BP reported that at the first F&P meeting there are a number of policies to review, which might be unchanged, but he needs to check in with the HT because there are so many.

BP explained that the other reason for the changed format of finance meetings is because previously the Finance Manager would attend meetings and it was really inefficient as she would arrive at a point when the Committee was talking about something else. With the new approach to meetings it will mean better use of the Finance Manager's time, as it will be clear which meetings it is relevant for her to attend.

BP RAISED that a challenge when it comes to policies is that with EB leaving the board, the F&P Committee loses someone with a health and safety background, so that is something for the board to be aware of.

The Chair ADDED that when the Governors start considering potential Parent Governors, one thing they could be looking for is people with expertise in facilities or construction, as there are quite a few dads in that field, as this is where the board is going to really need expertise.

The Governors discussed the potential benefit of looking for specific skills rather than taking a broader approach.

The Governors discussed the challenge of striking a balance between having enough Governors to delegate to, so that the more active Governors don't end up being overburdened, but not having a lot of Governors who don't do anything.

The Governors discussed filling the vacancies and the possibility of IH moving back to her role as a Parent Governor, as initially elected, and looking for a new Governor from the church.

A Governor RAISED that there is a wider pool of potential Parent Governor candidates than PCC, because they're struggling to get a lot of engagement within PCC from the current members.

The Chair ASKED BP and JG if they could think of any potential Parent Governors among the dads, to encourage them to nominate themselves, because the board is going to have to work to generate interest.

The Governors AGREED that engagement at meetings and having done the necessary pre-reading is the most important thing.

c. Personnel

LE explained that there is virtually nothing to report, because the Personnel Committee deals with fairly standard things that have to be covered twice a year, and is all around the appraisals and pay committee. The Personnel Committee reviews whether staffing structure is fit for purpose, or if anything needs to be changed, and policy review.

LE ADDED that there is nothing in the SIP that falls under Personnel Committee.

The Governors discussed that things are much tighter and more straightforward in terms of the Personnel Committee now, and the change is really noticeable.

The Chair ADDED that it is testament to the leadership behind it from the SLT.

The Chair RAISED that the TAs doing the booster lessons will be delivering lessons and also planning lessons, which would effectively make them TA 3 or 4, which were eliminated in the restructure.

The Chair and DT AGREED that this is something to be discussed in the Personnel Committee.

Action: TA levels and duties to be discussed at Personnel

d. Admissions

The Chair REPORTED that JG would be taking over the Admissions Committee.

JG explained that Admissions will cover two things:

The Admissions Panel in February 2019 for the next year's intake, using the revised criteria from the last year's consultation.

The change to the parish criteria, which there is quite a strict and tight timeline on, because based on the previous consultation, there was a meeting in September, the consultation started at the beginning of November, with letters going out, and drop-ins held. The deadline was at Christmas, with an EGM in January to decide whether or not to do the changes, ready for a final decision mid-February.

The Governors discussed going ahead with the scheduled Admissions Panel meeting the following week.

JG ASKED whether a replacement Governor was needed for the Admissions Committee, as JB has resigned.

The Governors discussed the membership of the Admissions Committee.

The Chair explained that she will attend the Admissions Panel.

The Chair CHALLENGED that prior to the meeting to discuss changes to boundaries, JG will need to do some work to establish what change will be made.

Action: JG to contact schools who have made these changes in the past, and to consult the HT to find out what he envisages for the change

A Governor RAISED that when it comes to the vote, it would help Governors to understand who will benefit and who will lose out as a result of the changes.

The Governors discussed that making another change to the Admissions Policy means that changes are being made before the impact of the previous year's changes can be assessed.

The Governors discussed that every year the school is faced with a completely different set of circumstances in terms of the applicants.

A Governor SUMMARISED that what's fair is having a parish that reflects boundaries that reflect really how near applicants live to the school.

The DT RAISED that the HT's concern that there are a lot of streets on the parish boundary map that don't exist, because there have been so many changes in the area, and they should be included within the list.

The Governors AGREED that there wouldn't need to be a consultation to just update the list of roads that fall within the existing parish boundary.

The Chair SUGGESTED that a starting point would be to ask Barnet, given the amount of recent development in the area, whether Barnet can provide the school with a revised parish list of roads, and see whether they can do that, and how quickly they can do it. It should be very straightforward, but it could be a challenge if it has to go through different departments.

The Governors discussed which roads are affected by this exclusion due to the long narrow shape of the parish.

The DT ASKED if this might be a matter for LDBS rather than the council.

The Governors discussed whether past instances of applicants on Swan Lane not getting places is a result of the parish boundaries, or because places had already been fulfilled further up the list of criteria e.g. church places and siblings.

JG ADDED that until the new criteria has been used, the Governors don't know how the process is going to work.

The Chair CONCLUDED that JG could do a little bit of research with Revd Lynn and LDBS, and maybe the council, to establish whether the parish boundary can be updated without the need to go through consultation and make changes to the Admissions Policy.

Action: JG to research to find out if parish boundary can be updated through LDBS/Council without change to Admissions Policy

3. Governor Action Plan

IH explained that the Governor Action Plan is a rolling document to ensure that the board isn't missing anything.

A Governor ASKED if it's something the board has to do, or something the board chooses to do. LE and IH answered that it's something the board chooses to do, as best practice.

IH talked through pointers for good governance in the GAP:

Having a clear shared strategy for the future of the school. IH explained that this needs to stay, because it is important to ensure the board keep thinking strategically.

A Governor CHALLENGED that this is implicit anyway in the role of the board, because the board is strategic.

IH AGREED but added that the Governors need to ensure they're not just thinking about what has to happen in the current year. The focus has to be on this year, but also on the future, three-year plan, upcoming Ofsted inspection, finances.

IH confirmed that she would remove "full governing body full involvement in creating the SIP" from the GAP, because that's definitely happening.

The Chair RAISED that the Governor Action Plan is something the board needed to be working on, so if the objectives have been met and it's embedded in the culture now, it can be taken off.

IH AGREED that it can be taken off then, so the document will be as short as possible.

IH RAISED that in terms of ensuring Governors have a good understanding of local and national context, she doesn't feel the board does that as well as they could do.

The Chair AGREED.

IH ADDED that Committee Chairs may need to add an agenda item for Governors to share any relevant topical information.

BP RAISED that the F&P Committee benefits from the Finance Manager's attendance, as she has a lot of local insight.

IH ASKED if it is just the TLS Committee where this understanding is weaker.

The Chairs all AGREED that this understanding needs to be worked on across the board, so this item should remain on the GAP.

IH RAISED that the next item is ensuring that PP, SEND, Safeguarding responsibilities are being properly met. IH and the Chair AGREED that these are a focus, and this had been embedded.

IH proposed changing this item to ensuring that the PP, SEND and Safeguarding Governors have the full knowledge of what they need to do, and are monitoring the school appropriately, as the Governors are quite new to these link roles.

The Governors and DT AGREED the item should stay on the GAP with new wording to reflect the focus on Governors understanding/developing their roles.

IH reported that the item on TLS committee ensuring appropriate discussions will be taken off the GAP, because the TLS committee is doing that.

IH ASKED whether the board is now in a better position regarding policies, where previously they had been inundated with reviewing them, or is it something that still needs to be worked at.

The Governors and DT discussed the challenge of being really engaged with policies until something happens necessitating reference to the policy.

The Chair RAISED that it is absolutely essential that the school have to own the policies.

The DT RAISED that there will be a lot of policy changes coming up.

IH ASKED if the process for approaching policies is now manageable.

The Chair explained that the policies have to be owned by the school, so all the changes have to come from the school, so that's operational. Then it's the way the policies come to the board, and how the board deal with it.

The Governors AGREED that the process for dealing with policies now works, as the policies are interspersed throughout the year, so they don't all have to be reviewed at once, and where no changes are being made, policies can be automatically ratified, saving time.

The Governors AGREED that Committee Chairs should take ownership of keeping on top of policies, being aware of what's coming up, and ensuring they are processed manageably throughout the year to avoid inundation.

The Governors discussed the process of reviewing policies. IH also RAISED that the Governors are reviewing the strategic part of the policy, not the operational detail. The Governors discussed the challenge of establishing which part of the policy is strategic, rather than operational.

IH RAISED that the board is on top of ensuring monitoring of school life is working, which again is about communication, and making sure the board work with what works for the SLT.

IH ASKED if developing the Pupil Voice element should stay on the GAP, because it's something the school is doing really well, and the Governors are really proud of.

The Chair ANSWERED that it doesn't belong on the action plan, because it's not something that needs to be worked on. Pupil Voice can be taken off because it is already embedded.

IH RAISED that succession planning needs to stay on the GAP, because there is none in place.

IH RAISED that there needs to be improvement around training reports.

IH REPORTED that she had added taking a strengths-based approach to the GAP, and explained what a strengths-based approach means.

The Governors AGREED that it is important when providing feedback to focus on the green rather than immediately focusing on the red.

The DT AGREED that focusing on the positive is more growth mindset.

IH AGREED that the language should be changed from strengths to growth mindset.

IH RAISED that the final point was regarding the Chair and Vice Chair being mindful of communications that it could be helpful to circulate, for example advance warning of any major changes, for Governors to be aware of.

A Governor ASKED whether the Chair and Vice Chair still have weekly/fortnightly meetings with the SLT, and ADDED that when the notes were being circulated they were really useful, but it does take a lot of work to do it.

The Chair explained that the format has changed, so the idea now is that she will come in to meet with the HT each Friday to ask how the week has gone, what's been going on, and if there is anything to report. The idea is that the Chair will then do a very quick rundown of what was discussed, and circulate the brief notes.

The Chair and Vice Chair will meet with the SLT every half term, for a bit more of a formal catch-up and planning, but no date has been set yet.

The Chair explained that as the school is in a good place right now, and if there is anything the Chair and Governors need to know about, the HT will pick up the phone and inform the Chair anyway, so now the Friday meetings are a lot more touching base and maybe giving the HT a bit of a sounding board. The Chair ADDED that going forward she intends to send the brief notes on the Monday morning following the Friday meeting.

IH ASKED which Committee would be responsible for updating the Complaints policy.

The Chair ANSWERED that it is an issue for the full governing board.

Action: IH to review the Complaints policy and circulate to full board to agree

The Chair RAISED that the Abusive Visitors policy (F&P) needs tweaking to include staff, Governors, parents, that there's certain behaviour that will not be tolerated around the school area, to include behaviour such as an unhappy parent approaching a teacher while shopping in Waitrose, even if it takes place outside the school grounds. The policy also needs to include Governors being approached or intimidated, either outside or inside school grounds, as currently there is no policy in place to protect Governors from abuse. The Chair ADDED that the policy needs to be updated by the school, acknowledging that finding time is a challenge.

The Governors and DT discussed the examples of other schools' existing policies which the new policy could be modelled on.

The Chair emphasised that she feels very strongly that this policy needs to be sorted and quickly.

A Governor ASKED whether any of the partner schools have a policy that St John's could just lift and tweak.

The DT ANSWERED that the example she circulated previously is very good, and very specific, it would just be a matter of reformatting.

The Chair suggested that, knowing how short the SLT are on time, if the DT and HT are happy with the content of the policy, she can try to merge the new policy with the existing policy, see where there's any overlap, and do some tracked changes to create a combined document, to make sure that it's not missing anything that has already been agreed.

The Chair RAISED that this policy will need a complete read and a complete review, but that it needs so much work, and she's happy to do the formatting.

A Governor RAISED that as there are a lot of policies due for review in October, and only one in January, it might be quieter to do it in January.

The Chair ANSWERED that it could be done in between, as it's a new policy, so it will be circulated, and Governors will be given three weeks to read it.

The Vice Chair ADDED that because it's a new policy, there is the opportunity to clearly outline the strategic purpose of the policy at the top of the document, for the Governors to review and approve. The Governors then don't have to read the operational elements of the policy, they will just need to agree that strategically, the policy is protecting staff and making sure that conversations are happening in a professional environment.

The Chair emphasised the importance of Governor input in to a new policy, though, to challenge whether a process would actually work in practice, and whether there are any gaps in the process that operationally have not been thought about.

The Vice Chair RAISED that if F&P Committee have a lot of policies to review in October, but this policy needs to be addressed urgently, perhaps it could be managed by someone else. The Governors and DT AGREED that this would be a matter for the full board, as incidents could occur either on or off premises, so doesn't strictly fall under F&P anyway.

The Governors and DT discussed possible alternative terminology used in other example policies, as "abusive visitors" sounds quite strong, and discussed whether it would come under the Complaints policy, as it is intended to guide behaviour in a complaint scenario and how to appropriately make a complaint.

The Governors and DT AGREED that the purpose of this policy is to outline appropriate behaviour, but that it needs to be worded correctly.

Action: School/LE create new "Abusive Visitors"/complaints conduct policy

4. Close

The Chair thanked Governors for attending and closed the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: TBC.