



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FULL GOVERNING BODY OF
ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD IN SCHOOL
ON TUESDAY, 10TH MAY 2022 AT 6.00PM**

PRESENT: Mr C Hartley (Chair, Foundation); Miss P Pickering (Head); Mr S Taylor (Vice Chair, Foundation); Canon J Bathula (Foundation); Mr M Doherty (L.A.); Mrs J Hurst (Foundation); Mr A McArdle (Foundation); Mrs E Morgan (Foundation); Mrs N Henderson-Andrade (Elected Parent); Mr P Haley (Elected Parent); Miss L Grant (Staff)

APOLOGIES: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Hall (Clerk)

1. CJ opened meeting with a prayer.
2. Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Meeting was declared quorate.
3. **Register of Interests**
 - a. NH-A declared she is a governor at Blessed George Napier.
 - b. JH declared she is a governor at Blessed George Napier.
4. **Minutes of the full GB meeting** of 15th February 2022 were declared to be a true record and were signed by Chair.

Matters Arising

NH-A updated the governors on Action Point 2. She and EM have spoken to [REDACTED] and they have agreed to pass on a simple questionnaire to the families of the First Holy Communion cohort, so that we may better understand their priorities when choosing a school.

ST told the governors that as a consequence of the financial information he presented at the last meeting, he has been in discussion with PP and the Finance Officer. He said they had raised the concern that the documents which he had shared inferred financial mismanagement. ST said that this was not his intent, and he wanted to share with governors the context of the 2017/18 high surplus carry forward. He explained that the LEA only allows an 8% carry forward so this needed to be spent or would be lost. This has involved four years of spending to get below £80,000 which has predominantly been on school buildings.

He said that to make this easier for governors to access, the Finance Officer will share a Budget Overview at the start of each financial year. The monthly accounts are also on Google Drive for governors to view. Chair pointed out that the difference between forecast and reality, when this current year was Year 3, is huge.

In regards to Action Point 3, Chair said that the Annual Safeguarding Review is available on Google Drive.

LG said that the children will make a thank you card after their First Holy Communion which is this Saturday.

5. **Headteacher's Report**

EM asked that the governors thanks be passed to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. PP reported that Chair and ST attended the Early Years Foundation Stage assembly on Friday 6th May at which the parents and

children thanked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Chair said that both the assembly and the children themselves were fantastic.

ST added that KOF's monitoring form was really nice to read.

PP informed governors that there is another maternity leave for September. She then confirmed that there is already one more application for September's EYFS intake and that we expect more. She explained that she has been working hard showing prospective parents around the school and that on discussion they say that they are often there due to personal recommendation - family, friends or neighbours have advised that the Headteacher takes the time to give an individual tour and meeting.

[REDACTED] LA have advised Ukrainian refugee applications go through the proper channels. There was some discussion about the comprehensive support structure in place for Ukrainian refugees in the local community.

6. Pastoral Matters

CJ said that class Masses have continued and that there has been no delay in celebrating the Sacraments which has maintained stability. He reported that [REDACTED] has been coming into school for the Rosary group, and class assemblies have been teaching the Gospel values for both Catholic and non-Catholic children.

JH extended her gratitude to CJ and the school as many parishes are not celebrating the Sacraments. She said that this is a great blessing for us as a community.

ST queried if the Mass of Thanksgiving previously discussed could be held in June. CJ agreed that it could be arranged for an evening.

7. Reports from Committees

a. Finance/H&S/Buildings

MD and AMc explained to governors the difficulties in comparing schools as funding is divided under different headings once it has been allocated.

CH said that all governors agree the finances are more complicated than simple benchmarking and that the Finance Officer has reported that the budget is balanced for the next three years which is exceptionally good. He also advised that we have been successful in our Voluntary Aided School Condition Allocation (VASCA) financing bid, with the grant amount being £121,205.

8. Policy Review Schedule

a. Behaviour Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

b. Complaints Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

c. Dignity at Work Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

d. Driving at Work Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

e. First Aid Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

9. Assessment Data

PP reminded governors that Year 6 are sitting their SATs this week.

AMc advised that, following conversation with LG, the Covid Premium information will be added to this folder. LG explained that at the end of this academic year there will be good evidence of the progress made. PP added that it is a concern that we do not know what the national average is but we have given it all we can and the children have responded well.

EM said that in her experience the school is not projecting these anxieties onto the children, and as a result they are not stressed.

AMc commented that the fact that the bottom set are moving towards the average is a credit to the teaching staff. PP replied that this is hinged on the ethos of the school.

10. School Development Plan (Governor Links)

ST explained that the SDP document is an opportunity for each governor to summarise their visits and conversations with teachers. He drew attention to a few areas which hadn't been completed and asked that we aim for all updates to be done for 5th July. He told governors to contact Chair, Clerk or himself if they have any difficulties.

EM pointed out that her next scheduled meeting is after the 5th July and it was agreed that in that scenario governors should write a note of explanation in the SDP.

Chair added that they should think about KOF's areas until a replacement is recruited.

11. Academy Status

ST informed governors that the next meeting with the Diocese and St Francis MAC is tomorrow. He explained that there are two action points:

- a. Two emails sent by Diocese to governors dated 17th March and 6th May 2022:
 - 17th March 2022 – *Multi Academy Family of Schools for St Mary's Primary School* (Forwarded to Governing Body by Chair)
 - 6th May 2022 – *Diocesan Directives issued by the Diocesan Bishop for the General Regulation of all Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham pursuant to canon 806*. This email includes a link to an online form which will need to be completed by 8th July.
- b. We asked for data to be shared that shows schools perform better in an academy. The benchmarking reports they provided are about financial performance rather than the staff and children (This will be put on Google Drive).

In regards to the second action point, ST responded to governor's questions that no, these reports do not answer our questions. In addition, he wondered what the academy's proposed marketing strategy would look like. ST commented that there may be some support as governors with engagement within the MAC. The Governance Manager has invited a couple of St Mary's governors to observe their next governors briefing. He added that teachers within the MAC can create materials for use across the primary schools, and that RE is the first subject to be considered. LG explained that the provision for RE across the Diocese has always been strong and cluster meetings are attended.

Chair said he was of the opinion that we are further in dialogue and the working party have done a huge amount of work and continue to do so. He asked that governors do their own research and share any questions with himself, ST or directly with the Diocese.

Regarding the Autumn 2022 deadline in the email dated 17th March, Chair clarified that the governing body should be able to give a timescale for when they will be in a position to move to the next stage, quoting "*to consider with your partners the indicative timescale for formal academisation and the associated next steps.*" He said he felt personally that that several questions remained unanswered. CJ stated that governors need to read the Decree from the Archbishop (attached to email of 6th May 2022) and understand what His Grace is asking of us. As the school is part of the Archdiocese the Archbishop trusts us to follow his guidance; the welfare of the school and its children come first for him. CJ emphasised that he found the email sent by the Chair difficult, as he felt it demonstrated disagreement with the Archbishop's directive.

Chair replied that he felt that governors have a duty to do the research and to ensure that they feel, as an individual, that this is the right course of action for the school.

JH said that she had signed a document of allegiance to the Archbishop and intended to stick with the promise.

CJ informed the board that he would not be putting forward anyone for the Foundation Governor vacancy who refused to follow the Archbishop's decision. He said that the Chair's email was undermining the document from the Archbishop. Chair replied that if it was interpreted that way he apologises as it wasn't his intent, but governors should continue to research, directing any questions through the Diocese, ST or Chair.

CJ advised governors to read the decree as it is very important and will become canon law.

EM asked if the Diocesan Directives 2022 Compliance Check is going to be on the agenda for the next meeting as the deadline is 8th July.

LG suggested that governors needed to consider when the right time for the school to join this particular MAC would be. She said that some MACs within the Diocese are run well, however this MAC doesn't comply with all the Diocesan directives as several schools do not have both a Catholic head and deputy. She said that it didn't sit comfortably to be going against the Church, but it is about how the children benefit. She added that they are struggling to support the schools they have now, let alone adding more. PP said she understood what it means to be head of a Catholic school and answer to the Archbishop. All she was asking for was some answers which would be acceptable for this school. She said that across the Diocese, Heads of her generation are leaving their vocation as they know what can be achieved as a Catholic family of schools without it being political - academisation is about money and business, not saving Catholic education. She said she did not believe in putting billions of pounds into private business, however fully understood and respected her obligation to the Archbishop which was why she was in turmoil. PP thanked the governors for continuing to diligently ask questions of people who do not appear to be able to answer them.

Chair summarised the two deadlines: by the end of 2022 the governors need to give a timescale and next steps on academisation to the Diocese, and the compliance check needs to be completed by 7th July.

12. Annual Website Review

AMc had checked that the website was compliant to all 20 items on the Governmental list. Some policies do need updating; the behavioural policy was approved during today's meeting and will be updated on the website. In addition, the equality policy is out of date and the accessibility plan should be on the website. AMc questioned how much information should be published from the accessibility plan, saying that wheelchair access and snow clearance should be included but not security concerns. Reviewing the governor's information and duties, AMc thought that hierarchy of committees could be made clearer.

He said that he has been comparing the websites of other schools and ours doesn't seem to be the benchmark for ease of navigation however, spending money on an expensive website seems wasteful. LG explained that we have been looking at tidying up the website. AMc pointed out the ease of navigation for prospective parents could be improved.

13. Annual Complaints Review

Chair reported no formal complaints have been raised. PP explained that informal complaints are dealt with speed, however they are always recorded. If they were not resolved satisfactorily, the complainant would then be invited to complete the form appended to the Complaints Policy.

14. Any Other Business

CJ asked that FGB meetings be moved from a Tuesday. All governors agreed that next academic year FGB meetings will be held on Monday evening in the school hall at 18:00. AMc asked that governors consider the weekend timeframes when Clerk is preparing for a Monday meeting.

Chair extended the thanks of the governing body to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for their work in EYFS. He then read aloud KOF's letter of resignation sent the day after the last FGB meeting:

Dear Patricia, Chris and Sean,

In March of this year my term of office as a Foundation Governor at St Mary's School comes to an end and I feel I am unable to apply for a further term.

It has been an absolute privilege and honour to be asked to serve St Mary's this way: I am incredibly proud to be associated with the school, all that it stands for and all that it achieves for our children.

Unfortunately, the updated application requires me to state that I will "comply with the Diocesan Education Strategy as directed by the Archbishop" and – at the current time – this is something I do not feel I can do.

I do not believe I should have to follow the DES if I find it to be contrary to the best interests of our school and so I cannot, in all good conscience, sign this declaration – the term 'comply' causes me particular concern.

As the next FGB meeting post-dates the end of my term may I take this opportunity to wish you and the school continued success. I will continue to support the school however I can and, if I may, would like to complete one last visit during school hours as RE Link governor if we can find a suitable time.

*With very best wishes to you all,
Kristan*

15. Date of Next Meeting
Tuesday, 5th July 2022

The meeting closed with a prayer at 20:15

LH 12/05/2022