

Archdiocese of Birmingham

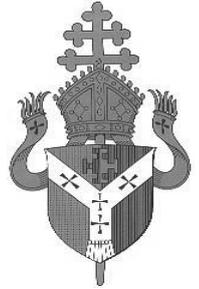
St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FULL GOVERNING BODY OF
ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD IN SCHOOL
ON TUESDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 6.00PM**

PRESENT: Mr C Hartley (Chair, Foundation), Mr S Taylor (Vice Chair, Foundation); Miss P Pickering (Head); Mr M Doherty (L.A.); Mrs K O'Flynn (Foundation); 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: Canon J Batthula

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Hall (Clerk)

1. Head opened meeting with a prayer.

2. Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Meeting was declared quorate.

3. **Register of Interests**

NH-A declared she is a governor at another school. JH also declared she is a governor at another school.

4. **Minutes of the full GB meeting** of 19th October 2021 were declared to be a true record and were signed by Chair.

No matters arising.

5. **Headteacher's Report**

ST commented that he was pleased to hear Catholic Social Teaching assemblies will return after the half term break. PP said that it was decided to leave them until after the break as the situation with Covid was still unclear. There are enough weeks in the second half of the term for all classes to have an assembly. However, Gospel assemblies and Masses have continued through this half term.

Chair added that he had been invited to the Carol Service in December, which was a lovely, special way to bring the school together to celebrate Christmas.

Regarding the questionnaire being sent to parents from the Archdiocese; JH asked if the phrasing is appropriate as she doesn't believe it is in everyday parlance for all to understand. She said she believed this should be an accessible, meaningful exercise. PP agreed, but that we have more freedom with the contributions from the children as these are in the form of discussions with the pupils.

AMc noted that it was good to see some movement with admissions.

Chair drew attention to the SIP visit, adding that during his meeting with her [REDACTED] had told him that it was great to see such a lovely school.

ST pointed out that the attendance rates are strong compared to national statistics. PP said that we have been blessed. We have not had the number of cases we have heard about in other primary schools and have tried to keep things as normal as possible for our pupils. Chair agreed that it is fortunate we have been blessed but also congratulated PP and all the staff for their efforts. NH-A said that it is so important to maintain normality as much as possible for children and their development.

In relation to attendance, PP told governors that when parents have tested positive and children have been unable to get into school, staff have walked children to and from school. Governors were impressed, saying that staff should be commended for that and for supporting the children's development. Chair told governors that they could give individual thanks to staff.

6. **Pastoral Matters**

Chair asked PP if she had anything to add as CJ was absent. PP had nothing which hadn't already been covered in the headteacher's report.

NH-A acknowledged the Confirmandi retreat last Saturday. She said that the difference between St Mary's pupils and the other children was immense, with both their behaviour and their knowledge.

AMc noted it was the same in BGN, you can always tell the St Mary's pupils. He added that this was one of the unique differences of St Mary's. JH said that it was impossible to impart the same experience into a short programme.

EM questioned if the children at St Mary's could make a card for the Catechists.

Referring back to admission figures, NH-A suggested that [REDACTED] could be asked to gather evidence, informally, about why these Catholic children didn't enrol at St Mary's. Chair agreed that it wouldn't hurt to ask.

7. Autumn Term Cohort Progress Review

PP pointed out that the numbers across all three cohorts are so low that they are not significant enough to bring out trends. LG added that, in regards to the Pupil Premium children, we know each individual child and their personal circumstances.

ST asked PP and LG if there is anything concerning or pleasing in the data. LG replied that EAL is high and is often a challenge as some children often don't speak English outside of the school building. But she explained there is also the other extreme of EAL families who speak English at home and have a very strong work ethic. PP emphasised that each individual child in this group is also known. She said that parental wish to keep their mother tongue has to be respected, but in addition there are parents who are unable to speak English, with children often becoming translators for their parents. PP confirmed that families own cultures should be respected and also commended pupils who are bi- or trilingual.

LG explained that these pupils have individual, targeted support but there are no groups which are thought to be an issue. She then discussed using whole class guided reading to improve their vocabulary.

EM asked if funding is received for EAL pupils. PP stated that we do, it is integrated funding.

8. Review Status of SDP

ST explained that each Link Governor will do a school visit which will be put into the Governor Hub calendar in advance. After the visit, the governor monitoring form should be completed; the more salient points of which will be input into the SDP.

EM questioned whether the deadline for completing the SDP should be moved back to a week before the Full Governing Body meeting to give an opportunity for the reading of each other's entries. All governors agreed. ST asked if the annual safeguarding review should be reported to the Full Governing Body. PP and LH will examine.

ST said he was looking forward to the children playing Quidditch, and EM replied that fencing has been a huge hit with the pupils. KOF underlined that the unusual sports we have been able to offer level the playing field amongst the pupils as no one has prior experience.

9. Reports from Committees

Finance/H&S/Buildings

Chair began by informing the board that a second supplier is visiting the school to advise on acoustic panelling in the hall.

(Appendix A - *School Financial Value Statement 2020/21 – St Mary's* shared via email to FGB by ST 14th February 2022)

Regarding the budget, ST said it would be useful to write in the minutes how we are performing against the budget. He drew attention to the monthly report on Google Drive which shows a £52,000 in-year deficit. He said it would be beneficial to have an understanding of this

PP explained that the in-year deficit doesn't show the overall picture. She said that ST would be welcome to join a Finance sub-committee meeting to help him understand. PP clarified that the in-year deficit doesn't factor in the carry forward, and that County have said St Mary's isn't a beacon for them as a school in financial difficulty.

ST reiterated that there is a £52,000 deficit and asked what the strategic plan to become financially stable is. PP replied that any advice would come from County, and nothing has been flagged at this time.

ST said that all the governors need to understand where the school is financially and suggested that spending and budgeting should be minuted at each finance meeting. PP, Chair and AMc all agreed that this is discussed at each meeting and reports are all available on the Google Drive. ST was concerned that it isn't obvious and governors shouldn't have to need to hunt for it. Governors queried if the finance committee could share with the FGB in layman's terms. Chair agreed that they could do this but reassured the board that County would flag up if there was any issue with budget monitoring.

KOF and NH-A pointed out that there are less reserves than previously and they were worried that the governors don't know how many years we're ok until we run out of reserves. KOF said she was unaware that financial reserves were decreasing as only the carry forward is minuted.

AMc explained that previously, when there was too much carry forward County would take it back. He said governors were aware that pupil numbers were going down and that means that the reserve figure is going down. He also discussed the changing demographic of the town. Older estates have an aging population while those with young families are moving to new estates with new schools, leaving older schools with fewer admissions. The only difference for St Mary's is the draw for Catholic families. AMc thanked ST for his time and effort.

PP highlighted the benchmarking used in ST's report, comparing St Mary's to St Aloysius'. She said that other comparisons could have been drawn, for example St Aloysius' is smaller but spends more on staff, having only 194 pupils and spending £20,000 more on staffing. They spent £70,000 on premises whereas St Mary's spent £44,000. She also referred to a conversation had with advisors at County who said that as each school uses different cost centres for their spending and funding elements it is impossible to compare.

Reports from Committees

Curriculum

KOF wished to commend the school for all their hard work. She asked if governors were in agreement for a Thanksgiving Mass to be held in June. All governors agreed.

10. Review of Policies

Admissions Policy 2023/24

Approved by Full Governing Body

Pay Policy for Teachers 2021

Approved by Full Governing Body

Pay Policy for Support Staff 2021

Approved by Full Governing Body

RE Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

Collective Worship Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

Catholic Life Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body

11. Update on Academisation Dialogue Plan

(Appendix B – *Academisation Dialogue Plan* shared via email to FGB by ST on 14th February 2022)

ST began by saying that the recent vote against academisation was not a rejection of the concept but due to a number of unanswered issues.

AMc was interested to know what the MAC would do to help us with a £75,000 deficit including their £45,000 membership fee.

Looking at the plan outlaid on the document shared with governors, KOF asked if the meetings in February would be the first time the governors could receive answers to the questions put to the MAC and Diocese during their meeting in November. She said that the representatives of the Diocese had not been forthcoming and were dismissive with no answers to the governors questions several months later. St Mary's governors had been accused of not being proactive by the Diocese. KOF also informed the board that the November meeting had not been minuted.

Chair shared the agenda of the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 16th February (Appendix C).

KOF questioned whether they would be able to answer any of the queries from governors at that meeting. She said that they had been unable to tell them how many vacancies for school leaders there were within the MAC. ST replied that as Fraser Long will be at the meeting, he should be able to provide answers to those sorts of questions. AMc remembered that when St Mary's governors asked the MAC what we would get for the money, they asked what we would do for them. EM said that the governors had been accused of not doing their jobs properly. Governors agreed that the meeting would be a welcome opportunity to again raise the five key questions which they had asked at the previous meeting.

Chair said that he and ST will be at the meeting tomorrow. As a governing body we had a vote in September and will likely have to vote again. He reassured the board that if they have any further questions they could pass them through Chair, ST, or ask the Diocese directly.

AMc said the Board trust the Chair and ST as their representatives. He stated that none of the FGB were opposed to academisation but that it had to be the right decision for this school and the children. So far, any examples seen do not show any improvement to Catholic education.

12. Governor Hub

ST gave a summary of the understanding gained during the implementation of Governor Hub. Governors agreed that the calendar is useful, as is having all documents in one location with training and resources.

13. Any Other Business

No other business.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 10th May 2022 at 18:00 in school.

The meeting closed with a prayer at 20:10.

LH 16/02/2022

APPENDIX A

School Financial Value Statement 2020/21 – St Mary’s

The SFVS allows governors to compare the school’s financial outcome to a set of local and national benchmarks, and look at trends in these measures too. This overview looks at

- Impact of declining pupil numbers on school finances
- A review of income and expenditure against a set of local benchmark schools

This information is from the website: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>

1. Change in Pupil Numbers in Bicester area

Within Bicester pupil numbers have remained broadly flat from 2016/17 to 2020/21

2016/17: 3,874

2020/21: 3,916

However, the trend in numbers on-roll for the various Bicester schools have varied significantly between schools

| School | Change |
|--|---------------|
| St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School | 77.6% |
| Longfields Primary and Nursery School | 15.6% |
| Chesterton CofE Primary School | 15.5% |
| Launton CofE Primary School | 10.1% |
| King's Meadow Primary School | 7.1% |
| Brookside Primary School | 1.3% |
| Five Acres Primary School | 0.6% |
| Glory Farm Primary School | -3.8% |
| Langford Village Community Primary School | -6.2% |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bicester | -16.5% |
| Bure Park Primary School | -16.5% |
| Southwold Primary School | -23.1% |

2. Impact of school numbers on funding

Decline in pupil numbers has impacted significantly on school finances, with 3 in-year deficits and a projected deficit for 2021/22

| Period | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|---------|
| Number of Pupils | 222 | 228 | 223 | 239 | 268 | 273 |
| | -£52,792* | -£43,317 | -£86,268 | -£24,742 | £64,721 | £50,832 |
| | | | | | | £ |
| Reserves | £118,900* | £171,692 | £215,008 | £301,276 | £326,018 | 210,465 |

**Projected Out-turn*

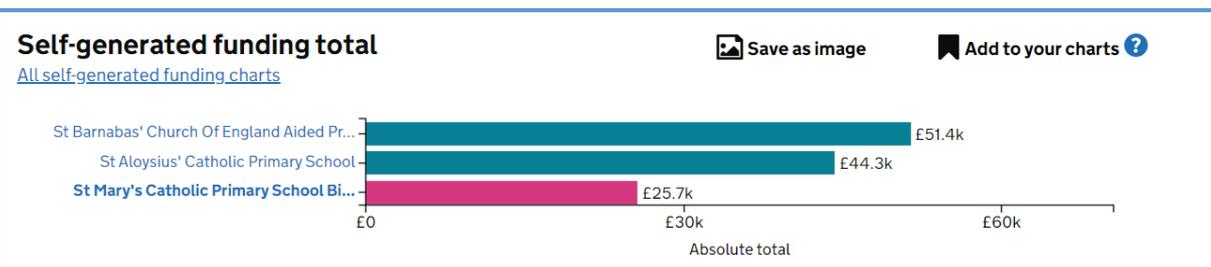
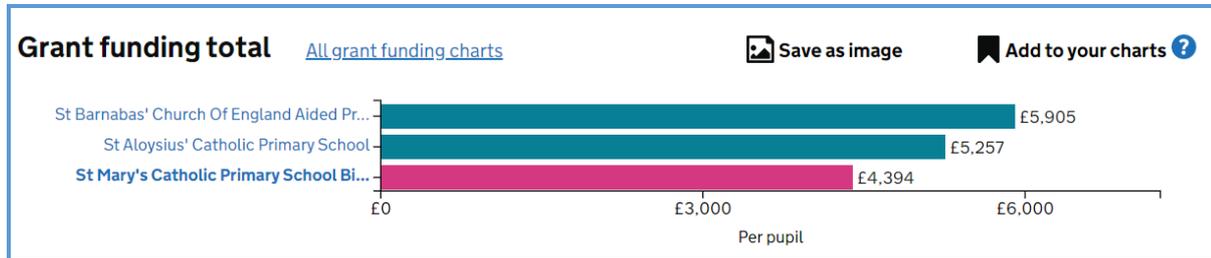
Forecast for pupil numbers for 22/23 and 23/24 are 225 and 232 respectively.

3. Benchmarking of Income and Expenditure

The website can select a benchmark group of schools, within the same LEA, which have similar FSM, SEN/EHCP and EAL characteristics. These benchmark schools are:

1. St Aloysius' Catholic Primary School
2. St Barnabas' Church of England Aided Primary School

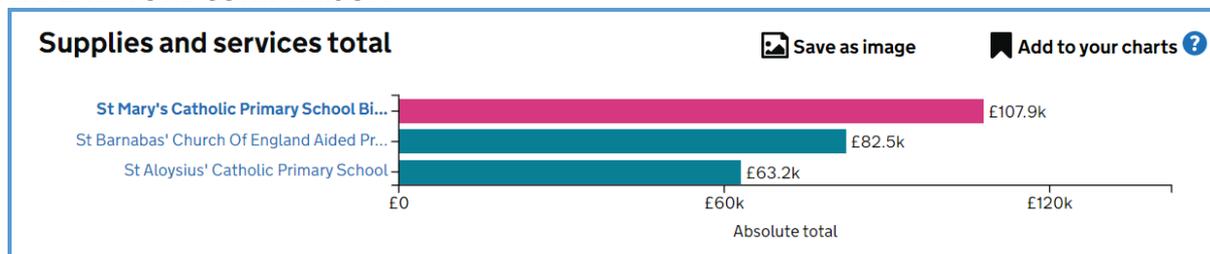
INCOME COMPARISON



Comments:

- Why do the other schools receive such higher amounts of grant funding?
 - *Why does St Aloysius receive almost £900/pupil more than St Mary's?*
- Are their opportunities for generating more self-funding?

EXPENDITURE COMPARISON



| School Name | St Marys | St Aloysius' | St Barnabas' |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Analysis Period | 2020 - 2021 | 2020 - 2021 | 2020 - 2021 |
| ICT learning resources | 29521 | 19446 | 17292 |
| Learning resources | 43619 | 28672 | 33092 |
| Educational consultancy | 11344 | 1688 | 8821 |
| Bought in professional services | 20566 | 10785 | 21182 |

Comments:

- Supplies and Services is the spend category which St Mary's spent significantly more than other schools:
 - *What are the drivers for this spend?*

APPENDIX B

Academisation Dialogue Plan

At the Foundation Governor's meeting with BDES (November 2021) it was communicated that the recent vote in September 2021 to not commence the Academisation process was not a rejection of the concept, but was due to a number of concerns which had not been fully resolved in discussions leading up to the vote. These are shown below:

What would St Mary's get for their 'Top Slice' payment

What would the school get back from the MAC in exchange for the Top Slice payment.

Teacher Vacancies

Regarding the number of Catholic leader vacancies in the Diocese. Can you provide any information regarding the difference between vacancies within the MAC and outside. Is there any evidence that recruiting Catholic leaders is easier in a MAC school?

Teacher Career Development

Are there examples of how career development and progression is enhanced by the MAC structure.

Examples of Curriculum/Teaching Best Practice being shared

Are there concrete examples of Quality of Teaching being improved through sharing of Best Practice

Pupil Number management

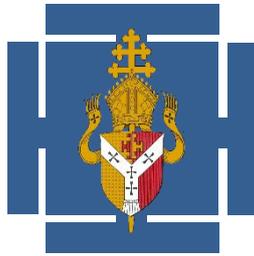
Examples of where a MAC had increased pupil numbers of a primary through an effective marketing strategy

It was agreed that communication and dialogue would continue between St Mary's Governors and other stakeholders. A plan was created in late November to facilitate this dialogue. Plan has recently been updated, and is shown below.

| | Who | Jan-22 | Feb-22 | Mar-22 | Apr-22 | May-22 | Jun-22 | Jul-22 | Aug-22 | Sep-22 |
|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Chair & VC to meet with PFMAC/BDES | CH/ST | | | | | | | | | |
| Chair and HT to meet with PFMAC/BDES | PP/CH | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish dialogue between St Mary's SLT and BDES/PFMAC | PP/CH | | | | | | | | | |
| 'Top Slice' and 'What we get' finance review - SLA | MOC | | | | | | | | | |
| BDES to provide examples of good practice for MACs & 'Protection of Catholic Education' | MOC | | | | | | | | | |
| FGB Meetings with PFMAC BoD/FL | All | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish dialogue with Chairs of 2 Primarys in PFMAC | ST | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish dialogue with Chairs of Oxford/Henley schools considering Academisation | ST | | | | | | | | | |

Updates

- CH/ST meeting with PFMAC & BDES on 16th Feb
- BDES to share following in Feb:
 - SLA agreement with PFMAC
 - Examples of Best Practice/achievements made by BDES MACs
- Contact made with Chairs of:
 - Sacred Heart, Henley
 - St Aloysius, Oxford



Archdiocese of Birmingham
Meeting between St Mary's Bicester and Pope Francis Catholic
MAC

VENUE: John Paul II Conference Centre

DATE: Friday 16th February 2022

TIME: 3.00pm

| No. | Item | Leading | Time |
|-----|---|---------|------|
| 1 | Opening prayer & welcome | CH | 5 |
| 2 | Aim of the meeting | MOC | 5 |
| 3 | PF MAC Vision and Strategy for next 3-5years | AW | 10 |
| 4 | The benefits of joining the PF MAC | FL / AW | 10 |
| 5 | St Mary's potential contribution to the development of PF MAC | CH | 10 |
| 7 | Plan for further engagement between PF MAC and St Mary's | All | 5 |
| 8 | Close and Prayer | AW | 5 |