



**Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting for Pulford Lower School, held on 22nd May 2024
6pm, school hall**

1.	Registration, Apologies and Prayer	Action
	<p>Present: Rev D Heather (DH), Mr E Price (EP - Chair), Mrs R Horsfield (RH) Mr A Perrott (APe), Mrs B Morley (BM), Ms A Parish (APa), Mrs E Smith (ES), Mrs T Rees (TR), Ms J Bradley (JB), Mrs M Akin-Esho (MA-E), Mr G Huskisson (GH), Mr B Webb (BW), Mrs N Barnett (NB)</p> <p>Mrs J Gudgeon (Clerk)</p> <p>Apologies: Mrs S Haines</p> <p>DH opened the meeting in prayer.</p>	
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests	
	No new pecuniary interests were declared by board members.	
3.	Matters arising from the last meeting's minutes	
	<p>DH updated the board regarding the ongoing initiative to encourage curriculum and lesson plan sharing amongst local lower schools with a view to reducing staff workload. LC2 is no longer a collusive group but there has been a meeting with other schools regarding History. The increase in the number of Academy trusts makes it more difficult as these have their own infrastructure. Whilst no major steps forward have been made, it is a work in progress. There is ongoing discussion with Herts for Learning, and Mrs Nurden has taken a lead on this.</p> <p>The Eco Summit occurred yesterday and was a positive event. The accessible roundabout has also been completed and is enjoyed by all.</p> <p>Links Networks visited last week to review the school's Wi-Fi provision and confirmed that there are opportunities to upgrade this, but they come at significant cost. A very rough estimate suggested it could be in the region of £20 – 30,000. It would make a significant difference so the school will look to fundraise for this. They need to take into consideration that upgrading the cables may mean some hardware also needs to be upgraded, which would be an additional cost. APa queried whether the school are in a contract with Links Networks or whether alternative quotes could be sought, and it was confirmed that this does not form part of the school's IT contract. She put herself forward to review and sense check quotes to ensure the school is getting the best option.</p>	
4.	Agree and sign last meeting's minutes	
	The board agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the previous meeting. EP signed the hard copy of the minutes and DH will file accordingly.	DH
5.	Chairs Report	
	<p>EP confirmed that no emergency actions have been undertaken since the last meeting.</p> <p>He urges governors to continue with subject link visits, ideally completing two per academic year. The spreadsheet on the Google drive is up to date showing most recent visit dates.</p> <p>He also highlighted that governors need to undertake spot check visits to confirm the policies are being followed and records up to date – for example Health & Safety, Payroll and Inventory. Safeguarding should also have regular spot checks.</p> <p>As soon as Central Beds publish their training schedule for the next academic year EP will circulate this and governors are encouraged to book.</p>	

	EP thanked governors for their support and work in an eventful year.	
6.	Headteachers Report	
	<p>Governors received the relevant statistics with the agenda for the meeting. Attendance remains a challenge but is still slowly increasing and is now above national average, but still lower than pre-COVID levels.</p> <p>The school meal uptake remains good.</p> <p>No exclusions have been made.</p> <p>GH queried whether there was any correlation with reports in the news that attendance is significantly lower on a Friday, but DH had not noted a particular trend.</p> <p>Some penalty notices have been issued for term time holidays.</p>	
7.	SIP Update	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communications <p>Despite concerted attempts it seems that there is no way of obtaining the analytics for the Google classrooms sites to see how much they are being accessed by parents. Alternative options come at higher cost which the school doesn't have the funds for. Suggestions to increase usage were to have a broader outline of current topics available on the website, with links to Google classrooms, or notifying parents when additional information or photos were uploaded. APa offered to assist parents who were having technical difficulties.</p> 2. Writing <p>This is discussed in the Curriculums & Standards Report circulated with the agenda pack.</p> 3. Staff Wellbeing <p>DH & Alison Quick have been attending a training program and the positive takeaway was that a lot of the action points are already in place at Pulfords. DH is aware that there is more to be done, particularly in relation to work/life balance, but it is difficult to manage. The training provider has generated surveys which will be distributed after half term. As a day-to-day consideration, staff are encouraged to consider each action, if it is having a positive impact, and if not consider if it is necessary. This is, however, difficult in practise. The main consideration is 'what does 'good' look like?' The key point is that all conversations need to be made with love, kindness and respect. The ever-increasing levels of negativity and aggression received from parents mean some staff are nervous to open emails on a Monday for fear of attack and this has a huge impact on wellbeing. It is difficult to find any course of effective action. At present the school just continues to reiterate how online communications can be taken differently than they are intended, so people should be considerate when sending emails. It was queried whether there should be a sign in reception reminding parents to remain polite, as in other industries, but most of the aggression is received via email rather than face-to-face. Ultimately everyone wants the same outcome, better staff wellbeing is better for everyone.</p> <p>The SLT are updating the Home-School Agreement. It was agreed that the updated Home-school Agreement will be signed by EP on behalf of the governors, increasing the visibility of the board and adding weight to the message. It is issued to parents when their children start school, and consideration was given to other opportunities to get the message across. The possibility of a video message, either by DH or EP, to welcome back in September was raised and will be considered.</p> 4. Parental engagement <p>Stress levels are now higher than ever nationwide. The way parents speak to staff has been affected and there are significant numbers of aggressive emails being sent to staff. Staff are considering how best to request parents unpack complaints made by children and gain perspective rather than firing straight at the teacher.</p> 	

	<p>Some positive feedback is received but people are quicker to send the negative. It is noted that one staff member is now spending most of the day meeting toileting needs. This takes them away from other areas they would previously have assisted with. At the same time parental expectation has hugely increased.</p> <p>5. Embedding school values The OFSTED and SIAMs reports confirmed that this objective has been met.</p>	
8.	Safeguarding Report	
	SH was absent so unable to present the Safeguarding report, but it was circulated prior to the meeting and there were no concerns or queries. DH confirmed that there are ongoing liaisons with middle schools to aid a smooth transition.	
9.	Committee & Subject Link Updates	
	<p>Appeals and Admissions committee – Not met.</p> <p>Discipline committee - Not met</p> <p><u>Resources Committee</u> APe confirmed that the budget was challenged in detail at the resources committee meeting and is recommended to the board for approval. The key risks have been identified and have been accounted for sensibly. It is clear that the school budget is incredibly difficult to balance, and the school is doing everything possible to protect frontline and support staff.</p> <p>The budget was ratified by the board.</p> <p>BW has been doing a large amount of work to streamline the Finance Manual. The result is that a lot of the governance and broader issues have been removed and are being collated in a new document, and this work is still ongoing. It was agreed that going forward the Finance Manual will be reviewed and approved annually by the Resources Committee and the new document will be reviewed at Full Board Meetings. It should be ready for review by the Autumn meetings.</p> <p><u>Curriculum & Standards Committee</u> BM referred to the report circulated prior to the meeting and confirmed that lots of questions were asked at the Committee meeting regarding the progression of students and how this is represented in the figures. It is very clear that staff are working hard on identifying needs and progression. The figures are not a great source of reference for overall progression data due to changing cohorts but are put to very good use by staff for the purpose they are intended in identifying individual needs.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the impact of having mixed year classes. DH will look into this. Pulfords is the only Lower school in LB with this model so there are none to compare with. The governors were encouraged to attend the staff meetings where the pupil gradings are discussed. The dates of these will be circulated.</p> <p>SEND report: ES offered huge thanks to TR and staff, especially Mrs Major, for the amount of work put into the SEND provision. Informal chats with parents have resulted in excellent feedback. ES is looking to set up an informal group, such as a coffee morning, for parents of SEN children to support and encourage.</p> <p>Subject Link Report: RE There were no questions regarding the report by NB. The only OFSTED recommendation to address is regarding assessment of RE. This is a national long-term issue.</p>	JG
10.	FGB Effectiveness Tracker	
	EP thanked ES for her work on this and ES commented that it would be a good tool to use for governors to hold themselves to account. It should be added to the agenda at each FGB to ensure it is kept up to date and remains effective. A couple of points to update were:	JG

	<p>EP is in conversation with the Chair of Governors at St Leonards Lower School. They are currently looking into joining a Multi Academy Trust. EP will liaise with them regarding the strategic thinking and feed back to the board.</p> <p>EP advised that the cost of having an external review was quoted at £370 +VAT. With the budget already tight and the positive feedback the board received from OFSTED, it was deemed unnecessary. The possibility of an external informal review was considered but was not recommended by Bex Howe. It is therefore highly important the effectiveness tracker and self-evaluation continue.</p> <p>DH advised that the board did undergo external review once in the past when funding was available. No major issues were identified at that point, and he feels the board works more effectively now.</p>	EP
11.	<p>Chair's 360 Appraisal</p> <p>BM summarised that the result of her conversations and feedback was that it is very clear the board values and appreciates EP's leadership.</p> <p>A few specific areas to highlight for discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training reminders: training is available, and the uptake could be increased. ● Individual meetings: some governors would appreciate one-to-one meetings with EP. ● Are there any longer-term issues that need to be considered, to ensure the board is thinking ahead and not just meeting things as they arise. EP is having a meeting to discuss this next term. ● Diversity: how can board influence/shape the school's commitment to diversity? 	
12.	<p>Policy Updates</p> <p><u>Governors Written Statement of Behaviour Principles.</u></p> <p>This is a statutory document. No concerns were raised, the only query being regarding the reference to discussion with pupils, which happened when the document was originally written. It was agreed to change this to past tense: 'was discussed with pupils'.</p>	
13.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Saints Alive Articles are always needed. APe agreed to contribute an article and was added to the list.</p> <p>MA-E announced her decision to resign from the governing board. The governors all offered their appreciation for her time and contribution to the board during her term.</p>	
14.	<p>Meeting Dates for Next Academic Year</p> <p>Resources – 25/09/24, 15/01/25, 30/04/25</p> <p>Curriculum & Standards – 08/10/24, 21/01/25, 06/05/25</p> <p>FGB – 23/10/24, 12/02/25, 21/05/25</p> <p>All meetings start at 6.00pm.</p>	
15.	<p>DH led the Grace to close the meeting</p>	