

Meadowside Community Primary School - Local Governing Board

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23.3.2023

Present: Phil Calrow (Chair), Stuart Wright, Adrian Burrows, Sarah Dixon, Jenny Gill, Gareth Harris, Kerry Woods

Apologies: Nicola Whyte, Claire Curtis

In Attendance: Alison Stokes, Alan Manuel, Dr. Carsten Kressel

Welcome and Apologies

Apologies had been received from Nicole Whyte and Claire Curtis.

Declarations of Interest

No further declarations of personal or pecuniary interest in the matters to be discussed were made in addition to those recorded in the register of interests.

Governing Board

Governor Training

Governors noted the following training activity: -

- Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Gill, Mr. Manuel and Mrs. Stokes had attended Safer Recruitment training.
- Mrs. Gill has been booked on appraisal training, to take place in May.
- Dr. Dixon had attended Ofsted training.
- All governors had completed cybersecurity training.
- The spring training session for governors was on the website, with an embedded link in the agenda.

Membership

Mr. Harris' term of office will end on 4.4.2023. He will notify the school of his intentions.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9.2.2023 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising / Action Log

The actions from the last meeting had been completed as follows: -

- Action 1 - Ms Whyte had completed Safeguarding training.
- Action 2 - Mrs. Gill's training in headteacher performance management is booked to take place in May.
- Action 3 - Governors had completed RPA cybersecurity training.
- Action 4 - Children's books will be brought to the Standards meeting.

Action 1: *Present children's books at the Standards meeting.*

Safeguarding / Welfare

Mrs. Stokes presented her report and highlighted the following points: -

- Staff have received training in attachment, trauma and mental health, as well as asthma care. Relevant staff have also been trained in medication awareness in education.
- Attendance is slightly above the national average; persistent absence has fallen to 18.7%, below the national average. Groups were reviewed, and attendance appears to be spread evenly across them. Attendance of groups is monitored regularly. Term-time holidays often are a factor contributing to persistent absence. One child was on fast-track prosecution. This process has been stopped. Four more children will be brought forward for fast-track prosecution shortly.
- Two blue letters and eight red letters have been sent for behaviour. In the autumn, all nine red letters related to incidents that occurred at lunchtime, whereas only five of the eight red letter incidents in the spring term took place at lunchtime. The school has taken steps to manage and prevent the type of situations that gave rise to several red letters in the autumn term. The incidence of blue letters appears unusually low. The situation is being monitored, and staff will be reminded of the procedures for dealing with repeated low-level behaviour.
- One suspension was imposed in the autumn for cumulative incidents. No suspensions have been necessary in the spring term.
- Safeguarding numbers are monitored carefully and are listed in the report. Particularly the number of child in need cases has risen significantly over the past year.
- Referrals are made for support as appropriate.
- Meadowside postcards are a useful tool.
- Coffee mornings continue. Outside agencies are invited regularly.
- The local authority Safeguarding audit report was positive.
- The number of children on the vulnerable risk register tapers off the higher they get in the school. This is thought to show the quality of support the families receive.

Governors asked the following questions:-

- Are there common names among the children receiving red letters? - Answer: There were some common names in the autumn term. This is being managed, and a behaviour plan was put in place for one child, with success.
- What escalation is possible beyond letters if behaviour does not improve or is too serious only to be dealt with by a letter? - Answer: There are incidents that merit immediate suspension or exclusion. Thankfully, these are rare. However, behaviour incidents have increased generally. If a certain number of blue letters is reached, meetings are held with the parents, and behaviour plans are an option. Where necessary, referrals to other agencies are also made to ensure adequate support.
- How often does the attendance officer attend? - Answer: She visits once every half-term.
- Do you know when families go on holidays in term-time? - Answer: Yes, they usually let us know in advance.

Ms Whyte had visited the school for a Safeguarding link meeting. She had prepared a report that Mrs. Stokes presented: -

- The vulnerable risk register was reviewed. Numbers are increasing.
- Support on attendance and Safeguarding is seen as exemplary and offered to other trust schools.
- Mrs. Stokes is being trained to become a Safeguarding supervisor, at the request of the trust.
- Early Help children were discussed. Referrals are made as required.
- Support for parents was discussed.
- Attendance was discussed.
- Five children in the main school have medical needs that affect their attendance.

Mrs. Stokes left the meeting.

Finance

Mr. Wright presented the financial update: -

- Since the meeting with Mrs. Gill, nursery income was included in the accounts, increasing the in-year surplus to £28k. This remains a conservative estimate.
- The school budget was reviewed in detail. The school still has a reserve of £150k. This money gives an opportunity for investment.
- £40k flood insurance payment has been received from the RPA. It will be used to replace resources that were damaged.
- A non-standard junction of cast iron gutter downpipes failed during a recent maintenance clean, leading to flooding in the photocopier room. The gutter junction has been repaired, but the gutter pipes will need to be replaced in due course.
- The Polish school continues to bring regular income.
- In-house catering of the trust has incurred a deficit of £1,867. As the catering is run by TCAT centrally, the school does not need to cover the losses.
- 56 children are in nursery at the moment, increasing to 66. This increase requires more staff to meet the prescribed staffing ratios. More recruitment will be required in the summer.

Governors asked the following questions: -

- Is the kitchen linked with debts that need to be recovered? - Answer: No.
- What is national tutoring funding? - Answer: It is funding from the DfE to pay for internal or external tutoring of disadvantaged children to aid Covid catch-up. The percentage of the employment cost of these tutors that is covered by the grant is reducing year-on-year. Initially, it was 95%, currently it covers 60%, and in the coming academic year, it can only be used to pay for 25% of the employment cost.
- What determines staffing ratios in nurseries? - Answer: Qualifications of staff and the number and age of children. The younger the children, the more staff are required.

Mrs. Gill gave the following update: -

- All income is received as expected. The school has also received Schools Supplementary Grant and an insurance payment for flood damage from the RPA.
- DP funding and claims are checked.
- Nursery income has increased due to a higher number of children using it.
- The pay settlements for support staff were included.
- The rest of the expenditure is as expected.
- A Debt Recovery Policy has been drafted for introduction, to recover unpaid debts from parents. It promotes positive actions to manage debt levels and encourages parents to ask for help if they find they cannot afford payments. The approach will be uniform for all types of debt, including breakfast and after-school club fees and dinner money. The policy also defines the mechanism for potential writing off of debts, including the writing off of old debts from former pupils. This mechanism will not be publicised.
- Debt management will be considered at trust level in future.
- Debt review will be a standing item in future link governor meetings with the finance team.
- The budget remains in a healthy position.

Premises, Health & Safety

Maintenance

Mr. Wright gave the following update: -

- Flood repair work and snagging is still ongoing.
- An extensive programme of works is planned, which falls into three phases: -
 - The school will get an energy efficiency survey to inform future investment.
 - Scheduled roof work and a survey for solar panels will be carried out.
 - Heat pumps will be installed in the summer.
 - The playground project will start in the summer: -
 - Nursery will receive shelters and dedicated, themed areas.
 - Year 1 and 2 will have a joint outdoor area and a canopy, which offers some shade and also enables continuous provision.
 - The main playground will get a new MUGA and a walking path with benches that can also be used for the daily mile run. In addition, there will be a stage, an area for board games, a big shelter, seating and planters, and an intricate climbing frame.
 - Work will be carried out over Easter and Whit, to be finished in the summer.
- The total cost of the playground project will be £190k. The trust has agreed a contribution of £150k, with the balance to be taken from school reserves.
- The trust has also awarded capital funding for three projects: -
 - CCTV
 - Toilet refurbishment and replacement
 - Replacement of the car park barrier with electrified gates at the outer edge of the site. The awarded amount of £10k may be too low to carry out this project, so that the school may need to contribute from its reserves.

Governors asked the following questions: -

- Can the playground still be used for sports day? - Answer: We will retain a running track on the playing field.
- Will the trees provide shelter? - Answer: Yes. In addition, the forest school will also be available for teaching.
- Do we anticipate further investment? - Answer: After some emergency expenditure in the first few years, we have been able to build a reserve for investment.
- Are these reserves typical? - Answer: They are fairly untypical for a school of this size and higher than in the other trust schools. We have managed the finances carefully. Furthermore, we receive dedicated support from the trust, which enables the headteacher to focus on school improvement. Mrs. Curtis will also have this support. Laura Fletcher is overseeing operations for primary schools.

Health & Safety Audit

Mrs. Woods gave the following update: -

- Five actions that were on the list during the last five years were selected at random and reviewed in detail to establish if they had actually been completed. It was found that all actions were either completed or in progress. Further actions from the list will be checked on a rolling programme.
- TCAT are now the duty holders for legionella.
- A meeting with Adele Partridge was held, an independent Health & Safety consultant. It identified the following additional actions: -
 - The fire protocol for the Polish school will be tested.
 - Personal evacuation procedures are required for all people with disabilities and will be developed.
- Six more members of staff have received first aid training. An update on first aid will be given.

Mr. Harris left the meeting.

GDPR

Nothing reported.

Staffing & HR

Mr. Wright reported that staff have had CPD for matters linked to the SDP, writing and language development. In particular, they received training linked to the curriculum in Real PE, Early Years maths, history, geography, as well as Safeguarding, safer recruitment, child protection, attachment and trauma.

Leadership training: Mr. Manuel receives training as deputy headteacher, Mr. Clay as SENCo.

Mrs. Stokes receives Safeguarding supervision training as referred to earlier in the meeting.

TCAT has linked up with Liverpool John Moores University for mentoring training.

A staff well-being survey received 32 anonymous responses out of the 44 staff working at Meadowside. The responses are very positive. One respondent indicated that they did not feel safe and supported in regards to Covid-19. This may reflect their personal experience during the pandemic. The school tries to support staff well-being. All staff are proud to be at Meadowside.

Governors asked the following questions: -

- What does an answer of "Don't know" signify? - Answer: It means that the question may not be applicable to their role or they have not been in Meadowside long enough to answer.
- Do we offer counselling to staff? - Answer: Yes, either by telephone or in person, as part of our occupational health contract.
- Was a comment made about the Covid-19 question? - Answer: No, but we can understand that some staff did not feel safe at the time, as they were required to come into school and work with children at close range.

A staff mental health room has been created.

The latest Sway training from the trust was uploaded. A link is embedded in the agenda.

Policy Review

Governors **agreed** the following policies: -

- Fire and Critical Incident Evacuation Policy - The policy covers fire evacuations as well as critical incidents including lockdown and bomb threats. A bomb evacuation and a lockdown will be practised. Dedicated sounders are in place.
- Debt Recovery Policy - The same model is used for seeking and pursuing payment related to all aspects where non-payment may occur. No child will go hungry despite debts relating to their school dinner account. The role of the finance link governor in writing off debts has been defined.

Governors asked

- How can SLT be contacted in an emergency ? Do you have walkie talkies? - Answer: We rely on mobile phones at the moment, but the introduction of walkie talkies can be considered.
- How do you record bomb threats? Is there a recording function on the office telephone? - Answer: We will review this.
- Do you have an emergency checklist on-hand at the phone? - Answer: Yes, it is in place.
- Have there been issues in relation to debt built up in relation to school meals? - Answer: There has been a small number of significant cases. We will start dealing with the major cases first, then proceed to less severe cases.
- Will children go hungry if they are in debt? - Answer: No, we will always provide a lunch but will take steps to recover money that is owed or refer the families for support.
- Will we monitor if children do not have a packed lunch because the parents cannot afford it? - Answer: Yes, we already do.

Action 2: Consider the introduction of walkie talkies for SLT, for use in an emergency.

Action 3: Review if the office telephone has a recording function.

Any Other Business

This meeting was Mr. Wright's last as headteacher before taking up position at another school after Easter. Governors thanked Mr. Wright for seven years of progress, achievement and resilience, and his contribution to the physical and educational development of the school. They also thanked him for creating a positive atmosphere and wished him well at his new school. Mr. Wright said that it had been a blessing and a privilege to be at Meadowside and thanked governors for their appropriate, helpful and supportive challenge. He added that the years at Meadowside had been the most challenging but the happiest time of his life so far.

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

18.5.2023, 4 pm, in person

13.7.2023, 4 pm

Action Log - March 2023

No.	Description	Responsible
1	<i>Present children's books at the Standards meeting.</i>	Mrs. Curtis
2	<i>Consider the introduction of walkie talkies for SLT, for use in an emergency.</i>	Mr. Wright / Mrs. Curtis
3	<i>Review if the office telephone has a recording function.</i>	Mr. Wright