

BURDETT-COUTTS AND TOWNSHEND FOUNDATION CE SCHOOL

Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 May 2018 at 5.30pm

Present:

Mrs N Bowles (Chair)	Mrs R Dyer (Headteacher)
Mr S Brickell *	Miss A Johnson*
Rev G Buckle	Mrs E Siddall
Mrs S Butcher	Mr W Walter
Mr P Carrivick*	Mr A Woodward (Vice Chair)
Rev C Duce	

Apologies: Ms L Playford [for part of meeting]

In attendance: Mr N Cressy (Bursar)
Mrs L McMullan (Deputy Headteacher)
Ms C Mehegan (Clerk)

1. Opening prayer; welcome and apologies

1.1 All present were welcomed to the meeting, which was opened with a prayer led by Rev Buckle. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Playford.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 It was noted that the Headteacher's/Bursar's report would primarily address matters relating to staffing structure, in which Mr Brickell had an interest. The agenda would therefore be re-ordered so as to allow Mr Brickell to depart before this matter was considered.

3. Minutes of meeting of 19 April 2018 and matters arising

3.1 Draft minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting. These were AGREED as a correct record.

3.2 Governors considered actions from the previous meeting, all of which were reported now to be closed.

3.3 GB vacancy (Min 5.2): It was noted that the Trustees had accepted the recommendation made. Miss A Johnson had been appointed to the Governing Body and would join the meeting shortly.

3.4 Links with other Governing Bodies (Min 8.14): It was reported that, in addition to the invitation to a gathering following the July meeting of the GB, it was intended that some informal meetings be arranged during this term, with a view to developing longer term joint working in the Autumn term of 2018. It was noted that the Headteacher had done some recent work on benchmarking of costs and that this might be one possible area for discussion.

[Clerk's note: Mr Carrivick joined the meeting at 5.40pm]

3.5 Foundation governors' meeting (Min 5.10, March): It was reported that Foundation governors had met as a group just prior to the current meeting and had considered the Foundation governor role and what they brought to the Governing Body. It was noted that the new framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools would be another possible area for sharing of ideas with other schools/GBs.

4. **Chair's and Vice Chair's reports**

4.1 Chair's report: A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. This covered a number of areas including membership matters, Ofsted preparation and meetings between the Chair and Headteacher, which governors were welcome to attend.

4.2 Mrs Bowles gave an additional verbal update, drawing governors' attention to the proposal that governors consider the establishment of a **hardship fund** for families and staff. There was some discussion of existing sources of support, such as charitable bodies, and of the nature of the Governing Body's responsibilities. It was emphasised that under no circumstances could public funds intended for the education of pupils be used for other purposes. It was recognised that there was scope for better signposting of existing sources of support (e.g. debt counselling agencies or the school's employee assistance programme).

4.3 It was noted that if any new scheme were to be set up, it would be necessary first to identify whence the money would be sourced, and then to consider clear criteria for support to avoid the scheme being unable to meet demand.

4.4 There was some discussion of possible sources of funds, such as charitable organisations or the corporate social responsibility schemes of successful businesses. It was AGREED that a letter seeking funding for specific purposes or projects would be drafted.

Action: W Walter

4.5 Governors were reminded that a **Ofsted Inspection Readiness** training session for governors had been scheduled for 21 June 2018 at 5.00pm.

4.6 Vice Chair's report: Mr Woodward gave a verbal update, focussing on **Governing Body effectiveness** and ways of working, and invited comments. The current year's new meeting model, with ten monthly meetings of all governors (as opposed to termly meetings of the full GB and of various Committees) was seen to have been a success. Link roles and the focus of link governors upon specific priorities in the School Improvement Plan had also been found to be helpful. There was thought to be scope for a more even distribution of the GB's workload, and succession planning was a matter for consideration. There was some discussion of the possibility of a model in which the GB had a Chair of Governors and two Vice Chairs, and how responsibilities might be distributed under such a model.

4.7 There was some discussion of **training**, including governors' induction and ongoing development. This year's skills audit had identified some areas of need and could usefully be repeated in the Autumn term of 2018. It was suggested that it might be helpful, in future, to invite governors to commit at the beginning of each year to specific areas for development (e.g. training relevant to their link governor roles). It was noted that online training for governors, including a programme which could be done in governors' own time, was available from the National Governance Association and AGREED that this should be purchased. There was some discussion of specialisation (e.g. individuals focussing on specific policies and policy areas), which had obvious advantages but also posed some risks in terms of succession planning. It was noted that the Governing Body shared collective responsibility for the school and the wellbeing and development of its pupils and that this could not be abdicated to individuals, although it was appropriate to assign leaders in certain areas.

- 4.8 There was some discussion of possible practical new ways of working, including:
- cover sheets for meeting papers which set out summaries of changes, proposals, or decisions needed
 - working on shared amendments to documents prior to meetings (e.g. via Google docs)
 - individual governors taking responsibility for specific items and asking questions prior to meetings or presenting items at meetings.

[Clerk's note: Miss Johnson joined the meeting at 6.15pm.]

4.9 Introductions were made for the benefit of Miss Johnson, who was attending her first meeting as a governor. Thanks were extended to Mrs Siddall, whose last meeting this was, for her three years of service to the Governing Body.

5. Reports from link governors

5.1 Governors were thanked for their visits and reports and were reminded that any outstanding reports from the Spring term should be submitted to the June meeting.

Action: Governors

6. General Data Protection Regulation

6.1 It was reported that new school email addresses were now in use for all Governing Body business and that the Clerk had now received training in relation to the new system for access to/storage of Governing Body papers. Some teething problems had been identified.

6.2 Mrs E Camplin had been designated the school's Data Protection Officer and it was intended that a report would come either to the next meeting of the Governing Body or to the July meeting.

7. Statutory policies/key documents for approval

- 7.1 A number of policy documents had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that the Governor Allowances Policy had been listed on the agenda in error, having last been reviewed and approved in October 2017.
- 7.2 The document relating to **Managing Unsatisfactory Performance and Capability Procedures** was a model document from the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS), previously adopted by the Governing Body. Its continued use was APPROVED.
- 7.3 It was noted that the **Governor Visits Policy**, as circulated, now included a section relating to the General Data Protection Regulation and some guidance on the writing of visit reports. The policy was APPROVED with no further amendments.
- 7.4 Governors considered the **Relationships and Sex Education Policy**, which it was reported had been amended slightly in line with changes to national requirements. Some examples were provided of the information taught at different ages and stages, using a national Scheme of Work. It was noted that RSE in the school was taught within a Christian context but with an awareness that the school's pupils came from a variety of backgrounds and had a very wide range of existing knowledge. Key themes included respect for oneself and others and non-exploitation. In response to a QUESTION, it was explained that parents did not commonly exercise their right to withdraw pupils from elements of the RSE curriculum: none had been withdrawn in the past year, with one withdrawal in the previous year. The possibility of including this information in the policy was noted, as was Mr Woodward's volunteering to be named as the 'link' governor for this policy. The policy as submitted, plus these minor amendments, was APPROVED. It was noted that there would be a new national framework for RSE from September 2018, meaning that a further review might be necessary early in the new school year.
- 7.5 Governors received and APPROVED the school's **Business Continuity Plan**, which was noted to include useful information on the action to be taken in the event of a number of types of emergency incident. In response to a QUESTION, it was confirmed that, although formal review took place on an annual basis, the plan was a 'living' document and was updated, for example, when contact details changed. It was reported that some sections from the plan were pinned up on the wall in the school office for use in case of incident. A recent example, in which the plan had worked well, was that the school had recently been one of a number of schools in London to receive an email containing a hoax bomb threat and an associated demand for money.
- 7.6 There was some discussion of general **policy content** and the **purpose of policies**. It was noted that it was intended as of September 2018 to include a section in each policy linking it explicitly to the school's 'vision'. It was recognised that policies did not exist for their own sake; it was important to be

able to identify what was achieved by policies. The possibility of reviewing policies alongside relevant data (e.g. RSE policy and data on safeguarding incidents with related features) was mooted.

[Clerk's note: Mr Brickell left the meeting at 6.50pm]

8. Bursar's report/Headteacher's report - School finances, staffing structure and process for making of redundancies

- 8.1 The Bursar's and Headteacher's reports were combined into a single item, with the content amended as compared with the agenda due to the significance of the changes to the staffing structure necessary in response to the school's reduced income, as reported at the previous meeting of the full Governing Body at which the budget for 2018-19 had been formally approved. To address the financial shortfall, it would be necessary to reduce the number of teaching assistants by six.
- 8.2 It was reported that the Bursar and Headteacher had met with a Human Resources adviser following the budget setting meeting. A proposed process and timetable for the redundancies had been circulated prior to the meeting, as had draft letters to be sent to staff members. It was noted that all teaching assistants would be at risk of redundancy, with interviews being held with existing staff for the roles which would remain in the new structure. Staff would initially be informed in writing, with group meetings held in the following week with support from union representatives. There was some discussion of the part to be played by governors in the process. It was noted that a governor presence at the meetings had the potential to be helpful, but that any governor present at the meetings could not then be part of any panel considering appeals against redundancy.
- 8.3 A QUESTION was asked regarding the position of teaching staff. Governors were reminded that the resignation deadline for the Summer term fell on 31 May. No redundancies of permanent teaching staff would be necessary, but some one-year contracts would not be renewed unless resignations created vacancies.
- 8.4 In response to a QUESTION, it was explained that voluntary redundancies of TAs were a possibility and that the cost implications of this, including the effect of pensions, had been considered. It was understood that the Local Authority would help with these costs. There was some discussion of the unusually high number of TA roles in the school's current staffing structure and the likelihood of redeployment elsewhere.
- 8.5 There was some discussion of the risks generally associated with significant changes to staffing structures. It was recognised that, if change management were not well handled, disharmony and unwanted staff departures could result. It was essential that the correct processes were followed, and good communication with staff was also of high importance. There was further discussion of the role governors could play in this. It was AGREED that Mrs Bowles would be involved in the process of informing and meeting with staff,

as her knowledge of and links with many members of the school's staff would, in any event, make her membership of any appeals panel inappropriate. In response to a QUESTION, it was explained that the school's staff were aware of the falling number of pupils on roll and of the reduction in the school's income, but that the extent of the necessary staffing reductions was likely to come as a surprise to many. The relevant unions had been informed and initial meetings had been held between them and the school's HR provider.

8.6 In response to a QUESTION, it was explained that it was not possible to predict whether any voluntary redundancies would be possible. The results of the staff survey showed that many members of staff were very happy working in the school.

8.7 There was some discussion of the methods and timing of informing staff and of the support available to them. It was explained that some, but not all, teaching assistants were members of the GMB or Unison. It was noted that it was vital that letters were provided in order that staff received all the necessary legal information. There might, however, be more flexibility regarding the processes around verbal explanations and meetings. Professional advice on this point could be sought if necessary.

8.8 Governors confirmed that it was formally AGREED that the reduction of the number of teaching assistants by six must go ahead, due to the school's financial position, and that delaying the process was not in the long-term best interests of staff or pupils. It was noted, however, that this was a painful decision and that the process must be handled with sensitivity, with staff being directed to available sources of support (including unions and the church) and appropriate time allowed for them to process this information. It was also noted that this would be a difficult time for senior leaders and that governors with relevant experience were willing to provide support as appropriate.

[Clerk's note: There was one abstention on the formal vote on the decision regarding the proposed six redundancies.]

8.9 There was further discussion of the timing of meetings with teaching assistants and with teaching staff. It was noted that, if the process were to begin as detailed in the document provided to governors in advance of this meeting, the formal consultation period would run until 23 June 2018. Information would be provided during this period regarding the posts available under the new structure. Interviews would take place in the week commencing Monday 9 July and staff would know whether applications had been successful by Monday 16 July. There was some discussion of the detail of the interview process, which would be undertaken by senior leaders, possibly with input from an adviser from the LDBS.

8.10 A QUESTION was asked about the reason for the distribution of teaching assistants across year groups in the new structure. It was explained that more assistance was needed in larger years groups and according to the identified learning needs of specific pupils.

- 8.11 There was some discussion of the longer-term projections for pupil numbers and the future impact on the school's staffing needs. Details of funding could not be known at this time, but some information was provided about the numbers of surplus primary places in the borough at present. It was noted that many schools across London had already made cuts in staffing. It was recognised that the demographic and financial position, due to local and national circumstances, was expected to remain challenging for some years to come.
- 8.12 There was some discussion of the need for schools to work creatively and strategically. Schools locally were already beginning to work together in sharing services. Further developments such as sharing of staff, federation of schools and possibly even closure of schools could be foreseen - although it was noted that the LDBS took a long-term view as regards pupil numbers and the need for schools and that it was not anticipated that any Church of England school would close.
- 8.13 In response to a QUESTION, it was confirmed that the budget for 2018-19 drew upon the school's financial reserves and that the aim was to ensure a balanced budget within three years.
- 8.14 It was reported that the Chief Executive of the LDBS was to visit the school on 14 June 2018 and that topics for discussion would include possible uses of surplus space to generate income for the school. Input had also been received from the Director of Education of the Bi-Borough service on a recent visit. It was noted that certain uses of school premises/land would require the agreement of the Trustees and understood that this topic was to be raised at a forthcoming meeting of the Trustees. There was some discussion of sources of funding and the degree of control available to the Governing Body as to how funds were spent.

9. Any other business

- 9.1 There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.45pm with a prayer led by Rev Buckle, followed by the Grace.

Summary of action points

Action (and relevant section in minutes)	Owner
Draft letter seeking charitable/corporate funding for specific projects/purposes (4.4)	W Walter
Submit any outstanding visit reports to June meeting (5.2)	Governors

Signed as a correct record by the Chair:



N. Bowles (Print name)

14th June 2018 (Date)