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ST NICHOLAS CE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 7pm held at the school

MINUTES

FGB ATTENDANCE TRACKER					
Name	Governor Type	5 Oct	7 Feb	14 May	20 Jun
Delia Boner	Associate Member	А	Α	А	
Ken Burgess	Foundation Governor			Р	
Stuart Burnett	Foundation Governor	Р	Retired 31 December 2023		
Simon Caunce	Foundation Governor	Р	Р	Р	
Anna Cherniaeva	Staff governor	Р	Α	Р	
Rizelle Crouch	Headteacher	Р	Р	Р	
Hilary Doherty	Foundation Governor	Р	Р	Retired	l 7/2/24
Dr Hannah Draeger	Parent Governor (moved to LA slot on 18/10/23)	Р	Р	Р	
Caroline Fleming	Foundation Governor	Р	Retired 31 December 2023		
Austin Finnegan	Parent Governor		Р	Р	
Dr Catherine Harvey	Co-opted Governor	Р	Α	Р	
Henry Loweth	Foundation Governor	Р	Р	Р	
Lucy Parr	Foundation Governor	Р	Р	Р	
Natalie Pepper	Parent Governor	Р	Р	Р	
Marie Price	Foundation Governor	Р	Р	Р	
Mary Jean Pritchard	LA governor (moved to Foundation slot on 18/10/23)	Р	Р	Р	
Charlotte McCrossin	Foundation Governor	Р	P	Р	
Rev'd Dennis Stamps	Foundation Ex-Officio	Р	Р	Р	
	In attendance				
Tracey Norris	HFL Education Clerk	Р	P	Р	

Р	Present
Α	Apologies provided

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N	Not present
0	Observer

1. Welcome and Prayer

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular, Ken Burgess to his first meeting as a Foundation Governor. Rev'd Stamp led the meeting in prayer.

2. Procedural matters

- a. Apologies: There were no apologies for absence. The meeting was quorate.
- b. <u>Declaration of any conflict of interest:</u> None relevant for this meeting. DS's ongoing conflict (church hall letting) was noted.
- c. Notification of other business: None raised.
- d. <u>Minutes</u>: The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 February 2024 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the moving of the section on the H&S audit out of the safeguarding agenda item.
- e. Matters arising: All actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in progress:
 - Review the implementation of the behaviour policy in the Spring term: see update at agenda item 4.
 - Staff wellbeing survey and results to be reviewed at the next meeting: on agenda, see item 5.
 - RC to find out of HFL could offer a workshop for parents on covid/impact on children and how to build resilience: RC contacted HFL and Tooled Up awaiting a response c/f.
 - LP to arrange SIAMs working party prior in Spring 2: see update at agenda item 8.
 - LP to share details of Diocese Carbon Cutting Webinar: completed.
 - Benchmark other local school meal charges/mark up: Completed, see below:
 - Manland: £3.55St Nicholas: £3.35
 - Other schools add between 5-10p to the cost of a meal
 - Include reference to PP eligibility in weekly newsletter: completed, see 4 May ebulletin.
 - Governors to write up visit reports from governor day in school
 - Governor photo board at school entrance to be reinstated. Governors to send headshot photos to RC: in progress. Awaiting photo of new governors.
 - Update home school agreement with reference to financial hardship and support available
 - Circulate equality action plan on Governor Hub: completed.

3. Finance Matters

The following documents had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Proposed budget 2024/25

Governors had also been sent via email a report from the Resources Committee summarising the main budget drivers, pupil numbers, H&S projects, staffing structure as well as KPI indicators. The Chair of the Resources Committee reported that:

With God there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can't overcome.

Through Him, all things are possible.' Matthew 19.26

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- The Resources Committee had met prior to the FGB to review the final draft of the budget in detail.
- Year-end position 2023/24:
 - o In year deficit: £43,404
 - o Carry forward as of 31 March 2024: £23,094
- RC had worked closely with the office manager to review every expenditure line to identify cost saving opportunities which had then been reviewed and agreed by the Resources Committee.
- Proposed budget 2024/25:
 - o In year deficit: £21,989
 - o Projected carry forward as of 31 March 2025: £3,062
- The school was not permitted to submit a deficit budget and it had taken a lot of work to achieve a positive carry forward as of March 2025.
- NP thanked her colleagues on the Resources Committee for their time, scrutiny and support; it was always a challenging to set a budget which balanced the school's financial sustainability against quality of provision/T&L and this year had been the most challenging to date.
- High risk areas to note:
 - Energy costs:
 - Actual cost in 2023/24: £18,054, budgeted for 2024/25: £23.372.
 - This amount would be tracked monthly by the officer manager.
 - Supply costs:
 - Actual cost in 2023/24: £21,970, budgeted for 2024/25: £25,830.
 - It was hoped that the actual spend in 2024/25 could be reduced through the use of HLTAs.
 - o Pupil numbers: falling roll directly impacted the school's income.
 - Reception numbers for September 2024 were currently at 15 (PAN = 22).

Questions and comments were invited:

- Q What plans were there to create/build up a contingency fund in the event of an unexpected rise in costs or urgent repair/maintenance works? Ans: This had been considered and was needed. Focus would remain on ensuring the school was full in all year groups; this was essential to maximising the school's income stream.
- An admissions strategy meeting had been arranged for Thursday 23 May at 1.30pm all governors were welcome to attend. NP would send out meeting agenda and accompanying papers (SWOT analysis etc) on Friday 17 May.
- The Resources Committee would review the staffing structure again at its July meeting given the bleak financial position projected for 2025/26, a restructuring would have to be considered although all efforts would be made to improve income streams first.
- All contracts had been reviewed.
- Staff costs had increased in real terms from 2023/24 to 2024/25 from £698,870 to £724,810, however this represented a reduction in the following KPIs:
 - Total staff costs as a percentage of income had fallen from 85% in 2023/24 to 83% in 2024/25.
 - Total staff costs as a percentage of Section 251 had fallen from 95% to 92%
- This was the result of the changes to the leadership structure effected in September 2023.
- The school and the Admissions Committee were responsive to in-year admission applications in all year groups and the school had been able to fill spaces in other year groups.

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- It was proposed that the class sizes for Sapphire and Diamond class should be increased to 34 to accommodate demand. This was higher than the limit of 33 set previously. Both classes have had 34 children in the past. The proposal was accepted by the governors.
- Q What had been the feedback from the school open days (for reception places)? Ans: LP had followed up all attendees with an email. She had received only positive feedback and messages from those parents who were keen to secure a place at St Nicholas. HD had spoken to parents with siblings who had decided on a different school for their younger child which suggested that the open day itself had been well received, there were other reasons why they had not selected St Nicholas.
- The parent survey had recently been issued and the feedback and results from this would be analysed and shared at the next meeting.
- Q What other R&M projects were in the pipeline/were a risk of urgent repair/replacement? Ans: The Resources Committee were tracking this. An external H&S walk round had been completed by AF and LP would book a date to complete an internal H&S walk later in the summer term. The quinquennial report survey had recently been completed.
- The Governors' Fund did provide the school with a contingency for some non-recurrent R&M. By the end of the summer term the fund would be approximately £70,000.
- Q What was the cumulative impact of falling pupil numbers? Ans: 25 x Y6 pupils would be leaving in July to be replaced by 15 x Reception pupils in September. The school's PAN was 154 there had been 148 pupils on roll in the October 2023 census (this was what the school's income for 2024/25 was based on) and this would drop to 143 in October 2024.
- Confirmed numbers for reception for September were 15.
- Q What was the likelihood of the risk that the 15 places allocated for reception were not accepted? Ans: RC was aware that three families had not yet accepted their reception place; St Nicholas had not been their first choice. RC was pleased to note that after showing a family in this situation round the school in person they had happily accepted the place (their first choice had been Manland School).
- Governors noted that the budget was based on projections for pupil numbers which might not be achieved – this was a risk.
- Action: Update the risk register re financial risk.

Governors unanimously **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2023/24.

- Governors noted the three-year financial position.
- Governors noted the submission of the SFVS to HCC in advance of the 26 March deadline.

4. Headteacher's update

The following documents had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

- Headteacher's report
- SEA spring visit report
- Open day attendance numbers
- School development plan updated 1 May

Questions and comments were invited:

Q What reasons had been given for the four families who had decided not the sent their younger siblings to St Nicholas? Ans: HD had contact 3 out of 4 families who had provided the following reasons for this decision: Res Com

- Perception that SEND provision was not good enough.
- Younger siblings were at nursery setting attached to other schools and wanted to stay with these friendship groups (Roundwood and Woodend).
- Marketing the school to existing families was key; RC was aware that existing families did not always attend the open days – they were now being targeted by RC.
- Governors were mindful that this created a further risk to pupil numbers; that the older sibling/s might be removed at some point if a dual drop-off became problematic.
- Q How were Y6 cohort finding the SATs exams? Ans: SATS exams were being held w/c 13 May and so far, there had been no issues. The cohort was calm, and all pupils had finished all papers so far. The reading paper seemed fair. The punctuation, grammar and spelling paper had been hard. Staff were supporting pupils with wellbeing strategies and de-stressing techniques.
- Q There was one reported incidence of bullying, had this been resolved? Ans: This was currently being addressed. RC explained the therapeutic approach to behaviour management as per the school's behaviour policy and the actions/steps put in place to monitor, assess and address bullying. These included:
 - Whole class work on anti-bullying;
 - Role play activities;
 - o Activism/agency: pupils were encouraged to talk about an issue straight away;
 - Monitoring by all members of staff including MSAs who recorded incidents during lunch time;
 - Adaptions made to unstructured time eg tidy up period creation of a "time-keeper" to provide structure; and
 - Assembly on role of MSA and behaviour principles.
- Governors suggested that parents in general were not aware of the amount of work staff invested in all aspects of behaviour and suggested that it might be a good PR exercise to share this in some way with the parent body. There was a common misconception by parents/pupils that "nothing was being done". RC would consider what information could/should be shared with parents and the best way to do this. It was not appropriate for other parents or pupils to be made aware of sanctions applied or when Level 3 behaviour letters were issued for example.
- All allegations of bulling were taken seriously and investigated.
- Pupils were also able to write down concerns and "post" these to staff through the post box system if they felt unable to talk about the matter face to face in the first instance.
- HL reported that he had received positive feedback from a parent in Sapphire Class who had raised a concern about bullying; a satisfactory resolution had been achieved.
- Consideration would be given to the following suggestions to improve communication between school and families re behaviour and bullying:
 - Updated behaviour leaflet on website;
 - Behaviour workshop for parents;
 - Weekly/fortnightly "insight" interviews with different members of staff on their work on pastoral or SEND matters; and
 - "Behind the scenes" promotional videos/material.
- Governors noted the reduction in the number of term time holidays being requested in the spring term compared to spring term 2023 and congratulated the school on its spring term attendance which was above national and Herts at 96.14%.
- RC noted that attendance was everyone's issue and class teachers were also playing a part in the school's promotion of attendance.
- PPG attendance was high at 94.3% and had shown an improvement on the previous term.

	Q How did absences compare to pre-covid when parents were not working at home and might have struggled more to arrange cover for a sick child for example? Ans: Attendance had improved from the immediate post-covid period when parents were more anxious about sending their children to school and could more easily accommodate them at home. Action: Attendance to be a standing agenda item. It was noted that the February half term holiday had been out of sync which much of the country which had made holidays (NB skiing) cheaper this year than in previous years which might have reduced the demand for term time holidays.	

		1
		Clerk
5.	Staff wellbeing survey results	
	RC reported that the deadline for the wellbeing survey had been extended to Friday 10 May, as a result the wellbeing committee had not had a chance to review or share the findings. This item would be carried forward to the next meeting. Google forms had been used to provide all staff with the ability to respond anonymously.	
	Action: Agenda item for next meeting.	
		Clerk
5.	Safeguarding update	
	The safeguarding audit, dated 19 March 2024, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The following was noted (see also HT's report):	
	 School context: 14 x pupils on SEND register 1 x CLA No child protection issues No CiN No suspensions or exclusions. Some action points had been identified in the audit and had been addressed/or were being actioned relating to staff training: RC had now completed safer recruitment training. Governors were reminded to ask a safeguarding question during a governor visit and examples of these were included on the governor visit pro-forma. Eg do pupils feel safe at school? Governors were required to complete safeguarding training as a matter of priority when joining the governing body, this would then need to be renewed every three years. The training link governor, HL, tracked this and would share a summary of training undertaken at the next FGB meeting. Action: Safeguarding to be a standing agenda item on all committee meetings. Action: Governors to sign (in paper or on Governor Hub) the declaration that they had read KCSiE and the school's CP policy (annual declaration in September and also at time of joining the FGB). Action: CP policy and KCSiE guidance to be on policy schedule for September each year. The spring term safeguarding report would be shared with the safeguarding link governor shortly. 	

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All

7. Committee Q&A

Committee minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting (where available) and matters to escalate were noted:

- a. Resources Committee held prior to FGB on 15 May
 - Focus had been on budget setting and cost comparisons with previous year.
 - Quinquennial survey: minor actions only identified.
 - Approval had been received from the Diocese for a capital grant to replace the kitchen equipment. The school would contribute 10% of the cost.
 - There had been no news on the boiler grant application which had been made at the same time. This had been chased by the school.
 - HL volunteered to join the kitchen working party.
 - An asbestos survey would be carried out to avoid any delays once the project had started. Q Why doesn't the school already have an asbestos log? Ans: It does, this was for the kitchen which was located in the church hall. The cost was £300, and the Church had offered to contribute 15% of this.
 - Q Was the boiler still functional? Ans: Currently yes, and it was possible to still buy spare parts for the boiler.
 - The Committee had corresponded via email to remain alert and aware of premise/H&S matters given the lapse of time between meetings (the last formal meeting had been on 23 January 2024).
- b. School Effectiveness committee held on 12 February 2024
 - See minutes uploaded to Governor hub:
 https://app.governorhub.com/document/66336a20c9b63b4830fe6c26/view
 - Review of pupil progress meetings, some parent governors had been unaware of the frequency and depth of these meetings. These were held termly and provided an opportunity for the class teacher to discuss the progress and attainment of every pupil in their class with the headteacher. Gaps/barriers to learning were identified and intervention strategies agreed and reviewed.
 - Consideration was being given to holding a pupil progress event of some kind for parents with the PTA providing refreshments/governors on hand to collect feedback etc.
- c. Admissions committee

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- Formal termly meetings had been replaced with a more flexible and responsive approach (zoom calls or email correspondence) to enable decisions on in-year admissions to be made as quickly as possible.
- The committee met several times a term on this basis.

d. Communications working group

- There had been no formal working group meeting during the spring term. The focus had been on the promotion and organisation of open days.
- Communication needed to be an agenda item for all committees as improvements and developments in communication was key to maintaining constructive relationships with all stakeholders.

8. Governor Business

a. Committee composition:

- There were currently no vacancies and the appointment of Ken Burgess as a foundation governor (29 April 2024 28 April 2028) was noted.
- Rev'd Dennis Stamp would be leaving midway through the summer term when he relocated to a parish in Oxfordshire. This ex-officio post would be filled as and when a replacement had been appointed by the Diocese.
- LP was in regular contact with the governance team at the Diocese who encouraged the Foundation Governors to maintain and strengthen links with the local PPPC.
- b. Governor Visits: The following governor visits had been made since the last FGB meeting:
 - English: Natalie Pepper & Mary Jean Pritchard report not yet circulated.
 - Early years: Lucy Parr see report on Governor Hub.
 - French: Lucy Parr report not yet circulated.
 - It was agreed that the annual summary of governor visits would not be collated for the July meeting but that it would be good to track link visits to ensure all subjects were covered – see table at end of minutes.
 - It was noted that governors could record any visit to the school as evidence of governor impact and engagement, eg attending assemblies, collective worship etc.
 - In the first instance, governors should contact the subject leader/class teacher to arrange a mutually convenient date/time for a visit. The governor visit form was downloadable from Governor Hub: https://app.governorhub.com/document/657c2489aba47726c6cd7fc1/view
 - Link visits could take the form of a pupil voice session, book look, observing a lesson, discussion with subject leader on action plan depending on time/availability.
- c. <u>Governor roles:</u> The following roles were agreed/re-deployed:
 - RE link governor: vacant when DS leaves Action: Governor to be appointed.
 - Safeguarding: Catherine Harvey and Hannah Draeger
 - SEND: Hannah Draeger and Marie Price.
- d. <u>Training:</u> The following training had been undertaken since the last FGB meeting:
 - Austin Finegan: Safeguarding children 1 May 2024
 - Austin Finnegan: Prevent training 3 May 2024
 - Lucy Parr: Strategic governance to better serve underserved learners 27 March 2024

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- Lucy Parr: Chair's strategic briefing 5 March 2024
- Suggestion for in-house training subject: Vision. Values and strategic direction to include bespoke approach on admissions/school promotion/PR.
- RC was attending the HCC Small School's Training Programme and noted that many other village/church schools were in a far more vulnerable position re pupil numbers and financial sustainability than St Nicholas.

Chair

- e. <u>SIAMS Working party: next steps</u>: The following was reported:
 - The working party comprised: RC/LP/DS/HL/KB.
 - The SIAMS SEF had been shared as a Google Document to allow comments to be added.
 - The school was not on the SIAMS inspection list for 2024/25.
 - An action from the SEF review was to make the school's vision and values strapline more prominent and standardised on all school documents including its policies. The links between the school and the church needed to be well evidenced and documented.
 - A question on the school's Christian Ethos would be added to the Governor Visits form for governors to ask pupils.
 - Action: RC to share proposed formatting of SMSC policy for governor approval.

RC

9. **Policy Review**

The following policies had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved (having previously been reviewed at committee level):

RC

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a.	Accessibility policy: subject to comments from CH being incorporated – the policy did not currently acknowledge the stairs in the building which made accessibility to the top classrooms more challenging.
b.	Alcohol, drugs and gambling at work policy: comments from CH had been included.
c.	Attendance policy: subject to the comments made by MJP being incorporated and the updated policy being re-circulated by RC.
d.	Equality action plan
e.	Equality policy
f.	SMSC policy: subject to the change in terminology from "mantra" to "motto".
g.	Whistleblowing policy
h.	ECT policy
i.	School uniform policy
j.	Teaching and learning policy
An	y other business
a.	Governor photo board: governors were content for the school office to use the photos taken for their school ID badges to be used on the Governor Who's Who board.
b.	<u>Book prize</u> : MJP had taken over this role from Delia Bonner and asked for approval from governors for the governor prizes to be funded from the Governor's Account.

c. Rev'd Stamps: Governors and the school thanked Dennis Stamps for his support and guidance over the last 12 years. He would be much missed.

This was **APPROVED**. RC confirmed that she would ask teachers to nominate pupils and would share the details with MJP who would then contact the parents and arrange the purchase of

10. **Closing prayer:** Rev'd Stamps led the closing prayer.

prizes (books).

11. **Date of next meeting:** Thursday 20 June 2024 at 6.45pm - school council to join the meeting

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Summary of actions arising from the meeting				
No	Item	Who	Status	
1	Resources committee to update the risk register re financial risk – this was now high.	Res Committee		
2	Standing agenda item for FGB meetings: Attendance	Clerk		
3	Add staff wellbeing questionnaire results to next meeting	Clerk		
4	Safeguarding actions:			

9.

	 Safeguarding to be a standing agenda item on all committee meetings. Governors to sign (in paper or on Governor Hub) the declaration that they had read KCSiE and the school's CP policy (annual declaration in September and also at time of joining the FGB). CP policy and KCSiE guidance to be on policy schedule for September each year. 	Committee chairs All governors Clerk/RC	
		Clerk/NC	
5	Chair to identify governor to take on RE link role	LP	
6	RC to share proposed formatting of SMSC policy for governor approval (re prominence of school's strapline/biblical text)	RC	
7	RC to make changes to the following policies and re-circulate: Accessibility Attendance SMSC	RC	
	For summer term (from previous mee	ting)	
8	Review of maths progress/attainment in Y5 and Y6 – impact from change to teaching of maths – agenda item for FGB in summer term.	RC/Maths subject leader	

Governor Link Visits Made During 2023/24 https://app.governorhub.com/g/stnicholascofevaprimaryschool/docs/654118cd10282694ff41a25f					
Class	Focus	Governor	Date		
INSET day	Staff safeguarding training	Catherine Harvey	1 September 2023		
INSET day	Staff SDP session	Natalie Pepper	1 September 2023		
Garnet	Phonics	Hannah Draeger	6 November 2023		
Sapphire	Maths	Austin Finnegan	15 December 2023		
Emerald	Maths	Charlotte McCrossin	15 December 2023		
Playground	Behaviour	Charlotte McCrossin	15 December 2023		
Diamond	English	Dennis Stamp	15 December 2023		
Garnet	Maths and phonics	Dennis Stamp	15 December 2023		
Playground	Behaviour	Dennis Stamp	15 December 2023		
Topaz & Diamond	Teaching and learning	Hilary Doherty	15 December 2023		
Sapphire	Maths and assembly	Mary Jean Pritchard	15 December 2023		
Topaz, Garnet and Diamond	SEN, Maths and English	Lucy Parr	15 December 2023		
Whole school	Safeguarding	Catherine Harvey	15 December 2023		

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Emerald	SEN	Hannah Draeger	15 December 2023
Garnet	EYFS provision (indoor and outdoor)	Lucy Parr	12 March 2024
Topaz	Teaching and learning	Lucy Parr	12 March 2024
Topaz	SEN	Lucy Parr	20 March 2024