



**SWANMEAD COMMUNITY SCHOOL
MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING
HELD ON**

Thursday 26 November 2020 from 6.00 p.m. using online Zoom Software

Present: Marian Gamper (MG); Jesse Pattison (JP); Davyd Muxworthy (DM); Mark Cook (MC), Andrew Whitfield (AW) Duncan Perks (DP); Dean Aspinall (DA), Vicki Stacey-Masters (VS-M); Kate Murdoch (KM) (from Item 027) and Mark Walker (MW) (Headteacher).

In attendance: Mel Hillman (MH), Independent Clerk to the Governing Body.

2020_21/021 Apologies for absence: Kate Murdoch (KM) had offered apologies in advance for a late arrival. These apologies were accepted. The meeting was quorate.

2020_21/022 No pecuniary interests* were declared in this meeting's agenda items.

2020_21/023 Minutes of the last full Governors meeting, held on 22 October 2020, were agreed as an accurate record. These were signed by the Chair of Governors. It was agreed that the thanks of the Governors be passed onto Sue Spurway for covering as Clerk. **ACTION: MW**

2020_21/024 Matters Arising* -

There were no matters arising.

2020_21/025 Governor Business

- a. Vicki Stacey-Masters was welcomed to her first meeting as a Co-opted Governor. The Clerk would deal with the paperwork. **ACTION: MH**
- b. Mel Hillman was welcomed as the new temporary Clerk to the Governors for the remainder of the school year.
- c. The Chair had circulated the notes of the recent Chairs' Briefing.
- d. The Clerk had joined the recent Clerks' Briefing on behalf of his other schools and would circulate the presentation and notes. **ACTION: MH**
- e. There had been no training or link sessions undertaken.

2020_21/026 Finance Update

- a. The Pay & Performance Committee had met on 4 November 2020. The next meeting would be held on 2 December 2020 and would be supported by Mark Griffin, an Executive Officer with SASH.
- b. There was nothing further to report.

2020_21/027 Headteacher's Reports and Updates

The Headteacher reported on the following items using an onscreen presentation:

- a) COVID19. The use of facemasks in school had been confirmed. It was a legal requirement for secondary age children, so the school had decided all pupils would be required to wear masks. The Headteacher confirmed the areas they must be worn. There was an additional cost for the supply of masks.

Signed as being a true record Chair

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- b) Marquee. A marquee had been purchased and erected in the quadrangle to improve additional outdoor covered space. **One Governor queried the cost of the purchase and how it would be paid for.** The Headteacher confirmed the costs of this purchase (£1,300) and portaloos (£800 per month) would be included in a claim to the DfE in due course.
- c) Teachers in their own classrooms. Consideration had been given to allowing teachers to remain in their own classrooms with children moving around the school following a strict one-way system. This had been paused but would be reconsidered in the new year.
- d) Self-Isolation. There had been one case reported and the child was off school. Other children and staff had been identified as contacts. The isolation had been confined to one class and had involved 5 staff and 28 children for 14 days. The Headteacher had been informed of the isolation on a Sunday morning and came into school to make the necessary arrangements which had worked brilliantly including a revised timetable involving some working from home. The teacher, Rachel Cox, had worked hard to maintain a full curriculum for those children. The Chair commented that it had been a tribute to the organisational skills of the Headteacher that it had worked so well. **One Governor queried how many children had not been able to access online work at home.** The Headteacher replied that one child had been affected and this would require further consideration for future lockdowns and isolations.
- e) Staffing. Coaching Training had been undertaken during the November INSET Day. This had demonstrated a wide range of skills and personal attributes across the staff which would be of benefit to the education of children.
- f) Changes of Staff. The Headteacher outlined changes to members of staff including the departure of Mark Lees from the end of term after 17 years. He was taking up an advisory post with Dorset Council. The backfilling arrangements were confirmed. The Headteacher also reported that he would be taking some paternity leave in April 2021 as his wife was expecting their first child. He was congratulated on this news.

2020_21/028 Restructuring Update

The Headteacher reported that the CISP Headteacher's Meetings were continuing to be held and the discussion continued to be at a professional level with careful listening to views and an empathetic attitude to each other.

The formal consultation process had opened on 12 November 2020 and would run to 10 December. It was known that some parents and staff had responded so far. The Parent Governors had sent out a letter to parents to aid their thought processes in the matter. The Headteacher had also held an online Parents Forum with 32 logged on. He had appreciated the fact that some staff and governors had joined in as well. Overall, he felt it had been a positive experience but considerable anger and anxiety had been expressed. **One Governor asked if he would repeat the process?** The Headteacher replied that it would require careful consideration and handling as not to impose his opinions and views onto parents.

It was known that there had been considerable recent social media activity. This was unofficial, but had started to display considerable joint opposition to the proposals in both the Ilminster

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and Crewkerne areas especially around the possibility of mixed year teaching in some of the current First schools.

There had been a Staff 'Interface' with the LA but this had been little more than staff writing questions in a text box and some officers answering them (or not, in some cases). There had also been a Parent Interface with 72 parents joining in under the same conditions.

There were still many questions over the Impact, Consultation process, Timing, Money, Capacity and Willingness to continue the proposals.

In a wide-ranging discussion, the following points were made:

- The Staff Interface had been frustrating as questions had not been answered in some cases. The Headteacher had handled the meeting in a professional manner. There had been concerns about comments made by representatives of other schools. There did appear to be joint resistance growing in both towns.
- The Chair commented that there had been negatives responses from Chairs of the other schools relating to the expanding the timeline of the process, mainly due to the constraints of COVID-19.
- The Headteacher felt that the schools in Crewkerne would have problems changing but for Swanmead it could require 18 months to resolve staffing, structure, curriculum and premises. There could be major changes required. The timeline would not be an issue but the timing during COVID-19 was poor.
- For First schools, the teachers in the Crewkerne area would probably be ready to proceed for April 2021.
- **One Governor asked what the 'end game' was for the school?** The Headteacher replied that in reality, no one at the LA would take much notice of the comments of the school staff and governors. It would require community action. The proposals were being based on financial issues and it was known in cases in other parts of the county, these had been resolved in the past. The answer could be one new Trust for the area. **The same Governor asked how the school could gain community support?** Another Governor commented that it had been discussed at the previous meeting and it had been agreed that the Parent Governors would circulate a letter to all parents. This had not tried to tell the parents what to do but to try to engage them in the process. There had been a pretty good response. The success of the consultation would depend on a ground swell of opposition within the community. The Chair thanked the Parent Governors for sending out the letter.
- It was confirmed that, up to the previous evening, 139 people had signed the Facebook online petition. Some governors felt that was not much more that they could do at the present.
- **DP outlined the process he had led in the past against the local council to overcome plans to build 400 new houses in the town. He agreed to share the details with Governors. There would be a need to say to people – 'if you believe in this, we can do it!'**
ACTION: DP
- It was agreed that a follow up letter and text alert be sent out in the next week on behalf of the Parent Governors which would 'make a fuss' about completing the consultation form. The Headteacher should not be mentioned but governors should proof-read the document before it went out. This should help generate the level of support needed to challenge the LA'S Proposals.
ACTION: MW

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- A Governor asked if there was an Ombudsman who could be contacted to express concerns about the lack of engagement by the LA in the consultation process. DP replied that he had experience in dealing with the Local Authority Ombudsman and would provide details. **ACTION: DP**
- The Chair commented that she had written to the local MP, with no response.

2020_21/029 SEND Update - No update was provided at the meeting.

2020_21/030 Policy Review and Renewal –

- a. The Whistle Blowing Policy previously circulated, was presented to Governors. All Governors agreed to adopt the Policy

2020_21/031 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

KM and AW withdrew from the meeting at this point.

2020_21/032 Safeguarding Presentation.

The Headteacher gave a short onscreen presentation on Safeguarding which had been used during staff training earlier in the term. The following points were made:

- Physical and Mental Health had been added to the definitions of Safeguarding.
- The key message remained that Safeguarding was 'everybody's business and everybody's responsibility'. There was a need to communicate concerns through the correct channels.
- The LA audit return would need to be returned to the LA by February 2021.
- There would be increased training opportunities for staff and governors.
- All Governors should read and sign that they have done so, the 2020 version of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' **ACTION: ALL**
- The types of Abuse included Sexual, Neglect (the most common), Physical and Emotional.
- There was a Neglect Toolkit covering six areas of need for children ie Physical Care, Health, Safety & Supervision, Love & Care, Stimulation & Education and Parental Motivation. There were subdivisions within each category. In the past 12 months the school had witnessed issues in areas such as food, clothing, safe sleeping arrangements, children left to supervise younger children for long periods, adult behaviour and substance abuse. There were four levels of action with Level 3 a major concern and Level 4 a major safeguarding issue.
- Attention was also drawn to the increasing presence of County Lines drug gangs operating in the county. There were 52 known Lines operating in or through Somerset. It was probable that some pupils had some contact.
- The signs of child exploitation were shown and would continue to be updated through the year.

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- **One Governor asked if there would be other items added to the audit list.** The Headteacher replied that there would continue to an in-school focus. There were some complex and challenging issues with a small number of families. There was still work to be done. The Chair reminded the Headteacher of the need for continuing action over bullying. He replied this was still a priority but COVID-19 requirements were intervening.

Meeting closed: 7.20 pm

Next meeting – Thursday 21 January 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

Signed as being a true record Chair

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