

SIR JOHN CASS'S FOUNDATION PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Governing Body held on 16 March 2016 at 4:00pm

Membership

Mr D Alexander*	Parent
Mr J Fletcher	Local Authority
Mr C Henry*	Foundation LDBS
Ms A Godas*	Parent
Mr D Hogben*	Foundation - Sir John Cass's Foundation
Deputy H Jones*	Local Authority
The Revd L Jørgensen*	Foundation - ex-officio
Mr E Keene*	Foundation - Deanery Synod
Ms H Khan*	Staff
Mr A Mullee*	Foundation - Sir John Cass's Foundation
Mr M Piper*	Foundation Parent – St Botolph's PCC
Mrs J Welsh*	Support Staff
Mr T Wilson*	Head
Mr D Williams*	Foundation
Mr A Wright*	Foundation Parent – LDBS
Vacancy	Foundation Parent – Sir John Cass's Foundation

*denotes attendance

In attendance

Ms H Franek	Clerk to the Governors
Ms S Laney	Deputy Head
Mr M Paddon	School Business Manager
Ms S Whitehorn	Aldgate Project
Mr G Mehrtens	City of London Academies Programme

PART A: PUBLIC ITEMS

1. Opening prayer

Mr C Henry opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Apologies

An apology for absence had been received from Mr J Fletcher and from Mr D Williams for lateness.

3. Declarations by Governors of any personal and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Dates of forthcoming meetings

- a. Solihull Approach training at 9:00am on 11 April. All governors are welcome.
- b. Finance Committee on 27 April
- c. Curriculum Committee on 8 June
- d. Full Governing Body on 29 June
- e. RAISEonline training on 6 July in the afternoon (thanks to Mr C Henry)

5. Minutes of the previous meeting; minutes of committees and updates (circulated)

- a. Minutes of the autumn term full governing body and matters arising
Page 3, item 6b, the RAISEonline report is available on the secure area of the school website.
Page 4, item 7a, governors' attendance at full governing body and committee meetings is available and will be circulated with the papers for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the governing body of 25 November 2015.

- b. Minutes of the spring term Finance Committee.
Noted and received
- c. Minutes of the spring term Curriculum Committee
Noted and received
- d. Minutes of the Children's Centre Advisory Board and associated documents
The Advisory Board is now operational and its work is having a positive effect.
Received

6. Approve policies from committees

- a. School Finance Manual
The manual has been discussed at the Finance Committee and is based on best practice guidance and advice from the City of London (CoL).

AGREED: to ratify the School Finance Manual for the 2016/17 financial year.

7. Governance and monitoring

The Head thanked governors for attending the review of standards day, which focused on pupil voice and special educational needs (SEN). Governors were reminded to complete a form for each visit paid to the school.

Mr D Williams arrived at 4:15pm and was welcomed back to the governing body.

Mr A Wright is taking the lead on training. Governors were reminded that online training is available at ModernGovernor:

<https://www.moderngovernor.com/#sthash.hFc8H8PX.dpbs>

Ms J Welsh reported that the induction pack for new governors is almost complete.

A notice regarding the Foundation parent governor vacancy was placed in the school newsletter and a letter was sent to all parents. Three applications have been received and will be sent to the Sir John Cass's Foundation.

Governors were reminded to complete the skills audit and annual business interest form.

Action: e-mails to be sent to governors whose skills audit and annual business interest forms are outstanding.

10. Aldgate project and developments around the school

It was agreed to bring this item forward on the agenda.

a. ~~Presentation on the project from Ms S Whitehorn~~

Ms Whitehorn said that the project was progressing well and the southern halves of the scheme, including the enhancements around the church, are due to be completed in September.

The street is due to be opened on 30 April. There will a route for lorry deliveries with gates across the kerb. In September the east bound carriageway will be closed and the footpath and kerb will be re-built.

The pavilion is not progressing to programme and will not be complete until Christmas. Work in that area could continue into next year and should be completed by the summer.

The Head said that the Finance Committee had discussed resources for play. There was concern that the school's involvement in the Aldgate project had stalled and governors wanted to know about equipment and landscaping. There was also concern about security and the Head had met with the contractors about the possible consequences of a lapse in security.

Governors were informed that it has been difficult to get contractors and that the work on the café has come in higher than budget. A budget has been allocated for play equipment for the active arts space and the school is viewed as a major player in the construction of the play space and play strategy. The draft strategy has been written and will be sent to the school for comments.

The Head said that the school was concerned that there will be a rotating system of play equipment for the active arts space and whilst there are different views, it was regrettable that there will not be any fixed equipment in a growing residential area.

Ms Whitehorn said that it was recognised that people of all ages may want to use the space. The project has considered the likely usage at different times of the day, including by office workers, students and children. It was governors' view however that children would be the most regular users. Ms Whitehorn agreed to feed back the strength of governors' feelings on the issue.

Replying to questions, Ms Whitehorn said that there are no plans to erect hoardings and that the City Police are responsible for dealing with cyclists using pathways. The Head said that he would convey the observations about the number of third parties working in the area and the seemingly low standards of security to the contractors.

Governors thanked Ms Whitehorn for attending and expressed thanks to the CoL for the play space that will be provided.

b. Concerns about the Mitre Square development

The Head advised that Mark Paddon, SBM, has reported concerns about the noise levels, vehicles blocking the pavement and parking on Mitre Street. There are air vents pointing at the playground and the school is asking for assurances about their impact.

The school is concerned to ensure that emergency vehicular access is not compromised and there was a suggestion that a letter from the governing body to the CoL could be considered.

8. School Expansion and reconstitution

The Chair said that there was nothing to report from correspondence with the Foundation. A tripartite meeting with the CoL and Foundation will take place in April. The CoL still has the extension plans for SJCP.

Mr Mehrtens said that there has been a government announcement that every school will become an academy by 2020 or have a plan to convert by 2022. The main reason for the school not converting to date has been the significant reduction in funding that would have resulted. Historically, the CoL has received more funding for education than any other local authority. Work undertaken by the London councils and the F40 pressure group on Fairer Funding, has estimated that the reduction of the DSG (Dedicated School Grant) to the CoL may be between 47% and 38%. The DfE is currently consulting on Fairer Funding with a view to its introduction in 2018/19, which LA's expect will be on a phased basis.

The central Community & Children's Services in the CoL will be affected by the funding changes.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has spoken of the future in terms of academy chains and economies of scale. The CoL is planning to have ten academies by 2019. This is the context for the school.

Mr Mehrtens said that applications for converting to academies are considered in September and March and that there could be financial advantages in converting earlier rather than later.

In March 2013, there was a proposal for the school to expand to two forms of entry (2fe). This was followed by a change to the admission policy to try to ensure that City residents would gain places at Sir John Cass Primary. This change has increased parental interest as evidenced in the rising number of enquiries.

The Education Funding Agency has queried why its £2.6m funding has not been spent and will seek further information in April. There is £4.8m in total for the school, not all of which is for the expansion. For example, there is £500k for SJCP and other sums for the early years provision.

The Head said that it would be useful to know how much is available to improve the existing stock. Mr Mehrtens said that there were reserves from the DSG that the CoL had sought permission to invest in resources as new classes come on stream. It was agreed that up to £35k could be used to resource new classrooms and that money has been set aside. Any expenditure would have to be receipted.

~~Mr Mullee asked about the legal position regarding governors making decisions and whether the school's insurance was valid. The Chair said that legal advice had been received that whilst the governing body was in breach of the duty to reconstitute, providing attempts were being made to resolve the situation, governors could lawfully continue to take decisions. The DfE has agreed with this advice.~~

To date, no progress had been made on the reconstitution, but the Chair was optimistic of an open discussion at the impending meeting and that an agreement could be reached in principle. It was noted that the constituent groups would then have to go back to their boards for a decision.

9. Bulge Class

Mr Mehrtens advised that the decision on the bulge class had to be timely in relation to the Pan London primary admissions timetable. The exact number of applications will remain confidential until April but governors were informed that despite a slight dip compared with last year, they remain high. There is still a demand for two classes and it was the right decision to expand to 2fe.

Mr Mehrtens suggested that governors consider what should happen next year, i.e. whether to expand and if so, whether to have another bulge class. Governors commented that the bulge class had been agreed on a one-off exceptional basis. The Chair said there would be a full discussion if the CoL made a further such request for next year.

Mr Mehrtens explained that if the expansion goes ahead the scheme would not be completed within the required timeframe and another bulge class would have to be considered. It was his view that the school could not survive as 1fe in the future. There is demand for additional places and the CoL anticipates that the school will

receive more applications as housing developments are completed. If SJCP does not expand, governors should review the admission policy.

Mr Mehrtens left the meeting at 5:10pm.

13d Fairer Funding Consultation (circulated)

Governors agreed that a response should be sent to the DfE consultation by 17 April. It will be necessary to consider the extent of the impact on the school's funding and also the proposals for academies.

AGREED: to delegate the response on the Fairer Funding consultation to Mr A Wright (to lead), Mr T Mullee, Mr M Piper and the Chair.

Governors discussed whether to draft a five year budget with analysis for the worst case scenario and how the reserves might best be used. The Finance Committee has discussed this and the SBM has worked on modelling future years' budgets. Mr Paddon advised that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) will continue to apply for a period to mitigate any possible immediate drastic impact.

Action: Mr A Wright, Chair of the Finance Committee to take forward the proposal to ~~model a five year budget.~~

11. Headteacher's Report (circulated)

The Head highlighted a number of items in his report and invited questions.

The proposals for the management structure of the Cass Child and Family Centre have been held up by the Children's Centre Review that is being conducted by the CoL. The school did not recruit to the Head of Centre post. However, there will be a full-time Family Co-ordinator, an increase from two days a week.

Shortlisting has been completed for the Deputy Head and a class teacher post; there are strong fields for both.

Quotes are being obtained for work on the playgrounds. There is £90k LCVAP funding from the LDBS that will be spent on re-furbishing classrooms.

The quality of teaching is a key priority and the benefits of having a specialist teacher for Art can be seen in the displays in corridors. The main focus for most of the year will be maths and achieving consistency in the books. There is now much good teaching and some that is outstanding.

Governors questioned that maths is more red-rated than reading and writing and asked whether it was a reflection of where pupils are now. If so, the context should be included to explain that part of the curriculum has not been taught at this stage in the year.

Mr Piper commented on the high quality of the recent poetry work. Thanks were to be recorded to Mrs H Khan, Mr T Scott and Mr Peter Sansom, Poet-in-residence.

12. School Improvement Plan Review

The Head said that the plan has been discussed at committee. Questions were asked about guided reading and the Head advised that it takes place three times a week.

13. Finance

a. School Financial Value Standard (circulated)

Mr Paddon said that it is mandatory to complete the SFVS self-assessment form every year. There are 25 questions and the school can demonstrate full compliance with 23. An action plan has been completed at the end of the form to address the two other items: to receive feedback from the LA on the Disaster Recovery Plan and an internal recommendation on the separation of financial duties and the need for more management controls. These actions should be in place by September 2016.

RESOLVED: to approve the SFVS form for 2015/16 for signing by the Chair.

Replying to questions, Mr Paddon said that there is a three year audit cycle and the school was subject to a finance management audit last year. The SFVS form needs to be signed off by the CoL.

b. Agree the school budget for 2016-17 (circulated)

Governors had received the draft budget for 2016-17 and for the two following years. The budget was prepared in January on a break even basis. There was less information at the time on the implications of Fairer Funding and Mr Paddon said that the budget would be refined.

RESOLVED: to approve the school budget for 2016-17.

c. To approve the school's block grant allocation for 2016/17 of £1,649,581

The CoL has asked the governing body to agree to receive the block grant allocation as a procedural matter. The Head said that all the block grant for the under-fives would be going in to that budget to show that it is under-financed.

RESOLVED: to approve the school's block grant allocation for 2016/17 of £1,649,581.

The Head said that virements had been made to try to ensure accuracy in the income codes. Governors questioned whether this was changing the current year budgets. Mr Paddon said that the school has very detailed budget codes and that they are used to build the budget for the following year. It therefore made sense to vire across to correct codes.

RESOLVED: to approve the virements proposed in excess of £1,000.

Mr Paddon was thanked for his work on the budget. *He left the meeting at 5:35pm.*

14. Admissions in 2016 and 2017

a. Outcome of Admissions Consultation and determination of admission policy 2017/18 (circulated)

The Head reported that there had been three responses to the consultation that had been positive. The only proposal is to change the way that the distance from home to school is measured; from using walking.com to GPS, which would measure as the crow flies from the centre of the school building, i.e. at the edge of the boardroom.

RESOLVED: to approve the admission policy for the 2017/18 academic year.

15. Safeguarding

Ms S Laney provided governors with the mid-year update on safeguarding.

There is one family where Social Care is involved. Ms Laney attended training in September 2015 on child sexual exploitation and the role of the LADO (local authority designated officer). The Head has attended training for the designated safeguarding lead and two other members of staff will go on the course.

All the staff have received the Safeguarding Policy and have signed to confirm receipt. They are regularly reminded that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Admin and early years staff have attended training.

Mr C Henry visited the school on 15 January and offered some useful suggestions, which were reported to the Curriculum, Pupil Achievement & Pupil Affairs Committee.

There was a four-hour, rigorous safeguarding audit by the CoL on 2 March 2016. The policy, practice, files and action logs were examined. The outcome was generally positive. A few actions were recommended, which will be acted upon.

Ms Laney said that she has used the section 11 audit tool for several years to review the school's safeguarding practice. It is not a requirement but is a useful exercise. The report that had been circulated to governors showed that the school is almost totally compliant. The need to ensure that volunteers receive induction on safeguarding has been addressed. The audit has been returned to the CoL.

Mr A Wright checks the SCR (single central record) every term and had done so before the spring half-term holiday.

The Head said that governors need to be aware of the school's current practice, given the importance of keeping children safe. Safeguarding is also an important issue for Ofsted.

Action: safeguarding to be a standing item on the agenda for governing body meetings.

Governors were advised that they can join the DBS on-line update service, which will remove the need to undergo a fresh check every three years.

16. Children's Centre and School Improvement Partners

Mr A McLean, School Improvement Partner, had been into school for the review of standards day. He noted that the actions from the previous term had been addressed and that staff were deployed well. There were no issues in terms of the data. The book work in maths is an area for development. Mr C Henry suggested looking at the maths books at the next meeting.

The feedback from the children was positive. There was a discussion on SEND with pupils and Mr McLean looked at the assessment system and commented that it worked well across the school.

At the last inspection, Ofsted noted that ICT needed to be improved. The current whiteboards are frustrating for teachers to use and it is hoped to install new interactive ones at a cost of £3k each with LCVAP funding. Kindles have been bought with grant money and ten laptops have been placed in classrooms providing all day access to computers in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. There will be CPD next term on a new platform, Purple Mash.

Mr C Henry left the meeting at 5:55pm

17. Children's Centre Review

The draft report had been circulated to governors. The Head said that the main issue was the physical environment and that the outcome was generally good.

There continue to be frustrations in relation to the unknowns in the data as the CoL has been unable to resolve some of the issues. The timeframe for the review of the services has not been finalised and the new SLA due for September was not now expected before December.

An analysis of the cost of the Children's Centre could be found on page 14 of report, e.g. of the toy library and stay and play. The budget is actually £80k. The Head has expressed his concern that whilst the report is lengthy it is not very informative. However, the recommendations are useful and many of the areas identified for development are already being addressed.

18. Policies (circulated)

a. Safeguarding Policy

The Head had checked that the content is compliant with all other documents that need to be referenced and the Early Years Framework. It was noted that Mr A Wright's e-mail address is within the policy.

b. Whistle Blowing Policy

There were no comments on the policy.

c. Complaints Policy

It was confirmed that complaints are to be submitted via the clerk to governors.

RESOLVED: to approve the Safeguarding, Whistle Blowing and Complaints policies for signing by the Chair.

Governors were advised that the SEN Policy, Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and Equality Statement were still being reviewed.

AGREED: to delegate the review and approval of the SEN Policy, Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and Equality Statement to the Curriculum and Finance committees, as appropriate.

19. Any other business

The Chair advised that there is a vacancy for a parent governor on the Corporation's Community & Children's Services Committee, of which she is a member. Mr M Piper, chair of the Children's Centre Advisory Board, volunteered to take up the place. SJCP is on the agenda for the committee's next meeting on 18 March.

The Chair expressed the governing body's thanks to Hania Franek for her dedicated knowledge and calm service as clerk to the governors and wished her well in the future.

End of the open section of the meeting. The members of staff and the Head left the meeting.

Signed Carin Jorgensen Date 29/6/16
Chair