



Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School

Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing, Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28th February 2018 at 4pm

Membership: Mr A. Wright (Chair)*
Mr T. Wilson (Head)*
Mr Matt Piper*
Rev L.Jørgensen*
Mr D. Williams
Dep H. Jones
Ms A. Frain*
Ms A. Godas
Ms J. Greenlees*

* denotes attendance

In Attendance: Ms Alex Allan (Deputy Headteacher and Head of Children's Centre)
Mr K Hadley (School Business Manager)
Ms T Shortland (City of London Corporation)

Clerk: Mrs Maxine Zeltser (Clerk)

Mr A Wright *in the Chair*

BUSINESS

1. Apologies

Apologies were received by MsAGodas and Dep H Jones.

2. Declaration of Governors

There were no declarations of any personal and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda.

3. Governors Work Plan

Governors were referred to this Plan contained in their Meeting Pack.

3. Dates of Forthcoming meetings

a. The next Full Governing Body Meeting is on Wednesday 14 March 2017. It was noted that this Meeting will now start at 5:00pm due to the interviews for the new Headteacher which will be taking place immediately beforehand. It was agreed that Mrs M Zeltser should notify all the Governors of the later start.

b. The next Staffing and Finance and General Purposes Committee is on Wednesday 16 May 2018 at 4pm.

ACTION POINT 1: Mrs M Zeltser to notify all Governors that the Full Governing Body meeting on 14 March 2018 is to start at 5pm.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2017 and matters arising

4.1 Minutes

Governors were referred to the draft Minutes of this Meeting which were contained in their Meeting Pack. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

RESOLVED – that the Committee agreed the minutes as an accurate record.

4.2 Matters arising

- Action Point 1: Mr T Wilson explained that one of the leads of the Square development had mooted the idea of having a crossing control person for the corner about which the School is concerned. However, the School has been asked whether it will pay for this. Mr T Wilson explained that the School would not fund this and pointed out that the School did not design the road layout. Also, it is not clear whether this proposal is only for a short period of time. Mr T Wilson explained that he has a meeting tomorrow regarding the road safety issue and will report back. Mr T Wilson confirmed that he will highlight the importance of ensuring that the new road layout is safe for the pupils. He believes that there needs to be a proper risk assessment as to the safety of children crossing the roads by the Square.

ACTION POINT 2: Mr T Wilson to report to the next Meeting about the results of his meeting concerning road safety.

- Action Point 2: There will be a further update on the communication with the Sir John Cass Foundation at the next Full Governing Body meeting.
- Action Point 3: A working party has been set up comprising Mr T Wilson, Mr A Wright and Dep H Jones to discuss how the School should use any s106 monies that it receives as a result of the Minories development. Mr T Wilson explained that he had received an update from Dep H Jones that the outstanding issues have been resolved and that the monies should be received next week. It is necessary for the School to carefully consider how the monies are received and to take into account its relationship with the Sir John Cass Foundation. It was agreed that when the s106 monies have actually been paid that the working party should meet to consider the next steps.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Mrs Maxine Zeltser asked for nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. Mr M Piper nominated Mr A Wright for Chair and this was seconded by Rev L. Jørgensen. Mr A Wright was duly elected as Chair. Rev L. Jørgensen nominated Dep H Jones as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Mr M Piper. Dep H Jones was duly elected as Vice Chair.

6. Budget Monitoring

a. To receive update on the School Budget

Governors were referred to the School Budget contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr T Wilson explained that there is predicted to be an overspend of £10K. He was pleased with this result given the significant staffing changes over the last year. Direct employee costs are the largest item as a number of staff were recruited last year. The School has more staff than it needs but some staff have been on secondments which brings income to the School. The staff numbers are in line with the School's strategy to use more teaching support in class and less TAs. There was an overspend in Computing due to the Google Chrome project.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Why is there an overspend on public transport?

This is largely related to school trips such as to Wales and France, where pupils used the train.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Why were these costs not budgeted?

In the past these costs had come out of the School's private fund. However, as these trips relate to Teaching and Learning, it has now been decided that they should be paid from the School's budget.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: *Why is there an overspend of £39K on fees and services?*

The overspend largely relates to professional fees. There were a number of bills and charges that were not paid in the last budget. Two years fees were outstanding for governor services from Tower Hamlets and also the costs relating to library services were unpaid. These have now been dealt with. Going forward the roles with the Finance Department have been split to avoid a recurrence of this issue of unpaid bills.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: *Are there any spending issues going forward for 2018/19?*

Mr T. Wilson explained that it is necessary to watch staffing costs as these are high. Over the next few years there is likely to be a few teaching staff retiring. However, the staff structure is such that the School would not need to recruit if one or two teachers left. At present, the School has a lot of staff on the high pay scale. Ideally, there should be a mix of more experienced teachers and those newly qualified. One member of staff is due to return from secondment in September. It is very early days to ascertain whether any teaching staff are likely to leave as they have until early May to give in their notice.

The School's income level is strong. £119K was received from the secondment of two members of staff. There was planned expenditure for the refurbishment of the reception area.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: *Why is the income from the sale of products and materials £30K below expected?*

It was noted that this relates to school meals, the income from which should be predictable. However, Mr T Wilson explained that these figures are not entirely accurate as he believes there has been a coding error and some of this income has been allocated to the wrong code. There needs to be an analysis on the allocation of codes and it is hoped that the issue will be covered under the current income audit. In addition, the staff member involved has received training to avoid this issue happening again.

b. To receive update on the CCFC budget

Governors were referred to the CCFC budget contained in their Meeting Pack. There was an overspend in the budget due to staffing changes. Overall, employees' direct expenditure was on budget. There was an overspend on repairs and maintenance due to the issue with the laundry which incurred significant costs. This was due to there being a significant Health and Safety risk in the laundry and kitchen areas as these were not properly secure. It was decided to refurbish these areas and the baby room was redecorated.

Expenditure on fees and services largely related to the fees of using the Anna Freud Centre. However, it has been decided to discontinue this service in April as the costs do not warrant the service provided even though it is a good organization. It is hoped that the School would be able to do projects with the Centre in the future.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: *Is the overspend of £26K recoverable from the City?*

Mr T Wilson explained that the Children's Centre budget is at the City's risk and the overspend should be paid by the Corporation. The Children Centre budget is complex as it is split between two separate budgets. One is fixed at £120K per year and is for the nursery class. Mr T Wilson suggested that it would be simpler to allocate this sum for teaching costs in the nursery.

b. To receive update on the School private fund

Mr T Wilson explained that all the grants from the Sir John Cass Foundation have been received by the School. Also, the School has received money for hosting the student teachers from Zurich, which normally brings £800-400 a year. Young Voices was paid for out of the private fund. Also, significant support for residential trips and transport costs was provided out of the private fund.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Do all parents pay the fees for the residential trips?

Mr T Wilson explained that the vast majority of parents pay these fees even if they pay a proportionate amount. The fees can be paid in instalments. The School normally recovers about 60/70 % of the costs of the trips. All parents are aware of the need to pay but the level of recovery of these costs needs to be monitored. Governors were particularly concerned about those parents who do not pay the fees but can afford to do so. Following the re-organisation in the finance department, there is one member of staff responsible for collecting income and chasing unpaid invoices. One issue is that invoices are sent from the City of London Corporation and parents assume that as the Corporation is well financed that they do not need to pay. There are also issues as parents do not always receive the invoices and are often unaware as to how much is outstanding. These issues can only realistically be dealt with if the School takes on its own accounting which is a bigger issue. The School is the only School that uses its Local Authority's accounting systems. The breakdown of debtors will be discussed later on in the Meeting. Mr T Wilson explained that he and Mr K Hadley call parents who have not paid but who they consider can afford to do so.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Why is homeopathy funded?

This service was paid for as a result of a specific donation from someone but the service is now no longer being provided.

7. School Budget Estimates

a. To receive and approve the draft School's budget for 2018-19 and b. To approve the School's block grant allocation for 2018-19 and the Children's Centre funding allocation for 2018-19

Governors were referred to the draft school's budget contained in their Meeting Pack. Following consultation with the City of London Corporation, the 2018/19 Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) budget for 2018/19 has been confirmed as totaling £1,904,510 including the DSG and high needs allocation funding. This is an increase of £100K from the previous budget and is as a result of the School being full and the strategy to ensure that pupil numbers exceed the PAN. Mr T Wilson explained that this has been a good strategy which has not impacted on education. The formula for allocating the funding is calculated on a per pupil basis and is based on the School's census returns to the Department of

Education. This year the School's minimum funding guarantee came out at +0.5 which resulted in an increase in the DSG. The City of London Corporation does not retain any of the funding.

The Early Years block of funding is also calculated on a per pupil basis. However, the funding formula only includes pupils who have taken up their places by census day and is only in respect of the 15 hours funding and the 2 year entitlement places. The additional funding of £120K is received by the School because the nursery has full time places. The funding for this is calculated separately and is only in respect of pupils who qualify for the 30 hours free childcare. The high needs funding is for pupils with EHC plans or SEN support. There is new guidance for schools on how the funding for Early Years will be calculated but this has not yet been produced by the Department for Education.

Mr T Wilson explained that next year, a decrease in income is anticipated as there will be less secondment income and there are currently no planned outstanding grants from the Cass Foundation. It was agreed that the School should consider whether there are any suitable projects about which to approach the Foundation. Mr T Wilson suggested that music tuition might be such a project. There is an increase in the teaching staff budget of £50K but it is anticipated that one part-time member of staff will be retiring. There is a possible reduction of 3 in the number of pupils with statements. Two of these pupils have highly complex needs requiring 1.5/2 TAs and so there may be a saving in this regard.

The Governors **approved** the School's budget for 2018-19 and the School's block grant allocation for 2018-19 and the Children's Centre funding allocation for 2018-19.

c. To receive and approve the draft Children's Centre budget for 2018-19

It is early to be setting the budget but the School is able to do so as the funding allocation has already been set. There is no capital expenditure in the figures. There has been a reduction in the proposed repairs and maintenance costs as the planned refurbishment of the Early Years block is to be cut down. Also, there has been a £10K saving in the transport costs as pupils now walk to swimming. The cost of using public transport has increased from £1000 to £5000 as this figure now includes the costs of school trips. There is an anticipated increase in the catering costs and there are ongoing negotiations with regard to a proposal to stop the nursery lunch provision for School holidays as this is currently very expensive. It will be explained to parents that the additional cost to them of providing the lunches will be instead of an increase in fees. It is planned for the catering staff to be term time only with a recruitment retention for the catering manager. The total cost is hoped to be £139K rather than £147K.

Next year's budget is going to be very tight. Funding of £417K has been confirmed from the City of London Corporation. As already mentioned the services from the Anna Freud Centre are to be discontinued and it is hoped to change the terms of annual leave for staff. It may be necessary to stop the nursery opening on a Saturday to save money and it is no longer possible to provide creches for the adult education classes as this is too costly. The vast majority of the budget goes on staffing costs. It is difficult to reduce the number of staff due to the required staffing ratios.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Is the Children's Centre too much of a burden on the School?

Ms T Shortland suggested that the staffing situation in the nursery could be eased if the School reverted to the ratio of one teacher and one TA to 26 pupils. It was accepted that this issue would be clarified in the Childrens' Centre review. The focus of the Centre should be on supporting deprived families. Governors will be involved in the review and will need to decide whether the provision should be reduced. The review will start its consultation next term. Another issue to be considered is the level of fees. At present, the charges are comparable to those of state nurseries in Tower Hamlets. However, the fees are much lower than local private nurseries. This means that the School may need to be stricter on who gets a place which would tie up with the need to re-consider the nursery admissions criteria. It was noted that there are very few funded full time nursery places.

The Children's Centre budget for 2018-19 was **approved**.

d. To receive 3 year budget plans for the delegated and CCFC budget.

Mr T Wilson explained that the 3 year budget plans will be discussed at the Full Governing Body meeting.

8. Benchmarking

To receive published information from Compare School Performanc on school finances.

Governors were referred to the Performance data contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr K Hadley explained that the data was for the financial year 2016-17. The current year's figures will be available in September. The data shows that the School's income per child of £8176 per pupil is high compared with other schools. This is due to generous funding from the City of London Corporation and other donations. The School's expenditure on teaching staff is also high compared with other schools although it is necessary to take into account that Inner London teachers are paid more than those in outer London. It should be noted that the figures do not take into account the nursery pupils and so this could skew the figures.

Mr K Hadley pointed out that the School's catering costs are 3 times the median costs for schools. Savings could be made if the catering were to be brought in house which would give the School greater control. However, it was agreed that the current contract should continue for another year, as it would create too much pressure for the new headteacher to have to deal with this issue in their first year.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Why is the School's expenditure on ICT resources low compared with other schools?

The School has a very good contract with Ford IT which has helped keep costs down. Also, expenditure on IT tends to be cyclical depending on when equipment needs replacing.

9. Donations and Grants received

To receive an update on donations and grants received since the last committee meeting including discussion about the Minorities (4C) development

Mr T Wilson explained that the s106 monies arising from the Minorities development was discussed earlier in the Meeting. It was agreed that the working party comprising Mr T Wilson, Dep H Jones and Mr A Wright would meet when the monies had been paid.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Is there a strategy for raising non-capital funds?

Mr T Wilson explained that the School could approach the Cass Foundation to ask for funding for the new music tuition in Year 3. There was a suggestion that the Lord Mayors's fund would cover such costs and it was agreed that Mr T Wilson should check this Fund's criteria.

ACTION POINT 3: Mr T Wilson to check the criteria for grants from the Lord Mayor's Fund.

It was acknowledged that to develop the fundraising further would be time consuming and it would be expensive to recruit a fundraiser. It was noted that one of the potential candidates in the forthcoming parent governor elections works in fundraising and could help advise the School. Mr T Wilson explained that it is proposed that the remit of the new business manager would include fundraising. It might be possible to recruit someone on a commission basis but it was agreed to wait for the outcome of the parent governor elections. In the meantime, it was agreed that the Strings Project would be a good project to approach the Cass Foundation about. The Governors discussed other organisations that give small community grants such as HSBC and First Bank but it was agreed that the School needs a member of staff/governor to devote the time to focus on fundraising.

10. Premises Update

a. To receive an update on premises matters and agree additional minor works

Governors were referred to the Report contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr T Wilson explained that it has been agreed to continue Chris Jabber's role as premises manager until September. The arrangement has worked well so far but that there is not sufficient work for a full time position. There has been a recent Fire Safety inspection following which a letter has been received outlining 10 issues which need addressing. It is proposed to book a fire risk assessment with the corporate Health and Safety Assessment from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as this will be the fastest method of ensuring that everything is up to date. It was agreed that Mr T Wilson should provide an update to the next Finance Committee on whether these issues have been addressed.

ACTION POINT 4: Mr T Wilson to provide an update at the next Finance Committee meeting on whether the issues raised following the Fire Safety inspection have been addressed.

Chris Jabber is reviewing all the School's statutory testing certificates and reports.

b. Review protocol for informing the Sir John Cass's Foundation about works at the School.

Mr T Wilson explained that the Sir John Cass's Foundation has an issue with the investment of public money into the School. Governors were referred to the letter contained in their Meeting Pack which is self explanatory. In short, the School should aim to notify the

Sir John Cass's Foundation of any capital projects by 1 May so that the funding can be considered formally.

c. Update on school boiler replacement

Mr T Wilson referred Governors to the Boiler replacement quotes contained in the Meeting Pack. The preferred quote is £135,520 from Priory Heating. The Sir John Cass's Foundation have indicated verbally that they may be prepared to pay half of the cost which would mean that the School would have to fund the rest from its reserves. At present, the School has only sent the quotes to the Cass Foundation due to the new protocol, but the City of London Corporation may be prepared to contribute towards the costs. If the Foundation is only prepared to fund half then it would need to accept that the School would find it difficult to fund the remaining costs from its reserves. It is proposed to carry out the works in the summer.

11. Policies and Statements

a. Schools financial value standard (SFVS)

Governors were referred to this year's SFVS which was contained in their Meeting Pack. The SFVS contains 28 questions and it is proposed that the replies are the same as last year except for number 20 which relates to whether there are any outstanding matters from an audit. Mr K Hadley felt that the School has to disclose the fact that there is an outstanding income audit. The replies to the SFVS were **approved** and the SFVS was duly signed by the Chair.

b. Terms of reference for the Income Audit

Governors were referred to these terms contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr K Hadley explained that it is hoped to have the draft report by 16 March.

12. Approval of individual purchase orders over £10,000 exceeding the delegated authority of the Headteacher.

Governors were referred to the schedule of orders circulated at the Meeting. Mr K Hadley explained that the schedule contains a list of all suppliers whose charges exceeded £10,000. Under the delegated scheme all costs over £10,000 have to come to the Finance Committee for approval. The charges in the Schedule relate to agency charges which are for mainly for support staff. The charges are around £700 a week and so do not technically require the delegated approval but it was felt that as in total the charges exceed £10,000, approval should be obtained for transparency.

Governors **approved** the expenditure.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: Why does the School use agency support staff?

Mr T Wilson explained that agency support staff was used due to concerns about the budget. There are 3 SEN pupils who require support staff but who are likely to be leaving this year. As a result, it was considered to be more cost effective to use agency staff as it may be necessary to reduce the number of support staff if these pupils leave.

13. Income Collection

a. Consider aged debt report including overall aged debt.

Governors were referred to this report contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr K Hadley advised governors that overall arrears of invoiced income outstanding as at 17 January 2018 is £48,894. Since the roles in the finance department have been split, the School has been more focused on sending out and chasing invoices. Debts of more than 60 days amount to £25,279 details of which are set out in Appendix A. Debt of more than 120 days amounts to £24K and so reducing this has to be a focus. These aged debts are mainly outstanding childcare fees. In respect of the fees for two families the fees will have to be written off as it would be inappropriate to enforce the debt in court.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: What is the School's policy in dealing with outstanding children centre fees?

Mr T Wilson explained that the School does chase families with outstanding fees. However, the aged debt related to two families which were both complex Child In Need situations with threats of eviction. As a result, it was felt inappropriate to stop the service as this would result in the parent losing their job which would exacerbate the situation. It was agreed that going forward, if a similar situation were to occur, that the School should refer the case to Social Care which has access for funding for vulnerable children to attend a nursery setting. Ms T Shortland confirmed that she would be happy to talk to Social Care about the procedure for such situations. Mr T Wilson explained that the School's policy sets out the consequences if families do not pay the children centre fees.

ACTION POINT 5: Ms T Shortland to talk to Social Care regarding establishing a referral pathway for vulnerable families that are unable to afford the children's centre fees.

b. Approve write off report for irrecoverable debt

Governors were referred to the Report contained in their Meeting Pack The total bad debts total £4664 and the details of each are set out in the Report.

Governors **agreed** to write off these debts.

14. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT and DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Governors were referred to the Plan contained in their Meeting Pack. Mr T Wilson explained that there are still a few reds in the finance section which are being addressed. There will be an update at the next full governing body meeting.

15. STAFFING

a. Update on appointment of school business manager and temporary arrangements for premises management

Mr T Wilson explained that he is interviewing candidates for the role of business manager next Friday. The closing date for applications is this Friday and so far, there has not been massive interest. Mr T Wilson asked for volunteers to help shortlist the candidates and with the interviews. It was agreed that Mr A Wright and Mr M Piper would help with the shortlisting which would be carried out by email and Mr M Piper would help with the interviews next Friday.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS


- GOVERNOR QUESTION: *What is the position regarding the Schedule of Works.*

Governors were referred to the Schedule in their Meeting Pack. Mr T Wilson explained that it was proposed to spend the LCVAP money on replacement of the flat roofs on either side of the School. Mr T Wilson explained that the tender for these works has been sent to Sir John Cass's Foundation in accordance with the new protocol. He explained that he considered that the works to the toilets and canopy should be a higher priority but Steve White at LDBS disagreed and as they are the School's agents, it is necessary to take his advice.

GOVERNOR QUESTION: *Why does the Schedule refer to the School as Sir John Cass CE Primary School?*

Mr T Wilson explained that this was an error and that he had asked the surveyors to amend the name of the School on the report several times, to no avail. The report was scanned to the School and so it is not possible for the School to correct the name.

The meeting ended at 6.10pm.

CHAIR..........DATE.....*6/6/18*.....