

THE GOVERNING BODY OF JOHN BALL SCHOOL



Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of John Ball School held on Tuesday 26 January 2016 at 7.00PM.

Present

Vanessa Amuah
Louise Atkins
Rachel Austin
Ian Blight
Angela East
Matthew Fields
Sandrine Marionville-Jaines
Catherine Mulcahy
Dame Erica Pienaar (Chair)
Jarlath Pratt
Michael Roach (Executive Head teacher)
Linda Yue (Vice Chair)

Also present

Leona Eley (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies (accepted) were received from Cassie Kiely, Tom Weddell, Beverley Hards and Julia McCrossen.

There were no declarations of interest.

Governors congratulated Michael Roach on his recent parenthood and wished him and his family all the very best.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated in advance with the agenda papers.

It was **RESOLVED** to sign the minutes as a true record of the meeting on 21 October 2015.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- **To update governors on the percentage of children who had absence that was significantly down**

It was reported that the information in relation to this action was contained within the Executive Headteacher's report.

- **Any updates from the Safeguarding training**

It was reported that some governors had attended the safeguarding training. These governors were; Louise Atkins, Linda Yue and Erica Pienaar. Angela East had attended similar safeguarding training in another setting. It was reported that the training had been very good and useful. Some suggestions had come out of the safeguarding training.

For example, governors asked that the safeguarding policy be given higher prominence on the John Ball School website (on the home page) in order that it could be as visible to parents as possible. The Executive Headteacher would arrange for the safeguarding policy to be positioned more prominently on the school's home page.

Action: Executive Headteacher

It was also suggested that the safeguarding policy be sent out with the home/school learning agreement.

It could also be provided to all new parents who joined the school during induction meetings in the summer term.

The school letterhead could also make reference to safeguarding in a strap line.

This would all be considered.

Action: Executive Headteacher

The Executive Head reported that a statement went into JBuzz (the school newsletter) each term regarding safeguarding.

- **Update on governors' pen portraits**

The Chair noted that most governors had sent her the information for the governors' pen portrait. Any governor who had not, was encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

Action: All governors

Photographs were required of some governors too.

The Chair had edited down the statements contained within the pen portraits to make them briefer, whilst still showcasing the range of experience contained within the governing body.

The completed pen portraits were to be sent out to the parent body and would be useful information for parents wishing to stand in the forthcoming parent election.

4. GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

(a) Vacancies

It was noted that there was currently one vacancy for a parent governor and one vacancy for a co opted governor. The school would arrange the election for the parent governor shortly.

Action: Executive Headteacher

If a number of good candidates came forward during the parent elections, then the highest scoring unsuccessful candidate could be approached about the co opted governor vacancy.

The Chair highlighted that it would be desirable for any prospective new governor to have a professional medical background.

A further update would be given on vacancies at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to list and EHT to run parent governor election

(b) A Policy for Governing John Ball School

It was noted that A Policy for Governing John Ball School had now been updated to reflect the new requirements for schools to record and display information about governors on the school website and contained within it was an updated code of conduct.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree A Policy for Governing John Ball School.

A printed copy of A Policy for Governing John Ball School was circulated to all governors and was signed on the back to confirm governors' agreement with its contents.

(c) Review of committee membership for the Co Ordinating and Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the following changes to the committees:

- Catherine Mulcahy would leave the C & F Committee and join the Personnel Committee
- Linda Yue would become Chair of the Personnel committee

Therefore the new committee membership would be as follows:

1. The Coordinating and Finance Committee

Dame Erica
Linda Yue
Michael Roach
Julia McCrossen
Rachel Austin

Julie Joyce (SBM) attends but is not a member.

2. The Personnel Committee

Dame Erica
Linda Yue – Chair
Catherine Mulcahy
Michael Roach
Julia McCrossen
Vanessa Amuah

(d) Governors' confidentiality statement

It was noted that the Lewisham Data Protection Team had produced a governors' confidentiality statement. The statement required some additional work and so would return to a future governing body meeting, most probably in the summer 2016 term.

Action: Clerk to list and provide statement for governors

5. EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

The Executive Headteacher's report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

School roll

The Executive Headteacher reported that there had been a rise in numbers on the school roll.

The 42 spaces in the Nursery were now full and most classes in years further up the school were full. Vicki Amner continued to do a very good job in ensuring that spaces were filled promptly. The governing body added their thanks to Ms Amner.

Attendance

A detailed section on attendance was contained within the Executive Headteacher's report.

Attendance was at 96.6% in October 2015. This figure was above the national average.

Within school, Debbie Parish and Sharon Windham met on a weekly basis to discuss late arrivals and unauthorised absences. A meeting had also taken place with Janet Bygate, from Lewisham Council, in the Autumn term. At this meeting all children whose attendance was below 90% were considered.

Catherine Mulcahy commented that it was useful to see beyond the data on attendance and to read the case studies as this put the attendance figures in better context.

Catherine Mulcahy asked, did the children have their own views about not attending school?

The response was that most children disliked being late for school, as it was embarrassing for them to enter their classroom late. Children also didn't enjoy missing school, in the main. Working with their parents and carers was key.

The Executive Headteacher also made the point that a failure to attend school regularly and safeguarding could sometimes be linked. There was therefore a need to consider attendance within the safeguarding context.

Special Educational Needs

The school was congratulated for obtaining the Inclusion Mark Centre of Excellence.

Detail was given in the Executive Headteacher's report about numbers of children with special educational needs at John Ball. In Spring 2016, 70 children were in receipt of SEN support, 4 children had an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) and 5 children had statements.

The Executive Headteacher highlighted a review underway at Lewisham Council around educating children with certain special educational needs out of borough. This was often due to a lack of suitable provision in borough. Educating children out of borough had significant cost implications.

The Executive Headteacher also highlighted the fact that there were a high number of exclusions in the secondary sector in Lewisham. Some primary schools had also reported a high percentage of exclusions. And yet, John Ball School had a good record on preventing exclusions and working with pupils with behavioural issues to keep them in school. John Ball School was in a strong position to support other schools and provide advice and guidance around this issue.

Linda Yue asked, would this support and guidance involve taking in additional children, excluded from other schools?

The response was no, it would not.

Staffing

The Executive Headteacher's report contained an item on staffing. This highlighted the fact at Beth Budden had gone on secondment to St Mary's COE primary school.

Catherine Mulcahy asked, how would Beth Budden's remit in the SIP be covered during her absence?

The response was that it would be covered through existing staff within the SLT. Learning Ladders was also embedding itself at John Ball School and Beth was still involved with chairing the group despite being at St Mary's.

Learning and Teaching

The Executive Headteacher's report noted that a round of observations of all staff (teachers and support staff) had taken place, linked to performance management. The result of these observations was that teaching and learning at John Ball School was classed as "outstanding", agreed by the LA SIA.

Pupil Council

An update on the pupil council was contained within the Executive Headteacher's report.

Linda Yue asked, why were the various groups all meeting at the same time?

The response was because there was overlap between the groups and it made most sense for them to meet together.

School Improvement Plan update & SAR & Lewisham's new system of grading schools

The Executive Headteacher's report contained an update on the seven key targets contained within the SIP.

Also sent with the agenda papers was the School Improvement Adviser Report. This report, written by John Ball's school improvement adviser Jeanie Jovanova, had reached the overall judgement that John Ball was a high performing school with exceptional value added. The report had been written more in line with the new Ofsted framework.

The Executive Headteacher reported that Lewisham Council had implemented a new system of grading schools. John Ball was a "green" school. Green schools were high performing schools, who would now receive one visit a year from the local authority and attend an innovation conference in the summer term.

The future of school finance

The Executive Headteacher began the discussion by reporting on a recent meeting he had attended of the Lewisham Schools' Forum.

At the meeting, school leaders had discussed the overspend in the Special Educational Needs High Needs Block and how to address it. One positive piece of news was that the Lewisham settlement from the Department for Education had been slightly better than expected. This had enabled some of the High Needs overspend to be paid off.

It was reported that the Schools' Forum had also agreed to end the LA SEN collaborative / early intervention funding that all schools had been allocated a portion of. This would result in a loss of approximately £8 or £9 thousand for John Ball.

For the 2016/17 financial year, it was reported that there would be some winners and losers in terms of overall financial allocations. John Ball's overall financial settlement for the next financial year was better than expected and the school stood to see an increase in funding of £260 thousand pounds.

Details of the funding for 2016/17 would be shared with governors by the Executive Headteacher.

Action: Executive Headteacher

The Executive Headteacher said that the governing body needed to think about how to respond to funding developments that would occur and which would impact on the school. These included changes to the national funding formula for schools. Under these changes, Lewisham was likely to see a reduction in future funding. It was essential that the school planned for the future carefully.

Academisation

Linked to the issue of school funding, was academisation.

The Primary Strategic meeting in Lewisham, attended by the Executive Director for Children and Young People, Sara Williams, had highlighted the fact that an Education Commission was due to be created at Lewisham. This commission, led by an independent appointee, would consider what the optimal structure was for schools in the borough.

The Executive Headteacher reported that the Executive Headteacher of Fairlawn and Haseltine schools federation was due to host a conference on academisation, and this would be attended by representatives from John Ball School.

A letter sent by the Greenwich school, Brooklands, to its parent body, was seeking parental views on academisation.

It was noted that the some elements within the secondary school sector in Lewisham had, for several years now, been suffering from poor results. In some case, it may be that some secondary schools would be forced to become academies based on their performance. If many Lewisham secondary schools became academies, this could destabilise the local authority due to the vast amounts of funding that would go with the secondary schools.

It was felt that whilst there is still a team at CYP in Lewisham providing services however, due to stretched resources, there might be shrinking of the local authority's role until it existed to fulfil mainly statutory duties.

Given these developments, it was felt necessary for the debate about academisation to be re-started at John Ball.

Dame Erica made the following points;

- It was important that all staff within the school were made aware of the governing body's current thinking on the issue of academisation. It was essential to listen to staff, to respond to their questions and provide reassurance. Given that the three members of staff on the governing body, plus the Head of School were absent from the meeting that evening, Dame Erica undertook to inform them of the discussions that had taken place.

Action: Dame Erica

- It was important to gain more information about what the process was for becoming an academy and exactly what was involved. Dame Erica and Michael Roach would attend a conference on academisation shortly. Feedback from this conference would be given at the April 2016 governing body meeting.

Action: Clerk to list

- It was important to obtain direct experience of an academy. For this reason Dame Erica had become an Associate Governor to a governing board of Lambeth Academy Multi Academy Trust.

Sandrine Marionville-Jaines asked, did the school have any sort of timeline in mind?

The response was that there was a process to be followed. Schools had to register an interest with the Department for Education. It was noted that in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, he had spoken about all schools becoming academies by 2020.

Next steps

In terms of the next steps, the main priority was to better understand all of the options available.

It was important that any option chosen would be sustainable financially.

There would be a report back at the April governing body meeting to provide governors with feedback from the conference that Dame Erica and Michael Roach were attending.

Ian Blight suggested that the staff body might wish to undertake some research of their own, and might like to set up a staff working party to look at the issue.

There should be an allocation within the budget to consider academy status as the process would come with some costs.

It was noted that there were two possible models; a stand alone academy or a multi academy trust. Looking at models would be included in the course of the research.

Sandrine Marionville-Jaines asked, if John Ball wished to consider the multi academy trust model, could the school choose its partners?

The answer was yes. John Ball might be invited in the future to work with other schools.

There were local examples of academies that could be studied and learnt from. Tidemill Academy in Deptford was one such example.

The item would return to the governing body in April 2016.

Action: Clerk to list

Business Continuity

Linda Yue raised the example of her daughter's secondary school, which had been evacuated earlier in the day due to a bomb threat.

Linda asked what the arrangements were at John Ball, if the school needed to evacuate?

The response was that John Ball pupils would evacuate and walk to St Matthew's Academy.

Premises

Sandrine Marionville-Jaines raised a query about letting rooms in the school building to a local group. The Executive Headteacher referred Ms Marionville-Jaines to Julie Joyce, the school business manager.

Fire drills were carried out during the Autumn term. On 16 September 2015, the main site was evacuated in 120 seconds, the EYFS / Nursery site was evacuated in 30 seconds. There were no concerns in respect of either drill.

6. JOHN BALL SCHOOL INCLUSION MARK CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Details of the John Ball School Inclusion Mark of Excellence had been sent out with the agenda papers. The school was congratulated for its excellent work in this area.

7. UPDATES FROM THE COMMITTEES

(a) Co Ordinating and Finance Committee

The Chair, Dame Erica, gave governors an update from the C & F Committee meeting held on 11 January 2016.

Budget monitoring

The Committee had considered the budget in detail.

Thanks were to go to Julie Joyce for her excellent monitoring of the school budget.

At present, a £29,000 budget surplus was being predicted.

The Committee was very aware of the risks in the future regarding budget cuts.

Partnership with Torridon School

The Committee had considered the implications of the end of the partnership with Torridon school.

Sandrine Marionville-Jaines asked, what would the staffing structure be like at John Ball School when the partnership with Torridon had been dissolved?

The response was that the Executive Headteacher could not make any firm promises about the future staffing structure at John Ball School until further budget work was carried out, however it would be good to sustain the level of leadership within the school, particularly as John Ball had recently

expanded to take a bulge class. A further update would be given to governors where there was more clarity around next year's budget.

Costs of the building expansion project

The Chair noted that the local authority had been slow to reimburse the school for some of the costs of the expansion project. The Chair was following this up with Lewisham Council.

Charging and remissions policy (including lettings)

Catherine Mulcahy was thanked for her work on this policy.

(b) Personnel Committee

It was reported that the Personnel Committee had not met this term.

8. UPDATES FROM THE WORKING PARTIES

(a) Update from the working party looking at communication

An update had been given earlier in the meeting in relation to the plans to hold a parent governor election and to finalise the governors' pen portraits.

(b) Update from the working party looking at Academy status

The academy status had previously been discussed. Next steps in terms of looking at academy status had been agreed.

9. POLICY APPROVAL

(a) Food Policy

A copy of this policy had been sent to all governors prior to the meeting.

Several governors expressed views on this policy.

Vanessa Amuah said that it was not clear to all children that the milk and water available at lunchtimes in the dinner hall was also available to children who were taking packed lunches.

The Executive Headteacher would ensure that children were again reminded that milk and water were available to **all** children and a note would be put in the school newsletter too.

Several governors expressed views about sweets being distributed to children in a class by a child whose birthday it was. The policy stated, "*This can be fruit or raisins for sharing rather than sweets, as they stay in the mouth for shorter periods, thus leaving sugar on the teeth for less time*". However, there were lots of examples of where children did indeed give out sweets. It was felt that either (a) the guidance should be removed from the policy, or, (b) the guidance should be enforced.

Similarly, slices of birthday cake were given out by some children on their birthdays, and this too was at odds with the policy.

The Executive Headteacher suggested that the Food Policy be reviewed by Debbie Parish and Angela East and that a revised version should return to a future governing body meeting for approval.

Action: Executive Headteacher to arrange for the policy to be reviewed by Debbie Parish and Clerk to list for a future meeting

(b) Home Learning policy

A copy of this policy had been sent to all governors prior to the meeting.

Catherine Mulcahy noted that she did not always see evidence of this policy being applied. The Executive Headteacher would review this.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Home Learning policy.

(c) Inclusion Policy

The policy had been deferred until the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to list

(d) Charging and Remissions Policy (including lettings)

A copy of this policy had been sent to all governors prior to the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Charging and Remissions policy.

10. 2016/17 BUDGET

This item would return to the April 2016 governing body meeting.

Action: Clerk to list

11. SCHOOL HEALTH AND SAFETY MONITORING CHECKLIST

It was noted that the John Ball school health and safety audit had been completed in December 2015 and returned to Lewisham council.

12. UPDATES ON GOVERNOR TRAINING

As previously reported, Erica Pienaar, Louise Atkins and Sandrine Marionville-Jaines had attended safeguarding training. Angela East had attended safeguarding training in another setting.

Sandrine Marionville-Jaines had attended Raise Online training.

13. UPDATES ON GOVERNOR VISITS

There were no visits to report.

14. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION FROM THE SPRING 2016 GOVERNOR INFORMATION PACK

The Chair highlighted a number of articles in the Governors' Information Pack of interest. These included items on the budget outlook 2016/17, Lewisham School Improvement update and the NLG's 20 questions for governors. Governors were encouraged to read the articles and familiarise themselves with the detail.

15. SAFEGUARDING / SINGLE CENTRAL RECORD UPDATE

The Chair reported that the single central record had been checked and was found to be correct and up to date. Matthew Fields visited the school and had met with Jacqui Noakes about safeguarding and also the single central record.

Both Michael Roach and Jacqui Noakes have recently had updated DSL training.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

17. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting dates were Tuesday 19 April 2016 at 7PM and Tuesday 5 July 2016 at 7PM.

Chair _____ **Date** _____