



Powerstock CE VA Primary School

Learning together to be the best that we can be

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting held in school at 4:30pm on 20 February 2024

Present: David Jones DJ (Chair), Wendy Morris WM (Vice Chair), Joanna Moss JM, Nick Harris NH (Headteacher), Elizabeth Rutherford ER, Baffy Turner BT, Sam Van Zyl SV, David Bligh DB, Rev. Chris Grasske CG.

In Attendance: John Alexander JA (Clerk).

Q/C = Question/ Challenge.

1. Welcome and Prayer

DJ welcomed all to the meeting, and CG gave the opening prayer.

2. Apologies

Laura Scarlett LS.

3. Minutes of 21 November 2023 FGB

These were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising and Action Plan

- i) *All governors to submit comments on the pupil survey by the end of the Autumn Term:* COMPLETED.
- ii) *All governors to include safeguarding as a focus for all monitoring visits and reports:* COMPLETED.
- iii) *DJ to raise the issue of the safety of school parking with the Parish Council:* COMPLETED. The Parish Council had expressed reluctance to take any remedial action. The school's – and parents' – preference would be for zig-zag 'no parking' road markings. NH agreed to contact Dorset Council's Highways Service to make further enquiries and representations.
ACTION: NH.
- iv) *All governors to confirm to JA in writing that they approved the Pay Policy for Teachers, or to raise any concerns they may have:* COMPLETED. The policy was approved.
- v) *JA to recategorize the courses on the training record under the headings 'mandatory', 'core' and 'recommended':* COMPLETED.
- vi) *DJ to consider whether there should be a lead governor for phonics:* This would be discussed at Item 9.n the light of the recent Ofsted inspection, all lead governor roles were currently being reviewed.

5. Declaration of Interests

None.

6. Report of Committees from the Chairs:

Curriculum and Wellbeing Committee 23-1-24: ER presented the minutes, which were included in the pack. The Committee had received a helpful and informative presentation from Cogden class teacher Deborah Batten on the current school approach to the maths curriculum. She had explained that maths was taught to chronological year groups rather than combined class

groups, thus reflecting the structure of the curriculum. Materials were 'scaffolded' so that more able students were stretched, while struggling pupils were given targeted help and support. Different pupils might excel, or struggle, with different elements of the curriculum, and it was rare for a particular child to excel or struggle in every part of maths. Approaches to teaching and learning were also fine-tuned in response to 'Pupil Voice' discussions, in which children were generally very willing to participate. They had asked for more practical, fun exercises to cement 'sticky learning', and continued opportunities to explain and demonstrate their learning. After each work area, they would make a self-assessment using 'smiley face' notations. Recent attainment data was discussed.

NH had presented the first draft of his work to refocus the School Development Plan, which would guide the strategic direction of the school for the remainder of the academic year. He argued that the existing plan had become too large and vague, with 'Business as Usual' activities merged with strategic priorities so that the document no longer lent itself to dynamic, forward-looking use that could be employed by governors to hold him, as headteacher, to account. The SDP was also included in the pack for the current FGB meeting. He had also discussed SDP-related plans for Subject Action Plans, a Curriculum Development Plan, interactive whiteboards and improved ICT equipment.

The Committee had discussed wellbeing monitoring. In discussion with the lead governor for wellbeing (LS), NH had decided to stop using the single, all-encompassing wellbeing tracker, which was seen as offering limited value, containing too much detail and with tenuous links to the PERMA wellbeing drivers. It was now proposed to do termly wellbeing surveys based on random samples of 10 to 12 children, with RAG coated reports.

Finance Environment and Premises Committee 20-2-24: DB gave verbal feedback from the meeting earlier that afternoon. The Committee had recommended the outturn report to FGB, having chosen the option of a budget that included an extra TA for three days per week rather than five. FGB accepted the Committee's recommendation. The outturn would now be submitted to Dorset Council by 29-2-24.

7. Safeguarding update

There were no new issues to report.

8. Policy Review

The following policies were reviewed by Governors and were approved:

- Health and Safety Policy 2023-24
- First Aid Policy 2023-24

For the First Aid Policy, NH would update the appendix showing the First Aid training current staff had completed. **ACTION: NH.**

9. Ofsted Inspection 6 – 7 February 2024: Reflections and Next Steps

The school had undergone a Section 5 Graded Inspection on 6 and 7 February 2024 and the lead inspector had held a feedback session with governors on 8 February. All grades were provisional and the report would undergo a Quality Assurance process before being delivered 18 working days after the end of the inspection, after which the school would have five working days to respond and raise any concerns. Provisionally then, the school's judgement was 'requires improvement', due largely to this judgement being applied to Quality of Education and EYFS. Personal Development and Behaviour had been graded as 'good'. This FGB meeting was the first opportunity that governors had had to meet and discuss the inspection.

DJ opened the discussion by emphasising that it was important to reflect on the inspection result, as well as to look to the future and how to turn the school's problems around. NH and DJ felt that the inspection had been measured and fair, and there had been some positive findings. Safeguarding, behaviour, personal development, financial management, recruitment and engagement with the Collaboration had all been spoken of highly. The Governing Body had also been praised, but it needed to not be complacent and to show humility. Comments about Quality of Education had been difficult and upsetting to hear, and governors needed to acknowledge that the issues had arisen on their watch, and they must bear some responsibility and recognise the seriousness of the situation. DJ made it clear that he made no assumption that he, as chair, retained the confidence of the other governors, and if there was a view that the leadership of the board should now change, he would understand and accept that view. He encouraged governors to speak to him outside of the meeting, or in confidence to JA, if they had concerns about the future leadership of the Board. **ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS.**

In the governors' discussion there was much emphasis on transparency, openness and honesty. Governors felt that they had been poorly advised over several years. The inspection had exposed long-term decline and accumulating weaknesses of approach to teaching – poor and inconsistent assessment of pupil progress; insufficient and unsystematic checking of student understanding; inadequate targeting of support; over-reliance on support staff; an approach to the curriculum that was poorly sequenced and planned and lacking in ambition. Regular visits from support leads from the Council and the Diocese had also failed to alert the Governing Body to the school's issues. Governors felt that they had been shielded from these problems and presented with a well-crafted and positive picture of teaching at the school that hid a different reality. Former Chair of Governors JM expressed deep frustration and disappointment that during her tenure in the role there had been this level of obfuscation. Interim headteacher Lisa Crew, and new headteacher NH, had taken a markedly different approach, presenting governors with a more open and honest assessment of some of the school's shortcomings, including poor subject leadership, outdated equipment and a confused curriculum, particularly for Phonics but also more broadly. Governors were clear in their view that much more of that approach was needed.

As for themselves, governors said they needed more clarity about the intent and impact of their roles. They had been too 'arm's length' – not operationally, but in terms of assurance that they were being presented with a full, true and complete picture of school life. They needed to reconsider how they worked with the school to ensure they were effective, and not overly focused on a small number of issues at the expense of the bigger picture. NH's new SDP offered a strong starting point, and they needed to make sure they knew how to best support him with its delivery.

One governor described how she had felt deflated, but then energised, by the outcomes of the inspection. There was a lot to do, and it was time for governors to 're-boot' their approach, with a forensic scrutiny of data and evidence. Others agreed, and the following additional points were made: governors needed to accept that challenge, and sometimes conflict, were part of good governance; governors were 'all in it together' and understood what had gone wrong; they needed to challenge more, and insist on being shown evidence to back up information they were given. They also needed to recognise that sometimes it was okay to take risks and make mistakes. They would need to rethink and restructure link roles and governor visits. They would also encourage more teacher visits to FGB meetings. **ACTION: DJ and NH to discuss governor roles and visit protocols. Q/C: Governors asked if they should pause visits until after Easter, by which time they would have discussed their processes at the 26 March FGB.** NH replied that this would be helpful. He added that he would prefer it if governors did not use the words 'monitoring' and 'observation' as they made staff uncomfortable.

NH pointed towards some of the first things he would put in place. Starting with Maths, English and Reading, teachers would be trained in subject leadership, and from there would develop Subject Action Plans, linked to the SDP, which would be dynamically monitored and reviewed. With a new, better focused SDP, dedicated subject leader time, training and systematic monitoring and assessment, Quality of Education would soon improve.

Q/C: Governors asked how they would know if these plans were happening and if they were successful. NH replied that they needed to consistently hold him to account and insist he was providing proper evidence. **Q/C: Governors asked for assurance that staff would be made to feel safe, and to see themselves as part of the solution.** NH replied that there would always be a clear focus on staff wellbeing. All staff were keen to help turn the school around, and NH was confident this would be achieved by the time Ofsted next visited in around 18 months. **Q/C: Governors asked if all staff would be trained in the new Phonics scheme.** NH said that they would, and that it needed to be applied consistently across the school. **Q/C: Governors asked if the school should have another fully trained teacher and fewer TAs.** NH replied that this was certainly a consideration that he would come to in due course. Support staff could also be used more intelligently and viewed as a pool of people with expertise to be employed more flexibly. There would be a skills audit to facilitate this. **Q/C: Governors asked how the issues identified with the vulnerable Year 2 group would be addressed.** NH said that there would be an extra TA, clarity over high expectations (an approach that had proved effective with the Year 5 group), and a renewed emphasis on behaviour, supported by the recent updating of the behaviour policy.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

26 March 2024, 4:30pm.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm.

Item no.	Action	Owner	By when
4	Contact Dorset Council's Highways Service to make further enquiries and representations about road safety markings outside the school.	NH	Next FGB
8	Update the First Aid Policy appendix showing the First Aid training current staff had completed.	NH	Next FGB
9	Speak to DJ outside of the meeting, or in confidence to JA, if they had concerns about the future leadership of the Board.	All governors	Next FGB
9	Discuss governor roles and visit protocols.	DJ/ NH	Next FGB

Item no.	Summary of Governor Questions & Challenges
9	Governors asked if they should pause visits until after Easter, by which time they would have discussed their processes at the 26 March FGB.
9	Governors asked how they would know if these plans were happening and if they were successful.
9	Governors asked for assurance that staff would be made to feel safe, and to see themselves as part of the solution.
9	Governors asked if all staff would be trained in the new Phonics scheme.
9	Governors asked if the school should have another fully trained teacher and fewer TAs.
9	Governors asked how the issues identified with the vulnerable Year 2 group would be addressed.