



## 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 21 November 2023

**Present:** David Jones DJ (Chair), Wendy Morris WM (Vice Chair), Joanna Moss JM, Lisa Crew LC (Interim headteacher), Elizabeth Rutherford ER, Baffy Turner BT, Sam Van Zyl SV, David Bligh DB, Rev. Chris Grasske CG, Laura Scarlett LS.

**In Attendance:** John Alexander JA (Clerk), Nick Harris NH (Headteacher from January 2024), Emma Thorpe ET (prospective Foundation Governor).

#### **Q/C = Question/ Challenge.**

#### **1. Welcome and Prayer**

DJ welcomed all to the meeting, in particular ET and NH, and CG gave the opening prayer.

#### **2. Apologies**

None.

#### **3. Minutes of 27-6-23 FGB**

LC asked for the minutes to be amended to show that the school currently had one Child in Need. JM asked for an amendment to show that her PE monitoring report had been included in the meeting pack. **ACTION: JA to amend minutes.**

#### **4. Matters Arising and Action Plan**

- i) *JA to amend minutes as detailed: COMPLETED.*
- ii) *DJ to liaise with Hut committee about cabinet cover: COMPLETED. The work would be carried out later in the week.*
- iii) *All governors to review wording of pupil survey for KS1 and KS2 children: Governors were asked to submit their comments by the end of the Autumn Term. ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS.*
- iv) *JA to add NGA skills audit analysis 2022-23 to next agenda: COMPLETED.*
- v) *JA to circulate ER and AO SEND reports: COMPLETED.*
- vi) *LC to update the Pupil Premium Statement on the school website: COMPLETED.*
- vii) *DJ to discuss the Burton issue with Dolmans and the Diocese and agree a way forward: COMPLETED. A small payment had been made to cover surveying work, which would also cover future surveying work. Otherwise work was on hold until staff had been further consulted on their preferences and further decisions made.*
- viii) *JA to organise and administer the policies sub-group: As agreed at the October FGB, the Policies Sub-Group would commence meeting in the Spring Term, once NH had joined the school.*
- ix) *JA to circulate the committee schedule for 2023-24: COMPLETED.*

- x) *JA to present a spreadsheet to the next FGB setting out a schedule of training governors would be required to complete by the end of the Autumn Term: To be discussed at Item 14.*
- xi) *JM to add comments from Year 6 exit interviews to the school website: COMPLETED.*

#### 5. Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business

Governors introduced themselves to ET.

#### 6. Declaration of Interests and Annual Review

None.

#### 7. Correspondence

None.

#### 8. Chair's Notices

DJ reaffirmed that the Ofsted inspection would take place very soon. All other schools ahead of Powerstock on the Ofsted schedule had received their inspections. For governors, there would be a meeting with the inspectors approximately 45 minutes long on the day of the inspection. He recognised the pressure that the anticipation of the inspection was placing on staff and governors. The Ofsted Preparation Committee continued to meet regularly. The school was well prepared, and was focused on one or two core improvement areas: enhancing subject leadership, and clarity about plans for the future. ***Q/C: Governors asked if the inspection might not happen until the New Year.*** DJ replied that while this was a possibility, the inspection was very much due, and could happen at any time. ***Q/C: Governors recognised and appreciated the long hours, hard work and powerful influence of LC, for whom this would be the final FGB meeting. They also recognised the indefatigable efforts of the staff to ensure the school was prepared.*** LC said she was sad to leave and felt very much part of the school team. She also noted that Louis Van Zyl had produced a report on progress with cybersecurity in the past 48 hours which governors would need time to digest. It was agreed that NH, LC and LS would meet on 28 November to discuss this in detail with a view to progressing the work in the New Year.

#### 9. Headteacher's Written Report

LC presented her written report, which was RAG coded to draw attention to areas of concern. ***Q/C: Governors found the format useful, but discussed whether the RAG coding could be adjusted, as in its current form all areas to be discussed at the meeting were coded Red. Governors expressed their preference for a format where Green was for areas that were 'on track', Amber was for 'some areas of concern', and Red was for 'not on track.' In this way, governors would be able to focus most of their attention, by exception, on where strands of work were off track, while recognising the Amber and Green areas might also be discussed in order to help resolve more minor issues or indeed to celebrate strong performance.*** This was agreed, and LC would recode the current report in this way and send it to JA for the stored record. **ACTION: LC.**

LC focused on the following:

***Number on Roll:*** There were currently 58 children on roll. Eight children had joined Reception joined in September 2023, two fewer than PAN. ***Q/C: Governors asked if the budget had been based on eight or ten new children.*** LC confirmed that it was eight.

***TA recruitment:*** The Finance Committee on 14-11-23 had recommended that an additional 15 hours of TA support should be recruited to ensure interventions and pastoral support for SEND and EHCP children would be available when needed. This was in the context of the fact that there had been a fall in TA hours, as the TA in Burton was now working 21.75 hours per week where 30 hours per week had originally been budgeted for. The number of TA hours available to

the school was therefore inadequate. There was currently no slack, and with the high number of SEND pupils at the school, interventions were immediately put at risk if any staff were absent for any reason.

Since the Finance Committee meeting, LC had reviewed what was needed and concluded that while 15 hours per week would be hugely helpful, providing TA support from nine until 12 o'clock each day, 18.75 hours per week would be highly preferable, since if the TA was still employed until 12:45pm, she or he would be able to help with lunchtime duty. Currently all staff were usually working continuously through the day, and only able to take a very short break for their own lunch. SVZ added that this would make a huge difference to staff. Overall, the extension of the TA contract from 15 hours to 18.75 hours would cost the school an additional £2,596 *pa*.

***Q/C: Governors asked if this was a full year cost, including on-costs, and from where the funds would be drawn.*** LC replied that it was full year including on-costs, to be drawn from unallocated funds. Governors discussed the proposal. ***Q/C: While governors recognised the great benefit to the additional TA hours, they also cautioned that the staff-pupil ratio at the school was already high compared to other schools, which may attract some scrutiny.***

Governors acknowledged this was a risk but noted that as a small school with high SEND number and an experienced staff group, this ratio would always be relatively high. ***Q/C: Governors questioned whether it should be a fixed-term or permanent appointment.*** LC expressed her preference for a permanent appointment, as this would likely enhance the quantity and quality of applicants. While she and other governors recognised that if the school's profile changed over time, for example with fewer pupils on roll or a smaller SEND percentage, the school may face a redundancy situation. However, they concluded that with careful scrutiny, the contract could if necessary be terminated before two years thus avoiding redundancy costs. Conversely, if a fixed-term contract was extended over two years, redundancy would still need to be paid on termination. Ultimately, it was the view of governors that many factors were unpredictable; the longer-term number of pupils on roll, future staff costs, and the SEND percentage to name only three. Schools, necessarily and inevitably, evolved over time.

Asked his view, NH said that it was untenable for teachers to be fully stretched and to have no breathing space. The 18.75 hours per week TA contract would be excellent value for money. He added that he was keen to be involved in the interview process if the appointment went ahead.

Therefore, after careful consideration of the pros and cons, governors agreed to the appointment of a permanent TA for 18.75 hours per week. The advertisement would go out immediately with a closing date of 4-12-23.

***Quality of Education:*** The Headteacher's Report evidenced a substantial amount of recent activity to enhance the delivery of the school curriculum, including Collaboration visits and events and training. ***Q/C: Governors asked about the purchase of Clicker to support SEND pupils, and what this was.*** LC explained that this was software to enable 'speak to print', which empowered younger children with additional needs by enabling them to see their spoken language in written form before their writing skills had developed sufficiently.

***SDP:*** LC clarified that the three priorities of the SDP were: to further develop subject leadership across the school; to raise attainment and progress of key groups in maths so whole school attainment would be at least in line with national averages and extend opportunities for more pupils to attain greater depth standard; and governors' implementation of a revised monitoring process focusing on the new Ofsted framework utilising technology, learning walks, governor days and one-to-ones with subject leads. LC noted that there had been 13 governor visits in the Autumn Term so far, which had been well received by teaching staff and governors alike.

*Attendance:* Overall attendance to date was 95.5% for the Autumn Term. Without one pupil's data this would rise to 96.1%, and because of support secured by the school this pupil's attendance had improved to 90% compared to the previous 41%. Two pupils remained in school who were persistent absentees the previous academic year. Both were now doing much better.

#### 10. Report of Committees from the Chairs:

*Finance Environment and Premises Committee 14-11-23:* DB presented the minutes, which were included in the pack. He confirmed that the school's financial situation was stable and balanced for this financial year. The Committee had agreed the virement from unallocated reserves to Repairs and Maintenance of £3500 to cover the installation of a lockdown alarm, fencing repairs, and late bills. The had also approved a new four-year photocopier contract which would be £96.68 per quarter and would include a new copier. A governor inspection of the school premises the previous day had noted some clutter and potential hazards associated with it. Governors had agreed that post-Ofsted a good clear-out and a holistic look at storage requirements would mark a fresh start and probably be beneficial to all the staff and children, not least those who were struggling.

*Curriculum and Wellbeing Committee 7-11-23:* ER presented the minutes, which were included in the pack. She reported that the Committee was now smaller and functioning well. LC had presented a set of detailed data that compared the school's attainment levels, from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) right through to Key Stage 2, with the other eight schools in the West Dorset Schools Collaboration (WDSC), and the average WDSC results with the Dorset and national figures. LC had also prepared a helpful summary of the data and the priority actions arising from it. This was the first time WDSC had shared their data at this level of detail and represented a major step forward in collaborative working between the schools.

LS had reviewed the information on the wellbeing tracker, and the Committee had noted that while this had been completed, the tracker was not well communicated, in particular with staff. They suggested that it would be more appropriate for new NH to pick this up in the Spring term. LS offered to familiarise him with the tracker once he had started at the school. The Committee also felt that the information on the tracker should be RAG coded, so that there could be a more intuitive focus on any areas of concern.

***Q/C: Governors drew attention to the minute from the Committee meeting which said "Governors needed to be aware of the high and constant challenge in teaching Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 together. It was testament to the skill of class teacher Angela Oxenbury that such good progress was made." They asked if the new TA would help ease this burden; if the early pressures of introducing new Reception children to school life eased as the year went on; and what else governors could do to help.*** LC and SVZ replied that the new TA would certainly help – all the staff were at full stretch and didn't stop working all day. The forthcoming Ofsted inspection was always at the backs of their minds. They felt confident that they were ready for it, but waiting for it was stressful and exhausting. As the year progressed, the children did get used to school routines and there were many real success stories. They said that governors were already helping by acknowledging the work of the staff and being responsive to their needs.

#### 11. Safeguarding update

WM gave a verbal update as lead governor for safeguarding. There were currently no issues of urgent concern. Behaviour was generally good, and attendance was satisfactory and improving. She reminded all governors to have an eye to safeguarding in their monitoring visits and to mention this in their reports. **ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS.**

## 12. School Parking Issue

BT drew governors' attention the dangerous situation of parents parking very close together directly outside the school gates at school pick-up and drop-off times. There was a constant risk of children slipping unnoticed between the cars and out on to the road. While acknowledging that warning lights would be unpopular in the village, they discussed several possible remedial measures, including zig-zag lines on the short stretch of road outside the school gates and A boards that could be placed there at appropriate times to tell people not to park. ET, who was the publican for the nearby Three Horseshoes public house, said that parents and staff could use the pub carpark if they were willing to walk the rest of the way to the school. Governors thanked her for this. DJ agreed to discuss the issue further at the Parish Council meeting the following Monday. **ACTION: DJ.**

## 13. Policy Review

The following policies were reviewed by Governors and were approved:

- Instrument of Government
- Admissions Policy 2025-26

In addition, DJ reported that as the model Pay Policy for Teachers had only just been released, he needed to do further work on it to tailor it to Powerstock's requirements prior to submitting it to governors for approval. He would therefore circulate it over the following week and governors were asked to confirm to JA in writing that they approved the policy, or to raise any concerns they may have. **ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS.**

## 14. Governance Issues

*Governor training arrangements:* JA presented an Excel workbook which specified the NGA training courses (as well as Gov. UK's online 'Prevent' course) which were the priority for governors to complete. ***Q/C: Governors questioned the use of the categories 'must' and 'should' into which the courses were divided, arguing that this appeared to place a lot of urgency on governors to complete a relatively large amount of training immediately.*** DJ clarified that only two courses – Safeguarding and Prevent – were mandatory, and governors could work their way through the others over a longer period. JA was asked to recategorize the courses under the headings 'mandatory', 'core' and 'recommended'. **ACTION: JA.**

*Governor visits:* Governors reviewed monitoring reports in the pack for EYFS, Phonics, Safeguarding and Maths. ***Q/C: Governors asked if there should be a lead governor for phonics.*** DJ would consider this and report back. **ACTION: DJ.**

### FGB Forward Plan

This was in the pack and was noted.

## 15. Clerk's Notices

None

## 16. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

6 February 2024, 4:30pm.

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Finally, all governors reiterated their gratitude for the hard work and positive influence of LC in covering a period between headteachers. They wished her all the very best for the future.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm.

Item no.	Action	Owner	By when
3	Amend minutes as detailed	JA	26-11-23
4	Submit comments on the pupil survey by the end of the Autumn Term	All Governors	End of Autumn Term
9	Recode headteacher's report as detailed	LC	End of Autumn Term
11	Include safeguarding as a focus for all monitoring visits and reports	All governors	Ongoing
12	Raise the issue of the safety of school parking with the Parish Council	DJ	27-11-23
13	Confirm to JA in writing that they approved the Pay Policy for Teachers, or to raise any concerns they may have	All governors	End of Autumn Term
14	Recategorize the courses on the training record under the headings 'mandatory', 'core' and 'recommended'	JA	26-11-23
14	Consider whether there should be a lead governor for phonics	DJ	Next FGB

Item no.	Summary of Governor Questions & Challenges
8	Governors asked if the Ofsted inspection might not happen until the New Year
8	Governors recognised and appreciated the long hours, hard work and powerful influence of LC, for whom this would be the final FGB meeting. They also recognised the indefatigable efforts of the staff to ensure the school was prepared for the forthcoming Ofsted inspection
9	Governors found the headteacher report format useful, but discussed whether the RAG coding could be adjusted, as in its current form all areas to be discussed at the meeting were coded Red. Governors expressed their preference for a format where Green was for areas that were 'on track', Amber was for 'some areas of concern', and Red was for 'not on track.' In this way, governors would be able to focus most of their attention, by exception, on where strands of work were off track, while recognising the Amber and Green areas might also be discussed in order to help resolve more minor issues or indeed to celebrate strong performance
9	Governors asked if the stated TA cost was a full year cost, including on-costs, and from where the funds would be drawn
9	While governors recognised the great benefit to the additional TA hours, they also cautioned that the staff-pupil ratio at the school was already high compared to other schools, which may attract some scrutiny
9	Governors questioned whether the new TA should be a fixed-term or permanent appointment
9	Governors asked about the purchase of Clicker to support SEND pupils, and what this was
10	Governors drew attention to the minute from the Committee meeting which said "Governors needed to be aware of the high and constant challenge in teaching Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 together. It was testament to the skill of class teacher Angela Oxenbury that such good progress was made." They asked if the new TA would help ease this burden; if the early pressures of introducing new Reception children to school life eased as the year went on; and what else governors could do to help
14	Governors questioned the use of the categories 'must' and 'should' into which the courses were divided on the governor training spreadsheet, arguing that this appeared to place a lot of urgency on governors to complete a relatively large amount of training immediately
14	Governors asked if there should be a lead governor for phonics