



## Powerstock CE VA Primary School

*Learning together to be the best that we can*

### Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting held in school at 4:30pm on 3 October 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, Tim Connor TC, Rev. Chris Grasske CG.

**In Attendance:** John Alexander JA (Clerk), Angela Oxenbury AO (SENCO), Nick Harris NH (Headteacher from January 2024).

**Also referred to in the minutes:** Louise Greenham LG (former headteacher).

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

#### 1. Welcome and Prayer

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

#### 2. Apologies

Laura Scarlett LS

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

SV asked for a correction to the minutes as she had been wrongly identified as owning an action relating to procurement. The minutes were otherwise agreed as a true record. **ACTION: JA to amend minutes.**

#### 4. Matters Arising and Action Plan

- i) LG to arrange a meeting with LS to progress work on procurement, including telephony, broadband and cyber security: Carried over to next FGB. **ACTION: LC**
- ii) Clerk to contact the NGA regarding TC's access: TC reported continuing inability to access the website. JA agreed to resolve this ASAP. **ACTION: JA**
- iii) LG to review the siting of the new cabinet in the hut and arrange a suitable cover for the glass if required: LC reported that a cover was required and the Hut Committee were organising this. **ACTION: DJ to liaise with Hut committee about cabinet cover**
- iv) All governors to review wording of pupil survey for KS1 and KS2 children. Carried over to next FGB. **ACTION: All governors**
- v) Clerk to ensure all skills audits have been completed. COMPLETED. Analysis to be added to next FGB agenda. **ACTION: JA**
- vi) Clerk to mark future agenda items as 'for information' or 'for decision'. Noted and actioned.
- vii) DJ to arrange for a gift of £50 to be made to Kyla and Andy Way. COMPLETED.
- viii) Clerk to draft the dates for Committee meetings 2023-24. COMPLETED.

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

None declared.

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

There were no interests declared in respect of the Agenda. All governors completed and signed a new Business Interests form and these were collected by DJ to be stored in the school office.

7. **Correspondence**

None.

8. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

DJ offered to continue as Chair and was unopposed. He was duly re-elected. WM offered to continue as Vice Chair and was unopposed. She was duly re-elected.

9. **SEND Review 2022-23**

AO, the school SENCO, attended for this item and presented her report, which followed a detailed meeting with ER, the lead governor for SEND. ER would send AO's report and ER's summary of their meeting to JA, for distribution to all governors. **ACTION: ER/JA.** The full reports contained a wealth of detail, and for this FGB meeting AO focused on the following:

In April 2023 there had been 25 children at the school receiving SEND support out of a total on roll of 63, which at 40% was substantially higher than the national average of 12.2%. Thirteen percent of the school's children were in receipt of Pupil Premium and there was one child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). She identified four main reasons for the high figure: parents of children with specific support needs often chose Powerstock because of its strong reputation in this regard; SEND numbers, while lower in most other schools, were increasing nationally, due to many factors, including the continuing effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis; the school's teachers were highly skilled and experienced at identifying and addressing a wide range of specific needs; the school's small class sizes meant that issues being experienced by children were more apparent and unlikely to go unnoticed.

Successful interventions had included the 'words first' programme, which focused less on phonics and more on learning to read simple books with the emphasis on key words. All classes had 'daily readers' which had helped to improve the reading of many children. For example, one Pupil Premium child in Year 6 was a poor reader, and their teacher had read with them each morning before school. The child had subsequently achieved ARE for reading. Two other children with SEND only narrowly missed ARE in both reading and maths. Five children with a range of needs, including autism, were part of a smaller phonics intervention in Burton Class (Year 1). Although they had not passed the phonics test they had managed to read a number of phase 3 and 4 words. They had clearly benefitted from the approach taken, and AO was optimistic they would be able to 'close the gap' as they progressed through the school. There were another group with emotional needs in KS2 whose ability to engage with learning had been severely held back by the pandemic and lockdowns. They had required a nurturing and gentle understanding and had ELSA support as well as daily teacher time and small group interventions in literacy and numeracy. They had made good progress and were now much more resilient, confident and ready to learn. The ELSA had seen an unprecedented 23 children over the course of 2022-23 and was supporting six or seven children per week.

***Q/C: Governors asked how long an EHCP application took to process. AO replied that it typically took at least a year. Governors asked why it took so long.*** AO replied that the necessary paperwork was substantial. A recent submission was around 9,000 words long, with 15 attachments. The evidence required was considerable and often difficult to obtain. The school currently has one application in progress. ***Q/C: Governors asked if many parents came in for the Friday afternoon 'parent drop-in' sessions.*** AO replied that this was a very well used and

popular service. LC confirmed that parents were very open with AO at these sessions about the problems they were dealing with and AO was often able to support them with issues at home, arrange for link worker support and help to move things on. ***Q/C: Governors asked if SEND assessments were made internally by staff rather than requiring external verification.*** AO confirmed that this was the case, based on daily interactions with children. The available knowledge base and the experience of staff meant that signs of particular issues and needs were identified much earlier now than used to be the case. Depending on identified need outside specialist support then may be requested. ***Q/C: Governors asked if it was mainly the impact of coronavirus and lockdown restrictions that has caused the increase in SEND.*** AO replied that coronavirus was only one of a number of wider societal factors that led to increased pressure on parents and emotional anxiety for families. SEND children often came to the school at later stages, such as Year 3, because problems had emerged in previous settings.

***Q/C: Governors had a lengthy discussion about whether the significant extra support given to SEND children was to the detriment of other children not facing these issues. Some were concerned that there may not be the staff time and resources to ensure that sufficient attention was given to these other children.*** AO and SV replied the school's teachers were highly skilled and experienced at ensuring that every lesson provided input and activity that matched the levels and ways of learning of all the children in the class. NH added that in his experience at his current school, if SEND children were taught effectively, it was to the significant benefit of all the children in the class, and this was backed up by research and evidence. LC added that any primary school would say that it's a juggling act, but teachers knew how to work 'smart', and use skills, resources and timetabling to achieve good outcomes. She also pointed out that SEND did not always equate to low-achieving, and many SEND children had considerable, if different, skills – as could be clearly seen by looking at their work, observing them in forest school or PE lessons and listening to them in debating sessions etc.

ER concluded this item by explaining that she and AO had an agreed agenda of regular meetings, and were able to evidence that the school's five strategic priorities were fully covered by the SEND approach. Links to the SDP were also clearly evidenced, which was facilitated by the school's holistic picture (HOP).

Governors said how impressed they were that school staff were able to cater so well to the individual needs of such a broad range of children, and thanked AO for her report and for her excellent work as SENCO. AO replied that she and the other staff were aware of how supportive the governors were and greatly valued this.

**ACTION: Governors asked LC to update the Pupil Premium Statement on the school website.**

#### 10. Chair's Notices

These would be covered at Item 16.

#### 11. Headteacher's Verbal Report

**Front office entry procedure:** Governors agreed to continue with the existing procedure for the time being. NH would review it once he had started as headteacher.

**Attendance Update:** LC tabled 2022-23 attendance data. The whole-school figure was 91.3%, against a national average for primary schools of 93.8%. For pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium, attendance was 85.3%. Persistent absence was 24.6%. One persistent absentee from last year had markedly improved this year. Currently one child had significant transport issues that prevented them from attending much of the time, and LC was urgently addressing this with Dorset Council. LC added that attendance was 95.2% since the beginning of the current term.

***Q/C: Governors questioned whether attendance was worse now than in the past, why it was so low and what needed to be done for it to improve.*** LC replied that attendance had definitely got worse at Powerstock, as it had nationally. This, too, was linked to the pressures on parents

caused by the cost-of-living crisis, as well as continuing problems originating from coronavirus lockdowns. Also, there seemed to have been a shift whereby parents increasingly saw it as socially acceptable to take their children out of school for term-time holidays. The issue of attendance was complex, multi-faceted and difficult to address; multi-agency approaches were needed. However, it was essential to communicate to parents that poor attendance at primary school would almost certainly worsen at secondary school.

*Pupil Premium Update:* There were currently seven children in receipt of Pupil Premium – 12.1% of the total on roll.

*Attainment:* LC tabled a sheet showing Key Stage 2 attainment trends over three years and compared these to the Dorset and national data. For reading and writing, results were improving or remaining steady, and were as good as or better than Dorset and national results, which given the percentage of SEND children at the school, was very creditable. Maths results had improved since 2022 but remained lower than local and national averages. However, a higher percentage of Powerstock children actually exceeded Age Related Expectations (ARE) in maths than locally or nationally. The need to analyse attainment in maths has been emphasised in the SDP and acknowledged in the Self Evaluation Form for 2023-24. In particular, the gender gap in maths would be examined, as this had been identified as an issue across Dorset. Key stage 1 results for reading, writing and maths were all in line or higher than Dorset and National. At EYFS, 63% of children had met all their early learning goals, which was also in line with Dorset and National.

## 12. Safeguarding update

WM gave a verbal update as lead governor for safeguarding. She had met LC earlier that day. There were currently no issues of urgent concern. There was one child with Children in Need (CiN) status. Behaviour was generally good, and aside from the one issue caused by transport problems discussed at Item 11 above, attendance for September was satisfactory. There were no Child Protection orders. ***Q/C: DJ asked all governors to confirm that they had read Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE).*** All replied that they had done so and signed a copy of KCSiE to confirm this.

## 13. Proposed building work in Burton

DB had reviewed the proposals and discussed them with staff. In October 2022 governors had discussed the headteacher's proposal, developed with Dolmans, the Diocese surveyors, to section off part of Seatown classroom for Year 2 to use. This would involve installing a new staircase and stud walls. The proposal was to be covered mainly by government funding with the school contributing 10% of the cost. One year on, however, staff appeared to be unclear what the changes would achieve. The staircase would take up a lot of valuable space and the money would be better spent soundproofing the partition wall. ***Q/C: Governors were surprised that staff were unclear about the plans, as their understanding was that staff had been fully consulted. Governors offered their apologies to staff for the misunderstanding.*** DJ agreed to discuss the issue with Dolmans and the Diocese to agree a way forward. **ACTION: DJ.**

## 14. Policy Review

JA presented a proposal whereby only the 16 policies which by law had to be approved by the Governing Body would be presented to FGB meetings, thereby freeing up more time for strategic discussion. Remaining policies would be considered and approved by a thrice-yearly policies sub-group, comprised of the headteacher and one further governor. WM volunteered for this role. The proposal was unanimously approved. **ACTION: JA to organise and administer the policies sub-group.**

The following policies were reviewed by Governors and were approved:

- Code of Conduct for Governors

- Governing Body Standing Orders
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

WM had made some additions to the latter policy to reflect the content of the September 2023 update to KCSiE. JM noted that the model Safeguarding Policy issued by Dorset Council had weaknesses, such as making no mention of Operation Encompass. This had necessitated further additions and amendments.

Governors noted two further policies that had been updated, but did not require their approval:

- PE Policy
- Marking and Feedback Policy

## 15. Governance Issues

*Governor committees:* DJ circulated the list of memberships of: the Quality of Education and Wellbeing Committee; the Finance, Pay and Environment Committee; the Ofsted Sub-committee; and the SIAMS Sub-committee. These were approved unanimously. **ACTION: JA to circulate the committee schedule for 2023-24.**

*Governor link roles and monitoring schedule:* DJ tabled the revised list of roles and the new visit and monitoring schedule for 2023-24. He asked governors to check these schedules and confirm acceptance of them to him by half term. He also asked for volunteers for lead governors for PSHE and Compliance. **ACTION: All Governors.**

*Governor training arrangements:* JA would 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. This would be updated with new training requirements at the start of each term. **ACTION: JA**

*Governor visits:* JM presented a monitoring report for PE, a copy of which was in the meeting pack. She had seen PE classes for the whole school the previous week. While these had generally been successful, the absence of SEND support for years 5 and 6 for PE lessons meant that behaviour was sometimes challenging. A discussion around whether there is a need for more support during lessons will be held between LC and SVS.

ER's report on EYFS and WM's safeguarding report had been discussed earlier in the agenda. DJ would carry out a monitoring visit on maths the following week.

*Year 6 interviews:* DJ tabled a report on the Year 6 exit interviews from the previous July. The children had expressed themselves eloquently and openly, were clear on the school's values, and although mainly positive, had been open with what they didn't like about the school – for example, they didn't like being sat in house groups at lunchtime as this meant they were often unable to sit with their friends. They had valued their SATs preparation classes and thought that even more SATs practice would have been worthwhile. **Q/C: Governors asked if some of their positive, well-spoken comments could be shown on the website.** LC agreed to organise this. **ACTION: LC.**

### FGB Forward Plan

This was in the pack and was noted.

## 16. Clerk's Notices

None

## 17. Date and Time of Next Meeting:

21 November 2023, 4:30pm.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm.

Item no.	Action	Owner	By when
3	Amend minutes as detailed	JA	Next FGB
3	Arrange a meeting with LS to progress work on procurement, including telephony, broadband and cyber security	LC	Next FGB
3	Resolve TC's access issues with the NGA website	JA	Half term
3	Liaise with Hut committee about cabinet cover	DJ	Next FGB
3	Review wording of pupil survey for KS1 and KS2 children.	All governors	Next FGB
3	Add NGA skills audit analysis 2022-23 to next agenda	JA	Next FGB
9	Circulate ER and AO SEND reports	JA	Half term
9	Update the Pupil Premium Statement on the school website	LC	Half term
13	Discuss the Burton issue with Dolmans and the Diocese and agree a way forward	DJ	Next FGB
14	Organise and administer the policies sub-group	JA	Next FGB
15	Circulate the committee schedule for 2023-24	JA	Half term
15	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	JA	Next FGB
15	Add comments from Year 6 exit interviews to the school website	JM	Next FGB

Item no.	Summary of Governor Questions & Challenges
9	Governors asked how long an EHCP application took to process. AO replied that it typically took at least a year. Governors asked why it took so long.
9	Governors asked if many parents came in for the Friday afternoon 'parent drop-in' sessions.
9	Governors asked if SEND assessments were made internally by staff rather than requiring external verification.
9	Governors asked if it was mainly the impact of coronavirus and lockdown restrictions that has caused the increase in SEND.
9	Governors had a lengthy discussion about whether the significant extra support given to SEND children was to the detriment of other children not facing these issues. Some were concerned that there may not be the staff time and resources to ensure that sufficient attention was given to these other children.
11	Governors questioned whether attendance was worse now than in the past, why it was so low and what needed to be done for it to improve.
12	DJ asked all governors to confirm that they had read Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE).
13	Governors were surprised that staff were unclear about the plans, as their understanding was that staff had been fully consulted. Governors offered their apologies to staff for the misunderstanding.
15	Governors asked if some of their positive, well-spoken comments could be shown on the website.