



**ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
GOVERNING BOARD**
Love one another as I have loved you – John 15:12

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING
OF THE GOVERNING BOARD
27 MARCH 2023 at 1900 hours**

PART ONE

ATTENDANCE

Name	Category	Term ends	Present	Absent
John McDonald	Headteacher	Ex-officio	P	
Charles Donnelly	Foundation	31/08/2026	P	
Kevin Doogan	Foundation	31/08/2026	P	
Jill Formston	Foundation	31/08/2026	P	
Brigid Gribbin-Bartlett	Foundation	31/08/2025	P	
Peter Matthews	Foundation	31/08/2025		A
Catherine Moor	Foundation	31/08/2025	P	
Father Ramesh	Foundation	31/08/2026	P	
Vacancy	Foundation			
Colette Haig	Staff	31/08/2024		A
Carmen Davies	Parent	31/08/2026		A
Bridget Pullen	Parent	31/08/2026		A
Teresa Philpott	Co-opted	31/08/2023		A
Lorraine Adamson	LA	31/08/2026	P	

In attendance/observers: Kelly Nuttall, Deputy Headteacher
Fleur McAlavey, Assistant Headteacher

The Headteacher invited the Governors to join in a prayer to St Alban.

KEVIN DOOGAN in the CHAIR

1 PRELIMINARIES

1.1 WELCOME: The Chair welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of the Governing Board in the Spring term 2023.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/ABSENTEES: Peter Matthews, Bridget Pullen, Carmen Davies, Teresa Marnell and Colette Haig.

RESOLVED: To grant special leave of absence to Peter Matthews to enable him to fulfil a pre-arranged commitment to the Diocese.

The quorum requirement of seven governors had been met.

1.3 CONFIDENTIALITY. The Chair reminded the Governors of the need to maintain confidentiality on all matters discussed this evening.

1.4 MEMBERSHIP: The Chair advised that the membership of the Board is complete, apart from one position of Foundation Governor.

Father Ramesh gave an undertaking to repeat, in the Parish Bulletin, the invitation to members of the community to express interest in becoming a Governor.

1.5 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS/RELATIONSHIPS: The Headteacher advised that he is a Governor at St Mary's College.

Charles Donnelly declared that he is Chair of Governors at St Mary's College.

Catherine Moor declared that she is employed at St Mary's College and her spouse is CEO of the Holy Family Trust.

No further declarations of Interests/Relationships were received.

1.6 GOVERNORS' SAFEGUARDING TRAINING: The Chair thanked the Governors for undertaking on line training on Safeguarding and confirmed that, apart from Carmen Davies, the Governing Board was now fully compliant.

1.7 INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNANCE. The Governing Board has a statutory responsibility to review the Instrument of Governance annually.

RESOLVED: That, having reviewed the Instrument of Governance, to confirm that no changes are required in 2023.

CO-OPTED GOVERNOR: The term of office of the Co-opted Governor is due to expire on 31 August 2023.

DfE guidance states: *A Co-opted Governor is an individual from the community who has the skills and experience the Governing Body require. The Co-opted Governor is appointed by the existing Board following an interview.*

The Headteacher suggested the need for each Governor to complete an updated skills audit in order to identify any gaps that may exist.

RESOLVED: The Headteacher to arrange for the Skills Audit to be issued to each Governor with a request to complete and return the proforma in time for consideration at the Governors' meeting in June.

2 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE GOVERNING BOARD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2022.

RESOLVED: To confirm that the minutes of the meeting of the Governing Board on 28 November 2022 are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Headteacher reported progress on matters arising/action points -

3.1 ARRANGE PARENTAL WORKSHOPS: A workshop on Reading had taken place; the event went very well. There is a desire to involve more parents in the life of the school. Plans are in hand for Reading Workshops in Year groups.

3.2 RE-INTRODUCE CHATTERBOX: Weekly Chatterbox sessions have been successfully re-introduced with a toddler group, on Friday mornings.

3.3 NEW POST OF PASTORAL/FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER: The Pastoral/Family Support worker's duties would include organising and running Chatterbox sessions with the parents.

RESOLVED: To approve the establishment of a new post of Pastoral/Family Support worker.

3.4 HEALTH & SAFETY: CLEAPSS TRAINING. Lorraine Adamson advised that CLEAPSS is very useful tool with a multi-faceted approach, that includes Safety. The objective is to make sure that all staff are fully trained in the materials they are using, and that everyone is safe. The aim is to draw up a timetable for training

across the LA. A number of schools have organised a conference in June. Further information was available on the home page on the website.

4 MINUTES OF GOVERNORS' COMMITTEES

A link to the minutes of Governors' Committees had been attached to the agenda published in advance.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE: 23 JANUARY 2023. In the absence of the Chair of the Standards Committee, the Chair of Governors stated that the main issue had been Writing at Key Stage 1 and Phonics, where the children were a little behind where they should be.

The Headteacher added that the focus had been on Maths, History and Geography. The Committee had been made aware of a number of children who are not self-regulating as they should be, which affects their ability to concentrate and to learn, and, in some instances, their behaviour. The staff are working incredibly hard to reduce the number of these children and they are looking for the right degree of training to support themselves.

Whilst the number of persistent absences is lower than in some schools, this school is not where it would wish to be. It is part of a working group with the Holy Family MAT, initiated by the DfE, on the actions to be taken to make sure that children who are not in school are safeguarded and supported. Children with long term persistent absences are returning on reduced timetables.

Post Covid, for some children non-attendance had become a habit, and raises the question, *'How do we engage with the parents of those children?'* It's a whole school issue - ensuring that children attend school regularly is everyone's responsibility. There is an urgent need for multi-agency involvement with these children.

A review of SEND provision had identified that better systems need to be in place so that children can be identified earlier. A new staff member has been introduced to improve referrals to the Inclusion Team to support the staff with strategies.

ASSETS COMMITTEE: 6 FEBRUARY 2023: In the absence of the Committee Chair, Peter Matthews, the Chair of Governors reported that the meeting had been well-attended. The Committee had agreed that the Financial Skills Matrix needed to be re-issued and updated.

The Committee had looked at the outstanding maintenance work funded by the Diocese that needs attention.

The hall floor is bowed following water damage caused by flooding from the flat roof and needs to be replaced. The work would be carried out in May half term at a cost of between £48/49,000 which would be partly met by diverting funding intended for

the installation of security fencing around the front playground. CCTV had been installed outside, primarily to protect the staff from unfounded allegations.

The Headteacher provided a detailed response to a question by Charles Donnelly on routine maintenance work carried out to ensure that the outlets are kept clear. He advised on the need to install grease traps to prevent grease from routine washing and cleaning in the kitchen entering and blocking the downpipes. Each grease trap would cost around £45, compared to a charge of around £60 by United Utilities. A decision was needed on whether to submit a bid to the Diocese for funding of £80,000 to prevent a recurrence of the problem relating to the flat roof.

The Headteacher continued that the Assets Committee had recommended that the Board approves the continuation of the existing SLAs in 2023, apart from Wirral Community Patrol, which had not provided the level of service expected in 2022. The Committee had recommended that Atlas Security is used on a trial basis for one year.

The Committee had received the Auditor's certificate for the audit of the school fund carried out on 10 November 2022.

RESOLVED: To-

- i. receive and note the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee on 23 January 2023;**
- ii. ratify the recommendations of the Standards Committee on 23 January 2023;**
- iii. receive and note the minutes of the meeting of the Assets Committee on 6 February 2023;**
- iv. ratify the recommendations of the Assets Committee;**
- v. thank the Chairs and members of the Governors' Committees for their commitment and support.**
- vi. thank the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors for their verbal updates.**

5 REPORTS

HEADTEACHER'S REPORT: The Headteacher showed a screen shot of his report. His verbal comments are re-produced below:

OFSTED AND CURRENT ASSESSMENTS:

- In terms of where we are or will be by the end of the year, our overall grade is Requires Improvement.

- That is because not everyone fully understands their role in terms of the quality of teaching and learning.
- We have been helping the staff with that and at the same time with some of the behaviour, particularly low level behaviour which is not necessarily secure in every class, and because we are not fully secure in all subjects, my understanding is that by the end of this year we will 'dip' in all areas, particularly in things like subject leadership.
- We have prioritised History, Geography and Maths.
- We had a meeting with the staff this week to look at simplifying the curriculum even further [this is about the fourth revision of the curriculum]. One of the things we have not yet got across the whole school and makes it harder to assess is that people are not 100% sure about what we want children to learn by the end of the lesson.
- Personal development is an area that requires improvement.
- We had a curriculum in place but it was not as effective as it should be because the children were not remembering what they had been taught – it was too focussed and I hope by the end of this year we will be in a better place. The feedback from the staff is they are liking it because it is more simple.

NUMBER ON ROLL:

- The expectation is that numbers will reduce by another 20 next year.
- In terms of SEN, the numbers are still high with a lot more children requiring support within the classroom. We are doing that as a whole staff and it is working well, but in some classes some children need more support.
- There are 36 children in Reception. There will be a big piece of work between now and the end of the year to make sure, financially, we are confident going forward.

STAFF ABSENCES

- Staff Absence, particularly amongst the TAs, is quite high.
- Three/four TAs have legitimate reasons but it impacts on the rest of the TAs.
- We want the children to receive the best quality care we can provide.

Governor question: : Do you cover for an absent TA?

Headteacher's reply: We don't normally. We have taken out insurance for the teachers but not the TAs. We shuffle people around, but it is not great and impacts on other parts of the school.

- The Observatory School have advised that they cannot meet the needs of a particular child.
- I want to make sure that the staff are OK and I don't want staff burnout.
- Two members of staff are supporting one child.

- A parent wants their child to go to West Kirby Residential School. A response is awaited, and also from Glenbrook.
- This puts extra pressure on the staff and inevitably the TAs take the brunt of that, we want to make sure they are supported.

PERSISTENT ABSENCES.

- The school is fairly typical when compared to other schools, but it is still high.
- We aim to reduce it to 7%.
- This report shows persistent absences as 26.3% which is too high. This time last year it was 22.6% and we want to challenge those persistent absences.
- Some is to do with habit and people being in a rut.
- The children spent time not being in school during the pandemic and sometimes parents allow their children to stay off, and if anything it is a self-perpetuating matter.
- Some parents say their child is being bullied, and that's more prevalent than we would like, but generally it's more to do with children disagreeing with each other.
- The LA was asked to do a comparison with schools in the Wallasey cluster.
- The chart shown on the screen indicates that this school is comparable with SS Peter & Paul and had fewer persistent absentees than St Josephs.
- It may be a local issue but that is something to improve on.
- Year 1 is quite high.

FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS:

- Two, for bullying incidents.
- Lisa Little came in November at the request of the LA. Lisa has been working with History subject leaders.
- At the last Governors' meeting, a request was made for external reports to validate my judgments. I've done that. You have the report, updated from the report from November.
- At staff meetings there has been lots of external training and coming together with a shared understanding of what we want.
- We need to be monitoring the timetable.
- We need the children being able to remember not so much the delivery of knowledge but how sharp the learning is and if they remember it - making sure it is really sharp?
- How can we make sure that the learning is delivered in the best possible way? Eg, it might be role play rather than written exercises.

- Lisa helped us with that. She will come back in after the SATS. We want to give people time to embed things that need to be in place.
- We have other external support. I asked our LA School Improvement person to come in the first week after half term to look at behaviour around the school.
- We want to hear that the children are happy and are learning well, and the staff are happy.
- I mentioned SEND data, and the action plan is here.
- We're involved with Liverpool School Improvement.
- We need to be sharper using these things.
- We now have just one SENCO instead of two
- Here is the SEND action plan 2022/23 based on the School Improvement Plan.

SCHOOL'S SEF PRIORITIES

- The priorities are Behaviour and the Quality of Education.

REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE: Responding to a query by the Chair, the Headteacher advised that six referrals had been made. One - for Early Help - had progressed. The school had been offered support with the remaining five.

Brigid Gribbin commented that the number seemed to be quite low.

The Headteacher replied that the school always '*works by the book*'; sometimes, Social Care state that they need more information. Where appropriate, the school seeks advice from the LADO.

He reassured the Governors that the school always takes a '*belt and braces*' approach as well as providing support to parents. Social workers are inundated with cases, and sometimes the school feels that they do not speak to the children enough.

No further questions were raised.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for his comprehensive report and presentation.

DIOCESAN BRIEFING: The Governors had been sent information on RE and Catholic Life..

GOVERNOR TRAINING. All the governors, bar one, had undertaken Safeguarding Training.

Charles Donnelly reported that he had attended training on Governor Visits.

No written or verbal reports on Governor Training attended were received at the meeting.

St Mary's College had delivered specific training on Governor visits looking at the quality of education in a few subjects together.

Cath Moor reported that the Headteacher, Father Ramesh [and another unnamed Governor] had attended training on Attendance and Catholic Life.

Charles Donnelly commented: *'It was a good day. We went as a group of governors and had a presentation from the senior managers and subject leaders and went into classrooms and observed. We were trying to look at everything that had been delivered and how it works'.*

ACTION POINT: **The Headteacher to arrange a Governors' Day to give the Governors a feel for the school.**

The Chair commented that, as agreed, the Governors had been waiting for subject leaders to contact them to arrange visits.

ACTION POINT: **The Headteacher to arrange for subject leaders to contact their link governor and arrange a visit.**

6 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Headteacher reported that the policies has been updated so they are much sharper.

The Complaints Policy has been updated.

The Admissions Policy. A decision had been made to leave the PAN as it is.

There are 34 first choices for next year, fewer than the school wants, but similar to last year. Six/seven second choices will take the number up to the forties.

School Dates are the same as Wirral's and St Mary's College. There is an extra bank holiday on 6 May for the King's Coronation.

The Lower Level Concerns policy is to do with keeping children safe in Education and refers to lower level concerns that may not result in a referral. It's a system for the staff to report those concerns no matter how small.

The Safer Recruitment Policy is about being more sharp when doing recruitment checks.

Wirral's Safeguarding Policy: A local Headteacher had picked up a mistake in the Policy – an amended version is awaited from Wirral.

Child on Child Abuse: A more formal version has been issued.

The Chair asked the Governors to confirm that they were happy to ratify and adopt the policies.

No dissent was expressed by the Governors.

7 CHAIR'S ACTIONS:

The Chair reported –

- Attendance at the RE Inspection with three other Governors who were very passionate about the school and had helped the Inspectors to come to their judgements.
- Receipt of letters of stage 2 complaints from two parents. In both cases the complaints had been referred back to the school to determine the exact nature of the complaints, and try to resolve them. The school had contacted the parents and worked hard to resolve the complaints. No further action is required.
- On his involvement in the appointment of an excellent class teacher for year 1 on a short term basis to begin after Easter.

8 HEADTEACHER AND STAFF WELLBEING AND WORKLOADS

In commenting that it had been a difficult time recently with the RE inspection etc, the Chair asked the Headteacher if there was anything he wished to raise in terms of general wellbeing.

The Headteacher replied –

- The one main thing had been culture change of a new headteacher and lots of challenge on the system, coming through Covid.
- The staff have been very patient with me, and also they are very honest in terms of sharing concerns.
- In terms of workload, there is nothing that helps more than being listened to, and over the past few weeks he had had a few good discussions which have helped people understand that there is no blame culture, but there is accountability culture.
- One of the things that is really useful is the work that started to-day with a person who is trained in psychology and has a friendly way of driving school improvement, which is not a top down but a bottom up approach to school improvement. Implementation time has been put in place to make sure that everyone's voice – from senior managers down to the TAs - is heard and there is shared ownership of what the issues are.
- Wellbeing goes up when people have a voice.

- That may be a challenge for me, but I feel supported and thank the governors who came in and spoke so well during the RE inspection. A big thank you for the support and help I have had and for the Chair's communication with the staff.
- The staff recognise that it is 'very tricky' at times; there are some difficult children as well, and they are doing well.

Cath Moor stated that she was part of the process [the RE inspection] and the report reflects what is happening in the school. It was lovely, the inspectors were able to recognise the hard work of everyone and recognised that leadership is hard, and that the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are still fairly new to the community; it is very lonely in that position.

She added: 'From the Governors' perspective we are really proud of the work that is done in the school and it was wonderful to hear how that work is about pushing forward. It is difficult to challenge. To challenge areas is not easy but my observation is that with RE there is always a reason, and we need to support the SLT and the rest of the staff in coping with RE, but it was a really brave, accurate reflection of what it is about. We reflected that in the RE inspection and talked about how aware we are of the work that has gone into this meeting - it is a lot of work - and every opportunity has been taken to provide the information about the children and that needs to be reflected from the Governors.'

The Deputy Headteacher thanked the Governors, stating that it had been a tough year but really enlightening working with the Headteacher and all the staff. Working alongside the Headteacher and the staff has been a delight, it is challenging but it's a lovely school and the children are lovely.

The Chair stated that it was gratifying to hear from the other side. He added, **'Well done to everyone, this recognition is very much appreciated.'**

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, 26 JUNE 2023. 19.00 HOURS

The Assistant Headteacher, Fleur McAlavey, withdrew.

The meeting continued in closed session.

**SIGNED AS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE PART ONE MEETING
OF THE GOVERNING BOARD ON 27 MARCH 2023.**

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

DATE