



ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Love one another as I have loved you

VIRTUAL MEETING OF A STEERING GROUP OF THE GOVERNING BOARD TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2020

PARTICIPANTS: John McDonald [Headteacher and host of meeting], Nicola Boyd, Claire Connor, Kevin Doogan, Pat Duprey, Pat Higgins, Lucy Lowe, Peter Matthews, Bridget Pullen, Marie Wolfe. James?

Non Participants: Colette Haig, Bernie Mooney, Louise Mulhern?, Teresa Marnell. ?

In attendance: Ann Evans, Deputy Headteacher, Fleur McAlavey [Assistant Headteacher], Eileen Coyle, [Clerk to Governors].

THE PURPOSE AND REMIT OF THE STEERING GROUP

- **To consider the working of the Governing Board and its Committees and to make recommendations for its future operation.**

The Headteacher welcomed and thanked the Governors for joining the steering group. An agenda of meeting, together with the Headteacher's report and related documents, had been sent to Governors for reading in advance.

1 THE CHALLENGES FACING THE SCHOOL AND THE GOVERNING BOARD

In introducing his report, the Headteacher referred to the many ongoing challenges facing schools and Governing Boards. He highlighted the need for the Board to be robust in facing these challenges, to focus on providing strategic leadership, to question and hold the Headteacher to account, to have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children, to have the inquisitiveness to question and to analyse; and to ensure that the Board is perceived by Ofsted to be carrying out its proper role.

2 THE HEADTEACHER'S PROPOSALS FOR THE GOVERNORS' COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Steering Group considered, line by line, the Headteacher's proposals for a Committee structure going forward, and responded to the invitation to express views on the proposals.

Peter Matthews responded immediately by saying: *'I agree it is a different, but an exciting way of working; it is a challenge for us to pick up and run with it, but it looks good and I support you 100%'*.

Kevin Doogan commented: *A change in Headship provides a good opportunity to look at the structure of the Board and how it works to ensure it meets the needs of the school and the needs of the new Headteacher.*

A flavour of other comments, with the Headteacher's responses, is given below:-

It is exciting and will be good in the longer term but it is also daunting. Given the number of Committees and the number of Governors, people might be stretched a bit thin'.

Although the new structure looks like more meetings, there would be no more work than Governors have done in the past. Change is always daunting and people will have worries about it, but it's simply a different way of working, whilst being transparent and everyone knowing exactly what each Committee is doing and maximising the experience and expertise of the Governors. Governance is a focus in the new framework for Ofsted inspections.

The current Chair of Governors has agreed to do another term as a transition period, but we need some succession planning, and to train someone up. It would be good to have some training courses before the next meeting. Each Committee needs a Chair and Vice Chair. People need confidence to chair a meeting.

If we change the structure we need to know exactly what our responsibilities are. It would be useful to spend a couple of hours together and for someone to support us with that. It would be difficult but perhaps we could have a couple of mock meetings?

The NGA have on-line training. You can become a member and, depending on your membership, you can access training, for new governors, etc., and do it on line in your own time, and there are also formal courses etc.

The Assets Committee would have the option of nominating a Health & Safety Governor who would be accountable to the Committee. The LA's Health & Safety Officer for schools might agree to become a Governor in an advisory role; I don't think it would be a conflict of interest.

The LA's Health & Safety Officer has been very supportive, especially in relation to the risk assessments. Governing Board can benefit from being able to draw on the expertise of someone from outside their formal governor membership. The Board can appoint an Associate member who would not be a governor but would work with the Committee in a voluntary capacity and carry out inspections of the school premises, for example, and advise on aspects of health and safety.

FOR ACTION BY HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Associate Governor for Health & Safety.	Approach the person concerned and assess their interest in becoming an Associate Governor.	Early September 2020

Who will do the minutes for all the meetings?

Provision has been made in the budget for the Clerk to Governors to attend and minute all Committee meetings, in addition to Board meetings.

The Headteacher clarified the remit of the sub-committees for the Headteacher's Performance Management, which would involve two Governors working with the School Improvement Associate [SIA]; the role of the Pay Committee; and the purpose of the two statutory Committees, which would only be convened on very rare occasions.

An adhoc Committee, the Strategy Committee, would be introduced, the primary function of which would be to support the Headteacher in setting the strategic framework for the school and for ensuring that all its statutory responsibilities are met.

The establishment of a new Committee, Parish, Community, Parents and Pupils, would meet the DfE's recommendation to guarantee that there is a link between governors, the parents and the wider community.

3 GOVERNORS' PROPOSALS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE.

Other than the comments and suggestions offered above, no proposals for an alternative Committee structure were forthcoming. The Steering Group –

AGREED, unanimously:

To recommend that the full Governing Board adopts the following Committee structure from September 2020 -

I THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- (a) Combine the Finance, Health & Safety and Premises, Personnel and Pay, and the Personnel/Pay/Staffing Committee to form –

THE ASSETS COMMITTEE. This Committee would be responsible for all the schools' assets, ie. the delegated budget, the whole school staff, the buildings and grounds and health and safety.

The members of the Assets Committee would form a sub-committee to deal with specific issues relating to the budget, budget setting, Pay, and the Headteacher's Performance Appraisal.

Whilst the Assets Committee would retain overall responsibility for Health & Safety, it would nominate a member to serve as Health & Safety Governor who would be accountable to the Committee for health and safety inspections, risk assessments and monitoring health and safety training for staff.

- (b) Retain the Curriculum Committee with additional responsibilities and rename the Committee –

THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE. This Committee would monitor the quality and delivery of the national curriculum and the impact on standards and pupils' achievement; be responsible for safeguarding children, children with SEND, children looked after and disadvantaged children, and review the Headteacher's decisions on exclusions.

- (c) Create a new standing Committee -

THE PARISH/COMMUNITY/PARENT/PUPIL COMMITTEE. This Committee would be a conduit between the school, the parents, the pupils, the parish and the community.

- (d) Introduce an ad hoc Committee -

THE STRATEGY COMMITTEE. The primary function of this Committee would be to support the Headteacher in setting the strategic framework for the school and for ensuring that all its statutory responsibilities are met.

II THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES. Replace the current arrangement with two committees – the First Committee and the Second Committee.

THE FIRST COMMITTEE would fulfil the Governing Board's statutory responsibilities for staff and pupil discipline, staff dismissals, redundancy, grievances and deal with complaints.

The membership of the First Committee would comprise the Vice Chair of Governors and two *eligible governors drawn from a list of named governors.

THE SECOND COMMITTEE would fulfil the Governing Board's statutory responsibility to hear appeals against decisions of the First Committee, and would form a Pay Appeal Committee.

The membership of the Second Committee would comprise the Chair of Governors and two *eligible governors drawn from a list of named governors.

*Eligible governors would include **ALL** members of the Governing Board, except persons employed by the school [including the Headteacher].

Parent governors when meeting as a pupil disciplinary committee or when dealing with a complaint from another parent, or a governor who has previous knowledge of the case, would **not** be eligible governors and would be excluded from the process.

4 THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR GOVERNORS' COMMITTEES

The Headteacher invited the Steering Group to review the proposed Terms of Reference for each Governors' Committee.

AGREED, unanimously –

To recommend that each Committee reviews/amends/adopts its terms of reference at the first meeting in each academic year.

5 SKILLS AUDIT

The Headteacher suggested that it would be helpful if each Governor completed and returned a Skills Audit for use in assigning Governors to the new Committees.

Copies of the NGA Governing Board Skills Audit, 2019 version, had been sent electronically to all members of the Governing Board. The skills audit was based on the six features of effective governance referred to in the competency framework and to the additional skills required to enable a positive contribution to the Board.

FOR ACTION BY GOVERNORS		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Skills Audit	Individual Governors to complete a Skills Audit and return it to the Headteacher.	Not later than Friday, 17 July.

FOR ACTION BY CHAIR, VICE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS AND THE HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Membership of Governors' Committees	Assign Governors [subject to individual consultation], to Committees, based on their Skills Audits.	By 1 September.

6 GOVERNORS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Copies of the CES' Model Code of Conduct for Governors in a voluntary aided schools, with Appendix II, the Nolan Principles, had been sent electronically to the Governors in advance of the meeting.

AGREED, unanimously,

To recommend that -

- i. the Governing Board adopts the CES Code of Conduct, for adherence to by all the Governors, and**
- ii. the Headteacher ensures that the Code is published on the school's website.**

7 GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT

Further to the discussion on Governor training under 2 above, the Headteacher reiterated that the school is committed to supporting Governors in their development as individuals and as a corporate entity.

Governor training offered by the Diocese and other providers will be closely monitored. Governors will be invited to participate in the training that is available, including on-line courses, and adequate budgetary provision will be made to meet the associated costs.

FOR ACTION BY HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Governor Training	Identify training providers for Governors, [eg NGA, Edsential, ECM Education Consultants].	Ongoing from September 2020

8 GOVERNORS' MEETINGS

The School Governance [England] Regulations 2013, allow for alternative arrangements to be made for Governors to participate in or vote at meetings, including by telephone or video-conferencing.

To continue to meet its statutory responsibilities during lockdown, the Governing Board of this school had replaced face-to-face Governors' meetings with virtual meetings, all of which had been productive with full participation and input by the Governors.

The Headteacher suggested that the Board may wish to consider whether, when the current restrictions are lifted, it would be beneficial to continue to hold some virtual meetings [eg Committee meetings], combined with normal meetings as and when appropriate.

The Chair of Governors responded with an emphatic 'No', adding, '*It might be something we can do sometimes, and it might be useful for certain people, if they are working*'.

A governor commented: *Different people like different things. Some governors are desperate to get back to face-to-face meetings.*

There was no further discussion and no recommendation to the Governing Board was forthcoming.

9 COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND GOVERNORS

The Headteacher stated that as a forward-looking school, on-going consideration is given to improving communication between the school and governors, especially by looking at how technology can be used.

A Google drive, for example, could be used to permanently store all the documentation relating to Governance, and to provide a reliable and secure means of communication between Governors and the school, enabling the Governors to ask questions and to receive answers on line, as an alternative to using electronic mail.

10 ANNUAL CALENDAR OF GOVERNORS' MEETINGS

The Steering Group agreed that it would be useful to have a structured annual calendar of meetings.

FOR ACTION BY HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Annual Calendar of Governors' Meetings.	Arrange for a Calendar of meetings in 2020/21 to be drawn up and distributed to Governors.	By early September.

11 OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 THE CURRICULUM: The Headteacher reported that the Deputy Headteacher was of the opinion that the school is ready to go to the next stage in terms of the curriculum. He explained that disfluency is one aspect that Ofsted is keen on and he gave a couple of examples where disfluency might occur, adding if a problem is not recognised, Ofsted will say that the school has a curriculum issue.

11.2 REQUEST TO CHANGE INSET DAY: The renowned speaker, Chris Quigley, who is a specialist in primary education and is well versed in the Science of Learning and Curriculum Design, is available to deliver CPD for the teachers and TAs at this school on one date only, Friday, 11 September.

The Headteacher sought permission from the Governors to change the INSET day in January 2021 to Friday, 11 September 2020.

The Governors responded enthusiastically stating that they could see the benefits of the training to the children. Although some key workers might have problems with child care, if they are notified of the change of date now, they would have the whole of the summer to make alternative arrangements.

AGREED, unanimously, to approve changing the INSET day to Friday, 11 September 2020.

Responding to a comment by a Governor about making children flourish, not just coping with their learning, and the help they need when they get to secondary school, the Headteacher explained that the curriculum is moving away from Delivery

to Assessment for Learning to Intent, and how to implement it. There is a need to develop children's resilience and help them develop independent thinking when they get to year 7, whilst still allowing them to be children.

11.3 YEAR 6 LEAVERS. The Headteacher thanked the Deputy Head for the great story at Year 6's leavers' event. A governor commented: *'It was fantastic'*.

11.4 APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE, COMMERCIAL PREMISES: Peter Matthews reported receipt of a letter from the Council advising local residents that an application for change of use to a micro bar and coffee shop and new shop front, at premises at the end of St Alban's Road, would be going to full Planning Committee. The premises would be open from 8 am to 10 pm, and parents have concerns that children will be walking past to go to school. Any objection has to be made on line, when the personal details - name, address, and comments made - of those who respond would be in the public domain.

The Chair of Governors and other Governors stated that they had signed a petition objecting to the application. The Chair quoted three criteria why the application should not go ahead, namely, health and safety, a very busy thoroughfare, and all the activities that are already going on in that row of shops.

A governor commented: *It's a very narrow thoroughfare, and people pushing prams would not be able to get past, it is not in line with Wirral's Harm Reduction Programme and other strategies. I would be concerned about people smoking, it's right on the playground and people throw butts on to the playground; it's outside Wilkinson's, the only place on the Wirral that exceeds national guidance for air quality; I don't know why they want tables outside because of the buses and the taxis, and the air quality is not great in that area. At playtime, the children already have poor air quality because of the bus routes and they should not have a seating area where children are playing.*

The Chair advised that the more objections there are, the more notice the Planning Committee will take of those objections. It's important that Governors go on line and express their concerns; it's about air quality and the safety of children.

FOR ACTION BY HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN
Local Planning application	Co-ordinate the responses from the Governors and pass to the Chair of Governors for transmission to the Council.	Before deadline date, 21 July 2020.

11.5 LISCARD TOWN CENTRE. INTEGRATED MASTER PLAN: The Headteacher advised that he proposed to join a webinar at 6 pm on 8 July to find out about the 15-year plan for Liscard Town Centre. He quoted from the literature which stated: *'It is an ambitious vision for the future of the centre and growth for the next 15 years'*, adding that it would be useful to have representation by governors.

FOR ACTION BY HEADTEACHER		
TOPIC	ACTION	WHEN

Webinar Liscard Town Centre	-	Send the link to the Chair of Governors.	Immediately.
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In closing the virtual meeting at 1908 hours, the Headteacher thanked the Governors for their input and for everything they are doing on behalf of the families they represent.