

The London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames



Sheen Mount School

Minutes and Action List of the Full Governing Board Meeting
Held Virtually via Google Meet
24th June 2020 at 7pm

Constitution, Membership and Attendance

Local Authority Governors - 1	Maria Widdowson (MW)
Parent Governors – 2	Nikki Christmas (NC) <i>Vacancy</i>
Staff Governors – 2	Avani Bakrania (AB) Ian Hutchings (IH)
Co-opted Governors – 10	<i>Vacancy</i> <i>Vacancy</i> Kelly -Ann Cahillane (KAC) Helen Edward (HE) Anna Hare (AH) Justine Hebert (JH) (Chair) Kathryn Higgins (KH) (Standards Committee Chair) Dan Jameson (DJ) Catherine Riley (CR) (Pastoral Committee Chair) Julia Sandell (JS) Tilly Walters (TW) (Resources Committee Chair)
Associate Governors – 3	Laura Jeffery (LJ) Maria O'Brien (MOB) Marianne Paemen (MP)
Clerk to the board	Sarah Bellingham (SB)

* Absence(s) in Bold

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Minutes

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 JH welcomed governors to the final meeting of the academic year. It was noted that due notice of the meeting had been given to all members of FGB, and that a quorum was present. No-one had any personal or pecuniary interests to declare. It was noted that all the documents to be referred to in the meeting had been posted onto Governor Hub prior to the meeting for governors to read.
- 1.2 JH expressed the board's thanks to IH, MP, MOB and LJ for their wonderful efforts at the school, particularly in this difficult last term, which had been impacted by Covid-19. JH also expressed her thanks to the whole board for their time and energy this academic year, especially for the recent swift responses to JH's e-mail about the school's plans for the updated return to school plans taking effect from 6th July 2020.

2. Minutes and Action List from 20th May 2020

Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes from the meeting of 20 May 2020 were approved by the board and JH agreed that she would sign these and send her signed copy to the school office for them to file, and to scan a copy to the Clerk for uploading to Governor Hub (**ACTION**)

Actions

- 2.2 JH confirmed that she had reviewed these and that the actions were either completed or being progressed. JH asked TW and MP to consider how to progress the mental health budget discussion next academic year (**ACTION**).

3. Governing Body Membership

- 3.1 JH confirmed that the board was recruiting still for three vacancies: one parent governor and two co-opted governors. Interviews would soon be held for the co-opted roles. The parent election process was progressing well. Five potential candidates with good skills had put themselves forward so far. It was hoped that all appointments would be made before the end of term with a view to the new governors starting in September 2020.

4 Head Teacher's Update

- 4.1 JH confirmed that this would be given verbally by IH.

Attendance

- 4.2 IH said that the school had seen an average of 245 pupils return each day since 1st June 2020, which represented an 80-90% return from the eligible year groups. This was better than the national trend of 30%. Currently, 54 key worker and 20 vulnerable children were attending school, which reflected how much support was being offered to parents of these children. IH anticipated that upon the switch of models from 6th July, the uptake of places by parents of eligible children might increase. The school was working on strategies to deal with that.

Pupils at home and online learning

- 4.3 IH said that whilst there had been a good uptake of the online learning provision to date, there had been a drop-off in activity and motivation after the summer half term. This was part of the reason for bringing Years 2 to 5 back to school before the end of term. IH noted that it had been one of the current SDP's objectives to investigate online learning. IH said that given the steep upward curve in the extent and the quality of the online offer to pupils, this objective had been met. IH

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expressed his thanks to staff for embracing this challenge and said the next step was to work out how to sustain and improve the online offer in September to meet the requirements at that time.

Safeguarding

- 4.4 IH thanked the safeguarding governors for having been proactive and having offered helpful challenge during recent weeks, especially in relation to pupils at home. IH noted that the safeguarding policy had been reviewed and that a Covid-19 annex had been added. Three pupils remained on child protection plans, which had been in place prior to the lockdown. One pupil had been placed on a plan during lockdown, although this had now been removed and the school was keeping the situation under review.

Staffing

- 4.5 Interviews were being held this and next week to fill teaching assistant (TA) and teacher vacancies. These were available because 2020/21 would be the final year of the school expansion, also because a teacher had resigned and because a teacher had gone on maternity leave meaning that extra support was needed.
- 4.6 **Q:** Were the shortlisted teacher candidates experienced or newly qualified?
A: IH said that they were experienced, as that is what he thought was required at this time.

SEND

- 4.7 LJ updated the board and confirmed that four of the school's 24 pupils with EHCPs were out of school: two were shielding for health reasons, one was autistic and doing well at home supported by one-to-one google meet sessions, and the other pupil was in Year 6 and was due to come back to school next week. In general, there had been a good level of attendance from this group. For the next academic year, several applications had been put in for an EHCP. If successful, it would mean the current number of pupils with an EHCP would rise to 28. Only two pupils would be coming into Reception with an EHCP, which was less than in the current Reception class. Three Year 6 EHCP pupils would leave at the end of the summer term.

Staff and Parent Communications

- 4.8 IH said that the school had worked hard to ensure that staff and parents had felt engaged with it, for example via weekly staff meetings and updates, and via the weekly parent newsletter and letters sent out in the event of a significant change. IH thought the school had been robust and thorough and said that staff and parents had given positive feedback. JH agreed that IH and his team had done a great job.

New Model – Covid-19 and Return of Years 2 – 5

- 4.9 The current offer to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils was closing at the end of next week. Thereafter, the school would be open to pupils in Years 2 – 5, for whom it was felt that physically attending school would be of real benefit in terms of teaching time and closure before the end of term. IH thanked the board for its swift and supportive response to the proposal, which was circulated to it prior to IH making his decision about this new model. There had been very limited negativity from the parents of the children who would be leaving school early this term.
- 4.10 JH explained that although technically the new model was not in line with the current government or AfC guidance, she felt strongly that it was clearly within the spirit of it. JH had discussed this with AfC and had confirmed that the board was fully supportive of IH's decision. JH said that she and MW were taking part in AfC's termly joint partnership meeting the following evening and expected lots of discussion about this.
- 4.11 **Q:** Were any other primary schools in the borough adopting this new model?
A: JH said not many were doing it, but a few were such as East Sheen Primary. LJ added that Barnes Primary was doing something similar as well.

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Model for September 2020

4.12 IH said that the government was requiring that all children return to school in September 2020. Guidance was due out in a week's time. Once this had been received, it would be fed into the risk assessment being prepared for the safe return of pupils at that time.

4.13 **Q:** Was it possible to say at this point whether pupils would be returning in September on a full or part-time basis?

A: IH said that he had heard discussion of bubble sizes at a maximum of 30 pupils. Therefore, it might be sensible to assume a return on a full-time basis. The key point would be the social distancing requirements, as these would impact break and lunch times, and the ability to mix or have contact between groups. IH would update the board as soon as he could.

4.14 IH added that there was the possibility of a delayed start to the new term, if the government issued further guidance over the summer holidays in response to a significant change like a second wave of the virus. This would allow the school time to consider this and adjust plans as needed. Any delay might only last a few days, but the principal had been approved already by AfC and the DfE.

Classroom Flooding

4.15 IH made the board aware that two weeks earlier, three classrooms had flooded. MP had been extremely helpful on the Sunday in question and had given up her day to help to clean up the mess and get the classrooms ready for the Monday morning. IH asked the Resources committee to note that an insurance claim had been made in respect of the damage.

Behaviour

4.16 IH confirmed that there had been a fixed-term exclusion in the previous week. He asked the board to note this in relation to the school's behaviour results.

4.17 **Q:** Did IH anticipate needing extra support from the board over the next weeks or over the summer break?

A: IH said that he would keep the board updated but hoped not to have to ask for support over the summer.

4.18 **Q:** Would there be a summer school offer this year?

A: IH said that discussions now were mainly about catch-up or tutoring programmes. IH said that he has made it clear that the school will close to everyone from 17th July 2020 to ensure staff have a proper break. However, the school would meet its duty of care to key worker children by offering summer child-care off-site run by an outside organization.

5 BehaviourBehaviour Link Report & draft Statement of Behaviour Principles

5.1 JH thanked JS for her thorough and extensive link report. JH also flagged to the board that the statement of principles was a new item which required the agreement of the board. The principles were important because they would underpin the school's approach and policy on behaviour going forward.

Statement of Principles

5.2 JS confirmed JH's comments and added that the board was required by law to publish the standards of behaviour it expected the school to adhere to. A number of the behaviour principles were mandated by law, such as behaviours outside the school grounds. However, several were for the board to decide. JS said that she and CR had tried to focus on positive behaviours with some sanctions as well. JS said she would welcome governors' feedback. CR added that the statement had been kept as short as possible and that the intention was to review it regularly. IH and MOB had already confirmed that they were happy with the current document.

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5.3 **Q:** There was a reference at point 9 to a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. This seemed stronger than the language in the existing behaviour policy. Had this been used deliberately?

A: CR commented that the existing behaviour policy would be reviewed in due course and that these principles would inform that review. IH added that the 'zero tolerance' language was already in use by staff at the school when talking with children about bullying. HE said she felt it might be too strong. MOB said that the existing policy stated that bullying was not acceptable and was not tolerated, which she thought seemed consistent. JS said that 'zero tolerance' on bullying was the language used by lots of schools.

5.4 JS said that the government's guidance required that the statement of principles be developed with parent input. JS noted that there were several parents on the board, but asked whether governors would like to see more parent input. It might be appropriate to do this once school had returned to more of a normal routine. JH agreed that more parent input should be sought and that the better time for this might be next term. It could be an item for the parent survey working party to take forward, with a view to including items in the survey about this to generate feedback (**ACTION**).

5.5 JH asked the governors to vote on whether they approved the statement of behaviour principles. The governors indicated their approval (or not) via the 'Chat' function. The Clerk counted these votes and all 12 (voting) governors voted in favour of the statement. This was approved (**ACTION**).

Behaviour Link Governor Report

5.6 **Q:** How easy was it for staff to get training connected with the content of the report e.g. ELSA training? What was the percentage take-up of this kind of training?

A: IH said that ELSA training had been offered previously to a group of TA's. It was very expensive and was not run frequently. However, IH said the school planned to offer it at regular intervals. In terms of overall CPD, IH confirmed that the school tried to offer as many opportunities as possible for the staff to have the training they wanted.

5.7 **Q:** There were a number of action points at the end of the report. How would these be monitored?

A: CR said that these had been drawn up collaboratively by the Pastoral committee and the school. Pastoral would take responsibility for monitoring them and looking at outcomes, however it would be JS who would 'own' these and guide the committee at meetings about progress. The actions included some wellbeing initiatives to feed into the SDP. JS highlighted that several actions needed further discussion with the committee before being finalised. CR explained that some actions were in train already, such as the one relating to low-level incidents. CR had connected with IH about this.

6 School Development Plan (SDP) – academic year 2020/21

6.1 JH explained that the role of setting the SDP is carried out jointly by the school and the board, who look at the strategic priorities for the school to work on with board support. JH said that under normal circumstances, this process would have been well underway. Given Covid-19, and following JH's discussions with IH, she was proposing to limit the strategic focus for the next academic year to two core areas. The first was standards and how to build on last term's achievements with a focus on catch-up. There would also need to be a consideration of the curriculum piece in that area. Secondly, the focus would be on well-being, to include mental health. LJ was already working on this. IH had also flagged to JH ideas arising from the recent attention on the Black Lives Matter movement and would include his thoughts on this.

6.2 JH suggested that the committee Chairs talk with their committee members before the end of term, to agree on ideas which should go into the SDP objectives. These ideas would be passed onto IH for him to discuss with MOB and LJ and to draw up a proposal. IH would bring his proposal to the annual Chairs meeting in early September, with the intention of bringing the updated version to the first FGB meeting of the academic year in early October. JH agreed to e-mail the committee Chairs after this meeting to clarify the action in this respect (**ACTION**).

6.3 IH asked the Resources committee to have as their next focus the possibilities for income generation for the school and the extended services contract. TW agreed that the swimming pool project had taken up so much of the committee's time to date, that this would be a good focus now. The contract had not been looked at for a while.

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7 Financial Management UpdateFinal 3-year budget submission for 2020/2021 – for approval

- 7.1 MP explained that this was a five year and not a three year budget. She emphasised that the uncertainty at present was so great that even the one year budget was debatable. The school was extremely dependent on a number of factors, which were not yet clear. These included the fact that the amounts or rates of the predicted subsidies receipt from the government in respect of pension contributions and salaries were not known.
- 7.2 Separately, and in relation to Covid-19, a significant amount of money had been spent on additional resources, to include human resources, sanitation, and refunds to parents for deposits paid for cancelled school trips. In that last respect, the school were in touch with the insurers about how to claim back the refunded money, which currently represented a £160k expense for the school.
- 7.3 In relation to the swimming pool, MP confirmed that Swimway had paid all of its invoices to date, meaning that the school had received £150k so far in line with expectations. In accounting terms, this income had to be treated as pre-payment of rental income and, as such, the school could only realise £50k per year for the ten year period of the contract. £50k would be realisable from this financial year onwards, given that this was the first year that the school had rented out the pool. MP added that many of the costs associated with the pool were within last year's budget and it resulted in a carry forward of about £100k into this year's budget. This was helpful for us, because the local authority would see on paper that we do not have many reserves which it could potentially claw back from us. In effect, our reserves would be spread out over a ten year period, so that we are guaranteed 50K income per year. This worked well from a financial management perspective.
- 7.4 MP said that overall, the school was in a reasonably strong position financially.
- 7.5 **Q:** With reference to the table in the slide pack, if all of the risks relating to the pool, the pensions contributions and the teacher salaries occurred, what would happen then?
A: MP said that she was keeping a close eye on these costs. Much would depend on what support the school received and previous government contributions had been significant, for example in the region of £80k towards pension contributions. The school had already received some support this financial year. TW added that in the years she had worked on the budget with Marianne, she had found that the government typically provided the required funding. The four risks detailed in the table in the slides represented the very worst case scenario and she thought it highly unlikely that these risks would all occur together. The table had been drawn up purely in the interests of transparency.
- 7.6 **Q:** In terms of parent refunds, what was the additional financial risk if the insurance claims were unsuccessful?
A: MP said that the school was taking legal advice on this. It was not yet clear, for example, what was the extent of any insurance excess that would need to be paid by the school and whether this could be claimed back from a tour operator. One of these operators, PGL, had been very unwilling to repay money spent by the school for trips which had needed to be cancelled through no fault of the school. The insurance claim had gone in via the insurance firm appointed by the local authority. From an insurance perspective it appeared likely that the school would receive a good proportion back. CR said that she would be happy to help MP. MP was appreciative of this. She clarified that as well as trying to recoup lost money it was also a case of trying to recoup it in the current financial year to match the outgoings on refunds to parents.
- 7.7 **Q:** There was a big jump in the cost of learning resources – from £99k to £143k. Could you please explain this?
A: MP said that this was the amount spent in relation to school trips and journeys. It reflected the fact that there was no plan to do trips in the autumn term, as well as the need to reimburse parents and the various uncertainties around cancelled trips.
- 7.8 **Q:** There was a catering cost reduction from £218k – 182k, and then an increase back to £223k. Could you explain this please? **A:** MP said that the catering situation this summer term had looked very different from the rest of the year. Mainly the school had been without school meal provision.

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7.9 **Q:** What was the financial impact of the cancelled bike ride and summer fair?

A: IH said that he had been in contact with the PSA, who were planning to appeal to parents to raise money in lieu of the fundraising which had not been possible via these two events.

7.10 **Q:** Assuming the teacher interviews went well and you appointed the experienced teachers you plan to, had you factored in the cost of these salaries?

A: MP said that for salary purposes, the expected new teachers had been categorised as 'some experience', meaning a middle level salary. MOB flagged that a newly qualified teacher was not as inexpensive, comparatively, as it might appear at first. This was because of the requirement to provide a paid protected half day a week, when additional cover also needed to be funded for that time.

7.11 The governors took a vote on the budget submission needed for 30 June 2020. The Clerk counted these votes using the entries in the Chat function and the budget was unanimously approved. MP asked that JH print out and physically sign the document and return it to her at the office (**ACTION**).

Swimming Pool – progress update

7.12 IH confirmed that he had received the requested planning permission last week, albeit with a condition about the transport of materials connected with restricted parking of vehicles close to the pool site.

8 FGB Standing Items

Safeguarding Report

8.1 JH thanked CR and HE for a thorough and clear report and for their support generally.

8.2 CR confirmed that she and HE had had lots of contact with school in this challenging time. One point that CR had forgotten to put into the report was around up-to-date safeguarding training.

8.3 **Q:** Was everyone's training up-to-date – for the DSLs and staff – and if not, would it be updated on the next inset day?

A: IH confirmed that the DSL training was up to date and otherwise this would be completed at the inset day in January 2021.

Equality & Diversity - Annual Equality Report

8.4 KAC confirmed that there was nothing extra to add to the report, and wanted to thank the committee chairs for feeding into it, with a special thanks to MOB for the data provided. It was planned to review certain points in September and KAC would touch base with CR after the summer. The report showed how much the school was committed to equality and diversity, for example through celebration assemblies, the reasonable adjustments made frequently to ensure the inclusion of everyone in lessons and trips, and the fact that it was so clear how the school values threaded through everything that took place. KAC saw evidence of lots of positive work.

8.5 JH thanked KAC for her time and effort. She confirmed that this report, as well as the safeguarding report, had been received by the board (**ACTION**). She also asked that IH consider how he might involve KAC when considering his Black Lives Matter ideas (**ACTION**).

9 Policies Update & Review

GDPR (Data Protection) Policy – for approval

9.1 JH clarified that this policy update required board approval. JH said that she had noted one small change within the policy per TW's note. She also noted that there was no change to the government guidance or the legislation. JH invited questions. MP said that the original policy was from a law firm which was appointed to work for Sheen Mount as part of a group of

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local schools. The law had not changed since then. MP clarified that the policy came connected with a data usage notice, a live document, which governed how staff and governors use data. This notice was on the website, and would be updated regularly.

- 9.2 JH asked the governors to vote using the Chat function. The Clerk counted the votes and the governors voted unanimously in favour of the new policy and therefore this was approved (**ACTION**).

Relationships Education, RSE & Health Education Policy – for approval

- 9.3 JH confirmed that MOB had done a great job in preparing both the updated policy and the helpful cover note to summarise the key points for governors.

- 9.4 **Q:** In the cover note you referenced forced marriage and FGM. Did you want the board to approve the wording in the policy or to decide about including this item at all?

A: MOB confirmed that she was asking for the policy wording to be approved as it was, namely as it had been sent round in the policy document prior to the FGB meeting. The policy wording had received various input from staff and governors before this meeting. MOB said that the policy looked and felt new, but in fact just pulled together what the school had been doing for many years. MOB was very confident that what was in there reflected what the school was already doing.

- 9.5 **Q:** How would it be best to communicate about the policy given it is due to be introduced from September 2020?

A: MOB clarified that although it was a difficult situation which all parents were facing currently, none of the new policy's content was new to parents, particularly for the parents of Year 5 and 6 pupils. For those year groups, there was always consultation about the sex education element. The key policy items were also discussed at 'meet the teacher' sessions and parents were able to contact phase leaders if they had concerns. MOB felt therefore that much of the communication piece was underway already. MOB said that whilst the board could send this item to a working party of parents to look at it, there were several parents on the board who had fed into the policy already. Lots of the school staff who had fed into the policy were also parents.

- 9.6 JH asked the governors for a vote to approve the policy. The Clerk counted the responses in favour of adopting the policy and there was unanimous approval (**ACTION**).

10 Link Governor Roles

H&S link governor report update

- 10.1 In relation to her report, MW said how pleased she was to have found that the school had consistently managed to comply with its health and safety requirements, which included the use of expert external consultations. The latest consultant had praised the school for its visible improvement in this area. In relation to Covid-19, MW had found that the school's attention to the planning and to the implementation of special arrangements was wonderful, and had inspired both parents and staff. This was evident from the high number of staff attending work, from the high percentage of pupils back at school from 1st June and from the appreciative messages received from parents.
- 10.2 MW expressed her thanks and appreciation to the staff and senior leadership team. This was echoed by JH. JH thanked MW for her time and effort in putting this report together and for her attention to detail. The report was received by the board.

11 E-Vote on Risk Assessment and Return to School Plans

- 11.1 JH explained that she wanted to formally note the school and the board's process for reaching agreement on the recent risk assessment and plan to close the current return to school offer, and to re-open the school to Year 2 to Year 5 pupils from 6th July 2020. JH had circulated the key information about that to governors by e-mail with a request for governors to respond, and JH had been very grateful for the swift and positive responses from nearly all of the governors. JH reminded everyone that technically it was not for the board to approve what JH had decided to do in this respect but rather to oversee,

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challenge and support. IH and JH would continue having regular discussions about the situation and the impact of the government guidance, and would continue talking with AfC.

12 Committee Updates

12.1 JH asked governors if anyone had comments about the content of the minutes from each committee meeting in June. No comments were raised (**ACTION**).

13 Communication to PSA, Staff and Newsletter

13.1 JH and IH discussed whether the PSA would be meeting again this term and whether there was anything for the board to be aware of or any need to connect with it. IH said he thought that the PSA would be focusing on an end of term fund-raiser for the school, but there was nothing further to note or to do in this respect.

13.2 JH asked the staff governors if there was anything else that the governing board could be doing to support them at the moment. JH had attended a recent staff meeting to offer her support. The staff governors did not raise anything.

13.3 JH flagged that that there had not yet been a formal response to parents on actions arising from the latest parent survey. The governors discussed the best way and the best time to communicate with parents about this, to avoid overwhelming parents with messages from the school at this time. It was agreed that JH would do a Chair's update for the newsletter due out at the end of the week. This would explain that IH would be addressing these actions in his annual report in September 2020, and it would also mention the final budget for 2020/21, the behaviour review work which had been carried out, the health and safety report, safeguarding, and the new RSE Policy which had been given board approval. The Clerk agreed to upload this policy to the website by the end of the week to time with the newsletter coming out (**ACTIONS**).

14 AOB

14.1 The date of the next full governing body meeting was confirmed as 07.10.2020.

14.2 JH reminded the governors that she had sent out proposed meeting dates recently asking for feedback to allow these to be finalised before the end of term. JH asked the committee chairs to respond to her and the Clerk in the next few days. (**ACTION**)

14.3 JH asked KH and MOB to please discuss and agree a date for the governors' curriculum visit in the spring term 2021 and to let her and the Clerk know (**ACTION**).

14.4 JH expressed her thanks to TW for her contribution to the board over the last four years and how sorry she was to see her go. This was echoed by many of the governors. TW was delighted with her card and gifts and thanked everyone for these.

14.5 JH brought the meeting to a close by thanking the governors and the staff for their hard work and resilience this academic year and wished everyone a relaxing summer break. The meeting ended at 9pm.

Signed by the Chair: _____
Justine Hebert (JH)

Dated: _____