

The London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames



Sheen Mount School

Minutes and Action List of the Full Governing Board Meeting
Held on 15th March 2023 at 6.30pm at Sheen Mount school

Constitution, Membership and Attendance

Local Authority Governors - 1	Maria Widdowson (MW) (<u>Vice-Chair</u>)
Parent Governors – 2	Susan Boughton (SB) Telmo Valido (TV)
Staff Governors – 1	Robert Kennedy (RK) – Class Teacher and Upper KS2 Phase Leader
Co-opted Governors – 10	Gemma Cass (GC) Helen Edward (HE) Andrew Gardiner (AG)* Anna Hare (AH) Justine Hebert (JH) (<u>Chair</u>) Kathryn Higgins (KH) (Curriculum and Learning Chair) David Morley (DM) (Resources Committee Chair)* Edward Nicholson (EN) Julia Sandell (JS) (Pastoral Committee Chair)* Jennifer Wright (JW)
Headteacher - 1	Tom Holmes (TH)
Associate Governors – 3	Louise Dear (LD) – School Business Manager Dan Jameson (DJ)* Laura Jeffery (LJ) – Assistant Headteacher, Inclusion Leader and DSL Maria O’Brien (MOB) – Deputy Headteacher and DDSL
Clerk to the board	Sarah Bellingham (Clerk)

* Absence(s) in Bold

The London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames



Sheen Mount School

Action List of the Full Governing Body Meeting of 15.03.2023

No:	Minute item	SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS	Date by when	Person responsible	For Next FGB Agenda
1	2.1	Sign and publish approved minutes of previous Board meeting	April 23	JH/Clerk	
2	2.3	Discuss the responsibilities involved in the governor role overseeing pupil/family leaver interviews	April 23	SB/TH/TV/EN	
3	2.4	TH to circulate former survey documentation to all, and ask for volunteers to join the survey working party	End March 23	TH	
4	3.1	Complete record keeping and related actions linked with HE stepping down as governor	April 23	Clerk	
5	4.22	Sign SVFS documentation following Board approval	End March 23	JH	
6	5.4	Absence rate for pupils with free school meals to be included in the attendance report brought to Pastoral	Summer term Pastoral meeting	LJ/JS	
6(a)	5.8	Pass on the FGB's thanks to the school premises manager for his help and enthusiasm	Spring Term	TH	
7	6.3	Review and discuss questions in SIP Report	Summer term committee cycle	Committee Chairs	
8	7.2	Seek pupil and staff views on school vision setting	3 rd May 23	TH & JH	
9	7.3	Discuss vision setting process in advance of May Board meeting and include on May meeting	3 rd May 23	SB/JH	
10	9.2	Review Pastoral standing agenda to include committee review of school's attendance policy	Summer term Pastoral meeting	JS/JW	
11	9.4	Review ways to enhance visibility of the school's cultural diversity	Summer term Board meeting	TH	
12	9.5	Discuss training options for staff on gender challenges and the nature of language used with the children	Summer term Board meeting	TH/JW/GC	
13	9.6	Upload approved Equality Report to website	End March 23	TH	
14	10.1	Check policy review schedule for which policies coming up for review next	Summer term committee cycle	Committee Chairs	
15	10.4	Upload approved SEND and ECT policies to website and Hub and update review schedule	End March 23	Clerk	
16	11.1	Upload the spring term Pastoral committee minutes to the FGB folder once received	April 23	Clerk	
17	12.1	Prepare a Board update for the end of spring term newsletter	End March 23	JH	

Minutes

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 JH welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from DM, JS, and AG. Governors had no interests to declare connected with the agenda items or for the Register of Interests.

1.2 It was noted that a quorum was present (50% of the total number of voting governors, excluding vacancies). Documents referred to in the meeting had been circulated to all via Governor Hub prior to the meeting, except where noted in the minutes.



2. Minutes and Action List from 30th November 2022 FGB Meeting

Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes from the meeting of 30th November 2022 were approved. JH would be asked to sign these. The Clerk would post them onto the school website. **ACTION – JH/Clerk**

Actions from 30th November 2023 (and matters relating to them)

- 2.2 Actions from the previous meeting were either completed, in progress, or would be progressed as follows:
- 2.3 TV and EN would take over HE's role carrying out exit interviews with families of pupils leaving the school before the end of Year 6. Information was available on Governor Hub, to include the presentation on this given to the Board in November 2022. SB and TH would discuss the role with TV and EN. **ACTION – TV/EN/SB/TH**
- 2.4 TH would send governors the example staff, parent and pupil survey forms used in the previous survey cycle and ask for volunteers to join the survey working party. Ideally there would be one lead governor per survey. The next cycle needed completing by the May half term. **ACTION – TH**

3. Spring Term FGB Items

Confirm governor HE stepping down with effect from 15th March 2023

- 3.1 JH confirmed that HE would be stepping down as a co-opted governor with effect from the date of the meeting. Huge thanks were expressed for HE's contributions over many years. The Clerk would inform AfC and complete related actions. **ACTION – CLERK**
- 3.2 JH also reminded governors that she, KH and the Clerk would be stepping down at the end of the academic year.

4. Financial Management

- 4.1 SB and LD updated the governors in DM's absence and referred to the financial documents circulated in advance.

2022-2023 Financial Year

- 4.2 A summary was provided of the school's position mid-year. The predicted £60k overspend had come down due to a reduction in expenditure, but the situation could look different by the year end. There were no concerns. Governors were asked if they had any questions.
- 4.3 **Q:** When teachers went on strike, did the unpaid wages for strike days go back into the budget to create a saving?
A: TH confirmed that this was correct.
- 4.4 **Q:** The educational support staff figure looked high – what was behind it?
A: There had been a significant pay rise of 10% the previous year, which had not been set in the original budget. Money had also been spent on an additional floating T.A. in June/July 2022.
- 4.5 **Q:** The cost of agency supply teaching looked high – why was this?
A: Several T.A.s for EHCP pupils had been taken on via the agency route, rather than direct employment. There had been no additional cost to the school in doing this and it had provided additional flexibility for the school. Also, one more T.A. had been taken on to meet pupil needs, than had been budgeted for originally.

Budget for 2023-2024



- 4.6 JH described the annual budget setting process for the benefit of the newer governors. In summary, JH was required to sign an interim budget, following its review by the Resources Committee and its approval by the Board. A draft interim budget had been brought to today's Board meeting by Resources. A final budget would be prepared for approval at the June Board meeting and would be submitted thereafter. The final budget tended to look quite different to the interim budget due to the extent of the additional information available from March onwards each year. This included better information on government funding and the amount of the carry forward from the previous year.
- 4.7 SB, LD, and MW provided key details about the proposed interim budget. A key aspect of this was the inclusion of a cautious prediction on both staff pay rises as well as the government funding available to support these. The result was a deficit position which might require submission of an accompanying recovery plan.
- 4.8 This was discussed in detail by the governors. The discussion included contributions from TH, SB and JH explaining their understanding of the position faced by several comparable schools locally, and the various options open to the school to reduce costs and identify any potential areas where the school could be more efficient. .
- 4.9 Questions asked by the governors included the following:
- 4.10Q: What was the financial impact for the school if places were not filled?
A: TH said that the school had 587 pupils compared to places available for 630. That meant it was losing out on funding for over 40 children, which was close to £300k of missing income.
- 4.11Q: When did the council take the snapshot of pupil numbers for funding purposes?
A: The census was carried out each October. The school missed out on funding therefore for any child who joined after the census date.
- 4.12Q: Which year groups were full and not?
A: Reception to Year 3 inclusive were full. The school was losing children in years 4, 5, and 6. There was still a lot of movement in general amongst families locally, impacting both pupil and staff numbers.
- 4.13Q: Had many children joined the school from the private sector, due to cost-of-living concerns?
A: If anything, the opposite was occurring. This might be due to the recent expansion of several independent prep schools in the area. The school appeared vulnerable to losing pupils at the end of Year 5, where a brother or sister had started senior school. It was difficult for the school to hold on to such pupils if a family was set on the independent route and wanted siblings in the same location.
- 4.14Q: With reference to the discussion about ways to avoid the need to submit a recovery plan at this point in the financial year, what did such a plan involve?
A: TH said he did not think we should be concerned about potentially needing to submit a recovery plan at this point. It was important to deal with all scenarios in an upfront way. The school business manager, LD, was right to be extremely cautious as regards the possibility of unfunded staff pay increases. These may turn out not to be as high as anticipated, and more would be known later in the academic year about government funding, salaries, and resources required at the school. TH added that the school was in the top 25% of schools locally in terms of its positive financial position and was fortunate to be able to make use of its reserves as needed.
- 4.15 The governors had further detailed discussions about actual and predicted agency staff costs, areas for consideration around resourcing between now and June, the typical carry forward amount held annually as a buffer, the likelihood or otherwise of receipt of extra funding from the local authority in the event of submitting a deficit position either now or in June, the level of government funding per pupil, and what a recovery plan might entail.
- 4.16 TH and JH summarised the position which the Board was being asked to approve at this meeting. This was a budget containing a £35k deficit overall, based on caution over future staffing costs, and with line 14 in the spreadsheet (IO8A)



stating a figure of £114k rather than £150k - as this saving was viewed by the school as realistic to achieve. A brief recovery plan would be submitted if requested by the local authority.

4.17 The final budget prepared for approval in June was anticipated to look different, once more information was known in relation to a significant number of variables.

4.18 The governors gave their unanimous support for the interim budget proposed at this time.

SFVS – March 2023

4.19 JH explained that the SVFS comprised a self-assessment dashboard and a checklist of questions for the school to respond to. JH was required to sign this annually on behalf of the Board, after Board review and approval. Governors were asked if they had any questions on the SVFS documentation supplied for this meeting.

4.20 **Q:** Had the action points from the 2022 financial audit been closed out?

A: TH said that he had met with LD to check on this and that all action points had been dealt with.

4.21 **Q:** Please explain the response to the line referring to confidence about plans.

A: TH confirmed that the school was saying it was confident except as regards a lack of information on potentially unfunded staff pay rises.

4.22 Governors discussed the documentation and have their unanimous approval to the SVFS for 2023. JH would sign this on behalf of the Board and return this to the office within the required time frame. **ACTION – JH**

5. Headteacher Report and Presentation

Headteacher Report

5.1 TH clarified that everyone had read his report. Governors were invited to ask questions.

5.2 **Q:** What had been the impact of the new Ofsted judgement in terms of interest in the school from new families?

A: TH said that it did not seem to have had any detrimental impact given the number of families attending open mornings and similar events since the inspection.

5.3 **Q:** Looking at the pupil absence figures and noting the 10% absence rate for Pupil Premium children, did these absences occur in blocks or were they more spaced out?

A: The category of pupils making up the worst percentage did not tend to be absent in blocks of time. Instead, it might be that these pupils were off approximately 2 days each week, meaning it was harder for them to catch up. The school had updated its absence reporting procedures to make them more robust and to ensure TH had a better oversight of the situation. TH flagged that if a child had been absent with illness for two weeks of the academic year then it would likely bring their attendance to under 90% meaning they fell into the category of persistent absence.

5.4 JH noted that the SIP Report had set out that children in receipt of free school meals had an absence rate of over 25%. JH asked that the Pastoral Committee have this data included as standard in the attendance report brought to committee meetings. **ACTION – LJ/JS.** TH explained that the 25% referred to equated to 10 children, of which there were only 2 that the school had real concerns about. This was noted but still felt useful for the Pastoral committee to track.

5.5 **Q:** Had the new performance appraisal system been well-received by staff and had all documentation for the mid-year appraisals been completed?

A: RK reported that he had found it a positive experience to oversee the performance management of the T.A.s in Upper KS2 during his leadership time. The T.A.s had felt more valued and listened to. It had been helpful for RK to understand



more about individuals' aspirations and reflect on the ways the school might provide support. Information was being passed on to TH and the half-way point in the academic year was a useful time to have these conversations.

5.6 LJ, MOB and TH described their experiences of the new system. Overall, there were lots of positives. Conversations with staff were two-way, open, robust, and organised. Many staff had provided praise for the new approach. TH said he thought that it would take more than one academic year to see real development for staff, and in some cases see staff apply for promotions if aspired to.

5.7 **Q:** Was the school encouraging all staff to aspire to stepping up to the next level professionally, whether at Sheen Mount or elsewhere?

A: TH said that it was.

5.8 TH updated the Board about management of the school premises within budget constraints and confirmed that the premises manager was being incredibly helpful and positive in this regard. This was noted and the Board asked for their thanks to be passed on .ACTION - TH

6. SIP Report

6.1 Governors agreed that the report from the school's new School Improvement Partner ('SIP') was comprehensive and helpful. It was clear he understood the culture at the school and was welcome in the role of trusted advisor.

6.2 Governors who had attended the SIP feedback session following the SIP visit provided a summary of what they had heard. TH explained what steps would be taken in response to the report's action points.

6.3 The Committee Chairs would bring the report to the next cycle of meetings to discuss the questions for governors in response to the content relevant to each committee's remit. **ACTION - Chairs**

7. Strategic Initiatives: update on vision and 3-5 year plan work

7.1 SB and JH discussed plans to refresh the school's vision and ways to deliver it. The vision would be expressed in a succinct manner. Curriculum would form a clear part of this.

7.2 TH would gather pupils' input via a discussion with the school council and possible other ways to be discussed with JH who had taken this work away from the last Board meeting. **ACTION – TH & JH**

7.3 Governor and staff input would be gathered in the lead up to and during the Board meeting on 3rd May 2023, noting that the SIP would be present at the meeting to help shape discussions. JH and SB would discuss ideas before the Board meeting. **ACTION – JH/SB**

8. Parent Survey Update

8.1 This item had already been discussed (see minute 2.4 above).

9. FGB Standing Items

Safeguarding – Minutes of Safeguarding Visit Spring Term 2023 & Safeguarding Report Spring 2023

9.1 JW agreed to be the named governor responsible for looked after children, which was a role required by the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. LJ would support JW in this role.

9.2 This policy also stipulated that the Governing Board would regularly review the school's attendance policy. The Board agreed that this review process would be delegated to the Pastoral Committee's remit. **ACTION - JS**



Equality and Diversity – Equality Report Autumn 2022 & Equality Visit Report January 2023

- 9.3 SB spoke to the key parts of her report. In summary, the school was in a very good place. After her visit, SB had attended AfC courses to enhance her knowledge in this area.
- 9.4 SB asked TH and the governors to consider how the school could better portray its cultural diversity. One suggestion discussed was to put up informative and colourful displays in the reception area at the front of the school. It was also suggested that the school could enhance its 'wish-list' for library books. **ACTION - TH**
- 9.5 A governor asked the staff members present if they were comfortable, and also thought staff were comfortable, with the appropriate language to use currently around potential gender challenges for pupils. There was a discussion about the value to be gained from including staff training on this topic on one of the next inset days. TH would discuss this further with JW and GC after the meeting. **ACTION – TH**
- 9.6 The Board unanimously approved the Equality Report for this academic year. TH would upload this to the school website. **ACTION - TH**

SEND

- 9.7 There were no updates for this item.

10. Link visit reports/updates and policy approvals

General policy reviews

- 10.1 The Committee Chairs would check the latest policy review schedule on Governor Hub to make sure that each committee was aware of policies due for review. Final versions of approved policies should be sent to the Clerk for uploading to the Hub. **ACTION - Chairs**

Approval of SEND Policy – reviewed by AH/LJ

- 10.2 The updated SEND Policy was approved unanimously by the Board.

Approval of ECT Induction Policy – reviewed by Resources Committee

- 10.3 The updated ECT Policy was unanimously approved by the Board.

- 10.4 The Clerk would upload the approved SEND and ECT policy versions to the Hub and school website and would update the review schedule. **ACTION - Clerk**

11. Receipt of Committee Minutes and Updates

- 11.1 The Board acknowledged receipt of the Resources Committee and C&L Committee's minutes from the recent meeting cycle. The minutes from the Pastoral Committee meeting in February would be uploaded after the Board meeting once received. **ACTION - CLERK**

- 11.2 The Governors discussed with TH the processes in place for serious incident and low-level incident reporting, to ensure a proper understanding of these systems. The Board reiterated its view that the reporting of low-level incident reporting was important for monitoring purposes.

12. Communication to PSA, Staff and Parents

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Sheen Mount School

12.1 JH would prepare an update for a newsletter due out in two weeks' time, at the end of term. She would flag that the Board had vacancies for three new governors, one starting immediately to replace HE and two coming up for September 2023 to replace JH and KH. **ACTION – JH**

Meeting ended at 20.35