

The London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames



Sheen Mount School

Minutes and Action List of the Full Governing Board Meeting
Held on 3rd May 2023 at 7pm 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) 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) <i>Vacancy</i>
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 03.05.2023

No:	Minute item	SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS	Date by when	Person responsible	For Next FGB Agenda
1	2.1	Sign and publish approved previous minutes of previous Board meeting	May '23	JH/Clerk	
2	2.4	Kick start the summer term pupil/parent/staff survey process via a conversation together, and circulate details and resources to the Committee Chairs	May '23	TH/JS	
3	2.5	Roll over action 12 to next FGB: 'Discuss training options for staff on gender challenges and the nature of language used with the children'	June FGB	JW/TH/GC	
4	2.6	Committee Chairs to check the latest policy review schedule to ensure next policies coming up for review were included in Committee meeting agendas this term.	June '23	Chairs	
5	5.35	Firm up proposal for vision setting process and circulate to the Board for input	May '23	JH/TH/SB	

Minutes

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 JH welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from AG and AH. The 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 15th March 2023 FGB Meeting

Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes from the meeting of 15th March 2023 were approved. JH would be asked to sign these. The Clerk would publish them on the school website. **ACTION – JH & Clerk**

Actions from 15th March 2023 (and matters relating to them)

- 2.2 The actions from the previous meeting were either completed, in progress, or would be progressed as follows:
- 2.3 *Action 2.4:* It was agreed that a staff, parent, and pupil survey should be sent out ideally by the May 2023 half term. Each Committee would take responsibility for one of the aspects of the survey to include a review of the questions and the analysis of the data. The school would take care of the administration involved in circulating the questions to the relevant audience.
- 2.4 It was agreed that Pastoral would be responsible for the pupil survey, C&L the parent one, and Resources the staff survey. JS would meet with TH to initiate the process and TH would then share resources with the Committee chairs. **ACTION: TH & JS**
- 2.5 *Action 12:* this would be rolled over to next FGB meeting. **ACTION - Clerk**



2.6 *Action 14*: the Clerk would check whether any policies approved at the previous FGB or sent to her separately since then had been saved onto the website. Committee Chairs were asked to check the policy review schedule on Governor Hub to ensure policies falling out of date were included for review at the next cycle of committee meetings. **ACTION – Clerk & Chairs**

3. Vision Setting: Presentation by School Improvement Partner, Tom Gibson (TG)

5.1 TG spoke to the power-point slides which he shared on screen. He explained that he worked for Achieving for Children, and was a partner for the school, providing support with strategic planning and providing constructive challenge to help drive improvement.

'Vision'

5.2 TG believed that a key aim for the school was to design a 'vision' to be achieved in the following 3-5 years. The vision needed to be articulated clearly and simply for it to be effective. TG explained why this aim had now become so relevant for the school: a new Chair of Governors would start in September 2023, the current Headteacher had been appointed the previous year, and the school had undergone a recent Ofsted inspection.

'Define the vision', 'Assess where you are', 'Determine priorities', & 'Define responsibilities'

5.3 It was important to define the school's vision in a specific way, going beyond an overriding statement.

5.4 Curriculum needed to be at the heart of the vision, to include it being highly sequenced, and linked with extra-curricular areas.

5.5 The school needed to identify and prioritise the steps required for achieving the vision. It then needed to allocate and apply the correct energy and resources to enable these steps to be taken.

5.6 A key resource was the school staff, who would only be effective if they had bought into the vision.

5.7 The school needed to measure and evaluate progress as it went along.

Establishing the vision

5.8 It was important to identify the key stakeholders whose views the school would seek. These might include staff, pupils, parents, and/or members of the local community. Stakeholder engagement was valuable to achieve buy-in, however it could be time consuming.

Priorities

5.9 TG recommended breaking down the priorities into a series of smaller steps, which could be achieved in a realistic time frame. As part of this, TG advised that the school clarify the first three of these steps, to help get the process started in a timely manner.

Governor responsibilities

5.10 TG identified three key areas of governor responsibility. In summary these were: clarity of vision and strategic direction, holding executive leaders to account, and oversight of financial performance. TG explained that governors could consider setting a 'mini vision' for each area, to help feed into the vision finally agreed upon.

Questions for governors

5.11 TG asked governors to consider the following questions:



- a. What would the governors like to see develop, improve and change over next 3 years?
- b. What were the barriers to achieving these?
- c. How would governors ensure that their role remained strategic rather than overly operational?
- d. What skills or expertise could individual governors offer to help with the development of the vision and the strategy for achieving it?
- e. What were the first steps in the process?

5.12 TG reassured governors that there was no perfect formula for a strategic plan. What worked was the plan which key stakeholders bought into.

5.13 JS left at 19.35.

5.14 Governors asked if they had any questions for TG.

5.15 **Q:** Whilst it was important to gather input from stakeholders variously, stimulus was also important. How had TG seen this harnessed elsewhere?

A: It was important that parents were given an opportunity to offer views in a way that was as personalised as possible. This could be via a virtual meeting, or electronically, or in person, as would work best. Several strategies could be used. The school was at an exciting time in its journey, and it was important that parents understood this. The pupils would need to understand why this process was taking place and why their input was being sought. That explanation might centre on the desire to make Sheen Mount the best it could be and that the pupils' ideas on this were an important part of achieving this.

5.16 RK offered to speak to Year 6 pupils about this. It was acknowledged that the teacher or adult seeking pupils' views needed to be a trusted adult from the children's perspective, to gain the fullest contributions from them.

5.17 TG explained that the value of the input gained from staff would be comparable to how much time and space had been allocated to listening to the staff voice.

5.18 TG said that it was important for the school to be ambitious and to set that as part of the discussion parameters. Governors acknowledged the value of including certain 'prompt' questions within the engagement process, such as what would 'best' or 'great' look like? TG added that although it might be wise to steer away from mentioning Ofsted, its latest framework did contain a clear structure which might prove valuable for shaping areas for discussion.

5.19 **Q:** When TG went into schools where this was being done well, what did he see?

A: First, he saw a clear view of where the school was going. Staff and the wider school community were knowledgeable about that vision, and there was clear buy in from staff who were proudly and happily going the extra mile to help achieve it. Also, everyone's targets fed clearly into the same goals set for the Headteacher. TG explained that when he spoke with Sheen Mount staff on his first visit, he had found a great deal of enthusiasm.

5.20 **Q:** Acknowledging that it was important to be aware of financial constraints and staff workload, how could that be balanced with the need to have staff 'going the extra mile' to achieve the vision? Having staff working 'smarter' and more productively was clearly the goal but not necessarily easy to accomplish?

A: It was important for the school to be bold about its employment arrangements. A 'workaholic' mentality was often present at schools but easily led to burn out. The school needed to be brave when considering the value of time spent on various activities, which may have been done as standard to date.

5.21 TH agreed on the value of this and said it was something to aspire to, despite its challenges TG emphasised the need for the school to unpick what being bold and being ambitious really meant for Sheen Mount, and what it meant in terms of priorities and challenges.

5.22 JH added that the process was important for getting engagement in the vision, and ensuring the school had the energy and resources to take the steps needed to achieve the vision.



5.23Q: What was the school's next step?

A: JH had started the conversation back in November 2022. JH shared a 'strategic framework' slide on the screen from a PowerPoint presentation she used with clients. This looked at what a vision was (inspirational, emotionally engaging, aspirational, and challenging), and described the range of steps needed to achieve it, as well as the suggested process for engagement of stakeholders.

5.24Q: Linked with TG's advice so far about getting everyone aligned on how to 'be better', how could the school avoid giving the impression to staff that it did not value what had been done to date?

A: TG explained that the school should be looking at accomplishing what other schools did not do. The ambition needed to be about becoming inspirational and cutting edge. This might be about the precision and clarity with which curriculum links existed between subjects and a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, resulting in children progressing rapidly across all subjects and leaving them in the very best place for the next stage of their education. Something strong and different which still linked with the main curriculum requirements.

5.25JH thanked TG on behalf of the Board for his inspiring and helpful presentation. TG left at 19.59.

5.26The Board split itself into three groups to discuss what might be the first three steps in the process for setting the school's vision. Governors agreed that it was better to set a strategic plan for achieving a longer term vision rather than rely on a one-year school development plan year-on-year. After their discussions the following summary feedback was provided.

Group 1 Feedback:

5.27It was important to achieve teaching staff' buy-in to the proposed strategic thinking without causing worry about risk-taking and/or innovation. This would involve careful communication about what it meant to be strategic and bold in the context of Sheen Mount's improvement journey.

Group 2 Feedback:

5.28A governor described a recent positive experience of contributing to her organisations' strategic vision. Different parts of the community in question had been invited to attend a day devoted to the process, including pupils, parents, governors and teachers. These individuals had been asked to seek the views of the community they represented before attending.

5.29On the day, several groups comprising a mix of attendees took part in facilitated discussions and feedback sessions, centred on guided questions. By the end of the day, key themes had been established which people aligned themselves to based on the value they could add. For each theme a leader was appointed, who later met with the school leadership team. Vision statements were then created and shared with the wider community, whose views were sought before the final vision statement was agreed upon. It started bigger and got smaller in terms of input.

5.30Q: What was the total time frame from start to finish?

A: It had taken approximately two weeks to gather input and hold the day event. Overall, just a few weeks to reach a conclusion.

Group 3 Feedback:

5.31The feedback from Group 3 outlined the following steps:

- *Set a framework:* Identify clear themes and headings to help shape the conversation, with the Headteacher leading the discussion and having the final say.
- *Hold a program of external stimulus for staff:* for example send teaching staff out to different schools, both primary and secondary, to gather experience of new contexts. Seeing a secondary school environment might help staff



better appreciate what Sheen Mount was preparing its pupils for and what skill sets the school was trying to set up and establish. Overall it was about exposure to people beyond the Sheen Mount experience.

- *Use the parent survey:* to gather some insight, especially if the survey would be carried out this term in any event.
- *Speak to the pupils:* about what they want to be, in a creative way.

5.32Governors agreed that the key stakeholders were staff, pupils, and parents.

5.33JH summarised the steps which she had understood that the groups had thought important:

- a. **Framing was key:** setting a clear expectation and getting people to relate to it in energising way
- b. **Stimulate thinking:** around what 'great' looked like
- c. **Gather thinking and input:** from the agreed groups of stakeholders
- d. **Hold facilitated sessions:** to synthesise the input
- e. **Carry out a decision making process:** not necessarily a vote but a process resulting in stakeholders feeling that their voice had been heard.

5.34Staff buy-in was key, because of their role in the delivery of this. It was important to be more than theoretical and to avoid over-use of the words 'strategy' and/or 'vision'. Better might be to ask questions such as; what did staff want for the pupils, what did they believe in, and what were the things which made a difference to staff in their role at Sheen Mount.

5.35JH, SB and TH would discuss this further after the meeting and circulate more details for input. **ACTION – JH/TH/SB**

Meeting ended at 20.35