



Minutes of Thirsk Community Primary School Governing Board on Monday 6th February 2023 at 6:15pm

Present: Stuart Mountford – chair (SM), Richard Chandler – head (RC), Jane Grainger (JG), Jenny Buck (JB), Lisa Garthwaite (LG), Sally Burton (SB), Kate Wimpory (KW)

Apologies: Lucy Minican (LAM)

In attendance: Jane Jackson – clerk (JJ)

| No 22/23 | Item | Action |
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| PART 'A' – Governance | | |
| 5.1 | Welcome The chair opened the meeting at 6:15pm. | |
| 5.2 | Apologies and determine whether absences should be consented to Apologies had been received from LAM and were consented to. | |
| 5.3 | Declaration of business interests JG worked for a virtual school. | |
| 5.6 Moved forward in agenda | Correspondence Resignations had been received from two governors due to personal reasons: Lesley Miller and Charlotte Pearson. There were now vacancies for a Local Authority governor and a Parent governor. Another parent had recently expressed an interest in becoming a governor. The parent governor vacancy would be advertised in the next newsletter and an election held if further parents came forward. The clerk had advised the local authority of Lesley's resignation. Action - RC to initiate the process to recruit another local authority governor. Any further interested governors could be made aware of the local authority governor application process. | RC |
| 5.4 | Approve minutes of meeting on 9 January 2023 The minutes of the Full Governing Board (FGB) meeting held on 9 January 2023 were circulated to all governors prior to the meeting. Approval - the minutes were deemed as a true record and signed by the chair. | |
| 5.5 | Matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governors had now all signed the document to say they had read KCSIE. This would be kept in the governor file. 4.17 School meals would be discussed under AOB. 4.5 Details about premises costs had been sought by the school, however a further breakdown of costs was needed and requested by governors. Action – further breakdown of costs to be requested from Local authority. 4.5 Feedback about the after school club was that some changes had been made in how it was organised, and more promotion was being done. It was not as popular as it was pre-pandemic but had some very busy evenings. It would be monitored and reviewed. | RC |

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| 5.7 | Governor Training None | |
| 5.8 | Governor vacancy This had been discussed under 5.6 | |
| PART 'B' - School Improvement | | |
| 5.9 | <p>Link Governor Reports</p> <p>JB had visited to look at English with a focus on writing. She had spoken with Gemma Wall and looked at books for boys in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG). The majority showed progress however some did not and some had appeared to go backwards. It was felt that those in the bottom 20% needed the strongest teaching.</p> <p>RC explained that since this visit, a staff meeting had been focused on this issue. Pupils had been identified in year 3 and 4 who were not secure on what a sentence is. Intervention had been planned to target this in the form of 3x 20 minute sessions per week. This would start after half term.</p> <p>GQ – Could teachers teach the bottom 20% for writing?</p> <p>A – Currently they were being taught in two smaller groups supported by HLTAs. This was a valuable question to ask, however rearranging this structure would have advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>GQ – Had the same approach made a difference for reading?</p> <p>A – Yes it had made a positive difference. The issue with writing would be how to manage it.</p> <p>JG noted that some of the books looked at were exemplary and included writing of a very high standard, however there was a lot of work missing for these pupils and so insufficient evidence. This was detailed in the written report which was uploaded to Teams.</p> <p>RC explained that it was too early to see whether the change in writing timetable had had an impact. Output varied depending on how much scaffolding was provided for the children in writing. Too much scaffolding was not always helpful as children then struggled to complete independent writing tasks. The amount of scaffolding work would be monitored in the new timetable and in planning.</p> <p>GQ – How does spelling and grammar (SPAG) fit into the writing timetable?</p> <p>A – Each writing cycle would feature a SPAG aspect, genre, guided write and independent write. The new timetabling would be monitored and if no improvement is visible by Easter then a further review would be taken to see if further changes needed to be made.</p> <p>JG had completed a safeguarding visit. She had discussed anonymised cases within school with RC and it was clear that he knew the families very well and was aware of pupil attendance levels. There had been an exclusion before Christmas but this had not been a safeguarding concern. RC had explained that weekly meetings took place to look at CPOMs and actions were identified and logged. The safeguarding audit had been looked at and actions discussed: to include safeguarding information in the</p> | |

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| | <p>parent newsletter and to run safeguarding scenario sessions with staff and governors. Parent perception of bullying in KS1 would also be revisited. The safeguarding information area in the staffroom was very good.</p> <p>The question of risk management in children was raised after a national incident over Christmas with children falling through ice, and a local incident of a fall at Sutton Bank. These were less common dangers that the children may need to learn about. Currently, learning about risk took place in PSHCE lessons and at crucial crew which did address some of this. The fire brigade also visited on occasion.</p> <p>Actions from this visit were: JG to attend safeguarding course; safeguarding to feature on newsletter; safeguarding scenarios to form part of staff and governor meetings (Clerk to add to March agenda).</p> <p>It was also suggested by a governor that safeguarding be added as an item on all governor visit report forms regardless of the focus of the visit, encouraging governors to be mindful of this at all times when in school.</p> <p>GQ – Had any work been done with parents regarding online and digital safeguarding issues?</p> <p>A – every class had done half a term on internet safety however it would be well worth having a discussion with parents.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the best way to involve parents in an information event, with the idea of a workshop afternoon involving parents with their children as a suggestion.</p> <p>SM visited the school to complete a health and safety walk around and a maths visit. He met with Sarah Kirkman and saw maths lessons in different classrooms, including the CLIC maths from start to finish and appreciated seeing how the process worked. He was very impressed with the children's work and observed that every class was enjoying their lesson, smiling and focused. Books showed good improvement from the previous year. The way the children were able to explain how they worked out the answers was impressive.</p> <p>A full Health and Safety check had been done for each classroom and for grounds outside. 3 storerooms had been left unlocked which had been reported to RC and dealt with.</p> | Clerk |
| 5.10 | <p>External Reports</p> <p>There had been a visit from Lindsay Miller focusing on attendance and SEN. The report was not yet available to share and would be shared for the next meeting.</p> | |
| 5.11 | <p>EDA visits</p> <p>As above</p> | |
| 5.12 | <p>Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire</p> <p>A staff survey around mental health had been completed. Responses had been broken down into different staffing categories in the school.</p> | |

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| | <p>Teaching staff felt valued in school however most did feel stressed or anxious at times, some very regularly. Causes were workload and pressures. Teaching staff felt more comfortable talking to a colleague or phase leader than to the senior leadership team.</p> <p>Teaching assistants felt useful and that they were making a difference. Half had felt stressed in the last three weeks and causes named were job security and relationships with students. More break times and more opportunities to meet as a group of TAs were suggested.</p> <p>Midday Supervisory Assistants felt valued and had not felt stressed. They would speak to the deputy headteacher or the headteacher if they needed support.</p> <p>Administrative staff sometimes felt stressed due to pastoral concerns. They felt useful and had good communication with other staff.</p> <p>It was the first use of this format of survey so there was no comparative data. The high number of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in the school provided additional challenge and pressure on time and resources. This could feel frustrating as time was taken away from other aspects of the job. The reduction of pupil numbers and, as a result, staffing had also been demoralising for staff.</p> <p>“Drop down days” were already in place as support; a half-termly extra half-day to spend on planning, assessment etc. The SLT were looking at adaptations in classrooms to support behaviour. Pupil feedback had moved away from lots of written comments which had eased marking workload and presentation slides were being accepted as written plans and a separate planning document was no longer required. Additional time such as staff meeting time was also given to work on SEND and behavioural documents. A governor commented that the headteacher might also benefit from a drop down day as well as teaching staff.</p> <p>It was felt that there were many things being done to support staff well-being but it was also accepted that it was a demanding and difficult job. There was a plan to re-establish a staff wellbeing team and to appoint a wellbeing governor. Work would be done to formulate a pathway to follow when feeling unduly anxious or stressed and training for staff on stress management was being considered.</p> <p>GQ – Had the quantity of administrative tasks required of teachers been reduced?</p> <p>A – Drop-down days had helped and there had been a reduction to the amount of printing teachers were required to do. Sometimes several deadlines came at once which made it difficult to pace workload.</p> <p>There was a discussion about staff absence, which was generally very low for teaching staff. Absences or vacancies in lunchtime supervisory staff had a knock-on effect on other staff due to additional lunch duties etc being required.</p> | |
| PART ‘C’ – Other | | |
| 5.13 | Policies for review | |

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| | <p>The following policies had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay policy – the whole school staffing structure needed the removal of a reference to the governor pay committee; • Whistleblowing policy; • DBS policy; • Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment Policy – optional pay protection section 10.9 to be removed; • Smoke free workplace policy; • Disciplinary policy; • Code of conduct for parents policy. <p>With the above amendments all policies were approved by governors.</p> | |
| 5.14 | <p>Safeguarding and Child Protection</p> <p>There had been a reduction to two children working at child protection, three children at child in need, and six children at early help. Early help workers were coming to meetings in school with parents which was positive. Four children were working at team around family. There had been no new referrals since the last meeting.</p> | |
| 5.15 | <p>How has this meeting impacted on the welfare and progress of our pupils?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit reports had been shared and actions had been discussed and put in place. • Staff welfare had been discussed. | |
| 5.16 | <p>AOB</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Persistent absence was a big issue, not only for Thirsk CP but nationally. Weekly attendance was to be featured on newsletters. It was requested that a governor volunteer to be a named governor for attendance to help ensure that actions were being followed up. Jane Grainger agreed to be the attendance governor. Attendance was also to be added as a standing item to all future meeting agendas.</p> <p>GQ – Were term-time holiday requests high?</p> <p>A – There were still quite a few requests. The LA were not following up on fines for holidays although governors had historically agreed to fine unauthorised absences for holidays.</p> <p>It was agreed that the fines were often not a deterrent as more money could be saved by taking holidays in term time regardless of the fine.</p> <p>GQ – Were any of the persistent absences genuine health issues?</p> <p>A – Yes this was certainly the case for some children but these absences tended to be in longer chunks. The persistent absence that was of concern was odd days here and there. All the information could be broken down into different categories and year groups.</p> <p>GQ – Did the walking bus begin?</p> <p>A – No as it was too difficult to staff.</p> <p>SEND was also to be added as a standing item on the agenda.</p> | <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> |

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| | <p>School meals</p> <p>The school business manager had done extensive research after governors requested further information about the variety in costs of school meals at different NYCC schools. Prices in different schools ranged from £2.42 per meal up to £5.22. NYCC had been asked to look at the fixed price meals and had responded that due to pupil numbers, two kitchen staff were needed. The fixed meal cost covered staffing and food therefore the higher cost was needed. However, after being queried, the cost was recalculated to a cost of £3.07 which allowed the cost to parents to be kept at £3.00. Governors passed on their thanks to Andrea the school business manager for her efforts on this.</p> <p>Connect the classroom</p> <p>Documents regarding a DfE grant to improve and develop the wifi and internet capacity in school had been shared with governors prior to the meeting. The cost, fully funded, would be £46,783.04 and governors' agreement was sought to raise a purchase order to this amount. It was agreed by governors that a purchase order be raised.</p> <p>School website</p> <p>A parent had made a governor aware that the minutes for FGB meetings were not available on the website from the previous July onwards. RC would make the school business manager aware of this. The page would also need updated regarding recently resigned members.</p> | RC/SBM |
| 5.17 | <p>Confidential staffing/school updates</p> <p>These were discussed and minuted accordingly.</p> | |
| 5.18 | <p>Date of the next meeting</p> <p>Monday 13th March 6:15pm</p> <p>The meeting scheduled for Monday 8th May was now a bank holiday, and would be rescheduled for Monday 15th May.</p> | |
| <p>Please note: The colour coding above links to the three key roles of governance questioning; RED for 'setting strategic direction', BLUE for 'holding Headteacher to account for educational performance' GREEN for 'ensuring financial health, probity and value for money'.</p> | | |

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 8:20pm.

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