

**Didsbury CofE Primary School
Local Governing Body Meeting
Tuesday 18th January at 7.30pm – remote meeting
Minutes**

Present:

Catriona Arundale	Foundation Governor
Simon Ball	Head of School
Kate Catling	Parent Governor
Abbie East	Foundation Governor
Paul Good	Chair (MDBE)
Augustine Ihm	Foundation Governor
John Janulewski	Foundation Governor
Matthew Lee	Foundation Governor
Philip Robinson	Parent Governor
Joyce Thom	Foundation Governor
Matt Whitehead	Executive Headteacher

Apologies

Sam Morgan	Staff Governor
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In attendance

Kathy Crotty	Clerk
Kathryn Thompson RE	Yr1 class teacher RE Lead (<i>Until 8.10pm</i>)
Liz Gandee	Reception teacher and & EYFS Lead (<i>until 8.10pm</i>)

Any text in red bold italics represents a Governor question (Q); challenge (C); Governor and/or clerk support (S). Black bold upright represents decisions and actions.

1. Welcome, Introductions & Opening Prayer

Governors were welcomed to the meeting by Paul Good. Simon Ball led the opening prayer.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Sam Morgan.

3. Declarations of Non/Pecuniary Interest

- Catriona Arundale; Phillip Robinson, Kate Catling, Abbie East, and Matt Lee, all have children in the school. Paul Good has one grandchild in the school and John Janulewski has two grandchildren in the school.
- There are no other declarations other than those listed on the school website

4. Presentations – Reading & Phonics

Kathryn Thompson - Phonics

Kathryn Thompson updated Governors on the latest guidance, there is no requirement for schools to have a systematic programme. DCE uses letters and sounds which is no longer a validated scheme. After reflection on the guidance which does require a fully decodable book, the school decided to look at the resources. The team wants to acquire a fully validated synthetic scheme, which will include resources, books, monitoring and assessment. This school has a wide selection of reading books in EYFS and KS1 from many schemes over a long period of time. New reading books would be needed to match the scheme. Many of the old books will be retained. Parents have been informed of the new guidance and the intention to change the way phonics is taught.

There will be an audit of staff to ascertain confidence, and the staff meeting on Wednesday 26th January 2022 will give an update and prepare staff to assess the children. There are currently more than 12 validated phonics schemes available for purchase, and the school is reviewing the schemes to select the most appropriate that will provide challenge for the children.

The school will use some funds from the pupil premium budget and there will be some fund raising, this will raise the awareness and profile of phonics across the school. This will be a period of transition and Governors will be updated on the progress made. This school has excellent reading results, and this will continue.

Liz Gandee - Reading

There are currently eight or nine schemes in use in the school. The books are organised into book bands these have all been reviewed. Those not phonetically decodable have now been removed. There are some gaps identified. Early reading skills are mostly taught in EYFS and Yr1, so the reading and phonics leads are working closely together.

Reception starts with phase two and letters and sounds are taught daily at 9am. Phonics starts in week one and this is a high priority. We look at the children who are not on track and maintain monitoring and interventions. These are areas that an inspection will also explore.

There are five sets of letters in phase two and these were outlined. There is a focus on the correct pronunciation. After set one, the children are given a reading book, and this was shown to Governors. The books build confidence and success by much repetition. Children learn tricky words in phase two, these are words learned by sight, not sounding out. 'ReadWriteInc' resources (flash cards) are used and were shown to Governors. Phase three words were outlined. Phonemes are taught weekly, and these are in the book given the week after. Sight words are incorporated into the reading books, there is one decodable book taken home each week. The parents in this school are very supportive.

Lessons will revisit and review the phonics, teaching, practice and then using the words learned. All children are required to be secure at phase three but in this school as there are many children with high achievement rates, the children are secure at phase four. There are some booster groups for those children that need extra support.

Formal thanks were given to Liz Gandee and Kathryn Thompson for their presentations and for their work in reading and phonics.

Q: Are there any children who struggle with phonics for any reason?

Yes, four children currently find it hard and need their phonics to learn to read. The school offers booster groups and individual assessments occur to check the progress. The better schemes include catch up planning and this will be useful for KS2 teachers. This will give more consistency across the school. In Yr1 the spread of ability increases. There is often a step change around February time. Tricky words and high frequency words are a focus for children who are struggling. All children have to attain up to phase five. Not all children pick up phonics easily so the scheme chosen will need many alternative options to cater for all children.

S: Governors complimented the staff for the initiatives given to parents to help the children.

Q: Is there a great variation of costs in the scheme and approximately what might the favoured one cost?

There is a significant difference as some schemes include more resources. Schemes that can utilise books already in the school might be favoured. The staff are not so keen for schemes with workbooks as there is a successful teaching sequence in operation in the school. Systematic synthetic phonics programmes will give a consistency of resources. The expectation of costs is between £6,000 and £8,000.

The HoS (Head of School) reported, the phonics scheme and the early learning books are needed. Some schools purchased schemes before all the validations was completed. All schemes were expected to be validated by February 2022 and this has been delayed.

The reading results and phonics results in this school are consistently high. The new systematic, synthetic phonics has been introduced to lift standards in those schools with more deprivation and less successful results.

Q: Governors noted there is much effort by staff responding to change, is there some degree of stability coming from the government?

The expectation is for change, as changing ministers and governments often bring new initiatives.

Q: Has there been any government funding to resource this or is current funding to be used?

There is some match funding up to £5,000 for schools who have high numbers of children who qualify for pupil premium. MCC (Manchester City Council) has high pupil premium numbers, but this school does not have 25% of children who are pupil premium and therefore does not qualify. The schools with high pupil premium numbers can purchase their scheme much more quickly. There is some pupil premium funding allocated to the budget. There has been no extra money for the new phonics schemes that apply to this school.

The Executive Headteacher reported on this requirement, even though phonics is only one element of reading acquisition. The increase in decodable books is to be commended. The school has a budget carry forward to support purchase. Staff preparation time is an issue and a scheme that includes planning support might be favoured. The aim to raise the profile of reading was commended.

The Executive Headteacher explained Ofsted will undertake a deep dive in reading and Governors were asked to remember the aims of the scheme. Staff are anxious that the books may not be in place prior to an Ofsted visit in the near future, but the staff are aware of the need to currently use non-decodable books, there is a “best-fit” of the books sent home. 97% of the children have achieved the recent phonics test despite the recent pandemic disruption which is an outstanding achievement.

5. Minutes of Previous in person Meeting held 16th November 2021 & Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held 16th November 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

Carry Forward Action: Augustine Ihm will be asked about the link Governor role for Health & Safety / Premises. This has been actioned 17.11.21. Augustine agreed to the role

Action: Clerk to share the link Governor template. This has been actioned 06.01.22

6. Head of School Report

Attendance

The attendance is 94.73% for Yr1 t Yr6. 39 cases of covid are recorded as illness. The attendance is excellent.

10% of children are PA (persistent absence), this is where attendance is under 90%. This is 33 children which is higher than normal and includes Covid. This is expected to decline during the academic year.

Autumn term assessment update

The data was detailed in the HoS report. Most children are on track with emerging and developing attainment. The tracking is similar to last year. In the first term, many objectives are achieved in part but consolidation and further objectives are achieved as the year progresses.

The progress data of disadvantaged children was shared. Some of these children are further behind. EAL children in this school tend not to be disadvantaged in achievement. There are 34 children who are EAL.

The delayed phonics screening had 97% achievement, including one child with an EHCP did not have to be assessed.

Autumn term progress towards the school improvement plan

The update was shared in advance of the meeting. The actions are green if achieved or orange if in progress. This will be updated after the spring term. There were no questions on the SIP.

School led tutoring update

The extra funding allocated is aimed at pupil premium children, this provides an extra 15 hours in after-school programmes where the children are taught in groups of three. Staff are paid extra for these sessions.

Staffing Update

Recruiting new staff has been a challenge in certain areas such as LOs (lunchtime organisers) and LSAs (learning support assistants). There were five rounds of interviews which led to one appointment in the autumn term. Two new staff members have been appointed for Yr4 and reception.

Quality Assurance visit 18.11.21 feedback

Allan Torr, QA advisor for all trust schools undertook the QA visit and Cat Arundale attended on behalf of the GB. The main themes included early reading, EYFS, and SRE. Actions were identified and it was felt having staff as the link EYFS Governor should change to a non-staff member.

Abbie East agreed to become the EYFS link Governor

S: Governors praised the school for the excellent progress despite the pandemic.

It was explained phonics for children to achieve the phonics they have to attain 32 out of 40 and this includes made up words to decode phonetically and the results were pleasing.

Q: Are the children aware they are being tested in phonics?

Phonics is called screening rather than a test, the children might not be aware but they would have had some practice at made up words. Usually, the DfE issue a phonics test annually, due to Covid the school has been asked to use an old screen. It was understood the children did not know, and parents present confirmed this.

Q: Do you know when Ofsted will come to inspect the school?

The school will receive a phone call the day before which can come anytime and there is an internal set procedure as to how the school will respond. Every school has a two day visit and Ofsted do not inspect on a Friday. By Wednesday lunchtime the expectation is Ofsted will not visit that week.

Governors were informed the school has had to make many rapid decisions covering the rota for lunchtime and after school activities and formal thanks were given to the staff for their efforts.

Senior staff have been covering lunchtimes and the Covid numbers are now declining.

Q: How many new staff are needed?

The school is trying to recruit three or four LOs

Q: Recruitment is time consuming, where do you advertise?

Traditionally there is an SLA (service level agreement) with MCC who advertise on various sites. The quality of applicants can reflect the pay and conditions, the work is only 1.5 hours per day in the middle of the day. Often there would be European applicants, these are not as numerous as in historical application rounds.

7. Behaviour and Safety update

There are no issues to report at this meeting. The Executive Headteacher undertakes regular checks. There are some children who are on the child protection register.

8. Kids Club Profits

The HoS reported the Kids Club restructure in response to financial losses caused primarily by the pandemic has been successful. The changes have been monitored and the report shared covered the autumn term. Kids Club generated a £12,000 profit. There was £54,000 income, and salaries of £40,000 with sundries of £2,000. The fluctuations are because the days open varies each month and there is some lag of income. Salaries were less as staffing reduced in December 2021 and this will rise again with the new appointment. The pay is averaged over twelve months so August will have no income but salary costs.

Q: Have you had to support Kids Club with casual staff due to Covid?

Yes, this has happened and is not affected in these figures, this will be in the January and February pay figures.

Q: Are you intending to replace the Deputy Manager in Kids Club?

This is one of the posts that was not filled during recent interviews. However, the readvertisement has drawn more hopeful applicants. The school believes there are able internal candidates. Lisa Burns, the manager, now spends less time now invoicing as the flat rate fee is easier to administer and she has been able to provide more cover.

9. Headteacher recruitment

The advert is now live. The interview process will be similar to the CEO appointment consisting of three panels. Governors were reminded it is good practice to be involved in both the shortlisting and the interview. Shortlisting is scheduled for the 1st February 2022 in the morning starting from 10am. The interviews are likely to be a full day. Governors were asked to inform Paul Good if they were available or not available. Applicants will be asked to present on vision and values.

Q: Will the shortlisting occur via Zoom?

The aim is to be live but some participants may be able to join in remotely.

Action: Governors to contact Paul Good by the 28th January 2022 to indicate their availability for the Headteacher recruitment panels.

10. Executive Headteacher updates

Finance

The finance report was shared on screen, the budget is healthy. Staff costs are slightly higher due to more supply staff. An LSA has been appointed for a child without an EHCP so this is funded from the school budget. Non-staff costs are higher as many resources are purchased in September. There is about £8,000 in credit and the £20,000 in-year surplus was projected. The CFO (chief financial officer) has indicated DCE may not need reforecasting budgets.

Premises Update

DCE is in good state for a Victorian building. The windows are a concern. KS1 has wooden windows which are not good, a CIF (condition improvement fund) bid has been submitted for the last few years. This year the school has aimed to score more points on the bid by offering 30% of the costs, this is £52,000. DCE carried forward £200,000 last year so this is affordable. A previous bid missed by only a few points and windows now need to be improved for the ventilation.

All checks are completed, David Robinson the site manager has completed all statutory checks. The files are in order. The school has purchased SLA from Stockport MBC for Health & Safety.

Trust Updates

Key dates were uploaded onto Governor Hub. John Barrett the new CEO will be meeting staff in all schools. Governors were invited to attend the DCE meeting dates. All heads meet at least monthly and there are joint staff meetings every half term. There has also been some cross trust training.

Q: Governors asked for an update on road safety around the school?

The HoS reported he has a meeting with a local councillor Andrew Simpkin. There are plans for new school markings near the back of the school where most children enter the building.

11. Governing Body Matters including:

Governor training undertaken

Governors were reminded to update their training on Governor Hub.

Link Governor reports

John Janulewski submitted a link governor report on Foundation Subjects.
Catriona Arundale submitted a link governor report on SEND.
Paul Good reported on a school visit and the report will be shared on Governor Hub.
Kate Catling has met the HoS to review pupil premium and will submit the report for the next meeting.

12. Policy approval

Teaching statement

This policy was missed off the last meeting and was uploaded onto Governor Hub for approval. Ten Governors indicated their approval.

Governors formally ratified Governor Hub approval of the Teaching Statement

Governors highlighted there are some spelling mistakes in this document.

Mental Health and Well-being Policy

This policy was last approved in 2019 and has now been updated.

Governors formally approved the Mental Health and Well-being Policy

Behaviour Policy

There have been some minor amendments to update. There are some changes to the rewards system which will formally be introduced in the next half term.

Governors formally approved the Behaviour Policy

S: Governors reported it was a positive move to have a break out area for children.

The HoS explained this is a quiet room and needs some more investments and this room is used for other interventions. The building does present challenges and staff were congratulated for their creative use of the rooms. More modern buildings do have therapy rooms and break out rooms. Remodelling this building would be expensive.

13. Date & Times of 2021/22 Meetings

Tuesday 8th March 2022 at 7.30pm (in school or remote to be confirmed)

Tuesday 3rd May 2022 at 7.30pm

Tuesday 28th June 2022 at 3.30 (meet the children)

14. Closing Prayer

Augustine Ihm led the closing prayer.

Signed.....
Mr Paul Good (Chair)

Date.....

Meeting closed at 21:15

Summary of actions

- Action: Governors to contact Paul Good by the 28th January 2022 to indicate their availability for the Headteacher recruitment panels.