

**Didsbury CE Primary School
Local Governing Body Meeting
Tuesday 31st October 2023**

**Didsbury CE Primary School, Elm Grove, Manchester, M20 6RL
Minutes**

Present:

Paul Good	Chair of Governors (MDBE)
Victoria Rippon	Head of School
Cat Arundale	Foundation Governor
Abbie East	Foundation Governor
Matt Lee	Foundation Governor
Rev Augustine Ihm	Foundation Governor
Rebecca Silver	Co-Opted Governor
Dr Dario tom Dieck	Parent Governor

In attendance:

Ms O Oldham	Office Manager
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Apologies

Lee Jenkins	Parent Governor
Sam Morgan	Staff Governor
Joyce Thom	Foundation Governor

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

Agenda items were discussed in the following order: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16

GSO OPENING THE MEETING AND ELECTION OF CHAIR

Election of Chair

It was noted that Mr Paul Good had declared an interest in the position of Chair prior to the meeting. Additional nominations or expressions of interest were invited; there were no further candidates.

It was proposed by Ms V Rippon, seconded by Rev A Tanner-Ihm and unanimously RESOLVED that Mr P Good be elected Chair for the agreed term subject to RATIFICATION by the trust board.

Mr P Good in the chair.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Governors were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair.

Mr Dario tom Dieck, new parent governor and Ms R Silver, new co-opted governor were warmly welcomed to the meeting. Ms R Silver had been nominated by the trust board.

Mr L Jenkins was also a newly appointed parent governor.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr L Jenkins, Ms S Morgan and Mrs J Thom and accepted by the governing board. Apologies for early departure were received from Ms R Silver and Rev A Tanner-Ihm.

The Head of School was warmly welcomed to her first local governing board meeting.

Mrs D Wood was also welcomed to the meeting.

The board is quorate with 3 governors in attendance

The Chair explained that the governing board membership would remain at 9 governors.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

It was noted that Ms R Silver had been nominated for the position of Vice-Chair prior to the meeting. Additional nominations or expressions of interest were invited; there were no further candidates.

It was proposed by Mr P Good and unanimously RESOLVED that Ms R Silver be elected Vice-Chair for the agreed term.

The Chair informed governors that he would be looking to step down at the end of the year.

3. DECLARATION OF A.O.B.

Governors had been invited to declare any items for any other business.

The following items were requested and agreed:

- Meeting Structure
C – I do not think that 3 local governing board meetings per year is enough.

The Chair responded that the aim is for the formal local governing board meetings to be focused on ratification and business. There are two key strands for governing boards to consider, the first is the curriculum, pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning and a committee will be created to consider this. The second is finance and compliance and this will include policy management, safeguarding and health and safety. A small group of governors would meet to discuss this and then feedback to the local governing board.

Q – Would there still be just 3 local governing board meetings per year as most schools have 6 meetings per year? The Chair explained that the committees would have delegated powers to make decisions. The curriculum committee would look at how the curriculum is developing and progress against the School Improvement Plan.

A governor raised concerns that if the meetings are held at 9:30am they would not be accessible for governors who work and therefore there would not be any representation from professionals at the meetings.

The Chair explained that the committees will be able to determine the best time for meetings to be held and consideration will also be given to the best time for curriculum leads to attend.

The Chair highlighted the importance of governors observing the curriculum being taught and having the opportunity to hold in depth discussions.

Q – Will the committees report back to the governing board in between local governing board meetings as it is a long time to wait between meetings? The Chair replied yes and explained that reports would also be shared at the next meeting.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

a) Declaration of Business Interests

Governors were asked to declare any business, financial or personal interests in any agenda items; no declarations were made.

Governors were reminded that they should declare any interest which arose during the meeting.

b) Business Interest Form

Governors were asked to complete and sign the form on GovernorHub.

c) DBS Checks and Section 128 Checks

The Head of School confirmed that DBS checks were in place for all governors and that Section 128 checks have been carried out.

5. PREVIOUS LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2023, copies circulated previously, be approved, signed by the Chair and authorised for publication.

Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

There were no matters arising.

The Chair explained that minutes are published on the school website.

Minutes from a local governing board meeting held in march 2023 were not yet available due to unforeseen circumstances. It is hoped that they will be ready to circulate soon.

6. CHAIR'S ACTION

There had been no Chair's action taken since the previous meeting.

7. POLICY REVIEW

Governors considered and APPROVED the following policies which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Child protection
- Admissions

The Head of School reported that questions have been raised regarding the admissions criteria and if this will be changed, however there are currently no plans to make any changes.

The Chair explained that questions were raised regarding whether to include an additional category for children of staff members. This would be a trust wide policy change and it has been explored in detail, including the legal implications as it would take 2 years for the change to be implemented after a full consultation process.

For the majority of staff members the change would not have an immediate impact, it was also highlighted that the school is a community school and the focus should be on serving the community first.

Q – Was there a high demand from members of staff for pupil places? The Chair replied no but explained that a high number of young staff members have recently been recruited and they may be looking to benefit from a change to the admissions policy in the future. A number of secondary schools have provision for members of staff to secure places for their children and this is something that the trust will explore further.

- Overview of policies moving under Trust control

The Chair explained that there will be a number of trust policies introduced to ensure consistency and uniformity in all schools within the trust. This will include a safeguarding policy, complaints policy and code of conduct.

Governors heard that inconsistencies have been identified in school policies where they have been modified and trust wide policies would prevent this happening as schools will not be permitted to alter the policies.

The Chair to request list of policies that are under Trust control.

ACTION 1

The Head of School agreed to upload any school policies to GovernorHub.

ACTION 2

Governors were reminded that the Admissions Policy is school specific and it is important that when any changes are made a consultation process is followed.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND SELF-EVALUATION

- Study latest IDSR Report (School Inspection Data Summary)
- Agree the SIP or SDP targets and strategy
- Agree monitoring schedule
- Agree SEF and progress since last meeting
- Agree governor visit schedule
- Agree end of Key Stage Performance Indicators (EYFS, Phonics, KS1, MTC and KS2)

The IDSR was shared with governors ahead of the meeting.

The Chair explained that the purpose of the IDSR is to show trends for the school over the years and maps the school purpose against other schools within the LA and nationally.

The Chair highlighted that the school is still performing above the national threshold. When compared to other schools in Manchester there are areas where the school is performing well and areas where the curriculum will need to be reviewed.

The science curriculum would be an area of focus. The chair explained that this was a teacher led assessment whilst other subject areas are assessed against national standards.

The School Improvement Officer would be attending school and a governors would be invited to attend the meeting to discuss the IDSR in detail and identify any trends.

C – Since I have been a governor I was under the impression that the focus in school was on Reading, Writing and Critical thinking. The Chair confirmed that this was correct and has been driven by the information being received. When looking at the reading performance and writing there is a gap and it is important to make sure writing is more consistent with the reading outcomes. This will continue to be a focus and other areas will also be explored.

C – Looking at the data, writing is worse than last year and science is also low. The Head of School explained that reading and writing were being taught separately and the school is now trying to link them both together. The school will have an umbrella of English and this will include immersive texts introduced in writing.

The Head of School explained that there is no longer a SAT paper for science and it is therefore more difficult to assess science. The School Improvement Plan includes an action for the science subject lead to work on the science curriculum plan.

Q – Referring to the sub group analysis between boys and girls, is there a significant difference in the science data for sub groups? The Chair replied that it tends to mirror what is happening in writing and maths. The analysis is not as deep as science data is based on teacher assessments.

Governors heard that writing is based on pupils reading skills and part of this is taking these skills and producing different forms of writing. Subjective assessments undertaken are moderated against other schools. The school works with other schools regarding judgements in writing and this supports a more consistent approach which continues to be refined.

The Head of School advised that she would be looking to raise the profile of subject leaders and give them the opportunity to assess subjects and spend time with teachers to raise the profile of moderation.

Q – With the focus on reading and writing was there a shift and a different approach? The Head of School replied that core subjects are Mathematics, Reading and Writing and Science. Maths and English are taught every day and science is taught for two hours per week.

Q – Referring to the sub group data, I noticed that the girls are performing much lower than boys. Particularly when looking at the KS1 expected standard data. Why is this? The Head of School replied that this is cohort dependent and the percentage of boys in the cohort may be higher. Governors noted that each child equates to a high percentage and it may be that there are girls with SEND in the cohort.

The Chair commented that this would be an area for the committee to explore further in more detail.

Q – How closely linked are we across other schools within the trust in terms of curriculum benchmarking? The Head of School replied that in terms of curriculum, a trust wide approach would create some challenges for schools and it is important for schools to maintain autonomy. The Head of School advised that the Chief Executive Officer was supportive of the school curriculum plans.

Governors heard that there would be benefits to the trust schools working more closely around assessment and an overarching assessment policy for the trust would be beneficial.

Governors agreed that there are benefits to the school working with other schools in Didsbury and the Head of School confirmed that the school is involved with cluster meetings with local schools.

Q – Would it be beneficial for governors to see this information? The Head of School agreed that governors could attend moderation meetings.

Governors accepted the SIP and noted that this would be a working document this year.

6:42pm Ms O Oldham in attendance

The Chair spoke positively about the work that Ms O Oldham has completed since joining the school.

It was agreed that item 11 be discussed at this point.

9. HEAD OF SCHOOL'S REPORT

The Head of School's Report had been circulated to the governors prior to the meeting; key points were noted and questions invited:

The Head of School spoke positively about the Early Career Teachers who have joined the school. Ms J Dunn from West Didsbury CE Primary School would be the ECT mentor. Reports would be shared with governors.

Q – Which year groups are the ECT's working in? The Head of School replied nursery/reception class, year 2 and year 4.

Safeguarding

The school continued to use CPOMS.

Training was held during an inset day at the start of term regarding the new KCSiE document and safeguarding policy.

Wellbeing

The Head of School advised that the school had introduced 'The Art of Brilliance' as part of the wellbeing strategy.

Weekly briefings are held with members of staff and CPD is included along with references to inspirational podcasts that staff may want to access to raise the profile of wellbeing for members of staff and pupils.

Governors agreed that wellbeing was very important and particularly due to the amount of change within the school over the past year.

Curriculum

Curriculum mapping was underway, History was the first subject and work would commence tomorrow. Discussions will be held regarding what children need to learn based on the national curriculum and school specific considerations. Maths curriculum would also be reviewed.

Behaviour

The Head of School reported that behaviour in classrooms was outstanding, changes in behaviour during time where there is less structure is being monitored.

The Head of School discussed Jenny Mosley training which St Elisabeth's CE Primary School have benefitted from to support with play time management. Governors were informed that the training is expensive.

Governors commented that this is an area that is highlighted a lot and it would be good to have a plan of action.

The Chair stated that he would support the school to go ahead and book training from Jenny Mosley. He added that the school invests heavily in members of staff and midday staff are also very important as they support the wellbeing of children. Governors agreed that they would support this and highlighted the importance of investing in midday staff.

C – I heard stories about the activities that the school arranged for Black History day and my child was very engaged and found the day a valuable experience.

The Head of School appreciated the comment and advised that the school is calling the days 'Super Learning Days' and there are two days planned this year.

The school would also be hosting a wellbeing week at the start of every half term as it has been acknowledged that not all children will have positive experiences during the school holidays. The focus will provide an opportunity to check in with the pupils and make sure they are ok.

Governors agreed that wellbeing week was a great idea and discussed the importance and value of holding 'super learning days' to offer different experiences for the pupils.

Health and Safety

The Head of School advised that she had recommended Jeanne Fairbrother Associates to the CEO and a meeting has been agreed for Jeanne to attend and complete a Health and Safety Audit. An action plan would be created and this would be shared on GovernorHub. Policies will also be available to access.

Governors thanked the Head of School for her report.

10. TRUST ENGAGEMENT AND CEO REPORT

- Latest report
- Interim updates since last meeting
- Outcomes of school visit/Trust review
- Reports from external advisors

School Trust review report was shared with governors ahead of the meeting.

The Chair stated that the report was very positive and the CEO recognised the changes and improvements at the school as there continues to be rapid progress.

A report was shared ahead of the meeting following a Quality Assurance Visit by Mr Alan Torr, former HMI.

The Chair stated that collectively everyone involved was disappointed to read the report, there are a lot of areas judged to be 'Requires Improvement'. Mr A Torr previously judged the school to be Outstanding.

Governors heard that the report was compiled based on a conversation with the Head of School and a review of some data. Mr Torr did not visit any classrooms and he did not review pupil's books or samples of work. Therefore, there was no triangulation of information.

The Chair advised that Mr A Torr visited classrooms and reviewed books during his previous visit and ideally if this had been actioned during his recent visit a more rounded perspective would have been the outcome.

The Chair, CEO and Head of School were all disappointed with the way in which the review was conducted. Some areas in the report were also found to be contradictory.

Q – As the Head of School, what is your judgement from what you see around school? The Head of School replied that the current curriculum would be judged to be 'Requires Improvement'. The curriculum is outdated and there is a lack of consistency in classes. The SIP recognises this and developing the curriculum and making it fit for purpose is a priority.

The Head of School added that the judgements included in Mr A Torr's report are quite accurate, however the comments made are very damning. The Head of School stated that it was a shame that this was the first official meeting that she had with Mr Torr.

The Head of School advised that the school is working on the curriculum.

Governors commented that they were not aware of the previous frustrations amongst staff members. Two members of staff have spoken positively about working with the new Head of School.

Q – Will Mr A Torr be invited back? The Head of School replied that Mr A Torr is very experienced, however she was unsure if she would be supportive of him attending another visit at the school.

The Chair explained that Mr A Torr retired in 2018 as an HMI and a lot has changed in education, particularly following the pandemic.

The Chair stated that there are deficiencies in the school curriculum, however it is a solid curriculum and previously served the school well, but no longer meets requirements. The curriculum was being inconsistently applied and this was noted during the Ofsted visit.

During the recent Ofsted inspection, a deep dive was conducted in History and there were inconsistencies identified in this subject. The CEO and Head of School have identified inconsistencies in Maths and English too.

The Chair advised that the school rankings compared to other schools remained high and therefore things currently in place are working. In the longer term we should aspire for our practice to be such that, people would be visiting the school to learn and be inspired by what is happening.

C – The only issue if we do not invite Mr Torr back would be that it looks like we are doing this just because we don't agree with his comments. A governor highlighted that Mr Torr has visited the school before and made judgements that were based on broader evidence. The Chair added that Mr Torr has been visiting the school for 3 years and the view is that after 3 years a fresh approach is needed.

The Chair referred to other reports from external advisors, including the CEO report which are much more positive.

11. FINANCE

- Latest budget update
- Performance statements
- Planned expenditure

The updated budget plan was shared with governors ahead of the meeting. The Chair explained that one of the board responsibilities is to approve any revisions to the budget since it was published.

The Office Manager explained that a member of staff has resigned and would be leaving at the end of the week, there will therefore be no cleaning staff in school after this date. The school budget includes a new cleaning contract to start and this is balanced by the savings made in staffing when the member of staff leaves. A decision had been made to outsource cleaning to an external company.

The Office Manager advised that she was currently sourcing quotations for a handyman to undertake maintenance jobs around school. The school caretaker retired in August and it was proposed that the saving made in salary be allocated for cleaning to be outsourced and a handyman paid to complete a list of tasks around school.

Governors heard that West Didsbury Primary School would be interviewing for a caretaker next week and this role could be split over the two sites.

- Pupil premium
- Sports Premium

The Office Manager reported that pupil premium income is consistent with what is included in the budget. Once the census return has been processed she would report the final figure.

The nursery income was in line with the forecast figure, all extended childcare codes have been received and processed.

The Office Manager explained that census was completed at the end of October and once this has been processed all budget figures will be confirmed.

Q – Is there any building work planned? The Head of School replied that the lock in the back door leading to the playground is broken and this is also a fire door. This will need to be replaced. The Office Manager confirmed that work in this area of the building would not be restricted due to the listed building status.

Q – Any update on the window? The Chair replied that the school submitted a bid for the windows in the hall to be replaced. The windows in the listed building were all replaced with the support of a Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bid and funding from the Department for Education in association with Diocese of Manchester. The school has submitted further bids through the same route since converting to an academy.

The Chair explained that the replacement of the door is to ensure the safety of the children and members of staff and to secure the school building.

Governors heard that there is a significant widespread issue regarding the recruitment of cleaning staff in schools and the Chair explained that this was due to the split shifts and shortages in the workforce.

The Chair explained the benefits of a contract cleaner and how this will separate cleaning and caretaking duties.

Q – What will be in place for the time between the member of staff leaving and the cleaning contract starting? The Office Manager replied that the school had a cleaning contract due to start in September, three companies were asked to provide quotations and only one company attended. Approval has been secured for the school to go ahead. The school is currently relying on agency cleaning staff and this is expensive.

A governor suggested that the school look at options to work with the clergy as this is something that they have to deal with in the churches. The Chair agreed that a partnership with the church when employing a handyman would be beneficial.

Q – I assumed it would be standard practice for the trust to work with other schools? The Office Manager replied that this has happened, the previous caretaker worked across two sites within the Trust and conversations have taken place with the other school.

The Chair suggested that the school observe the arrangements this year and explore the possibility of working with the church in the future.

Governors APPROVED the revised budget plan presented.

7:02pm Ms O Oldham left the meeting

7:03pm Ms R Silver and Rev Augustine left the meeting

12. COMPLIANCE/SAFEGUARDING

- H&S Latest report and summary of actions
A visit was scheduled for the end of November.
- Fire Risk Assessment
The school was awaiting the report.
- Premises
- Safeguarding audit and actions
This would take place in January as part of the annual cycle.

13. LGB MATTERS

- Committee membership

The Chair would email all governors to ask if they would prefer to be appointed to the resources committee or curriculum committee.

ACTION 3

The Chair explained that the committee structure was being modelled at trust level too. The Chair discussed the move towards a more consistent approach across all schools in the trust and encouraging access to appropriate training resources for members of staff.

The Chair advised that the Diocese of Manchester are becoming a major training provider for middle leadership and this will support members of staff to become school leaders or further develop their skills.

- Governor visit reports
- Ms C Arundale visited school to meet with Emily Smith and Kathryn Thompson and attended an SEND quality assurance check.

Q – Where do we send completed governor visits forms? To the GSO.

The Chair referred to a safeguarding issue that was dealt with last year and commented on the extensive time and emotional energy this took up for staff and governors. A review was conducted by the LA and this was very positive in terms of the schools position. The review highlighted some areas that the school could have improved, however it was acknowledged that when the incident came to light, the school acted and updated the policy. The LA review team concluded that the school did everything possible and in the correct way.

The Head of School and Chair visited the setting and the Chair commented that after meals and activities have been completed, children would return to the accommodation unit and there are limited things they can do. This is where the issues arise as when accommodation doors are closed, members of staff do not know what is going on.

During the recent visit, all accommodation doors were open and staff remained vigilant. This was challenging for members of staff as it took up all their time and they therefore had limited downtime.

The Chair stated that Condover Hall may not be the most appropriate place for pupils to visit due to the layout and lack of common room for pupils to access. Common recreation space would be easier for members of staff to monitor.

The Chair added that the quality of the activities and food was very good, however alternatives are being explored.

The Head of School advised that the school has joined Evolve, this is a company who will validate risk assessments and offer advice over the phone when completing risk assessments. The company authorise risk assessments and this provides valuable back up for the school.

The Head of School would be leading training with members of staff around the use of Evolve.

Q – What happens when the children go to sleep? A teacher is in the block and in close proximity to the children. Members of staff sit outside the bedrooms until pupils are quiet.

The Chair advised that Evolve have oversight from a major LA and all the schools in the Trust now have to go through the system when arranging trips and visits.

Governors discussed the value to the children of the residential trip.

C – As a parent I feel that the super learning days provide great experiences and enrichment opportunities for the children.

Q – Will all classes have a school trip? The Head of School replied that once Evolve support is fully in place, trips can be agreed. The value that children can gain from trips and visits greatly enhances their curriculum experience and these will be encouraged.

Governors noted that the main cost for school trips is with the transport.

- Vacancies
There were no vacancies on the local governing board.
- Skills Audits

The GSO agreed to email the skills audit to all governors to be completed.

ACTION 4

- Agree Governing Board Development Plan
- Outcome of skills audit

14. BRIEFING PAPERS OF THE LA

Governors noted the following articles:

- Governance update and governor development
- Safeguarding; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Update for academies
Discussed direction of academisation.

15. DATES

Tuesday 30th January 2024, 6pm

Tuesday 11th June 2024, 6pm

16. A.O.B.

Communication

Q – Has the trust communicated the changes to the name? The Chair replied that the trust needs to communicate this with the school community and agreed to discuss this with the CEO.

ACTION 5

C – There are issues with the communication policy as if parents collect their child later then there is not an opportunity for face to face communication with the class teacher. The Chair replied that this is something to review as if parents have a concern they need to be advised that they can make an appointment with the class teacher.

The Head of School stated that the school may need to consider hosting open mornings for parents. A parent who attended a reception class open morning spoke about how positive this was.

The Chair suggested that time be allocated following a class assembly as these will be returning.

The Head of School agreed to explore this further.

With no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8:00pm with a prayer for the school, staff and wider community

Signed..... Date.....

Mr Paul Good (Chair)

DIDSBURY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
AUTUMN TERM 2023 LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES
MEETING ACTION POINTS

ACTION POINT	ACTION REQUIRED	ACTION FOR	DATE ACTION TO BE COMPLETED
1	The Chair to request list of policies that are under Trust control.	The Chair	30 th January 2024
2	The Head of School agreed to upload any school policies to GovernorHub.	Head of School	Post meeting
3	The Chair would email all governors to ask if they would prefer to be appointed to the resources committee or curriculum committee.	The Chair	Post meeting
4	The GSO agreed to email the skills audit to all governors to be completed.	GSO	Post meeting
5	<i>Q – Has the trust communicated the changes to the name?</i> The Chair replied that the trust needs to communicate this with the school community and agreed to discuss this with the CEO.	The Chair	Post meeting