

**OAKINGTON C OF E (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 24 November 2016, 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Edmund Buss (EB, Chair), Sally Daggianti (SD, Head), Peter Nicholas (PN), Lindsay Born (LB), Paul Lloyd (PL), Jenny Prince (JP), Dawn Mansell (DM), Jo Bryant (Clerk)

APOLOGIES: Clare Chapman (CC), Sharon Oakley (SO), Anne Christie (AC), Ann Webster (AW), Karen Sutherland (KS)

Prayer: SD opened the meeting in prayer.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from SO, who was unwell, AC, who was attending a course, AW who is recovering from surgery, and KS and CC due to work and childcare issues respectively. These were accepted by the governing body.

EB welcomed Ben Phillips, the newly appointed family worker at St. Andrews.

2. Declarations of Interest, Register of Pecuniary Interest

None were declared.

3. Introducing Ben Phillips, St. Andrews Family Worker

Ben introduced himself to the governors and gave some information about his background and interests. From Yorkshire, he had been brought up in the Church of England. He was baptised at the age of 9 and, although he had been deaf from birth, his hearing was then restored. He is married to Sharon and they have three girls, the youngest of whom was still a new baby when they moved into the village last summer. He has run his own business, directed films and created websites. In recent times he has run, interdenominationally, film clubs, youth groups and food banks, offering counselling. As a young person he experienced difficulties with domestic violence and his parents splitting up, and he began drinking. Eventually a friend challenged him about calling himself a Christian while behaving in this way and he managed to get back on track. His aim is to bring the gospel to people in an unthreatening way; he is based at St. Andrews and his role in Oakington is to help the church communicate better with the local community. He recently organised a successful Light Party for local children and books were available for children to read if they wished. He feels it is important to live by example and he is available to visit families in a pastoral capacity. He has been working alongside SD and James Alexander, the vicar, in delivering assemblies and he has also taken part in JAM (Jesus and Me) clubs. The situation he finds himself in now is very different from that which he came from in Yorkshire, but even in a pleasant leafy village such as Oakington there is still some poverty. He would consider chaplaincy training, and he is currently shadowing Steve Whyatt of GenR8 who, until recently, was the school chaplain. He is still awaiting his DBS certificate. His wife, Sharon, is helping at Humpty Dumpty Pre-school and sees her role as ministering to women. Ben was thanked for introducing himself to the governors, after which he left the meeting.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

After a correction to show that AC had given her apologies, the minutes were signed as a correct record.

5. Matters Arising

EB has yet to contact our local county councillors to request nominations for an LA governor (Action 71).

A question about the school staff's view of the governing body will be included in the staff well-being questionnaire next time (Action 78).

Drawing up a disaster recovery plan is ongoing. [Action 83: Organise a Disaster Plan including an emergency checklist \(KS, CC, SD\)](#)

[Action 89: Governors to supply own portraits for display in entrance \(All\)](#)

[Action 90: Notify staff that the deadline for responding to the staff questionnaire has been extended to 30 November \(SD, EB\)](#)

6. Governing Body Objectives

It was decided to limit the GB objectives to two this year.

1. Consider the options for academisation. This is a major decision involving structural change.
2. Continue to use RAISEonline to monitor trends in pupil performance. This objective is running for 2 years.

Following some discussion about how best to use financial resources to renovate the school house and provide adequate classroom accommodation and play space for an increase in school size, EB recommended that we go ahead with transferring the trusteeship of the school to the diocese (which will cost around £3,500 in legal fees) and that the school applies for LCVAP funding while that is still possible. [Action 91: Apply for LCVAP funding for 7th classroom before Mar 2017 \(SD\)](#).

7. Policies for Approval

These had been circulated, and comments invited, prior to the meeting. JP and DM had responded. As the First Aid policy stated that all TAs should be trained, arrangements need to be made for Mrs. Moss to have paediatric training. The governing body approved the policies.

8. Head Teacher's report

There are currently 142 children on roll. Mr. Clarke is taking training on Professional Development for Middle Leaders. Ben Phillips, the new family worker, will be taking over some school assemblies from James Alexander, the vicar. School Sports Funding will be used to pay Jamie Wilson to coach the school football team.

Attainment is excellent. In EYFS 81% of children achieved their target, compared with 69% nationally. Results in both KS1 and KS2 were good, and writing results improved significantly. Oakington achieved the government's floor standard across Reading, Writing and Maths even though this has become harder. Half of all primary schools are not managing to do this. KS1 SATs results have been moderated by external assessors. The school is very good at extending more able pupils, and Phonics is also a strength

Attendance continues to rise slowly and now stands at 96.7%.

There is to be a Christmas Jumper Day to raise money for charity.

Teaching Assistants have suggested re-using redundant gates to create a barrier to the car park at the front of the school.

Every school has to deal with bullying. There is an anti-bullying week every year, and the school's policy is to intervene early and minimise bullying behaviour by acting decisively and encouraging dialogue.

9. Reports from Committees

JP reported that the recent Learning and Development Committee meeting had discussed the school's results, SDP and the staff well-being questionnaire. The template for governor monitoring visits has been revised and will be circulated. Governors are encouraged to limit their report to bullet points and submit it within 2 weeks of a visit.

Action 92: Circulate the governor monitoring visits plan for current academic year, with new report template (JB).

Action 93: Fill in focus of visit in report template even if the visit is not until next summer (All).

PN reported from the Resources Committee that Chris Meddle, a Senior Adviser with the county council, had recently visited the school to assess the security of boundary fences, entrances and exits including the area behind the bicycle shed. The BCR was considered and discussed. There are several health and safety issues: There was some concern that the fire door by Acorn class toilet is left propped open as it is too heavy for children to open. A solution would be to install door props that release when there is a fire alarm. SD had obtained a quote for over £700 to install props to all 5 fire doors, and was therefore requested to obtain a revised quote for 3 doors. A Yale lock is to be fitted on the kitchen door leading to the car park, because it remained unlocked while the kitchen was in use. The committee was told that KS has begun the process of drawing up an emergency plan. Increasing numbers of pupils in the school will mean a single class in every year group, so an additional classroom will be needed. By next September the school will be exceeding its capacity. How the cost of a seventh classroom could be met was discussed in some detail.

Both committees Terms of Reference were approved.

10. Academisation Process

EB welcomed Dr. Tim Coulson, the Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England, who was invited to give the governing body an introduction to the procedure for becoming an academy. He represents the DfE in the Eastern region and his role is to monitor the performance of academies. He began by saying that **becoming an academy is not compulsory** for Good or Outstanding schools. Academies were initially introduced by a Labour government to transform the worst performing schools. Since then, Conservative governments have changed the focus with the aim of improving standards overall. Most academies are secondary schools. Where primary schools have become academies it is usually within the context of a multi-academy trust (MAT). The options for us as a Church of England school if we were to become an academy include joining Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust (DEMAT) which includes 30 schools, joining or forming an area MAT which is a local grouping of church schools. Two or three schools may set up a trust which is then joined by others.

There are various forms of affiliation:

- 1) **Partnerships.** These comprise the local schools we currently work with within the diocese and with whom we may share training and sports events, for example.
- 2) **Collaborations.** This formally recognises the above.
- 3) **Federation.** Schools within a federation share a governing body and a code of behaviour and may comprise infant and junior schools.
- 4) **Multi Academy Trust (MAT).** The academies in the trust have a funding agreement with the DfE. It is possible for academies to fail financially or educationally.

A “**Soft Federation**” (Nos 1 to 2 above) is not a legal entity. Governors from each school sit on a joint committee and it can be a step towards full Federation. Federation tends to suit small rural schools. They can share a head teacher, and also a governing body. It was recommended that the governing body should investigate this further.

A **Hard Federation/Multi Academy Trust** is a group of schools. Some schools can sponsor or incorporate weaker schools thus sharing strengths. A MAT has a board which delegates responsibilities to local governing bodies. It has a master funding agreement with the DfE which is calculated according to existing levels of funding to the participating schools. The board can retain some funds because of economies of scale.

Common **issues** that arise are:

- Fear of change and the loss of individual identity and autonomy
- Changes to pay and conditions (staff concerns)

- The idea of a shared head teacher (parents' concerns)

Benefits:

- The school improvement part of local authorities is diminishing as budgets are being cut. This decline in local authority provision has implications for schools that are not academies. Governor Services may only be able to offer a subscription-based service. Becoming an academy could make the school better.
- Saves money.
- Schools that are doing well, share this strength with others.

The current position is that, unless the school is designated as Requires Improvement by Ofsted or is in Special Measures, it is free to choose whether or not to convert to academy status. The Government is in favour of an academy system, and the alternatives are diminishing. Becoming an academy is something we need to be enthusiastic about. It is not good to enter the process half-heartedly.

A MAT is able to employ a level of financial skill or buy in financial support. If the MAT comprises 3 schools, an Executive Head would spend approximately 2 days a week on each and other staff would need to be stepped up. If there are 6-7 schools in a MAT the model changes in that there would be a separate CEO, freeing up the head to teach rather than deal with business matters. Consideration would need to be given as to how to attract suitable members for a trust board, and Tim would be able to help identify volunteers. The existence of MATs is keeping more village schools open, but the governors would need to consider whether they would be willing to subsidise a weaker school financially. While the majority of primary schools in Cambridgeshire have still not converted to academy status, struggling schools are under pressure to join a MAT. Schools within a MAT should not be further apart than a lunchbreak journey so that logistics are not an issue.

Questions raised:

Is it possible to revert from being an academy to the existing position? **No. Once a school has become an academy, it is not possible to revert back to pre-academy status.** In very exceptional circumstances if the MAT does not work (i.e. the trust becomes bankrupt or standards fall dramatically) the Commissioner can step in and move schools to another academy trust. The Executive Board decides how much is delegated to local governing bodies.

What are the funding options for providing the needed seventh classroom? There is an annual funding application for small MATs through the DfE for expansion. The money is allocated nationally and ranked according to need. LCVAP-type funding is available to large MATs of 5 or more schools.

How would handling admissions change with academy status? At present the local authority can override the school's PAN. As an academy, the school would publish and apply its own criteria and there would be an independent Appeals Panel, although the local authority still has to co-ordinate admissions.

How is being a sponsor school of benefit? It sharpens the school's best practice and gives greater opportunities for staff development.

Governors were recommended to visit examples of MATs, both church and non-church schools, to see how they work.

Action 94: Visit local examples of C of E Primary Schools that have become academies e.g. in Suffolk, by summer 2017.

There are **costs** involved in converting to academy status.

- i) A solicitor would need to be retained for legal and other advice
- ii) A temporary project manager would be needed for the conversion process. A grant of £25,000 is available to cover this and Tim would be able to recommend personnel.
- iii) If the school becomes a sponsor and takes on a weaker school, the Sponsor Capacity Fund provides a grant of £70,000 to employ a senior leader for a period of time.

Examples of trust deeds can be found among DfE model documentation and Tim would be able to send us examples. To begin academisation, we would need to find other schools to partner with and complete an Expression of Interest Form. The DfE would then support the process.

Tim Coulson was thanked for his input and left the meeting.

11. Correspondence

Information from Governor Services had been circulated.

12. AOB

EB reported that his discussions with the diocesan solicitor regarding the transfer of trusteeship to the diocese had been helpful. The trustees are responsible for all of the school buildings and the land on which they sit. Funds from renting the school house have to be used for the benefit of the school according to the school trust deed and, to allow this to continue, governors petty cash will be coded within the school budget. Currently, two trustees, the vicar of St. Andrews and the Master of Queens' College, Cambridge would need to give their consent to the school becoming an academy, and if anything happened to either of them it could lead to long delays in the academisation process. EB therefore feels that transferring the trusteeship to the diocese is the right thing to do. PN proposed this should go ahead, and it was approved by the governors present.

The meeting concluded at 10.55pm.