



**Embsay C of E (VC) Primary School
Meeting of the Governing Body held on
Thursday 9th December 2021 at 5.30pm via Teams**

Minutes (Confidential items removed)

Present: Matt Smales-Cresswell (Chair); Fiona Prest (Headteacher); Rev. Tim Calow (TC); Rachael Higgins (RH); Chris Atherton (CA); Jennifer Stearn (JS); Emma Smith (ES); Andrew Gash (AG); Rev. Marion Russell (MR); Steven Hudson (SH)

Apologies: Helen Ralph (HR)

In attendance: Paul Baxter (Clerk); Shirley Chapman (Office Manager); Val Berry (Bursar)

Core Functions of a Governing Body:

- Setting strategic direction.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for educational performance.
- Ensuring financial health, probity and value for money.

No.	Item	Action
Part A – PROCEDURAL		
1.	<p>Prayers – MR opened the meeting with a prayer.</p> <p>Welcome The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies Apologies were received from Helen Ralph which were accepted.</p>	
3.	<p>Confidentiality The Chair reminded all present of the confidential nature of all discussions.</p> <p>It was agreed that item 13, Feedback from the Headteacher’s Performance Management Committee, should identified as confidential and withheld from the minutes available for public inspection.</p>	
4.	<p>Declarations of interest No declarations were made.</p>	
5.	<p>Urgent business items The Chair advised that he had not received any notification of other urgent matters to be discussed.</p>	
6.	<p>Membership of Governing Body Vacancies – It was confirmed that there is still a vacancy for a Local Authority Governor. The Chair advised that he will take this forward before the next meeting.</p> <p>Skills audit – Governors were reminded and encouraged to complete the skills audit questionnaire. A copy of the link will be circulated.</p>	Chair to consider the LA vacancy

7.	<p>Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 October 2021 were approved without amendment. The Chair will sign a copy of the minutes for the record at the next face to face meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Item 4 – Agree and adopt revised Standing Orders – A copy of the revised Standing Orders had been circulated before the meeting. They now reflect meetings held virtually or where the meeting is a mixture of face to face and virtual attendance. The Standing Orders were unanimously approved for adoption. 	
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Part B – Finance & Resources

8.	<p>Revised Budget</p> <p>A copy of the revised Budget and monitoring report had been circulated to Governors before the meeting. The Bursar took Governors through the revised forecasts and explained the key variances to show how the expected surplus has increased since the Start Budget had been approved. Although costs, particularly those associated with staffing, are increasing whilst funding is not, the school is still in a healthy position.</p> <p>Governors clarified what future costs have been included and what have yet to be taken into account after which they approved the revised Budget for submission unanimously.</p> <p>Financial benchmarking information</p> <p>A copy of the Benchmarking information had been circulated and Governors were advised that the format has changed since last year. The Bursar provided a brief summary of the changes and took Governors through the document to highlight the key areas. Governors were reassured that there were no areas of concern but agreed that it was difficult to make comparisons with schools which are not the same.</p> <p>Asset Register</p> <p>The Headteacher advised Governors that the current asset register format is cumbersome and inefficient although it is accurate. Governors wanted to know what the asset register was kept for, whether it was used as a forecasting tool in setting the Budgets and whether it would be used to factor in financial depreciation into the accounts. The Bursar and Headteacher answered Governors’ questions on these matters.</p>	
9.	<p>General Finance</p> <p>IT 2021/22</p> <p>The Headteacher provided an update concerning the school’s IT. At the current time, the school has a contract with Blue Box for the provision of IT support. Governors were advised that the Headteacher does not think that the school is getting value under the contract. She has discussed her concerns with the owner of Blue Box who is to personally review the service given. Governors were advised that if there is no improvement, a new contractor will be sought, and this may well mean going back to NYCC as the provider.</p> <p>The Headteacher further advised Governors regarding the school’s IT equipment, particularly its laptops, some of which are now seven years old and some coming up to</p>	

	<p>three years old. Blue Box have been asked to review and it may be necessary to invest in some new equipment which may or may not be laptops; notebooks and/or tablets will also be considered.</p> <p>Governor question: Given the recent developments regarding the pandemic, does the school have contingency plans in case of lockdown/closure in the coming months? – The Headteacher confirmed that the school currently has four laptops available to lend out and there is a possibility of getting some additional ones too.</p>	
10.	<p>Other Finance</p> <p>Contract Review Schedule – a copy had been circulated before the meeting. It was confirmed that the school is on a fixed price contract until March for utilities and that an increase in the utility costs has been factored into the Budget thereafter.</p> <p>SFVS – A draft copy had been circulated to Governors who were advised that the format has again changed. It was confirmed that the SFVS must be submitted by the 31 March but the earlier the better. There are still some areas which need completing, for example the skills audit and the register of business interest. Subject to this, the SFVS was approved for submission.</p>	

Part C – School Improvement

11.	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>A copy of the Headteacher’s report had been circulated to Governors before the meeting. The Headteacher highlighted some of the key areas in the report as follows:</p> <p><u>School Improvement Plan (SIP)</u> – A copy of the Education Development Adviser’s (EDA) report following a formal planning meeting had been circulated with the Headteacher’s report. Three dates have been agreed for future visits and Governors were encouraged to attend on those dates, particularly for the safeguarding and the curriculum focus visits when there will be some training aimed at Governors.</p> <p><u>Assessment</u> – Governors were advised that teachers are struggling to assess the children with any accuracy because there are so many gaps in learning following the disruption of the pandemic. This is particularly apparent in years 2 and 6. Governors were given an overview of the difficulties and taken through the data available. Governors discussed at length and sought further clarification from the Headteacher. Questions asked included:</p> <p>Governor Question: Reading in year 1 also seems significantly lower than expected? – The Headteacher advised that those in year 1 haven’t yet had full assessments.</p> <p>Governor Question: If the figures for year 2 and year 6 are unreliable, how is that going to be monitored as the year progresses and when will it be known more realistically what those figures will be? – The Headteacher advised that after Christmas, the year 2 and year 6 teachers will be asked to provide predictions for the SATs results which is what will then be tracked. The difficulty will be that there are not now three previous year group results for comparison but at least there will be a better idea of where the children are. Governors will therefore be provided with more realistic figures at the February meeting.</p>	
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	<p>Governor Question: What plans does the school have to address the learning gaps and support the children going forward, particularly given the disruptions arising from staff absences? – The Headteacher advised that there a timetable has been compiled where every class has an additional 4 to 6 hours of extra support in the classroom. This enables small group work to be done and children to be really focused on. In the afternoons there are also small intervention groups. There is disruption to this because of the staff absences. Supply teachers have been used where an absence has not been able to be covered internally but, as supply teachers do not know the children, addressing the gaps in learning through this is not ideal.</p> <p><u>Link Governor visits</u> – There have been no visits this term as agreed but, for next term, it would be helpful if Governors could let the Headteacher have dates when Link Governors would like to visit. Governors were asked to let the Headteacher have some dates for availability as soon as possible.</p> <p>Governors were further reminded that when they have read Keeping Children Safe in Education, they must let the school know. There is now a form available with which to do this.</p> <p>Governors asked additional questions on the Headteacher’s report including on unauthorised absences and wider links with other schools. Further discussions around the use of supply staff and on addressing the learning gaps took place.</p>	<p>Dates for Link visits to be provided by Govs</p>
12.	<p>SEF/SIP/SIAMS</p> <p>Governors were reminded that the SEF is not being updated this year but will be reviewed at the start of the next academic year.</p> <p>The SIP was discussed under the Headteacher’s report and an update on SIAMs is also included in that report. Governors had no additional questions.</p>	
13.	<p>HT Performance Management Committee</p> <p>This item was dealt with at the end of the meeting whereupon the Headteacher and ES left.</p> <p><i>This item has been declared confidential and has been excluded from the minutes available for public inspection.</i></p>	
14.	<p>Governor Action Plan – update 2021/22</p> <p>The Chair advised Governors that it was difficult to prepare a report without the skills audit having been completed. Governors were therefore again encouraged to complete the return as soon as possible. This item to be on the agenda for the next meeting.</p> <p>Governors were reminded that at the last meeting it had been agreed to ask for a review of governance. The EDA has suggested this be undertaken in March and Governors were asked to let the Headteacher have some dates when they would be available. It was suggested that Headteacher circulate a Doodle Poll which she agreed she would do.</p>	<p>Headteacher to circulate a Doodle Poll for the Governance Review</p>
15.	<p>Academisation Update</p> <p>The Headteacher advised that the Diocese has suggested that all schools, not already part of an academy trust, should consider at least once each year whether it would be</p>	

	<p>to the school's benefit to join an academy. Governors were referred to a slideshow presentation prepared by the Diocese, in particular to a slide outlining the benefits of being part of an academy.</p> <p>The Headteacher advised that she does not see the case for it at this present time. Governors discussed and agreed that now is not the right time; there is enough disruption to the learning without throwing an additional complication into the mix. It was further agreed that more research was needed and that it would be better to consider this in more depth at the start of the next academic year. It should though, be included in the Governor Action Plan.</p>	
16.	<p>Reports of:</p> <p>Governor visits/ monitoring – There have been no reports to date. A review of the IT has been carried out by the Link, the Safeguarding Link has been in, and the SEND Link has met with the Headteacher.</p> <p>Governor Training – Headteacher reminded Governors that she has circulated a list of training available through NYCC. Newer Governors were encouraged to attend the introduction to governance course which can be booked through the school.</p> <p>Feedback from courses – One Governor had completed a Cybersecurity Webinar.</p>	
17.	<p>Health and Safety Update</p> <p>The Headteacher advised that there would be a Health and Safety inspection by NYCC's H&S officer in the coming week. Nothing is expected to be an issue.</p> <p>The school's Risk Assessment has been updated and tightened to reflect the current position with regard to incidences of covid amongst pupils and staff. There has been a return to split play times with no mingling of classes in the school. The measures in place are not yet as rigid as they were during the lockdown. CO2 monitors have now been placed in all the classrooms.</p> <p>The Staff Governor reported that staff had asked her to convey to the Governing Body that they were fully supportive of all the measures which the Headteacher has put in place. The Chair asked the Governor to send back the Governing Body's thanks for that support and for their dedication and hard work this term.</p> <p>A Governor raised the issue of reporting H&S incidents to the Governing Body. The Headteacher advised that she normally completed a form which was then sent to NYCC. She will look at whether there is a report she is able to produce from NYCC's systems for the Governing Body and she reminded Governors that all major incidents are included in her Headteacher's Report.</p>	
18.	<p>Policies reviewed and adopted</p> <p>The following policies were reviewed and adopted unanimously:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay Feedback and Marking Educational Visits Budget Management Code of Conduct Administration of Medicines 	

	<p>Governors asked for clarification on the monitoring with regard to the Feedback and Marking Policy and were satisfied with the Headteacher's response.</p> <p>Governors asked whether the Educational Visits Policy would need anything added to take into account trips cancelled because of illness. The Headteacher advised that she will speak with the H&S Officer to clarify this. In the meantime, Governors were happy to adopt the policy as is.</p>	
19.	<p>Governors' correspondence received or sent No correspondence has been received. The Clerk advised that a letter has been sent to a complainant advising of the decision of the Complaints Appeals Committee.</p> <p>It was confirmed that a letter has been sent to all parents from the Governing Body as agreed at the last meeting. It was agreed that a further letter updating parents should be issued. It was further agreed that the Governing Body would send out a letter to parents every half term.</p>	Chair to draft a letter to parents
20.	<p>Any other urgent matters previously notified to the Chair under item 5 above. There were no additional matters raised.</p>	
21.	<p>Next Meeting Date: 10 February 2022 (Curriculum) to start at 5:30 p.m.</p>	
22.	<p>How have we helped to achieve our objectives today and how has this meeting impacted on the welfare and progress of our pupils?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors have agreed the revised Budget Forecast and the SFVS. • Governors discussed and were satisfied with measures being taken to assess the gaps in learning and to support and address these. 	
23.	<p>Close of meeting The Chair declared the meeting closed at 19:30.</p>	

Signed:

Dated: