

# Hindhayes School



## Full Governors Meeting Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 starting at 5.30pm – Willow Room

### Minutes

**Present:** Louise Melia (Chair), Kate Nester (Headteacher), Lucy Shakesby, Sue Court, Neil Howiantz, Linda Monaghan, Martin Lukins, Michelle Heap, Mike Sales (Business Manager) Ken Southern (Observer)

**Apologies:** Helen Clark, Ben Amos

The meeting started at 5.32pm.

18/2425 Welcome (including observers) to meeting and apologies received

The chair of governors welcomed everybody to the meeting including Kenneth Southern as an observer.

Apologies were received and accepted from Helen Clark and Ben Amos, both due to family commitments.

19/2425 Presentation on Curriculum Areas (Emma Plumber)

Emma Plumber was unable to attend the meeting. She will be invited to the next meeting. The governors would like her to give a presentation on the music curriculum.

Action: Clerk to invite Emma Plumber to the next meeting.

20/2425 Opportunity to declare Pecuniary Interests

None declared.

The clerk reminded governors to return the annual declaration of interests form.

21/2425 Minutes of the last Meeting (26 September 2024) to be approved

*Confidential Minutes start and end here.* There was a confidential discussion regarding issues raised in the previous meeting.

The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were approved without amendment.

22/2425 Action points from previous meeting

Actions points from the previous meeting have been progressed.

23/2425 Any Other Urgent Business

The Clerk had circulated notes from this week's clerk briefing before the meeting. She noted that the DFE had made minor changes to what information should be published online, that the full governance board should minute approval of the annual Safeguarding S175 Audit and should review the pay policy.

Action – The Business Manager will look at the checklist for what must be published online and the pay policy would come to the next meeting.

## 24/2425 OFSTED Update

This is the first meeting after the recent Ofsted inspection and governors want to find out how the school is doing. The news locally has been positive.

### **A governor asked whether there had been any feedback from parents after the inspection?**

A covering letter to parents with the report had been sent to all parents and there hadn't been any feedback so far after this. Social media (Facebook) comments had been positive.

### **A governor asked how staff were feeling after Ofsted?**

The headteacher said staff morale was fairly low as there had been two Ofsted inspections in 12 months and the latest one wasn't what was hoped for, three weeks into the new year with new classrooms after a positive staff meeting. The experience of the inspection wasn't positive.

Governors said the Ofsted report was very, very good. The Headteacher felt there was a disparity between the two latest inspections and the more recent one had been challenging. The school is trying hard to stay positive and feel proud. The Chair of Governors said the governing body stands with the senior leadership team and wants to be more present in school at this time so there is a chance for staff to speak and be heard. The Governance board is thinking about a thank you to staff and wants to say that it's a superb Ofsted report – a very good report for a very good school.

The Parish council has said it's good and generally popular public feeling is being reported back.

There was a discussion about how best to communicate to staff to support them during a difficult time after the Ofsted visit and the current challenging financial situation. Governors felt communication was important so issues could be explained and so staff have the opportunity to talk through as many avenues of communication as possible. The Governors appreciate the chances to talk to the Headteacher and Business Manager informally during their visits to school and can refer staff to the leadership team where appropriate.

Morale doesn't feel positive currently. The National picture doesn't feel positive currently. The leadership team has explained the pay grades which are set by the local authority. There seems to be a feeling that less experienced, cheaper staff are being employed to support children but staffing is a management responsibility and decisions are made for the best of the children and staff involved.

The headteacher is concerned about how the school meets the Ofsted targets.

A governor said that management problems always arise especially regarding pay and need to be solved as best as possible with a lot of repeated communication and open lines of communication.

## 25/2425 Policies to be agreed

The governors were advised that non-statutory policies are not required to be approved by the Governance board so less policies may come to meetings unless issues were pertinent to be discussed.

**Regarding the Equality policy, a governor said the role is massive – how is it covered?**  
The Safeguarding Governor covers some elements and there is a breakdown in the Heads Report including the attendance data. Lesson observations also cover this. Monitoring and recording achievement. Governors want it kept on agenda.

The following policies which were brought to the meeting were approved by the governors:

- Whistle Blowing
- Reporting Low Level Concerns
- Child on Child Abuse
- Equality
- E-Safety
- Acceptable Use Policy (updated)
- Transition
- Collective Worship
- Teaching and Learning
- Positive Handling
- Charging and Remissions
- Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school (New)

The governors discussed writing Behaviour Principles to sit above the relationships policy, referring to the relational approach and inclusive ethos which is responsive, and trauma informed.

Action: Michelle and Linda will work together with Lucy to devise a page of Behaviour Principles for governors to approve.

Action: Policy grid to record which policies are statutory.

## 26/2425 Finance

The Business Manager introduced Kenneth Southern as a potential new Finance Governor. He has a wealth of experience from a twenty-five year career in the City of London managing projects and dealing with legislation changes, especially after the 2008 credit crunch.

The Business Manager talked through the key points of the Governor Finance Update Report, which precedes the Month 7 Report (April – October 2024). There is currently an estimated deficit of 120,737. The report details the reduction of the number of roll by 25 between October 2022 and October 2023 Census, taught through six classes currently. Numbers are down across Somerset. National birth rates are down from 2.4 children to 1.4 children. Staffing is largest cost at 74% of the budget. Curriculum cost is just 1%. Problems

have arisen financially due to the falling number and increasing 1to1 needs of joining children. There were less Teaching Assistants previously and these are needed for reasons of safety.

Energy costs have stabilised with the new heating system and staff report that the system is efficient now. The school is warmer now.

Governors said the leadership team did an incredible job regarding the building works, raising money, keeping staff informed, managing the budget. There was positive feedback from parents at parents evening. There was a great team of builders and staff also worked together to sort the rooms out afterwards. Staffing changes mean the levels are down to a minimum.

The Business Manager managed the building project saving £40,000 on project management fees from Property Services.

The staff governor said the new building has given the children the very best. Children now have toilets next to class which preserves dignity in going to the toilet.

The Senior Leadership Team has maximised efforts through project managing, taking own photos and offering Social, emotional and mental Health support to other schools.

The school taking it's own photos has been positive and the children responded well and the pictures were better for the children being happy and relaxed.

Amelia Walker's email recognises that there are pressures and a new government change. Last year's figures showed an in-year deficit. The summary is that whilst ideally the school would work within it's budget, the situation is challenging and this isn't possible currently particularly with the carry forward from last year of £44, 700. The balance reset is an option.

**A governor asked would the school still be in deficit if the balance is reset?**

Yes the school would still be in deficit as 17 children are needed reach capacity which would help to balance the budget.

In summary 80% of schools in Somerset have an in-year deficit, 33% of somerset schools have an overall deficit. Government commitment to schools doesn't scratch the surface. There has already been an independent financial audit. Funding to join a Multi-academy Trust has gone. Joining schools will have to pay. What options are left for the school.

**A governor asked what had caused the loss for extended schools?**

Cover staff were needed to cover staff absence. Last year's numbers were good and this year they have been less. Development of the provision needs to come before expansion. There's hidden responsibility in these roles and they are undervalued. Senior leaders need to be on hand to support as necessary.

The Business Manager is keen to have the critical friend of a finance governor to help find solutions to the current issues.

The Governors thanked the Business Manager for his report.

For the benefit of the observer, the Headteacher remarked that the traditional written headteacher report was stopped after Ofsted feedback was too cumbersome, instead the report is based on the ongoing and live SEF (School Self Evaluation Form). There's a different focus each time.

The school development plan (SDP) is a two-year plan and is split between teaching and curriculum and leadership and management. Children are at the school for three years. The Headteacher summarised the key points from the SDP:

- The staffing body continues to change due to falling pupil numbers, retirement and redundancy. The Deputy Headteacher has gone back to 4 days teaching. The PFSA is reducing to 2 working days and he has also recently moved out of the area.
- PFSA funding has been cut. It's an important but challenging role.
- Concern about money or time to meet the Ofsted targets – the deputy head used to be out of class and able to focus on phonics progress now she is back in class and the school is meant to make progress faster. If other schools are making faster progress the school is keen to know who they are and to share knowledge and experience.
- 35% of staff are new or recently appointed –time needs to be taken to revisit what makes Hindhayes the caring and nurturing environment built over the past 10 years together. New Reception Teacher Emily Pople reports being well supported and will receive training for Autism and Number Sense.
- Apprentices – there are two in school supporting significant need in one class but cover is needed on Friday when they have out of class learning time.
- Year 1 phonics results – there is concern without financial investment about how we going to move those children on faster. Data for Year 2 is really good. Y1 data is 50%-60% not swift enough. Pupil Premium, SEN, vulnerable, Trauma, low attender (under 94%) altogether for results. Children are not coming to school ready to learn. We don't have them at pre-school age.

**A governor asked what the national situation was, what benchmarking said about the targets.**

The county council said other schools were meeting targets but didn't say who they were. We need to know which schools are reaching targets faster.

- Building work is complete. There is an improvement in heating, and this has had an impact on attendance there are more children at 100% at this time of the year
- There was a successful Ofsted inspection
- Will the school revisit whether to join a Trust? There's a need to redo the due diligence, looking at finances and all other aspects.
- SEF contents -163 on roll (164 in January)
- Reviewing attendance policy – want to find out what local schools are doing about fines for term time absences.

#### 28/2425 Safeguarding

The Headteacher said the Safeguarding Audit was to be done for the 31<sup>st</sup> January. She would also be supporting the PFSA with his recent move and the Business Manager would be doing Designated Safeguarding Lead training.

#### 29/2425 School Values

To be moved to the next agenda

#### 30/2425 Governor Strategy Day

Action – Louise will circulate date

### 31/2425 Governor School Visits and Training

Governors have visited school on the following occasions:

Ofsted 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> October – Michelle Heap, Louise Melia, Helen Clark, Neil Howiantz

Tuesdays Assembly – Louise Melia

Friday Meeting – Louise Melia

Thursdays – Supports Forest school – Neil Howiantz

### 32 /2425 Date of next meeting – Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 5:30pm

Michelle Heap left the meeting at 8.07pm

Governors would like to be invited to the Christmas performance.

The Chair of Governors thanked everyone for attending today's meeting.

Meeting finished at 8:11pm

### Action Points

Agenda item	Action by	Agreed Action	Update for next meeting
19/2425	JW	Clerk to invite Emma Plumber to next meeting	16/1/25
23/2425	MS	The Business Manager will look at the checklist for what must be published online and the pay policy would come to the next meeting.	
25/2425	MH & LM	Write page of behaviour principles	
25/2425	LS / Clerk	Identify statutory policies on the policies list	16/1/25
30/2425	LM	Circulate potential dates for the Governors Strategy Day	

*L. Melia*

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Signed by Chair of Governors

Date: 16.01.2025