



**Agreed Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Whitchurch Primary School & Nursery Full Governing Body, held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 6.30pm**

**Present**

Co-opted	Neil Sherman (NS) Peter Tenconi (PT) Cecil Anang (CA) Peter Brook (PB) Akmal Bahar (AB)	(5/5)
LA Governor	Manji Kara	(1/1)
Parent Governors	Kula Sudhakar, Chair (KS) Meera Shah (MS) Paul Smith (PS) Deepa Samani (DS)	(4/4)
Staff Governor	Maria Nickson (MN)	(1/1)
Headteacher	Joanne Daswani (JD)	
Clerk	Seema Supeda (SS)	

**Apologies**                      None

**Supporting documents**

Roles and responsibilities – Senior Leaders and Governors

- denotes action
- denotes question/challenge

*Meeting opened at 6.31pm*

	Action	Due
<b>1. Welcome, apologies and consent for absence</b>  All members were present.		
<b>2. Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest/Update of Register of Pecuniary interests/Reminder of the need for confidentiality.</b>  No declarations made. The Chair reminded the Governors of the need for confidentiality, especially during virtual meetings. The content of Governor meetings and discussions which take place are confidential until minutes are agreed at a subsequent meeting.		
<b>3. Roles and responsibilities of Senior Leaders and Governors (NS)</b>  The Chair informed Governors of how decision-making takes place in a school, with the Headteacher being responsible for day to day operational management, and the Governing Body responsible for the 3 core functions of governance: - Ensuring clarity of vision and strategic direction - Holding the Headteacher to account - Overseeing the financial performance of the School		



The Chair referred Governors to the Roles and Responsibilities document which was shared prior to the meeting.

The Chair defined the role of a parent governor is to provide a 'parental viewpoint', a representative parent rather than a representative of parents. Governors were informed they only have the power to act collectively as a whole Governing Body, in the best interests of pupils. Governors should approach the Chair to address important issues/clarification on decisions in the first instance to prevent overloading the Headteacher with individual emails.

Governors were advised that any 3 members can request a meeting by providing written notice to the clerk, who must convene a meeting as soon as is reasonably practicable, with seven days clear.

*MK joined the meeting at 6.39pm*

**A Governor asked what the Governing Body's role is in ensuring the School is acting legally with regard to the early closure in December 2020.**

The Chair advised the contingency framework stipulates it 'should not be used for operational challenges such as staff shortages'. Operational challenges are the legal responsibility of the Headteacher, who should be held to account at the next opportunity. There was a serious operational issue whereby keeping the School open would have serious health and safety implications. Advice was sought from the Local Authority before the decision to close was implemented. Although the setting of the Health & Safety Policy is the responsibility of the Governing Body, the implementation of the policy falls to the Headteacher.

**The parent governor definition mentions 'a parent representative rather than a representative of parents'. What is the difference?**

Parent governors are not spokespersons for parents, they provide a parental aspect in the discharge of their duties.

**Are Governors able to ask questions to the Headteacher about any decisions which have been made, in between meetings?**

As Governors must act collectively, individual contact with the Headteacher on behalf of the GB should be avoided. Any questions Governors have regarding an operational decision of the Headteacher should be reserved for formal meetings of the GB, where all Governors are present.

#### **4. School's response to Covid19 (JD)**

JD informed Governors of the events leading to the decision to close the School one week earlier than the scheduled Christmas break. The School term ended on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December rather than Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The School was only open to the children of keyworkers and those identified as vulnerable for the week 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

It was reported that there were very few positive cases (2) of Covid19 prior to the October half term. Cases started to rise in mid-November leading to staff and pupils in affected bubbles to self-isolate. There was an increase in positive cases within the same year group by the end of November which increased rapidly by the first week in December, affecting both staff and pupils.

The Headteacher informed Governors that by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December there



<p>were 37 members of staff off-site due to either testing positive or in self-isolation due to burst bubbles or contact tracing which was external in some cases. A further 6 staff members were also exhibiting symptoms or awaiting test results.</p> <p>There was a safeguarding concern due to only having 2 first-aiders on site, down from 22. The Headteacher advised she had reported 6 cases to the DfE on 11<sup>th</sup> December by 9.30am which is what prompted the decision to close the School.</p> <p>The DfE and the Director of Education at Harrow Council were both consulted. The Director of Education confirmed the closure decision due to staff shortages and a letter was sent out to parents advising them of this.</p> <p><b>Should the Governing Body have been informed of these kind of decisions beforehand?</b></p> <p>The Chair notified Governors that they do not need to be informed of operational issues beforehand, however the Headteacher should be held to account for any decisions made during the following meeting of Governors. The Headteacher informed Governors that under usual circumstances, Governors would have been informed in advance of closure, this situation was moving at great speed which didn't allow for the communication.</p> <p><b>A Governor questioned which children are legally entitled to attend school.</b></p> <p>The Headteacher advised it was previously unclear which children are legally entitled to attend school with regard to 1 or 2 keyworker parent requirement. The government has now clarified their position: children where one parent is a keyworker are entitled to a space at school, however children should be kept at home if possible.</p> <p>The Headteacher reported 122 pupils attended school today, with a maximum bubble size of 8.</p> <p>Governors provided positive feedback for the online learning, describing the provision as 'absolutely outstanding' and 'incredibly commendable' that the School could move to online learning so efficiently. Praise was given to all staff and the Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>The Headteacher explained the feedback from parents has been very positive, and gave credit to the staff for the provision of a high standard of education to pupils. The provision shall be reviewed on a weekly basis.</p>		
<p><b>5. AOB</b></p> <p>None.</p>		
<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>13<sup>th</sup> January 2021: Finance and Resources committee          27<sup>th</sup> January: Standards &amp; Achievement committee          10<sup>th</sup> February 2020: Full Governing Body</p>		

*Meeting ended at 7.44pm*

**Actions Log**

Action:	For:	To be completed by:
None		