



Park Grove Primary School

FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd February 2016 at 6pm

Present:	Mr David Hare (Chair)	Miss Jo Sawyer (Headteacher)
	Ms Sheila Davitt	Ms Hazel Colquhoun
	Mrs Vicky Hearson	Mrs Jane Golightly
	Mrs Fiona Fitzpatrick	Dr Tillmann Jacobi
	Mr Richard Romaniak	
In Attendance:	Mr Iain Tessier (Governor Support Officer and Clerk)	
	Mr Adrian Fletcher (peripatetic School Business Manager)	

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Miss Heather Barden and Mrs Kelly McDonald.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Membership Matters and Governor Development

- 2.1 The Chair reported that Fleur Kennedy had resigned as a parent governor. The Chair had met with Mrs Kennedy to discuss certain issues that had prompted her to resign. A parent governor election would take place in due course **Action JS**.
- 2.2 With Mrs Kennedy resigning there was a need for someone to take on specific monitoring responsibility for Safeguarding. The Chair made a proposal to group together the monitoring roles that covered disadvantaged pupils, SEND and Safeguarding and that these areas be jointly monitored by Tillmann Jacobi and Fiona Fitzpatrick – who could then arrange the roles within that set-up accordingly.
Resolved:
Governors agreed the proposal.
- 2.3 It was confirmed that Mrs Fitzpatrick would sit on the Pay, Appraisal and Staffing committee, as communicated by the Chair prior to the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 15 December 2015

Previously distributed.

- 3.1 **Resolved:**
The minutes of meeting held on 15 December 2015 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of that meeting. The Chair was then authorised to sign the minutes.

4. Action Plan and Matters Arising (not on the agenda)

- 4.1 Action 1 – covered via the agenda.
Action 2 – the working party would be addressed under the next item.
Action 3 – results of the skills audit had been circulated. Discussion around that to be deferred to next meeting.
Action 4 – It was confirmed that several governors had either not completed or submitted their certificate from the online Prevent training **Action All to check**. Mrs Fitzpatrick felt that it was important for her to complete face-to-face training in this regard in her new role as Safeguarding governor. Such training to be completed as it became available.
-

5. Academy Update

- 5.1 The Chair reported that the Working Party, consisting of Messrs Hare, Sawyer, Golightly and Fitzpatrick, had a recommendation for the Governing Body based on the research conducted thus far and internal meetings to formulate a possible strategy. The Chair said that the purpose of this agenda item was to impart to governors all the information collated so far, to allow for as full and frank a discussion as necessary and to approve a way forward post meeting.
- 5.1.1 Some governors felt that the opportunity to join the Working Party had not been communicated very well and that the speed of developments was ahead of that which had been indicated at last meeting. On the first point the Chair apologised to any governors that felt communications had not been handled well and encouraged anyone who still wanted to be involved going forward to contact him. The Chair said that the speed of development was being driven by a rapidly changing local and national picture and the realisation that the school needed to get itself in to a position to control its strategic direction.
- 5.2 On the back of the last point, The Chair moved to make his presentation, which had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting. Certain governors noted that they had contacted the Chair directly in relation to the information circulated. The Chair summarised the activities carried out thus far by the Working Party – the main focus had been to identify what the best options were for the school. The Chair wanted to clarify that the Working Party was in no way putting forward a concrete set of proposals on developing a formal partnership but it was the intention to make governors aware of the best options based on the research conducted. The Chair had also attended a mini-conference, hosted by the LA, on Academies and partnership options. It seemed clear that the main drivers for the Academy agenda were additional funding (possibly time limited) and the desire to establish formal ties with schools that shared the same core values and were likeminded when it came to the structure that would underpin their partnership. Naturally, the school would want to have as much control as possible over this process but if the school remained RI then it was very likely that it would essentially be ‘taken over’ and sponsored. Of course everything possible had been done to ensure that the school would not remain RI. Before moving on to option appraisals the Chair felt governors needed to be aware that the process of moving to Academy status was time consuming and that certain options were more resource intensive than others. Initial questions were invited.
- 5.2.1 A governor asked if additional monies from the conversion process would be such that they could be used beyond the set-up costs. The Chair said that around £25k would be needed for set-up costs. If a MAT was formed, any monies coming in over that amount (figures ranging from £50k to £100k were floated) could be used by those schools subject to certain conditions, the details of which the Chair did not have to hand but were available.
- 5.3 The Headteacher was invited to appraise the option of joining an as yet unformed partnership with cluster schools. The Headteacher began by saying that she had attended meetings with cluster heads on this matter and by the end of one of the main meetings it had become clear that the preferred structure for any possible partnership would be based on the Academies model. However, no firm commitments had been offered by any school and this was in part due by the fact that no one school leader wanted to be the driver for this process. The Headteacher could understand why. There would be a lot of work starting from scratch essentially and trying to bring everyone together whilst ensuring that the day job of running a school carried on effectively. The Headteacher certainly had no intention of taking a lead – there was enough to be focussing on at Park Grove. This was one drawback. Another was the fact that there was no one set secondary feeder school for those primaries around the table. Normally, local Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) comprised of one secondary setting and a number of primary providers, often, but not always, feeder schools. In this instance, the Headteacher could foresee all sorts of issues with either two secondaries coming under one MAT umbrella or one secondary effectively ‘leading’ the other schools in the group - the Headteacher elaborated on this.
- 5.3.1 Following a governor query, the Headteacher explained what ‘secondary led’ would look like in practical terms. A discussion followed.
-

-
- 5.3.2 A governor noted that there was a MAT now operating in the city, whose structures seemed to indicate that the secondary provider had more of a lead role in that Trust. It was not a problem for them why would it be for Park Grove. The Headteacher said that in that instance the primary had wanted to benefit from the resources and infrastructure of their neighbouring secondary and theirs was an alliance based around the fact that the vast majority of the primary children then went to the Academy. The Chair added that this Academy, along with other Academy chains/MATs nationally, had got in early and created additional income streams by becoming a teaching schools and CPD provider, for example, as direct LA support dwindled away. This would allow further capacity in teaching and leadership to be built up and further development of their model – looking at it from that perspective it was easy to see why the local primary had wanted to be a part of that. The secondaries in their cluster were not at that point and therefore where was the benefit in joining and being led by them. ‘Financial headroom’ to grow as you wanted was so important. The Headteacher concluded by saying that this lack of attractiveness worked both ways at the present time. There was not a queue of schools lining up to partner with Park Grove whilst it remained RI.
- 5.4 Fiona Fitzpatrick was invited to appraise the option of joining an established national Academy chain. Mrs Fitzpatrick began by recognising the unease of some governors with the pace of potential change and acknowledged that she did not think that this issue would be one they would be dealing with so early in her tenure as a governor. However, everyone had to recognise the changes to the educational landscape and the withdrawal of local authorities from directly supporting schools. In terms of joining one of the bigger chains such as ARK, Reach2 or SPT there were several key factors that should be viewed as real drawbacks. Firstly, the school would lose a large part of its own identity, having to incorporate the values and ethos of the Trust and do things their way (such as adopting certain uniform and policies). Secondly, the school would lose control over its budgeting and performance monitoring, with minimal local decision making, including decisions key staffing appointments. Thirdly, none of these sponsors had any local presence (nearest Doncaster) and therefore the school would likely feel isolated, perhaps lack group support and be accountable to a management team in another part of the country. Yes there could be time and cost savings achieved by joining a well established Trust but overall it was hard to recommend this as a viable option.
- 5.5 In their capacity as an ex-headteacher and someone with experience of going in to work with a school that had to move down the Academy route, Jane Golightly was invited to share her observations. Mrs Golightly said that conversion to Academy status felt very different for a school in a category that was effectively being forced to convert with a sponsor to that of a school making its own decisions in that regard. Schools in control of their own future needed to do their research and ensure any potential partners had a proven track record on standards and on improving and supporting primary provision generally. Yes, the educational landscape was changing fundamentally and, whatever one’s personal views were, leaders had to consider what opportunities there were for securing their school’s future. Schools considering taking on a lead role in a MAT had to be sure that they had the resources, the capacity and suitably experienced staff to support improvement in other schools whilst maintaining standards in their own setting. It was not something to be undertaken lightly by any means. Mrs Golightly said that schools doing nothing and then deciding to perhaps opt-in to the MAT model later on took the risk that, as MATs reached optimum capacity, they ended up being left out and isolated. This was not a position Park Grove wanted to get in to. A lengthy discussion followed.
- 5.6 The Chair provided an options appraisal of a potential tie-in with the already established EBOR Trust. The Chair began by saying that an initial fact finding meeting with the Trust’s principal had been very positive and he was heartened by the group’s core belief in ensuring all pupils performed to their potential. There were several benefits of joining EBOR. Firstly, this was now an established MAT with a clear structure that had built up capacity to provide support and development opportunities for staff within the Trust. Member schools could retain their identity and local governing bodies retained much of the decision making, including budgetary control. The whole ethos of the group was to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils and there was a good track record of supporting schools. EBOR was prepared to partner with Park Grove even if the school remained RI. The Chair acknowledged that to have any influence on the future direction of the Trust, the Governing Body would need to have formalised any partnership by
-

April 2017 at the latest and this brought with it time pressures on the SLT and governors. With OFSTED still to negotiate and focus on, everyone would also need to find time to do the research and due diligence on EBOR. At present EBOR also had no involvement with a secondary provider locally. The Chair briefly outlined EBOR's current Trust board structure and noted that the Trust board was concerned with the big group decisions such as capital projects, budget approval, school builds etc and not matters at local level. The Trust also operated 'scrutiny groups' and the Chair summarised how these worked. As already mentioned, there would be additional funding available to the school for joining the MAT and this could be used for improving teaching and learning and improving leadership development through CPD. EBOR had a central service recharge for group costs such as HR provision and the total outlay would be similar to that with the LA at present but cost savings could be identified and realised down the line.

- 5.6.1 A governor commented that there would be no financial advantage right now for joining the Trust as had been intimated. The Chair clarified that the start point for the budget would be the same but going forward there was the real potential for savings and economies of scale to be achieved. The Trust also brought in monies from its other activities to support member schools; this was often in the form of specialist provision, provision that was currently an additional cost to the school if it wanted it. The Chair acknowledged that governors would need to investigate the extent of savings that could be made.
- 5.6.2 Responding to a governor query about where some of the Trust's monies ended up, the Chair made clear that EBOR was not a for-profit entity. Their goals were to support schools and in turn enhance their capacity for support by drawing on the expertise of staff in member schools; ultimately to improve the outcomes for pupils. The SBM thought it was worth noting that direct additional funding was not always passed out to schools at the advertised amounts. It was dependant upon individual circumstances. Going forward any 'top-up' funding would come from additional income streams.
- 5.6.3 A governor asked if there would be an expectation on member schools to provide staff for support elsewhere in the Trust. The Headteacher understood that there was no such expectation it was based on a school's position and capacity. Being involved in supporting another school would be a real positive though both for the individual and for Park Grove – bringing back new ideas and confidence around leading areas of work etc. Teaching and learning internally would be boosted by it.
- 5.6.4 The Headteacher provided assurances on staff pay and conditions and the Trust's commitment to only having qualified teachers in front of pupils.
- 5.6.5 A governor asked if Trust executives were paid. The Chair said that he understood that the CEO was paid and imagined that the accountant/company secretary might be remunerated but beyond that Trust board members were volunteers like any other governor. The Trust was established as a charitable organisation. This would be a good question to ask them directly.
- 5.6.6 The Headteacher was asked to outline why she personally believed that a partnership with EBOR would be attractive. The Headteacher referred to and concurred with the points already made by the Chair and added that day-to-day the effect on Park Grove, its children and its staff, would be minimal. This was all about higher level, strategic development of the school.
- 5.6.7 A governor pointed to the fact that the Trust's vision was being driven by one person and what if the CEO left? Also, what would the Trust feel like if it expanded, as it was attempting to, up to 20+ schools? The Chair said that size mattered to a certain extent – there was an optimum level where savings could be properly realised and group capacity was such that member schools could fully support one another etc. The Chair acknowledged that the CEO might leave, probably would do in time but this was not to be worried about. More importantly, were the right structures, systems and people in place to make the Trust work.
- 5.7 A full and frank discussion followed and governors were invited to express their views on both what they had heard in the meeting and their personal stance on Academies.
-

-
- 5.8 The Chair wished to move the matter forward and prompted governors about what direction did they want to go in. The proposal was, in the first instance, to have the CEO from EBOR come in and present to governors – that way those more detailed questions could be put to them directly. The Chair was clear that governors should understand that Academisation was on the main political agenda and the question was not really a ‘do’ or don’t’ it was more of a ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘with whom’. Following governor comments, the Chair said that it was very unlikely that this direction of travel would be altered if there was a political administration change at national level. Mrs Fitzpatrick wanted to record that LAs did not think schools would end up in the position of facing up to a climate of dwindling LA support and what schools were doing should in no way be seen as a criticism of them. It was true that schools had to safeguard their own futures and look to alternative models of operating.
- 5.9 A governor expressed disappointment that there was no clear alternative and direction being put forward from within the cluster schools. The Headteacher agreed with the governor to some extent but added that even if there was a will and commitment, one of the schools and their leaders would need to lead this forward from scratch. The governor asked if the school could consider joining another MAT, just so that there was a comparison with the EBOR solution. There was a new MAT forming on the East side of the city. The Headteacher said that she had been following developments there, the problem for Park Grove was that they had no relationships built up with those schools, no networks and therefore no real way in.
- 5.10 The Chair asked for final comments before proposing and recording their resolution.
Resolved:
The Governing Body agreed to explore further a formal partnership with EBOR MAT whilst retaining the option of exploring other partnerships should that potential arise.
- 5.11 The Chair circulated a full pack to governors containing all of the information gathered together thus far by the Working Party. Governors were asked to absorb its contents prior to further meetings on the subject.

6. Committee Reports

Minutes from the recent committee meetings had been circulated to all and governors had noted the main items for discussion and any decisions taken under delegated powers.

- 6.1 The Chairs of the Finance and Raising Achievement committees gave brief summaries of meeting business.

7. Skills Audit

- 7.1 The Chair asked governors to consider the proposals at the bottom of the report ahead of next meeting when governors could review and agree the committee memberships **Action ALL.**
Agenda

8. Policy Reviews

- 8.1 **Resolved:**
Governors approved the following policies:
- Child Protection
 - Intimate Care (proposed amendments noted by the SBM)
 - Control of Bullying
 - Sex and Relationships Education

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Governors ratified the SFVS submission as approved by the Finance committee. The SBM was asked to circulate the submission to all governors **Action SBM.**
-

9.2 The Chair was asked to convey to potential parent governors the time commitment involved in being a governor **Action DH**.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 26th April 2016 at 6pm.

The meeting ended at 8:20pm.

Signed: (Chair)

Date:

Park Grove Primary School

Actions from the Governing Body meeting on 23rd February 2016:

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>Item no on minutes</i>	<i>WHO</i>	<i>WHEN</i>
1) Parent Governor election	2.1	Jo Sawyer	Due course
2) Completion of online prevent training	4.1	All governors (to check)	ASAP
3) Skills audit – read report proposals	7.1	All governors	By next meeting
4) Circulate final SFVS submission to all	9.1	Adrian Fletcher	ASAP
5) Make sure Parent Governor candidates understand time commitment	9.2	David Hare	ASAP