



## ST JAMES' R.C. ACADEMY TRUST

Maybury Close, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1BL

*Faith in Action, Working Together, Walking in the Footsteps of Christ*

### **Minutes of the 138<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Governing Body which took place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March starting at 1700 at the School.**

Present:

Mary Hutchinson (Chair of Governors)	Mark Hutchins
Lisa Weeks (Head Teacher)	Michelle Wilson (Deputy Head)
Margaret Connell	Martin D'Souza
Amanda Garlick	Richard Monaghan
Fr David Camilleri	Elizabeth Williamson

In Attendance: Dominique Wells (Clerk to the Governors)

Papers relating to the meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

#### **1. Opening Prayers**

The Chair opened the meeting with a prayer.

#### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Paul Gribben, Cat Hardiman, Mark Edwards.

The Governors adopted Richard Monaghan as Foundation Governor and welcomed him to the Governing Body.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest** in items in this Agenda.

Mark Hutchin's wife is a midday supervisor at the School.

#### **4. Review of Minutes** of the last meeting:

##### **4.1. Confirmation of Accuracy**

Corrections as follows:

##### Item 11. Holding the School to Account

1. 'The *EYFS* cohort has ...'

##### Item 12. Chair of Governors' Report

'However, [Bromley] *at present, the School* is not affected ...'

##### Item 17. EEDI Report

Subject to the above corrections, **the minutes were agreed by all to be a true record.**

##### **4.2. Matters Arising** - None

## **5. Head Teacher's Report**

The Head Teacher was thanked for a comprehensive report that complemented the Newsletter, giving a good picture of the School.

She highlighted points as follows:

- There is a very focussed and renewed enthusiasm for RE at the moment, particularly the Holy Club. The character education traits are noted as being the same as Catholic virtues, so that term will be used going forwards.
- A child in Year 6 is raising money for a charity for a disorder that they have, and they were very proud to talk about it.
- There is a new team in the office – Susan Lams is joined by Quyen Patel.
- The new Mission Statement is slowly being introduced to the children.
- Persistent absenteeism is higher than normal – this is a national picture. Some children have not returned to school after the pandemic, predominantly in secondary schools. The School's rate is 9% while it is 20-25% nationally.

The children fall into 3 main groups:

- low attendance due to real medical needs, e.g. Strep A hospitalisation, chicken pox, Type 2 diabetes.
- holidays booked that were postponed due to the pandemic (for instance, to see family or for special occasions abroad) are now able to take place. These are unusual cases.
- The Head Teacher is monitoring a very few who have low attendance for no particular reason. She usually reviews the registers at 9.30am and asks the office for the reasons for absence. If there is a pattern, she speaks to the class teacher and sometimes the parents. However, there is no current cause for concern.

## **6. Pam Fearnley's Spring Term Visit**

Pam Fearnley is considered a real asset: she challenges and finds areas to improve, and her feedback is generally useful. At the recent visit, she looked at the IDSR, last Ofsted, SDIP. Some of her feedback has been accepted and taken forward for discussion.

Regarding targets, it was suggested that the Head Teacher should speak to Governors about progress and attainment.

She suggested that the School might like to use Havelock theory of change.

She also suggested tightening up the RAG rating on SDIP and that Governors might question the Red areas.

## **7. Umbrella Trust Development Proposals**

The working party meets at least once a term, and they met in February.

Schools still have until 2030 before having to become a MAT. There are now 64 Catholic schools in the area (Diocese) and there may be 5 or 6 MATs. SELCAT is the only one which is currently established.

Another MAT may be set up, called St Benedict's for schools in Lewisham (some of which are not yet academies). Bromley Umbrella Trust was approached and asked if it would be interested in joining. Fr Victor Darlington is overseeing this and there would be a meeting with Fr Darlington, Pat Barber and the Headteacher of Bonus Pastor. The plans are to start St Benedict's in Sept 2024 and the process is being taken very slowly.

The focus of the discussion is the children. There would be dedicated SEND funding, and any finance generated by the school would be kept. Schools would keep their reserves for 12 months, and a top slice of 4-6% would then be taken into the pot.

There is no pressure on the School to do anything at the moment.

*Questions asked by Governors:*

*Q: What is our position?*

*A: The same position as before, but it is good to know there are alternatives. There is no need to be in a MAT at the moment unless Government requires us to. Many schools are worried about falling rolls and may see MATs as a solution.*

*Q: What advantages & disadvantages are considered when assessing MATs?*

*A: Trust in the CEO and CFO will be important as the School has to work with them. Some MATs have one SENCO and we may consider whether we want this. Also, we would look at their model and see if it is something that we would want. Ultimately, the School is concerned that no stakeholder should see any change. Negotiation of the terms is possible and there is also a safety net and support for individual schools.*

*Q: Would it be expected that a Head would go to help another school?*

*A: There would need to be agreement on all sides if this were to happen.*

*Q: If the School is happy with how things are now, would we not want to stand alone?*

*A: Yes, but the Government wants all schools to be in a MAT by 2030. However, we would enter discussions before joining.*

## **8. Holding the School to Account**

Questions were addressed by the Head Teacher as follows:

1. New books have been purchased for classrooms to increase literacy and inclusivity resources. Book fair money was used to buy these books. The EEDI committee met and undertook a learning walk, looking at displays and books around the school. It is still very much a learning process for the School and the Head Teacher is monitoring it.
2. Poetry units are featured each term and World Poetry Day was celebrated. Children do have an enjoyment of poetry and the Reading Passport encourages the children to recite poetry as one of the tasks. World Poetry Day included Change Sings (encouraging diversity through rap).

3. Many courses have been attended in regard to the new R.E. Inspection Framework. The Deputy Head Teacher led a staff meeting to inform the teachers of the new framework. There will also be new updates at subject leader meetings from April. See Chair's Report. The Mission Statement, Catholic Social Teaching and Oscar Romero award have been a focus recently. Also, St James as a person. Fr David indicated that he would like to help with the latter, possibly in a staff meeting.
4. Confidential item.
5. CPOMS is a new platform being used. Safeguarding concerns have previously been filled in on a form and handed to the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Mrs Richards, actioned and kept in secure cabinet. It was then hard to share the information when necessary.

There seem to be more safeguarding concerns now than 6 months ago, and many children are being monitored due to concerns raised by staff. A better system was needed, so CPOMS has been introduced. At £700/year, it is relatively inexpensive and allows for all information to be entered by the member of staff. All three Safeguarding Leads are alerted, actions can be entered and fed back to the member of staff. The process is more transparent and everyone feels that they have a better handle on safeguarding. Documents can also be uploaded and if a child transfers to another school, the information can be transferred to the new school. The 2-way authorisation makes the system very secure.

*Questions asked by Governors:*

*Q: How many more children are there concerns about compared to before?*

*A: There were perhaps around 5 children before and now it is more like 30.*

*Q: Is there a reason for this?*

*A: Children talk more openly about what is happening in their homes. There are a lot of pressures on families, causing domestic violence, marriage breakups, financial issues and poverty, and a rise in drugs and alcohol. Families can also be more open as well.*

*Q: Is there security of data?*

*A: One of the selling points of CPOMS is the security. It was recommended by Bromley Social Services and is more secure than keeping paper records. It will be looked at in the GDPR audit.*

6. Two cases of e-safety concerns.
7. Some families are accessing food banks, and some children do show anxiety about poverty in the home. Pupil premium money can be used for shoes and other such items. The children of concern are those with families who are 'just about managing' on household income of around £19,000 and therefore not quite able to access benefits. Household support fund helps provide hot meals in holidays, and the HAF programme (which provides school clubs in holidays) also supply the children with a hot lunch.

There are other charities that can help such as the Catholic Children's Crisis Fund. The Head Teacher has been contacting charities and help has been obtained by

donations from other parents, PTA preloved uniform sales, ensuring school trips are affordable, Christmas jumpers and costumes for World Book Day are 'recycled'. The Parish are also supportive and situations are always sensitively handled.

Fr David reported that there was a pilot project at Holy Innocents where £58k has already raised for parents in crisis. Mr D'Souza has already made contact with them. At some schools all families are in crisis, while here, there is a mixture.

8. Healthy eating is covered in science topics and the Ten Ten scheme. Year 6 have regular daily exercise and there are running activities (for instance, in active maths) in the curriculum. RHE is embedded in the curriculum and is age appropriate from Rec to Year 6. Also SEND children have separate initiatives.
9. Parent Pay costs £600/yr and School Cloud £200/yr. These platforms help bring the school more up-to-date and saves many hours of labour. For instance, the parent evening appointments used to take office staff 20 hours of overtime to organise and this time it took 20 minutes. Being a cashless school, the School has saved on security costs and Loomis. Children don't have access to the systems, only parents.
10. Across Bromley, fewer applicants for schools are seen. However, at St James' there have been 111 applicants this year, although not as many are supported by a priest's reference. It is not anticipated that there will be a problem filling classes. 40-50 applicants did have a reference.

## **9. Chair's Report**

The Chair pointed out that the R.E. Inspection will be a very different inspection, so Governors will be invited to a Zoom meeting on 25th April, 6-7pm to give Governors an overview. The inspection will take place over two days (8am-5pm and 8am-3pm) instead of one day, so it will be very thorough.

The Governing Body records here the death of Austin Barradell, who was a committed and wise governor, being a member of the Headteacher review panel as well as the Resources & Audit Committee.

Governor morning was considered a splendid event. Different times for the Governor visits would be considered to enable more Governors to attend – perhaps in an afternoon.

## **10. Religious Education/Catholic Life and Mission**

A full report was sent by the Deputy Headteacher. She highlighted the main points:

Thanks were given to Fr David for his support in having the children attend Mass and Reconciliation in Church and also coming to the School on Mondays. It was noted that many schools do not have such support. Reception class are currently learning the Hail Mary and Fr David would come in to pray with them and the teachers.

There has been a visit from a Hindu speaker, and visits were made by children to a Hindu temple, a mosque in Keston, and a synagogue in Bromley.

The School is waiting to hear about the Oscar Romero award.

The new Mission Statement is 'Show our love every day in all we learn, do and say'.

The Catholic Social Teaching is being embedded throughout the year.

Each class has reflection time with the Stations of the Cross.

The Holy Club has started, led by the KS2 R.E. Ambassadors. Mrs Wilson meets with them at 12.30-12.45pm and then they lead the Club from 12.45pm. The Club comprises mainly Y5 and Y6.

## **11. Sustainability Audit**

The audit focussed the School on different areas and this is a work in progress.

The School seems to be in a good place: children very aware of sustainability. The next step may be procurement.

## **12. Budget Monitoring Report**

The School is still in a good position and the Finance Officer and Head Teacher are working hard to maintain this. It is on target for the year end. There will be a pre-audit in June and close in September, so a tight turnaround this year.

Numbers have increased in the Breakfast and After School Clubs, which results in more income. It is uncertain as to how much funding there will be for heat, gas & electricity.

The Finance Officer is currently working on the budgets and will finalise them after Easter. A large increase in pay is assumed. The funding from the Government is a little better than last year. The income from clubs and lettings is good and the PTA are subsidising a lot.

*The Finance Officer left at 18:30.*

## **13. Committee Reports**

The meetings of the Resources & Audit Committee and the Children & Learning Committee took place this term and the minutes will go to the relevant committees in May.

## **14. Subject Ambassadors/Link Governors summer term meetings**

The Chair would send a reminder to Governors to arrange meetings.

Richard Monaghan would be Subject Ambassador for Maths and will arrange a meeting with Mrs Richards.

## **15. Policies**

- **Maths**
- **Data Retention**

The Head Teacher explained the following in response to Governors' questions:

The School is guided by Judicium.

Schools keep all children's data until they are 26 years old. When a primary school passes on information to secondary schools, it becomes the secondary school's responsibility.

Safeguarding records that have been passed over shouldn't be retained, although a school has the right to retain the records if there is the chance that a historical event may come back.

Judicium advise if the School is unsure in any area.

- **Data Protection**
- **Data Breach**
- **Health Education**
- **Online Safety and Social Media and Acceptable Use**

*Questions asked by Governors:*

*Q: Is there an issue with children accessing YouTube and data?*

*A: They do not have access to these in school.*

**The policies were accepted.**

## **16. Reports**

- **Health and Safety Report**

Mr Gribben undertook a Health & Safety walk. The following actions were taken and all urgent ones in process:

- stock room will be tidied up on the last day of term.
- an old wooden table was removed.
- contractors' equipment was removed.
- The pond platform is being replaced.

- **GDPR Audit**

Every year, a lawyer carries out an audit of GDPR & gives the School recommendations. Consequently, action points were given, mainly as a result of Brexit and its implications for GDPR. Most actions have now been ticked off.

Privacy notices, etc. have been updated, etc.

- **The School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist**

The DfE ask schools to do this every year and share it with Governors.

## **17. Any other business**

Mark Hutchins visited the School as the Responsible Officer and found everything to be satisfactory.

A question was asked about the welfare of the staff, given that it had been Mental Health Awareness Week. It was reported that mostly staff feel positive and initiatives such as quizzes at lunchtime help with this.

## **18. Dates of next meetings**

No Governor morning, but Zoom meeting:	Tuesday 25 April at 6-7pm
Resources & Audit Committee	Tuesday 2 May at 4.30pm
Children & Learning Committee	Tuesday 16 May at 4.30pm
Full Governing Body	Thursday 29 June at 5.00pm

**19. The Closing Prayer** was led by the Chair.

**The meeting closed at 18:30**