

MEETING MINUTES

'Be the best you can be.'



School: John Blow Primary School
Meeting title: First Spring term meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Wednesday 22nd January 2025 at 6:00pm
Location: At the school

Membership

'A' denotes absence
'V' denotes virtual

Mrs Adrienne Allcock
Mr Ben Carver (Headteacher)
Ms Claire Fawcett
Mrs Mary Hartshorne
Mrs Sue Laplanche (chair)
Mr Paul Nolan
Mr Pete Smith
V Mr Thomas Straw
A Mr Mark Tyler
A Mrs Emma Briggs-Price
A Mr Cameron Lord
Mrs Kerry Round

In attendance Mrs Victoria Hayles (Clerk to the Governors)

Action

GB/01/25 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Tyler(illness), Mrs Briggs-Price(work) and Mr Lord (Work). Governors resolved to accept these apologies.

GB/02/25 Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for items of business on the agenda.

GB/03/25 Review of membership and terms of office ending in the next 12 months

It was noted that the term of office for Mr Tyler ended in March 2025. Mr Tyler had indicated that he would not be looking to extend his term of office.

Governors discussed the recruitment of a new governor and the skills that would be looked for. Governors agreed that need to appoint an external co opted governor who had skills in finance, compliance and health and safety.

ACTION: A draft advert for a co-opted governor to be produced and circulated to within the local community.

HT GB

GB/04/25 Minutes of Autumn Term Meeting held on 6th November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2024 having been previously circulated were confirmed and signed by the chair.

Review of actions

It was resolved that the actions of the last meeting had been completed.

GB/05/25 Finance Overseeing Financial Performance

The headteacher had previously circulated finance reports to governors.

The headteacher highlighted the following on the deficit budget:

- The updated 3 year forecast and staff report was being completed for submission to LA finance by 24th January. This would be circulated to governors on completion.
- Additional costs had been incurred since the last report:
 - Supply teacher costs. This was due to the long term sickness of a member of staff. £1500 had been reimbursed from staff absence insurance.
 - Office manager supply costs. This position has now been filled.
 - Supply costs to cover Y2. This will be offset by reduced salary costs.

Governor challenge: IS it the view that the school would be moving out of a deficit budget in 25/26?

The headteacher explained that the LA had seen the projections and had stated that they were happy that the school were moving to a balance position. The deficit budget would be supported by a predicted increase in pupil numbers. 38 children had applied for places in September 25, although the number of first choice applications was not yet known.

25 children would be leaving in July 25.

Governors discussed the increasing number of children on roll and the allocation of places where twins were in the year group.

Governor challenge: Do we need to look at allocating a higher percentage of the budget to supply costs in 25/26 as we have overspent in this academic year?

The headteacher explained why supply costs were higher than allocated and that increasing the amount allocated could be considered.

Governor challenge: Staff insurance cover was purchased for cover at 10 absence. Do we need to consider cover from 3 days?

The headteacher explained that they had received insurance payments this year which would offset some of the supply costs. Consideration would be given to looking at alternative insurance options.

Governor challenge: Why is the budget code for teaching staff over budget?

The headteacher explained that this was due to payments made to staff who worked in the holiday club. This would be offset by income generated by the clubs.

Governor challenge: Why are IT support costs different to those budgeted for?

The headteacher explained that there had been an increase in the costs of licences. The school would be reviewing the software packages that were used in school alongside the licences that were held to ensure that they were all used and if any savings could be made.

The head teacher stated that the school no longer needed LA support with the REC1 as the new office manager was now able to complete these. This would be a small saving to the budget.

Governor challenge: Did the budget need to have an allocation for overtime for the office manager?

The headteacher explained that the office manager was not undertaking any overtime.

Governor challenge: Did the school tender for contracts such as IT?

The headteacher explained that some contracts were tendered for and these were reviewed. Services for Schools were services purchased via the LA and did not need to be tendered for. However, they were not always the best value.

Governor challenge: Are we anticipating any additional catering costs or debts from school meals?

The headteacher explained that some catering costs would be balanced out by the end of the year. There were no debts for school meals as it was not possible to book without paying.

Audit report

The headteacher reported that the school had received an audit and that the report had been shared with the chair.

The report had indicated that there were a number of areas that needed to be improved. It was noted that the school had undergone a high turnover of office staff in the last three years and this had caused significant problems within school and the monitoring of finance.

The headteacher highlighted actions that had already been completed in response to the audit including chasing debt. Reminders had been sent to parents about clearing debt but there was a reluctance and refusal from some parents to pay for events. This was being fuelled on social media, with parents being advised that pay for trips and enrichment activities was voluntary.

Governors discussed voluntary contributions and the need to make sure that parents were clear that trips and events would not take place if sufficient funds were received.

The headteacher explained how the school were working to ensure that this was clear to parents and ways of recording parental agreement to pay for trips.

It was **agreed** that a letter would be produced outlining the benefits of additional activities and the costs involved. This would be signed by the chair and the headteacher.

The headteacher informed governors that the office manager had been receiving complaints from parents about the payment of historical debts.

The headteacher stated the office manager would begin chasing outstanding payments for Y6 pupils in February prior to them leaving in July.

The headteacher explained changes that had been made to school processes when making changes to staff contracts and payroll information.

Missing cheque books and bank stationary had been reported and cancelled.

Governor challenge: How long had the cheque books been missing and do we know where they may have gone?

The headteacher explained that he did not know and that the new office manager had not been able to find them. The school did know that that they had not been used.

Gas and electric statements that had been held by NCC had been chased and were being cleared. The school had budgeted £16,000 to cover these bills.

The school inventory was being updated and outdated electric goods disposed of.

The school was no longer over drawn in its bank account after receiving a deficit budget grant from NCC. The office manager was managing the budget and banking effectively and as a result the school were in a much stronger position with the management of the budget.

Governor challenge: How are you feeling about the new staff that have been appointed in the office?

The headteacher stated that it had been a very positive appointment and as a result the school were in a much stronger position.

Governor challenge: What support or networks are available for the office manager?

The headteacher explained that finance support was available from the LA but there currently were not any office manager networks. Governors suggested that it might be beneficial to instigate a group.

Governor challenge: Would it be possible to analyse the finances of the breakfast and after school club as well as the holiday clubs as a part of the budget setting process?

The headteacher stated that this would happen and be reported to governors.

GB/06/25 Working Group Updates / Governor Monitoring Visits

Sports Premium / PE

Mrs Round reported on her visit with the PE lead. Highlighting the following:

- PE Lead was doing a good job of managing the sports budget and was very aware of the finances.
- It had been very informative to know why the school were able to provide so many sports clubs and that this would be useful for all parents to know.
- The cost of transport to activities and the possibility of a minibus.

Governors discussed the use of a minibus noting that the school currently had an informal arrangement with the local Scouts. The headteacher was looking to agree a formal agreement over the use on a regular basis.

Governors noted that the use of a minibus would be very beneficial and could help to reduce costs. Consideration would be needed on who could drive a minibus and any additional actions the school needed to take to ensure that they were compliant with legislation.

Pupil Premium

The report was on the school website. Due to unforeseen circumstances the monitoring visit had been delayed and would be rearranged.

SEND interventions

Mrs Hartshorne had carried out a visit but would be revisiting the school as changes to SEND interventions had been made.

Preschool

It was noted that the school had submitted a bid to the DFE and that an outcome would be known in the spring.

Governors discussed the considerable amount of work that had been required to submit the bid and the support of the local community in helping to provide quotes and architectural drawings. The work that the school had previously undertaken had placed them in a strong position to submit the bid within the timescales.

Governor challenge: Have you given any thought to how this will be promoted?

The headteacher stated that until the outcome was known then they couldn't really do anything. A parent consultation had been very positive.

GB/07/25 Headteacher Report- Holding executive leaders to account:

Pupil Outcomes

Governor challenge: Governors challenged the lack of assessment data in the report.

The headteacher stated that as noted in the report the assessments had been undertaken and reported to parents. However, due to staff absence there had not been sufficient capacity to compile a report.

Governor challenge: Have any concerns been highlighted through the assessments undertaken?

The headteacher stated that staff had identified areas of concern that they were going to address. The provision for additional support within school was changing. There was a greater focus on ensuring that children made progress with high levels of attainment across the school and that this was not left to Y5 and Y6 teachers.

Following the departure of the SENCO, the headteacher had taken on this role. He was working with staff to ensure that the pitch of sessions was at the right level and that adaptations for individual needs were in place. Consistent medium term planning was now in place.

Governors noted that the school had been ranked as number 1 in the authority for its 2024 Y6 outcomes.

Governor challenge: Governors challenged headteachers capacity to undertake his substantive role and that of the SENCO.

The headteacher and chair outlined the actions that had been taken to support the headteacher as he managed this additional workload including:

- Staff being trained to deliver assessments such as dyslexia screening.
- Teachers undertaking tracking and monitoring of pupils with SEND in their class.
- Additional time out of school for the headteacher to complete work.
- Changing the allocation of additional provision.
- Sharing information and support from the Family SENCO with class teachers
- Learning for pupils in Nurture being planned for by class teachers.

Attendance

It was noted that attendance was 95.3% for the autumn term which was above national.

Pupil Premium funding

Governors discussed that they would like to see attainment data to support the written commentary on progress and attainment.

Sports Premium

This had been reviewed as part of the PE visit. Mrs Round would be added to the document as the governor link.

Behaviour

Governors discussed the behaviour report which had been circulated and the meaning of the terminology used for individual categories.

Governors were assured that the school were taking appropriate action to meet the needs of the children and respond to behavioural incidents.

Governors discussed if future reports could contain comparisons of terms to view long term trends.

Governor challenge: Governors asked if the headteacher felt that behaviour was improving.

The headteacher stated that he felt behaviour was getting back to normal, however there was still work to do on improving low level behaviour.

The headteacher updated governors on the work being undertaken with children causing the most concern and the positive impact that this was having.

GB/08/25 Approval of NCC policies

Governors approved the following policies which had been circulated and reviewed:

- Appraisal Policy
- Capability Policy
- Pay Policy

GB/09/25 Curriculum and Enrichment Opportunities

It was noted that this remained a key area for the school but was dependent on funding as discussed in the through the finance part of the meeting.

The Friends of John Blow continued to provide a subsidy of £15 per child for enrichment activities.

Governors discussed ways that the benefits of enrichment activities could be report to parents and promoted.

GB/10/25 EYFS

This had been discussed as part of the report on the preschool bid.

GB/11/25 Safeguarding

This had been included within the headteacher report for review by governors.

Mrs Allcock agreed to arrange a meeting with the headteacher to undertake a file audit.

Governors were reminded to undertake Prevent training if this had not already been completed.

GB/12/25 Clerk's Items

The clerk shared the following Directors Report and actions for governors:

- HT Wellbeing
- Small School Sustainability Strategy

Governors discussed the wellbeing of the Headteacher and the need to ensure that he was supported.

Items from Newsletter 1 were shared.

GB/13/25 Communication

From Chair

The chair informed governors of an email she had received from a departing member of staff regarding the lack of exit interview and outlining the reasons behind her moving schools.

The chair explained to governors that the exit interview had not taken place due to staff absence.

The headteacher and chair explained that following the email they felt it would be beneficial to undertake a staff survey to gain a general overview of how staff were feeling.

Following a discussion, governors agreed that they would undertake an anonymous survey exploring staff wellbeing. Mr Nolan would work with the headteacher to compile the survey and analyse the results.

ACTION: Staff survey to be completed.

HT PN

From Headteacher

Nothing to report.

GB/14/25 Evidence of governing body impact on school improvement and review of how the governing body has held the school's leaders to account.

Governors' challenges have been recorded throughout the minutes. These challenges help to support school improvement alongside training and discussion.

- Finance
- Preschool
- Policies
- Behaviour
- Pupil Premium outcomes
- Staffing
- HT wellbeing

- SEND

GB/15/25 Confirmation of dates

Spring 2025

- Spring 2 – 5th March
- Budget Setting Meeting - 19th March.

Summer 2025

- Summer 1 – 14th May
- Summer 2 – 11th June

GB/16/25 Determination of confidentiality of business.

It was resolved that all papers and reports be made available, as necessary.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm

Signed



Date 05.03.25

School Display