

**Minutes of a governing body meeting of Charles Dickens Primary
School on Thursday, 4th September, 2014 at 9.00 am**

Governors Present: Cassie Buchanan (Headteacher), Amos Emoike, Emma Gleadhill, Catherine Greenwood, Matthew Harris, Claire Maugham, Andrew Mayer, Annastazia Nyaga, Zoe Sumner, Linda Taylor, Robert Loader

Others present: Malcolm Booth (Associate Member)

Clerk: John Finch

The meeting started at 9.09 am and was quorate.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cerian Morgan, Nik Nicol and Perrine Summers, and consent was given for their absence.

2. Declarations of Interest in the agenda

There were no declarations of interest in the agenda.

3. Election of Chair

Nik Nicol was nominated for the position of Chair.

Agreed – Unanimously that Nik Nicol be elected as Chair of the governing body for a period of two years.

4. Election of Vice-Chair

Andrew Mayer was nominated for the position of Vice-Chair.

Agreed – Unanimously that Andrew Mayer be elected as Vice-Chair of the governing body for a period of two years.

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair chaired the meeting, and governors considered item 5 under confidential items at 9.11 am.

5. Final Consultation on Foundation Status

Governors received the following documents as circulated via e-mail prior to the meeting:

- E-mail to Cllr Noakes re. support staff pay (and replies)
- Foundation Consultation Results
- O'Mahony submission to FS consultation
- Weblink to parental responses to the foundation consultation

Malcolm Booth raised the following points:

- 1,500 parents and residents were consulted on the school becoming a foundation school, with letters to residents being hand delivered and then being re-sent, posted first class to ensure their delivery.
- 25 responses were received, with 97.5 % of people consulted not responding.
- It was also noted that an average of 12 parents attended each of the two parental consultation meetings.
- There were more negative than positive responses, however several negative responses pertained to issues unrelated to a change to foundation status, with these issues to be summarised in the summary document produced by governors.
- Concerns were raised regarding the changing of the Admissions Policy (which would not happen) or the school no longer being a Southwark Council school (which it would remain).
- The responses also suggested a lack of trust that the governing body had properly considered the reasons for becoming a foundation school, and dissatisfaction on the lack of communication on what those reasons are.
- It was noted that the governing body allocated more time to the consultation process than it was legally required to give.
- It was stated that meetings with unions and staff members have all been positive.

Governors raised the following points:

- It was acknowledged that communication to parents needs to improve.
- It was stated that any concerns on the direction and quality of education are separate from the issue of becoming a foundation school.
- It was suggested that, as performance-related pay is a key issue of becoming a foundation school, the governing body should recruit a governor with HR skills.
- Governors stated that with building works to be considered and a potential impending OFSTED inspection ahead, there needs to be clear reasons for becoming a foundation school, and governors need to be confident that they can answer any questions on these reasons in a transparent way.

Positive reasons for becoming a foundation school

Malcolm Booth and the Headteacher raised the following points:

- Under the Southwark Council framework, support staff are paid according to their job title instead of the abilities of the staff member, and the school can currently negotiate for a pay rise of £300.
- As a foundation school, the governing body would become the employer and would not be bound by the Southwark Council

framework.

- The school is already offering performance-related pay for support staff, but as a foundation school it would be able to offer support staff a pay increase of several thousand pounds.
- As a community maintained school, the school struggles to meet its commitment to recruiting graduate Teaching Assistants (TA) as it cannot currently offer a graduate salary.
- The school's future training offer doesn't outweigh a £15,000 graduate salary, so it is limiting to work within the current Southwark Council pay grades.
- Becoming a foundation school would allow the school to offer a graduate salary, and to recruit a higher quality workforce.
- The governing body would become the owner of the school land, which is currently owned by Southwark Council, and as a result it would have more control over how the land is used to benefit the community and to generate revenue in the future.
- The school would maintain contact with and be funded by Southwark Council, and would still buy into its services.

Malcolm Booth and the Headteacher gave the following answers to questions from governors:

- *If the school becomes a foundation school, how would it be able to afford the suggested pay increases and higher salaries?* The school is currently recruiting staff through an agency which costs 30 % more, and there would be a £2,500 fee to be paid to the agency if the school wanted to recruit a member of staff on a permanent basis. Although salaries would be higher as a foundation school, expenditure would reduce as the school would save money on agency fees.
- *How do other schools recruit TAs as presumably they cannot also offer graduate salaries?* Other schools tend not to recruit graduates. It was stated that the school asks for graduates to be a TA for two years, so a higher salary would make it easier to retain staff.
- *Would new job descriptions be written for support staff to allow for the paying of higher salaries?* All TA roles would be reassessed. It was noted that it is an expensive process for TAs to then become teachers.

Negative reasons for becoming a foundation school

Malcolm Booth and the Headteacher raised the following points:

- By becoming a foundation school, thus allowing the school to pursue the recruitment of graduates, the school might miss out on recruiting non-graduates who might be good teachers.
- It was also suggested that graduates might take advantage of the school's high quality training and then leave once they are trained.
- There would be a greater obligation for the governing body, who

would be responsible financially and in terms of the management of the maintenance of the school premises, particularly with regards to any health and safety issues.

- The school would stay within the Southwark admissions process, but as a foundation school there would be additional administration responsibilities for the admissions process as additional forms would need to be sent to parents.
- The governing body would also be responsible for running admission appeal hearings.
- The Headteacher stated that she is confident that the school can handle the extra workload, but that governors would need to be confident that they can administer the admissions appeal process based on the set guidelines.
- There could be an extra burden for finding insurance, but it was noted that the school could continue buying into Southwark Council's insurance.

Malcolm Booth and the Headteacher gave the following answers to questions from governors:

- *Are there concerns that by becoming a foundation school, the school might miss out on recruiting non-graduates who may eventually be good teachers?* No, as despite the school's current policy of recruiting graduates, one third of TAs in the school are non-graduates. There is an expectation that any TA in the school is of a higher quality as they are working in an Outstanding school.
- *Are there concerns that graduates might take advantage of the school's high quality training and then leave once they are trained?* No, as exit interviews take place so the school is always aware of reasons for staff leaving, and can address any issues that arise. It was noted that TAs that have recently left have done so to complete their PGCE.
- *Will Southwark Council continue to support the school as a foundation school, particularly with regards to the building works that are coming up?* Yes, although Southwark Council has not met its obligations regarding building works whilst the school has been a maintained school. The school has arranged for building works and maintenance to be done, so in that respect the school is effectively operating as a foundation school already, and in practice there would be no change to the school.
- *Will the school be able to continue to buy into other Southwark Council services, and if so would the quality of response diminish as a foundation school?* The school currently buys into HR and clerking support, and this would continue, with the quality of response remaining the same.

Robert Loader arrived at 9.56 am.

Support for legal matters is already outsourced, and payroll services are bought into from Strictly Education, so there would

be no change to either of these and there would be no effect on the quality of service offered to the school.

- *There have been big changes to the SLT recently, and with the impending building works and potentially imminent OFSTED inspection, is it a risk to the success of the proposal to become a foundation school to change at the present time rather than in the future?* The changes to the SLT have not been that big as there is good succession planning embedded, with a strong leadership training programme. Building works will start next summer but will take three years to complete, and the premises team has been expanded to three (compared to one person, two years ago) which will help to mitigate any risk. The only risk at this time is if there is an OFSTED inspection, and the parents who feel negative towards the proposal to become a foundation school are asked for their views by OFSTED inspectors.
- *What is the timeline for the final consultation process?* It can be completed within a minimum of 8 weeks, but the school would like to take more time and complete the process by January 2015.

The following points were raised:

- A working party consisting of the Headteacher, Malcolm Booth, Emma Gleadhill, Matthew Harris, Rob Loader, Andrew Mayer and Annastazia Nyaga will write a summary response from governors covering the discussions in the governing body meeting.
- The response will cover the benefits of becoming a foundation school, and the issues and concerns that have been raised and the comments made in response to them.
- The benefits and issues to be addressed are:
 - The ability to pay higher salaries to support staff and TAs, allowing the school to recruit a higher quality workforce;
 - The governing body will gain ownership of the school land, allowing it to better utilise the premises and to generate future revenue;
 - The governing body will have responsibility for all compliance issues regarding the premises, particularly regarding health and safety issues;
 - The governing body will have responsibility for the administration of the freehold, including the arranging of insurance, although there is capacity within the premises team to manage this;
 - The school will continue to maintain contact with Southwark Council and the local community;
 - The school will continue to buy into services from Southwark Council, with the same level of service being offered;
 - The governing body will have responsibility for the administration of the admissions process, and for the running of admissions appeals;

- Concerns have been raised regarding the timing of the change to foundation status, in the context of changes to the SLT, the building works that need to be carried out and the impending OFSTED inspection.

The Headteacher gave the following summation:

- Building works in the school are not imminent, so the main reason for the school to become a foundation school now is to allow for improved staff recruitment and retention.
- Other options have been considered, and there are no other viable alternatives to becoming a foundation school that will allow the school to successfully address the recruitment and retention issues.
- There is an impact on teaching and learning in the school as a direct result of not being able to recruit and retain the standard of staff that the school requires, as well as an impact on resources for the SLT.

Agreed – Unanimously that governors agree to enter a final consultation process towards becoming a foundation school.

Malcolm Booth left at 10.10 am.

6. School Improvement Plan

Governors received the School Improvement Plan as circulated via e-mail prior to the meeting, and documents titled “School Self Evaluation Report” and “End of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) Provisional Results 2-13/4” as circulated at the meeting, and the Headteacher gave the following update:

- It is important that governors are aware if the school’s key strengths and areas for improvement, as set out in the School Self Evaluation Report.
- The main strengths of the school are:
 - Attainment and achievement, both last year and in previous years. The school did well at Level 5+, particularly in Reading, which at 77 % was above the national average;
 - There has also been a significant improvement in Phonics results, going up by 16 % to an all-time Year 2 high of 85 %;
 - The gap between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium pupils has been reduced to 0.2 points in attainment and progress, which is an improvement on the previous year;
 - The quality of teaching and learning in the school. All pupils benefit from consistently Good and often Outstanding teaching, which has implemented in part due to the high quality training programme offered by the school;
 - The quality of leadership and management. There is a

strong and stable SLT, with a pay-related performance management process in place. Every teacher out of their first year of teaching is given a responsibility area. The school also works in partnership with Southwark Council to provide support and training to other schools;

- There is a new curriculum with new forms of assessment. The curriculum is very academic, but assessment will use age-related expectations rather than levels. The aim for Year 6 will be to be judged as secure instead of achieving a Level 4+, and this new judgement would be equivalent to achieving a Level 5+. Parents will be informed at the end of each year whether their child is exceeding age-related expectations, on track, or below age-related expectations.
- The main areas for improvement in the school are to:
 - Raise attainment of very able children in Reading, Writing and Maths in upper KS2, and to increase the percentage of pupils achieving Level 6 by 10 %. It was noted that some children were taught the Level 6 curriculum but were not tested last year;
 - Accelerate the progress of FSM and SEN pupils in KS2, in particular those pupils who were low attaining at the end of KS1. It was noted that there are two children in Year 6 with statements, so results are expected to dip at Level 4.
 - Further improve pupil attainment through the introduction of age related outcomes (using national curriculum expectations) in summative assessment, and embedding outstanding 'close the gap' marking;
 - Introduce the new curriculum in the school, and to embed improvements in standards in Reading and Phonics across the school through embedded guided reading practice using new age-related objectives; maintaining and improved teaching and learning of Phonics; and further developing early interventions for Phonics and Reading;
 - Improve the teaching and learning of grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting through the implementation of the new Handwriting Policy; embedding contextualized teaching of GPS; and improving opportunities for home learning in GPS;
 - Ensure that behaviour for learning is outstanding at all times, despite an increase in pupil numbers in the school;
 - Manage the physical and educational transition of the school from 1 ½ to 2 form entry. The school is now 2 form entry in Reception and KS1, and the Nursery has expanded to a class of 32 pupils per session, with 21 full time and 22 part time places (compared to 25 full time places previously). This year the school will seek planning permission for the £4 million project to build new

EYFS classrooms, a hall, kitchen and re-landscaped play spaces and an entrance.

- It was also noted that every teacher will be allocated a coach, with all of the SLT trained in coaching and mentoring.
- Parental engagement and involvement, and communication between the school/governing body and parents, needs to be improved.
- There are parental events regarding home reading and home learning that will help to address this issue.
- Governors were invited to send any comments or questions on the School Improvement Plan to the Headteacher by e-mail.

Agreed – That governors adopt the School Improvement Plan as circulated via e-mail.

7. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda via e-mail prior to the meeting, and noted the dates and times of the following meetings:

Autumn term

Curriculum & Standards - Tuesday, 16th September, 2014, 6.00 pm
Children, Families & Community
- Tuesday, 21st October, 2014, 6.00 pm
Resources - Tuesday, 4th November, 2014, 6.00 pm

Governing Body - Tuesday, 2nd December, 2014, 6.00 pm

Spring term

Curriculum & Standards - Tuesday, 20th January, 2015, 6.00 pm
Children, Families & Community
- Tuesday, 3rd February, 2015, 6.00 pm
Resources - Tuesday, 10th February, 2015, 6.00 pm

Governing Body - Tuesday, 10th March, 2015, 6.00 pm

Summer term

1st Curriculum & Standards - Tuesday, 28th April, 2015, 6.00 pm
Children, Families & Community
- Tuesday, 9th June, 2015, 6.00 pm
2nd Curriculum & Standards - Tuesday, 16th June, 2015, 6.00 pm
Resources - Tuesday, 23rd June, 2015, 6.00 pm

Governing Body - Tuesday, 14th July, 2015, 6.00 pm

Governors noted that the Resources committee meeting on Tuesday, 14th October, 2014 has been cancelled, as there will just be one autumn term Resources committee meeting on Tuesday, 4th November, 2014.

8. Any Other Business

None was raised, and the governing body continued with its annual strategy day.

The meeting finished at 10.26 am.

Date..... Signed.....