

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE COURT SCHOOL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11th October 2023 AT 5.00PM**

**PRESENT:** G Hunt (Chair), A Griffiths (AG), S Deverson (SD), C Gibbon (CG), J Shimmin (JS), N Chaudhry (NC), J Beesley Headteacher (JB), C McBratney (CM), E Powell (EP), S Jenkins (SJ), G Webb (GW)

**APOLOGIES:** D Sargent(DS)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Pam Cotter Clerk (PC)

| Item | Discussion/Actions  | Owner |
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| 1.   | <b><u>Welcome and apologies for absence</u></b>   |       |
| 1.1  | GH welcomed governors.  |       |
| 1.2  | Apologies were given and received for DS.   |       |
| 2.   | <b><u>Governing Body Membership</u></b>   |       |
| 2.1  | <b><u>Election of Chair of Governors</u></b><br>Clerk informed governors that she had received one nomination for GH for the role of Chair of Governors. GH was reappointed as Chair  |       |
| 2.2  | <b><u>Election of Vice Chair of Governors</u></b><br>Clerk informed governors that she had received nominations for AG and DS for the role of Vice Chair of Governor. A secret ballot followed. AG received most votes and was appointed as Vice Chair of Governors   |       |
| 2.3  | <b><u>Review Governing Body membership.</u></b><br>There is a parent governor vacancy following the receipt of Sharon Bounds' resignation. JB will start the process for parent governor election once new parents have started to settle into the school. There have been 14 new children starting at the school this term.<br><br>It was the consensus for DS to remain as safeguarding governor, JS to continue to chair the Health and Safety Committee.<br><br><b>JS asked if the Finance Committee will meet before the Full Governing Body meetings.</b> JB advised that it would. JB explained that the Finance Committee didn't meet today because he had only met with the finance officer this week. |       |
| 2.4  | The Code of Conduct forms were circulated to governors and signed.  |       |

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| 2.5 | <p>The Business interest forms were circulated to governors and signed.</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to circulate to governors the Committee Structure membership sheet</b></p>  | PC |
| 3.  | <p><b><u>Declaration of interest on items on the agenda</u></b></p>   |    |
| 3.1 | <p>No interests were declared.</p>  |    |
| 3.2 | <p><b>JS asked where Health and Safety appears on the agenda.</b> JB advised that Health and Safety is covered in the Headteachers Report, and it was agreed to include Health and Safety as a standalone item on the agenda going forward.</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to add Health and Safety as an item on the governing body meeting agenda's going forward.</b></p>                               | PC |
| 4.  | <p><b><u>Agree schedule of Governing Body meeting dates and Committee meeting dates</u></b></p>   |    |
| 4.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autumn 1: Wednesday 11th October 2023</li> <li>• Autumn 2: Wednesday 29th November 2023</li> <li>• Spring 1 : Wednesday 31st January 2024</li> <li>• Spring 2: Wednesday 13th March 2024</li> <li>• Summer 1: Wednesday 1st May 2024</li> <li>• Summer 2: Wednesday 26th June 2024</li> </ul> <p>The governing Body agreed to the dates set out above.</p> |    |
| 5.  | <p><b><u>Agree timescale for the production and issue of Governors Annual Report (report was last published summer term 2023)</u></b></p>   |    |
| 5.1 | <p>JB suggested producing the Governors Annual Report in the summer term 2024 which was agreed by governors.</p>  |    |
| 5.2 | <p>JB informed governors that the Governors Annual Report 2023 wasn't sent out to parents but is available for viewing online. JB noted that the school website has been improved and updated.</p>  |    |
| 6.  | <p><b><u>Approval of minutes of previous meeting</u></b></p>  |    |
| 6.1 | <p>The minutes from the previous meeting had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting.</p>   |    |
| 6.2 | <p>Governors reviewed the minutes for accuracy:</p>   |    |

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| 6.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At page 3, item 7.2 - "assisting" headteacher to be replaced with "assistant" headteacher</li> </ul> <p>The minutes were approved and agreed as a true record.</p>  |  |
| 7.  | <p><b><u>Matters arising</u></b></p> <p>7.1 Item 1.2: the meeting was no longer quorate after item 6 but no decisions were made from that point.</p> <p>7.2 Item 3.1: confirmed that JS is now vice chair of finance committee</p> <p>7.3 Item 4.1: agreed to add staff training and development to the governing body meeting agenda as a standing item. Governors further agreed to add agenda items Health and Safety and Healthy Eating to the agenda with Healthy Eating being a responsibility of governors.</p> <p>7.4 7.1 - 6 following the last meeting JB looked up how many other special schools within the South Wales area with TIS status and there are 6</p> <p>JB provided update on his meeting with Neil Hardee explaining that there had been ongoing conversations regarding staffing structures at new sites. JB informed governors that it had been a productive meeting which had provided clarity on some matters, but that whilst Neil Hardee had been a strong advocate for the school, he has now left the LA.</p> <p>JB advised that he had talked to Neil Hardee about different structures in the schools, which have been clarified on paper, to lead into the next meeting with whoever takes that on and meets with the school.</p> <p>JB expressed concerns as to who will support the school within the LA as Neil Hardee had always met with the school whenever there were any issues. Chair supported JB's view expressing that Neil Hardee was always prepared to speak to leadership at the school.</p> <p>JB advised governors that he has to report on finance at every governing body meeting as the school is in £60k deficit budget, which had been approved.</p> <p>JB informed governors that he met with FSM and they had talked about staffing which took the deficit budget to the late £87/88k. JB</p> |  |

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| 7.5 | <p>advised that there are areas to trim the budget to £71/72k. JB explained that this is mainly because of staffing, illness and staffing cover.</p> <p>JB informed governors that he has asked the Chair to get in touch with Jennie Hughes at the LA to organise emergency meeting for the school. JB advised governors that they have not set a deficit budget in the past because the LA has provided additional funding and try to address it now, with the potential for a £200k + deficit next year. JB advised governors that he wants to take a proactive approach and address it now. JB invited AG to attend the meeting with Jennie Hughes.</p> <p>JB explained to governors that school funding is based on allocations for pupils and that the system does not consider the uniqueness of learners at The Court School. JB further explained that there are lots of pupils who require 2-1 or 1-2-1 support. JB stated the need to speak to the LA to express concerns regarding the position going forward.</p> <p>JB explained to governors that in a lot of bases in Cardiff the school will receive financial reimbursement from MSF from day 1 of staff sickness but in ALN schools staff sickness has to go to 10 days before receiving financial assistance. JB stated that this is frustrating because they need day 1 cover.</p> <p><b>NC stated that on a training course that he attended he asked how Finance look at the budget of special schools and how it is allocated. NC asked if a document could be produced to create a strong case and show how many staff the school has, how many pupils are on roll and how many pupils are allocated per staff member.</b> JB advised that the issue here is that The Court is the only special school of this type in Wales and there is no comparable setting but that he does have information on staffing and pupil ratio.</p> <p>AG advised that there is a Welsh Government consultation re SEN and childcare. AG will send details to Clerk to circulate to governors.</p> <p><b>Action: AG to forward details of Welsh Government consultation to Clerk who will circulate to governors.</b></p> <p>Item 7.6: all pictures have been received and are on website<br/> Item 7.7: JB informed governors that he has been asked to join another inspection in December, but will decline as Caroline Joy is off and not likely to be back by then.</p> | AG/PC |
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| 8.  | <b><u>Headteachers report</u></b>  |  |
| 8.1 | JB informed governors that there have been challenges at the start of the year but that things are quite settled in the context of the Court school. JB advised that they are making changes to pupils and classes where needed.   |  |
| 8.2 | JB provided an update from the Headteachers Report which had been shared with governors prior to the meeting.  |  |
| 8.3 | JB delivered the news to governors that Caroline Joy had been diagnosed with cancer, and that all of the staff at school are thinking of her.  |  |
| 8.4 | JB explained that his role now is more operational, that Neil Purcell had stepped up and was covering a lot of ALNCO responsibilities, which the LA is happy with. JB further explained that his ability to attend meetings is compromised but that the needs of the learners are priority. Chair passes on the governing body's best wishes to Caroline and family. JB stated that the flexibility and cover from everyone has been fantastic.  |  |
| 8.5 | <p>JB requested from governors permission to advertise a number of roles as the school is in a deficit budget situation and would be looking for support from governors to be part of the interview process. JB explained to governors that there are too many members of staff on supply which is too expensive. Governors agreed to proceed with advertising roles.</p> <p><b>GW asked what grades are being advertised and SP asked how many roles will there be advertised.</b> JB advised that the roles will be grade 3,4, and 5.</p> <p><b>NC asked whether the vacancies that will be filled are old or new.</b> JB advised that some are old and some replacements.</p> <p><b>NC asked if the attrition rate for school staff can be recorded.</b> JB advised that there are very few staff who have left the school recently, but one is due to leave.</p> <p>One historic role, some of the other roles are to stop the school from spending so much on supply.</p> <p><b>NC stated it would be useful to have some numbers around attrition rate to give an idea regarding how many permanent staff are leaving and reasons.</b></p> |  |

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| <p>8.6</p> <p>8.7</p> | <p><b>AG agreed that it could be useful to look for a pattern as to why staff are leaving</b></p> <p><b>GW commented that many university graduates join the school and use the position as a stepping stone in their careers.</b></p> <p><b>NC asked JB what the ratio of staff employed by an agency and staff employed directly by the school. JB advised that it's approximately 75% permanent and 20-25% agency.</b></p> <p><b>CG expressed the difficulty of having agency staff who are doing a good job, but that the long recruitment process means that there is a risk of losing them.</b></p> <p><b>Action - JB to provide the ratio of supply and employed staff (percentage) in next meeting</b></p> <p><b>NC asked why the school cannot offer permanent contracts to those agency staff who are doing a good job.</b> JB advised that we cannot offer a position to supply staff, and that there is a protracted recruitment process to follow. JB explained that his capacity to advertise a role in the school is limited and went on to explain the recruitment steps. JB informed governors that he is trying to work offsite for a day a week to manage his capacity.</p> <p><b>JS asked, of the 20 - 25% supply staff are all or the majority TAs?</b> Chair advised that the last recruitment drive was very strong and that the majority who joined from that recruitment drive, came from the pool of supply staff at the school.</p> <p><b>NC asked if there is an agency fee to pay.</b> JB advised that the school is either charged a massive fee or the school has to pay the staff member through an agency for x number of weeks.</p> <p><b>SJ asked when the posts will go live?</b> JB advised before the end of the autumn term.</p> <p>JB advised that the school does not have any psychology students this year, explaining that all three who met with the school chose other placements as other providers can provide remuneration where The Court School cannot. JB advised that there will be another round of students in January/ February time.</p> <p>JS provided a verbal update on Health and Safety, noting that fire safety notices that were lacking have been rectified, shatter proof light strips have been replaced, finger guards on doors have been</p> | <p>JB</p> |
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| 8.8 | <p>fitted. JS advised that the wall that had caused concern has been inspected and the school has been informed that it is structurally safe, but requires remedial work.</p> <p>JS, JB and Chair acknowledged the hard work that Chris has been doing since his return and the great job that he has done to get on top of things.</p> <p>JB noted that the fence is not being repaired yet, and that although it is leaning does not yet present a danger.</p> <p>JB advised that the LA have asked the school to take ownership of the flat but JB has refused until it is safe to go in as in the current state it is not safe for contractors enter.</p> <p>JB informed governors that he is very concerned with the support from LA on the Category D end of life provision. JB advised governors that he has requested further meetings with the LA to no avail; JS has requested a meeting again.</p>   |  |
| 8.9 | <p>Chair and AG met with the Improvement Partner with a presentation and a list of questions that may come up during an Estyn inspection. Feedback was that the meeting was useful and that Chair and AG feel confident around inspection.</p> <p>JB drew governors attention to the attendance figure advising that it does not give a true reflection of attendance because it is generated by the total number of available sessions for the week and does not account for PSPs and not the sessions those pupils were due to attend and that by disaggregating the data manually, against the number of PSP sessions, attendance is actually 87.75%</p> <p><b>A governor asked if there are any pupils who are presenting particular concerns with attendance or behaviour.</b> JB advised none and advised that in terms of behaviour, staff will need to get to know pupils to know what works for them.</p> <p><b>A governor asked how was the attendance rate 90% 7 years ago.</b> JB explained that there were fewer PSPs and more exclusions. JB advised that the Pandemic has had an impact on reintroducing children back into school with anxiety which has been difficult.</p> <p>JB commented that the new children appear to be really happy in school and want to be here as much as possible.</p> |  |

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| 10.  | <b><u>SER/SIP</u></b>  |    |
| 10.1 | JB shared the SIP presentation using the screen.   |    |
| 10.2 | JB explained the structure of the SIP explaining that it reflects inspection areas from 1 - 5. JB showed the development of the SIP and what he is working on informing governors that they have worked hard to use Estyn terminology, as Estyn will be looking at evaluative writing.   |    |
| 10.3 | JB circulated paper copies of SIP 2022-23 to demonstrate how it contains contextual information, attendance, context so that all information is in one document for Estyn.   |    |
| 10.4 | JB informed governors that he will Insert 2023-24 targets  |    |
| 10.5 | JB informed governors that he is working off site tomorrow to work on the SIP so that it is ready for the Improvement Partners.  |    |
|      | <b>Action: JB to send to Clerk last years SIP and the copy of the new SIP for circulation to governors for comment/feedback</b>  | JB |
| 10.6 | <p><b>A governor asked if JB could give an example of an initiative that's been introduced around Healthy Eating.</b> JB advised that food is covered a lot, for example there are discussions about different types of foods, fruit and veg is also distributed to pupils every day, a lot of cooking is undertaken in classes, last year pupils grew and used produce, produce is also purchased locally from Sullivans for pupils and staff.</p> <p>JB advised that healthy drinking is not covered as much and that pupils did come into school with Monster energy drinks which they do not allow.</p> <p>It was suggested that during the second Spring governors meeting he could ask classes to provide pictures/information on what they are doing for healthy eating.</p> <p>JB informed governors that they are looking to run parent/carers sessions around healthy eating and provided an example of a pupil who is being looked after by their sister who would welcome support with cooking, so they are starting to do this with her and hope to extend the support to others.</p> |    |
| 11.  | <b><u>Annual Safeguarding Training - Level 1</u></b>   |    |

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| 11.1        | JB requested that this item is covered at the next meeting, given the time restraints and large agenda at this meeting. Governors agreed.  |  |
| 12.<br>12.1 | <b><u>Safeguarding update</u></b><br>JB informed governors that the school has had some significant safeguarding issues requiring MARF referrals. JB explained that they have dedicated staff to work with those, support and mechanisms.  |  |
| 12.2        | <b><u>CLA</u></b><br>JB advised that they currently have 5 CLA children at the school: 1 is unwell, 1 is in long term care in a residential home, 1 is cared for jointly by LA and dad.<br>JB advised that the impression is that CLA learners are doing really well in terms of their wellbeing, attitude to learning and attendance.<br><br><b>A governor asked if these are 5 new CLA learners?</b> JB advised that of the 5 CLA, 1 is new and the others are the same from last year.  |  |
| 12.3        | <b><u>Safeguarding</u></b><br>JB explained that the school uses MyConcern to record safeguarding issues. JB advised that MyConcern makes it easy to submit concerns which then get triaged to decide what happens next. JB advised that there is currently lots of involvement with Children's Services and that next week there are a high number of meetings with Children's Services. JB explained that school staff cannot always attend all meetings due to clashes, but they always try to prioritise these and try to attend. |  |
| 12.4        | Chair confirmed that DS is Child Protection Safeguarding Governor  |  |
| 12.5        | JB confirmed that the vast majority of staff have received safeguarding training.  |  |
| 13.<br>13.1 | <b><u>Policies - HR Manual and Child Protection / Safeguarding</u></b><br>Chair advised that these are Local authority documents and sought comments from governors. <b>There were no comments and the policies were approved.</b>   |  |

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| 14.  | <b><u>Governor training and development including compliance with mandatory training</u></b>   |    |
| 14.1 | JS advised that he is due to complete governor finance training which will take place prior to the next finance meeting.   |    |
| 14.2 | SJ has completed the data training   |    |
| 14.3 | AG has completed Safeguarding Level 1 training and due to undertake Level 2 in November. AG is also signed up for Understanding and Promoting a Culture of Vigilance and Supporting your School for Estyn Inspection.<br><br><b>Action: Clerk to circulate training details to SD and CM</b> | PC |
| 15.  | <b><u>Correspondence</u></b><br>None received.   |    |
| 16.  | <b><u>Date and time of next meeting</u></b>  |    |
| 16.1 | Autumn 2 - Wednesday 29th November 2023@ 5pm<br>Finance committee to meet - Wednesday 29th November@ 4pm   |    |
| 17.  | <b><u>AOB</u></b>  |    |
| 17.1 | JS informed governors that the LA has set up a cross party in relation to the Neurodiversity Strategy that the LA is developing.   |    |
| 18.  | <b><u>Confidential</u></b>   |    |
| 18.1 | One item discussed under confidential.   |    |

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