

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY (FGB) OF
STEEPLE MORDEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
HELD VIA ZOOM ON 9 DECEMBER 2020 AT 7.30PM**

Governors Present: Karenza Nutley (Chair for the meeting), Christian Amadeo, Sam Brown (Associate Governor), Ryan Ellett (Associate Governor), Marie Gardner (Co Chair), Tracey How (Headteacher), Liz Martin, Gillian McGuire.

Also in Attendance: Jacquie Watts (Clerk)

The meeting was quorate.

(NB: Governor Challenge, Questions and Monitoring are highlighted in bold)

Action By:

1.	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>NOTED: Apologies for absence were received from Catherine Seward, Suzanne Summerhayes and Shamus Williams. Gabrielle Edwards was also absent.</p> <p>AGREED: to accept the three apologies received.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest.</p> <p>NOTED: there were no declarations of interest in relation to the meeting's agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>Appointment of Co-opted Governors</p> <p>NOTED: there were two co-opted governor vacancies to be filled. Sam Brown (Associate Governor) was nominated to be a co-opted governor by Karenza Nutley and seconded by Christian Amadeo.</p> <p>AGREED: unanimously, to appoint Sam Brown as a co-opted governor for a period of four years commencing on 9/12/20, (Sam Brown having already passed DBS and Section 128 checks).</p> <p>NOTED: the governing body had advertised widely to fill the co-opted governor vacancies. The school was especially interested in appointing someone to the remaining vacancy who was not a parent to ensure diversity of views on the governing body. Only one person in addition to Sam Brown had expressed an interest in response to the recruitment drive and had then withdrawn because of the time commitment involved. The use of School Governors One Stop Shop was suggested by a governor.</p> <p>AGREED: all governors were invited to notify the Chairs of any potential suitable candidates for the remaining co-opted governor vacancy or to suggest alternative places for the vacancy to be advertised.</p>	All

4.	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting – 23rd September 2020</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the full governing body meeting held on 23rd September 2020 and circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>NOTED: the following MATTERS ARISING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of Interest (min. 2 refers) – annual declarations had been received from Tracey How and Gillian McGuire. The Clerk had not received responses from Gabrielle Edwards or Suzanne Summerhayes. The school confirmed the documents had been sent direct to it. All annual declarations of interest had therefore been completed and received. • Minutes of Last Meeting (min. 4 refers) – the FGB minutes of 15th July had been signed by the Chair for the meeting and delivered to the school for safekeeping. • AOB – Appointment of Governors (min. 7 refers) – actioned as per minute 3 of this meeting. • GB Standing Orders (min. 8 refers) – the Clerk had revised and circulated the agreed Standing Orders. • GB Code of Conduct (min. 9 refers) - The Clerk had not received responses from Suzanne Summerhayes and Gabrielle Edwards. AGREED: the Chair would speak to Suzanne Summerhayes and Gabrielle Edwards regarding the need to formally indicate they would abide by the Code of Conduct. • Committee Structure, Terms of Reference etc (min. 10 refers) – the Clerk had amended the Resources Committee TOR and circulated it. The Chair would check to see if she had amended the Curriculum TOR in relation to the Assessment Policy and other matters. All governors were in agreement with the appointments made at the meeting. • Governor Annual Attendance Figures 2019/20 (min. 11 refers) - the 2019/20 attendance figures had been published on the website. • Safeguarding (min. 14 refers) – The Clerk had not received responses from Suzanne Summerhayes and Gabrielle Edwards, but the school believed all governors had confirmed they had read and understood the KCSIE documents. • Governor Training and Briefings (min. 15 refers) – action points should be ascribed to MG not KN. The Clerk would amend the minutes accordingly. • Arrangements for Headteacher appraisal (min. 16 refers) – steps as set out in the minutes had taken place <p>AGREED: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd September 2020 as a true and correct record of the meeting, subject to the clerk making the agreed correction to action point initials for minute 15. They would accordingly be signed by the Chair for the meeting and delivered to the school for safekeeping. The Clerk would send the final version of the minutes to the school for uploading onto its website.</p>	<p>KN</p> <p>KN</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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5.	<p>Minutes of Meetings of Resources Committee – 15th October and 25th November 2020</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes as circulated with the agenda. The Chair of Resources summarised the committee’s areas of discussion including: capital, pensions, staffing, the swimming pool and energy performance. Following a presentation on energy performance, the contractor had been asked to investigate the school’s energy consumption as it had not declined as expected. A survey was being carried out on the school buildings pending possible further maintenance work.</p> <p>NOTED: minor revisions had been made to the provisional minutes of 25th November since they had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>AGREED: to receive and ratify the Resources Committee minutes of 15th October and 25th November 2020.</p>	
6.	<p>Minutes of Meetings of Curriculum Committee – 8th October and 19th November 2020</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes circulated with the agenda. The Chair of Curriculum summarised the committee’s areas of discussion including: curriculum, gaps in pupil learning as a result of lockdown and SEND. The SENDCO had attended the November meeting. There was an increase in pupils with SEND and the need to accrue six months of evidence across the lockdown period to acquire additional support was proving challenging. Pupils had arrived in reception not having attended pre-school in the previous six months and with no accompanying paperwork to evidence their needs. TAs providing intervention support to mixed age groups was not possible because of the need to maintain bubbles. There were also more vulnerable children this year because of the pandemic, including those lacking resilience and with anxiety</p> <p>AGREED: to receive and ratify the Curriculum Committee minutes of 8th October and 19th November 2020.</p>	
7.	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>NOTED: the school had received a letter from the PCC requesting a routine report. This had been provided.</p>	
8.	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>NOTED: the Headteacher’s report as available in the governors’ folders. The Head was trialling a different layout as recommended by the LA. The progress being made by the school was discussed. Governors asked what “keeping up to date in PE” meant? PE was taking place outdoors and a flexible timetable enabled it to be taught when the weather was suitable. The concept of TOIL was explored and the Headteacher highlighted the flexibility and supportive nature of staff, with some classroom staff not taking it as they felt they had not been asked to do as much as others during the lockdown period. Governors asked if there were any staff who hadn’t taken TOIL who should have for their own well-being? The Headteacher said she had no concerns regarding staff at the moment.</p>	

	<p>NOTED: Governors asked for an update on home learning. Year 3 was at the end of its period of self-isolation. The school would be trialling live video lessons at the end of the week. Some pupils were not engaging with home learning, but these were largely children who hadn't done so previously. The school was trying to engage with the families as far as possible and was following up whenever it could.</p> <p>NOTED: the Co Chairs had met remotely with the Headteacher when there was a case of COVID 19. The school had dealt with it quickly and efficiently. Governors queried the response from parents? There had been some positive feedback and some questions, which had all been answered. Some parents had allegedly expressed themselves on social media, but things seemed to have settled down, although there had been some anxiety that a member of staff had returned to school before the children, but, given the circumstances, this was in keeping with official guidelines.</p> <p>NOTED: the Headteacher asked governors for their views on the feedback form on the report. The pros and cons of this approach were discussed.</p> <p>AGREED: governors who wanted to could raise questions on the Headteacher's report in advance of the meeting by emailing the Headteacher, but the questions would have to be repeated at the meeting in order to be captured in the minutes.</p> <p>NOTED: Governors asked what Christmas activities the school was managing to arrange? The Headteacher listed a wide range of activities including Widdershins Puppet Theatre, Ely Cathedral Christingle Service, a mixed live and recorded Christmas assembly, Christmas Lunch, Father Christmas and Christmas jumper day The school would not be closing on 18th December following the government's last minute announcement because the Head did not believe this was fair on parents. Instead the school would be using the INSET day on 4th January more flexibly to permit home-based activity for staff.</p> <p>AGREED: Governors liked the new report format and would be happy for the Headteacher to use it again</p>	<p>All</p> <p>TH</p>
9.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>NOTED: the Safeguarding Link governor reported that a safeguarding review with the LA had taken place on 19/11/20. It had gone well and there had been positive feedback. The School still had some things to do. It was stressed that safeguarding was the responsibility of all governors, not just the safeguarding link. For example all governors should be able to describe the school's co-ordinated offer of early help. The Headteacher would place a flow-chart summary of the process in the shared folders (Key documents) for all to read. The LA was coming back in January 21 to review the school's SCR as this had not been possible via the initial remote meeting.</p> <p>AGREED: Liz Martin and Marie Gardner would produce summary notes of the safeguarding training they had recently attended and place them in the shared folders.</p>	<p>TH/ All</p> <p>LM/ MG</p>

10.	<p>School Development Plan (RDIP)</p> <p>NOTED: the School Development Plan (now known as the Recovery, Development and Improvement Plan) as available in the governors' folders. The Head was trialling a different layout as recommended by the LA. She asked for governors' views on the new style document. Governors commented on the length of the document. The Headteacher admitted she had reservations about the document, but had customised it for Steeple Morden so that it only contained 9 priorities. Governors asked if the priorities were in priority order, but also commented that with so many priorities everything the school did seemed to have been captured and everything could not be a priority. Governors felt the document was too generic. Many of the smaller actions had already been undertaken by the school before the document was written and so it did not really meet the needs of the school. Governors said the new document felt like a tick box activity and questioned if it would be more constructive to use the old SDP design instead? The document stated the obvious and duplicated actions and issues that were already known and discussed. The Headteacher advised that she liked the section that reflected on the previous year's achievements and issues. The meeting went on to note that the curriculum issues had already been discussed in detail by the Curriculum Committee.</p> <p>AGREED: the Headteacher would further review the RDIP format and merge the best elements of the document with the school's previous SDP</p>	TH
11.	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>NOTED: the Health and Safety Link Governor would be reviewing the school in light of the LA's Health and Safety checklist in the spring, once he could physically have access to the school.</p>	RE
12.	<p>Policies</p> <p>NOTED: the very long list of polices put forward for approval and available in the shared governors' folders. Most had been considered by either the Resources or Curriculum Committee, but the Complaints Policy was highlighted for further discussion. The document was based on the CCC model and there had been no significant changes since the previous year. Governors highlighted some typos and noted that clause 2.11 referred to two possible outcomes, but because of the alignment of the bullet points only appeared to have one outcome, although the second outcome was listed. Governors highlighted the need for them not to get involved in informal complaints so that they could be truly unbiased if the complaint went to the formal stage. Governors asked how many formal complaints the school received? They were advised it was a relatively rare occurrence as most concerns were dealt with informally. The accessibility of the Complaints Policy on the school website was raised and discussed.</p> <p>AGREED: the Chair would correct minor typos on the document in the governors' folders.</p> <p>AGREED: the Complaints Policy subject to the correction of typos.</p> <p>NOTED: as highlighted by a governor, that section 4.3 of the Code of Conduct was not comprehensibly worded.</p>	KN

	<p>AGREED: the school would raise section 4.3 of the Code of Conduct with EPM and ask them to reword the section more clearly. The document was agreed in principle subject to this re-wording. Authority to agree the final version of the Code of Conduct was delegated to the Head and two Co Chairs.</p> <p>AGREED: all other policies as listed on the agenda and below:</p> <p>Appraisal and Capability Policy GDPR/Data protection Disciplinary Procedure relating to Staff Misconduct Governors Allowance Policy Grievance Procedure NQT Policy Pay Policy Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Admissions policy SEND Safeguarding Admissions Scheme for Financing Schools Contract Regulations Financial Regulations for School</p> <p>Allegations against Staff and Volunteers Induction Policy Safer Recruitment Education of care experienced pupils (formerly LAC) Collective worship Remote education RE</p> <p>NOTED: governors queried why so many documents were being approved at once and whether they could be spread out across meetings more evenly in future? Many documents had been rewritten and approved when the Headteacher first joined the school and were all up for renewal at the same time.</p> <p>AGREED: the Co-Chairs would meet with Mandy from the school to see if the list of policies and procedures to be agreed could be more evenly spread.</p>	<p>TH</p> <p>TH/KN MG</p> <p>KN/ MG</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Update on Governance Review</p> <p>NOTED: the updated Governance Review Action Plan circulated with the agenda. The majority of actions had been progressed. There were no questions from governors.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p>Use of Electronic Signatures</p> <p>NOTED: the difficulty of physically signing minutes and polices because of COVID 19 restrictions. Marie Gardner had provided the school with her electronic signature for use on documents once agreed and governing body approval was minuted. Karenza Nutley had still to provide Cath at the school with an electronic copy of her signature.</p>	<p>KN</p>

	<p>AGREED: the use of the Co-Chairs' electronic signatures by the school on agreed policy documents and approved FGB minutes.</p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p>Staff Well-Being</p> <p>NOTED: this was an especially key issue because of the pandemic. The Chair summarised her experiences at a recent conference she had attended. Governors should be aware of the increased staff workload as a result of the pandemic: staff had to cover for colleagues who were self-isolating, there was an increase in SEND and vulnerable pupils, physical and virtual teaching, increased expenditure, constantly updated risk assessments, track and trace requirements and a variety of other issues. Recognition, appreciation and realistic expectations were required of governors. The Headteacher commented that staff were appreciative of the praise and support expressed by governors.</p> <p>NOTED: in light of the above a full staff survey would not be conducted this year. Rather a short email would be circulated in January soliciting staff views if they wanted to provide them, but it would not be compulsory. Governors supported this approach and asked questions about the detail including access to an external helpline. The school already provided staff with access to external phone number.</p> <p>AGREED: The Chair and Head would consider if the two external phone numbers were one and the same. The Co Chairs would finalise the January email to staff.</p> <p>NOTED: governors asked the Headteacher if there was any support she wanted? Other suggestions for supporting staff as identified at the conference were discussed. Some were felt not to be suitable for Steeple Morden and others were already being carried out. The Headteacher highlighted that a recent discussion with the staff governor indicated that staff were now more settled and more realistic in their goals compared to the start of term and were no longer setting themselves overly-stretching targets. Governors felt that many parents and members of the public did not understand the teaching workload or the need for parental engagement in online home-learning for primary school children.</p> <p>AGREED: the Co Chairs should draft public thanks to the school staff for all their efforts during the pandemic and, in the process, highlight the range of responsibilities and tasks faced by the school.</p> <p>NOTED: with pleasure that Catherine Seward had been able to return to school. The governors wished her well.</p>	<p>KN/TH KN/MG</p> <p>KN/ MG</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p>Governor Training and Briefings</p> <p>NOTED: the update provided by Marie Gardner on training she had received on closing the disadvantage gap for pupils. The gap had been closing for a decade, but was now been widening because of COVID 19 and the closure of schools for a significant time. She would share the training slides in the governors' folders.</p> <p>NOTED: training undertaken by Gillian McGuire. She would share the training slides in the governors' folders.</p>	<p>MG</p> <p>GM</p>

	<p>NOTED: Marie Gardener thanked all governors who had undertaken training and emphasised the current opportunities presented by Zoom training and conferences. She highlighted induction and health and safety training that would be taking place in January. Gillian McGuire had attended this term's LA briefing and Liz Martin was scheduled to attend next term's. The rota for governor attendance was in the shared folders. Gillian McGuire provided a brief oral update on the term's briefing, but pointed out that much had happened since then. She drew attention to the Norfolk Monitoring Guidance as a valuable tool for governors</p>	
17.	<p>Governor Visits.</p> <p>NOTED: the Safeguarding visit that had taken place and the Health and Safety Visit scheduled for the spring if the pandemic permitted. Other than that there were no visits because of COVID 19.</p> <p>NOTED: The Clerk advised that NGA, LA and OFSTED expectations were that governor visits or monitoring should not cease because of the pandemic, but should take place more creatively, subject to the pressure placed on staff, and be formally recorded. For example, visits could take place by video link and conversations could take place by phone, by video or outdoors between link governors and staff. Governor attendance at school video events could also be included. All such monitoring activities should be captured by governors as visit reports so there was a formal record of governor monitoring activity during the pandemic. The Headteacher felt that much of this activity was taking place.</p>	
18.	<p>AOB</p> <p>NOTED: Cath at the school was responsible for updating the school website and governors should contact her about items on the website. A video tour of the school recorded with pupils was on the website for all to view.</p>	
19.	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>AGREED: the next scheduled meeting of the Full Governing Body would take place on Wednesday 10th February 2021 at 7.30pm either at the school or by ZOOM.</p> <p>AGREED: governors' thanks should be conveyed to the Headteacher and Staff for all their efforts this term. Governors were thanked for their support and endeavours and all were wished a happy and healthy Christmas.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">The meeting finished at approximately 9.27 pm</p>	

Drafted by: Jacquie Watts
Clerk To The Governors
10th December 2020

Approved by the Full Governing Body on:

Date:10th February 2021.....

Signature (Chair):.....

