



The Fields Nursery School, Galfrid Road, Cambridge, CB5 8ND

Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body
Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 6.30pm

<u>Present:</u>	Mrs Gloria Reed	GR	Chair of Governors
	Mrs Ann Abineri (from 6.45pm)	AA	Local Authority Governor
	Dr Valerie Ashton	VA	Co-opted Governor
	Ms Florence Blagden	FB	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Ruth Holman	RH	Acting Head
	Ms Sarah Moynihan	SM	Co-opted Governor
	Dr Luisa Pedro	LP	Parent Governor
	Mr Simon Sykes	SS	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Dawn Willis	DW	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Rebecca Wylie	RWy	Co-opted Governor

In Attendance: Mrs Gwyneth Barton GB Clerk

1. Welcome- GR chaired and welcomed Governors to this virtual meeting of the Governing Body. The meeting was quorate.

2. Apologies- Accepted from Carmile Trancoso-Gordon and Roger Williams.

3. Declaration of Interests- There were no new declarations of interest.

4. Extension of Governor's Term of Office- Carmile Trancoso-Gordon's term of office as a parent governor had ended on 2nd July 2020. Governors noted that:

- The local authority had previously advised The Fields not to recruit new governors during progress towards federation, at which time fewer governors would be needed, but to retain existing governors where possible.
- The local authority had recently advised all schools that due to the difficulty of running elections when not operating at full strength during the coronavirus outbreak, Governing Bodies could temporarily extend elected governors' terms of office.

It was agreed unanimously to extend Carmile Trancoso-Gordon's term of office by one year.

5. Minutes of the Meeting of 9th June 2020- The minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 9th June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record. All matters arising were covered on the agenda.



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6. Acting Head's Report

RH reported that:

- The Fields continued to run smoothly under the arrangements made following the coronavirus outbreak, thanks to the hard work of staff. The last day of term would be Tuesday 21st July 2020.
- The timing for The Fields to join the Cambridge Nursery Federation remained dependent on when The Fields could complete its restructuring. All involved remained supportive of federation once the restructuring was complete.

Restructuring

RH reminded Governors that nationally, restructuring consultations in schools had been put on hold when, due to the coronavirus outbreak, schools had closed in March to all but vulnerable and key worker children. The local authority had recently advised that now that schools had reopened to a wider range of children, the consultation on restructuring at The Fields should resume.

It had initially been anticipated that the consultation would resume on 29th June 2020, enabling all necessary meetings to take place before the end of the summer term. However, a delay on the local authority's part meant that the consultation was currently due to restart the following day, on 16th July 2020. A meeting via Zoom for affected staff was scheduled for 4.30pm, to be preceded by a meeting with union representatives.

Two possible timetables for the remainder of the consultation had been e-mailed to Governors, both with the resumption date of 16th July 2020. These had been prepared by RH in consultation with Sally Stainton-Roberts of EPM. The first showed dates if the consultation continued to run during the summer, which would mean term-time only staff coming in for meetings during the holidays. The second showed dates if the consultation paused during the summer holidays and resumed in September.

GR reported that she had received seven e-mails that afternoon from staff who were very upset at the proposal to restart the consultation before the summer holidays. She had replied to each of these individually. A number of staff had also spoken to RH. GR and RH explained that staff accepted that the restructuring would take place, but were asking for a break over the summer. They had been working under considerable stress and uncertainty for some time and had responded with significant good will and flexibility, working through school holidays, not taking leave during term-time and more recently overcoming the professional and personal challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak. Staff felt that reopening the consultation before the summer holidays was insensitive and that it should instead reopen when the new term started on 3rd September 2020.

Governors considered a number of points:



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- Noted that six term-time only staff were affected by the restructuring proposal, plus a further five who were on all year round contracts. The e-mails GR had received were from a mixture of term-time only and all year round staff.
- Noted that NEU members were due to meet that evening and were likely also strongly to support the request to delay the restarting of the consultation until 3rd September 2020.
- Agreed that staff had worked with flexibility and commitment both during the coronavirus outbreak and in the preceding months and that this was to be recognised and commended.
- Noted that GR had already e-mailed Sarah Martins, the local authority's HR adviser, expressing her concern at any suggestion that the consultation run during the summer holidays. RH had sent an e-mail that afternoon to Jon Lewis and Hazel Belchamber seeking their views on not resuming the consultation until September, but had not yet received a reply.
- Asked about affordability and whether postponing the restarting of the consultation to September would significantly delay the conclusion of the restructuring and the delivery of federation. Governors noted that the first timetable, under which the consultation ran throughout the summer holidays, showed the restructuring process completed in September. The second timetable, under which the consultation still started on 16th July 2020 but paused during the summer holidays, showed the restructuring process completed in October.

RH explained that the second timetable was based on the local authority's normal practice of not counting school holidays as part of a consultation timetable. Resuming the consultation at The Fields on 3rd September 2020 instead of 16th July 2020 would add four days to the second timetable. It should still remain possible to implement restructuring by the end of December 2020, enabling federation to take place in January 2021.

- Noted that it was for the local authority as employer to determine when the consultation should resume and how it should run. Given the financial position of The Fields, the local authority's financial support would also continue to be needed until federation could be achieved. However, the Governing Body could make representations to the local authority and it remained in the interests of all for the local authority and the Governing Body to continue to work well together.

Following discussion, it was agreed unanimously that the Governing Body would write to the local authority, setting out the following points:

- Recognising the need for continuing collaboration between the local authority and the Governing Body to achieve federation and to secure the long-term sustainability of The Fields
- Recognising the commitment and flexibility of staff during a long period of uncertainty, compounded more recently by the coronavirus outbreak
- Noting that it had been hoped that the consultation would restart on 29th June 2020, which would have enabled the necessary meetings to take place before the end of the summer term



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- Advising the local authority of staff members' unhappiness at the current proposal to restart the consultation on 16th July 2020 and their request for it to restart on 3rd September 2020 instead
- Conveying the Governing Body's support for this request
- Emphasising that the Governing Body would continue fully to support the restructuring process when it resumed on 3rd September 2020 and would make every effort to minimise the impact of a September start date on the completion of the restructuring
- Emphasising that it remained the Governing Body's aim to achieve federation by January 2021.

It was agreed that SS would draft the letter and send it firstly to GR and RH. The letter would then be circulated to all Governors for comment before being sent to the local authority. The aim would be to send the letter to the local authority before the staff meeting at 4.30pm on 16th July 2020, so that staff could be advised at the meeting of the action taken by the Governing Body.

RH agreed to prepare a revised timetable based on the consultation resuming on 3rd September 2020. Governors noted that if agreed, this would require a Governing Body meeting on 24th September 2020.

7. Chair's Report

GR reported that:

- She had been in touch with Rikke Waldau and Rebecca Mack and both were well.
- Following RH's appointment as Acting Head, GR had initially had weekly meetings with her. These had since been reduced to fortnightly, although they continued to be in contact between meetings as needed.
- RH had asked whether Rikke Waldau could mentor her for the final stage of her National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which she was due to complete by October half-term. Governors noted that Rikke has been RH's mentor for the previous stages, prior to leaving The Fields. Rikke had confirmed that she was happy to do this. Governors agreed that the arrangement should continue and that GR should seek advice from Sally Stainton-Roberts on appropriate remuneration for Rikke.
- On 30th June 2020, GR had attended a national webinar with the Minister for Children, Vicky Ford. RH, VA and FB had also attended. GR expressed concern that the Minister did not seem clear about the differences between maintained nursery schools and PVI's. GR had subsequently written to Daniel Zeichner MP to ask him to continue to promote the case for maintained nursery schools. A reply had been received that day, which had been e-mailed to Governors.



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8. Committees/Policies

a) **Finance and Personnel Committee 23rd June 2020-** The notes of this meeting were received. RH reported that concerns about a possible double payment reported at the Committee meeting had not materialised. She confirmed that local authority Finance colleagues were continuing to provide full support to The Fields.

- Terms and Conditions- Ratified by all, subject to some corrections to typos circulated by FB.

b) **Safeguarding Meeting 9th June 2020-** The notes of this meeting were received.

9. **Any Other Business-** None.

10. **Dates of Future Governing Body Meetings-** It was agreed that future Governing Body meetings would take place on:

- Thursday 24th September 2020 at 6.30pm
- Wednesday 8th December 2020 at 6.30pm.

These would be virtual meetings if necessary.

[RH left the meeting while the following item was discussed.]

11. Acting Head

RH had become Acting Head with effect from 1st May 2020. Governors had previously agreed an honorarium to be paid for the four months from May to August 2020.

Governors noted that federation would now be delayed past 1st September 2020. It was agreed to continue payment of an honorarium to RH from 1st September 2020 until federation, advice to be sought from Sally Stainton-Roberts on the amount to be paid.

Governors thanked RH for continuing to take on this role and for her hard work.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.