

Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body
Tuesday 27th March 2018 at 6:30pm

<u>Present:</u>	Mrs Gloria Reed	GR	Chair of Governors
	Ms Ann Abineri	AA	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Caroline Hart	CH	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Ruth Holman	RH	Staff Governor
	Mrs Rebecca Mack	RM	Co-opted Governor
	Mr Simon Sykes	SS	Co-opted Governor
	Ms Rikke Waldau	RW	Head of Centre
	Rev Dr Roger Williams	RWi	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Dawn Willis	DW	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Rebecca Wylie	RWy	Parent Governor
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Mrs Gwyneth Barton	GB	Clerk
	Ms Paula Champion	PC	Union Representative (until 6.55pm)
<u>Not Present:</u>	Mrs Florence Blagden	FB	Parent Governor

1. **Welcome-** GR chaired the meeting. The meeting was quorate.
2. **Apologies-** Accepted from Ms Sarah Moynihan (SM).
3. **Declaration of interests-** There were no declarations of interest based on the agenda items.

4. Governor appointments-

- a) **New co-opted governor-** Governors welcomed SS and introduced themselves. A personal statement from SS had been circulated with the agenda. It was agreed unanimously

To appoint Simon Sykes as a co-opted governor.

- b) **New parent governors-** GB reminded Governors that there had been three parent governor vacancies on the Governing Body since October 2017. Two parent governor elections had been held but no parents had stood. This meant that the Governing Body could now appoint as parent governors any parents who expressed interest.

GR reported that an expression of interest had been received from Valerie Ashton, whose personal statement had been circulated with the agenda. RM reported that a second parent had also expressed interest and provided a written statement. It was agreed that GR would arrange to meet both parents informally, possibly together, and that they should be invited to attend and be appointed at the next Governing Body meeting on 1st May 2018.

- 5. Briefing from Union representative-** Paula Champion attended the meeting as the National Education Union (NEU) representative, to update Governors on Union discussions. She reminded Governors that the NEU had been formed through the amalgamation of the National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Support staff as well as teachers could be members of the NEU and support staff at The Fields were starting to join.

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Paula explained that:

- Union members and the wider staff at The Fields were fully aware of the complexity of the situation faced by the Centre, with contributing factors including insufficient funding from central Government and from the County Council as well as the reorganisation of the children's centres, which had led directly to a financial shortfall. The implications of the children's centre reorganisation had not been impact-assessed. It was impossible to restructure without a proper change period and without due regard for the complexity of both the organisation and the transformation required.
- Paula had previously attended a Governing Body meeting to talk about the pressures on staff. Pressures were continuing to build, with everyone working beyond capacity. This had consequences for staff members' health and wellbeing.
- Like Governors, staff remained passionate and committed and this had been reflected in last year's 'outstanding' from Ofsted.
- However, staff members' resilience was reducing over time and Union officers therefore felt that it was necessary to act. It was the Union's view that the County Council should meet the financial shortfall resulting from the children's centre transformation.
- Union officers had started the process by negotiating with the County Council but did not feel that the County Council was listening.
- An indicative ballot on strike action had therefore been held, which had been successful. A formal ballot would now be held over Easter, with a view to the first action taking place in the first part of the summer term.
- This was not an action against the Governing Body, but staff needed to make their voice heard. Parents were also becoming active and had raised a petition, which would be presented to the next County Council meeting. Union members hoped that parents would support their action.
- The County Council would be informed as soon as the ballot was underway. Union members had wanted to give early notice to Governors

[Paula Champion left the meeting at 6.55pm.]

Governors discussed Paula's update and noted that:

- The specific reason for calling a strike was the lack of impact assessment in relation to the children's centre transformation, including the failure to assess the risk of redundancy for senior leadership. Time was needed to carry out the transformation effectively. These points had been raised in the response from The Fields to the children's centre consultation.
- The Union was seeking £34,000 for transitional funding. This sum was not sufficient to make up the financial shortfall but would make a more considered change process possible.

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- The County Council's Education team was reluctant to give additional funding to The Fields, on the basis that this would lead to similar requests from other settings. The case being put by The Fields was that this Centre was in a unique position, due to its previously fully integrated model of service.
- As this would be a local strike, staff who went on strike and had their pay deducted would have their pay reimbursed by the Union. However, it remained important to be sensitive to individuals' circumstances when they decided whether or not to strike.
- Operationally, if some staff went on strike, it was likely that the Centre would not be able to open.

GR proposed that the Governing Body should record that it understood why Union members were proposing to take action and was supportive of them. This was agreed unanimously by Governors.

6. Minutes of the meeting of 6th February 2018 (open and confidential versions) - Confirmed as correct records by those present at the meeting. All matters arising were covered on the main agenda.

7. Governing Body matters

- a) Committee membership-** It was agreed that SS would join the Personnel Committee. Other Committee appointments would be reviewed at the next Governing Body meeting when the new parent governors would be in post.
- b) Dates of Governing Body and Committee meetings-** Noted.
- c) Governing Body training update-** RM had attended schema training. AA reported that her training was up to date on issues such as the Prevent duty and FGM. GR and AA had attended the last Governors' Termly Briefing. Arising from this briefing, GR asked how The Fields would be meeting the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). RW explained that the nursery schools together would be buying a package of support from the local authority's ICT service.
- d) Succession planning-** GR reminded Governors of the need to keep succession planning for the Chair in mind.

8. Head of Centre's report

RW introduced her written report and Governors discussed the following issues:

- a) Annual charge to parents-** The report proposed the introduction of a £3 annual charge to parents to cover the cost of wipes, sun cream, Calpol etc. This would have to be a voluntary contribution; if everyone paid, it would cover the Centre's costs. It was noted that Willow and Daisy parents were already asked to contribute £1 a week towards the cost of fruit and extra food for activities. Some parents paid week by week, some for the whole year at once, some not at all. Governors supported in principle the recouping of costs but questioned whether it was administratively cost-effective to collect such small sums. It was agreed that the Finance Committee should consider this proposal further.

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b) Abbey Meadows- The primary school's recent Ofsted inspection had led to an 'inadequate' rating and the school was now required to academise. The Parkside Federation had been identified as the preferred Academy Trust, with a decision to be made mid-April 2018. There were some misconceptions about the implications for The Fields. RW confirmed that The Fields occupied its site independently from the primary school but shared its gas, water and electricity supply with no separate meter. This would need to be resolved before the primary school became an academy.

It was noted that the Teaching School would be offering some EYFS support to Abbey Meadows, particularly on literacy. The EYFS outdoor space at the primary school had also been identified as a concern. However, the main issue identified by the Ofsted report had been the primary school's poor results at the end of Key Stage 2. Governors commented that when the primary school became an academy, it was likely to benefit from enhanced support, including finance. They emphasised that The Fields and the Teaching School, whose resources were more limited, should charge appropriately for any professional support offered.

c) Name of the Centre- RW advised Governors of the need to consider a new name for the services provided by The Fields, including day care, the nursery school and after school and holiday provision: following the transfer of children's centre functions to the local authority, retaining the name of 'The Fields Children's Centre' would be inaccurate and confusing. RW proposed that the Centre in future be known as 'The Fields', especially as this was the name most commonly used by parents.

GB advised that there was a formal process to be following to effect a name change, including the issuing of a new Instrument of Government. Governors agreed to endorse the name change in principle and asked RW and GB to take the necessary steps to bring it formally into effect. It was noted that there would also be considerable work to update logos, signs, documents etc.

d) Timeline for restructuring- Governors had made a number of decisions at the previous meeting, including that the Centre's daily opening hours should move from 8.00am to 6.00pm to 8.00am to 4.00pm with effect from April 2018; that the Centre should move from all-year opening to term-time only with effect from September 2018; and that the Centre should move to single registration for the nursery school and daycare, noting that this decision could necessitate the closure of the baby room.

RW reported that these decisions had been relayed to staff and parents and had been met with considerable concern and opposition. An urgent meeting with parents had been called and over 30 parents had attended. The new Service Director for Education, Jonathan Lewis, and Hazel Belchamber, who had been covering this role, had also unexpectedly been present. They had given an undertaking at the meeting that current service levels would be maintained until the end of August 2018.

Governors reviewed the situation and made a number of decisions, which it was agreed to communicate to parents as soon as possible.

[This item is covered in more detail in the confidential minutes.]

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- e) **Paper from Cherry staff-** As the staff Governor, RM presented a paper from Cherry staff setting out a number of questions, comments and suggestions. RM emphasised that staff were under considerable pressure as a result of reduced resources and increasing numbers of children with SEN; very anxious as a result of the continuing uncertainty; and seeking clarification for the future. However, they were also offering their support in a variety of ways to sustain services, for example by working additional hours, covering additional roles and undertaking additional training.

Governors recognised the Cherry staff's concerns and their willingness to help. It was not yet possible to answer all of their questions: the decisions taken under the previous item would help to work through the issues. Governors also appreciated their offers of help but noted that individuals taking on more and more was not a sustainable solution. Governors undertook to continue to communicate with staff as issues became clearer.

- f) **Parent fundraising-** RW reported a request made by parents to raise money for the charitable Trust in support of a holiday club, if The Fields were to move to term-time only opening. RW would need to check that this was legally permissible.

9. Chair's report- GR reported on a number of issues:

- a) **Donation from Marshalls-** SM had recently confirmed a donation of £2,000 from the Marshall Family Trust, to be used as The Fields wished. RW noted it could be used for the printing costs of the proposed prospectus.
- b) **Meetings with staff and parents-** GR had chaired two meetings following the last Governing Body, one with staff and one with parents, as described by RW above. AA had also attended the staff meeting. Both meetings had been difficult, with people understandably upset by the changes proposed. CH led Governors in thanking GR for her efforts to lead these meetings constructively.
- c) **Liaison with Abbey Meadows-** GR had met with Mike Davey, the Abbey Meadows Chair of Governors, and planned to meet with him again. Mike Davey was in contact with Anne Campbell, the Chair of the Parkside Federation Multi-Academy Trust. GR suggested that it would be useful for RW directly to contact Andrew Hutchinson, the Trust's Chief Executive. GR would ask Mike Davey to encourage the Acting Heads of the school to liaise with RW. She would also emphasise the importance of giving out clear messages about the implications of the primary school's academisation for The Fields.

10. Safeguarding- No issues reported.

11. Pupil Premium- Covered in the Head's report.

12. Teaching School update- No issues reported.

13. Committee reports/policies

- a) **Finance Committee 29th January 2018-** Received and noted.

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- b) **Personnel Committee 4th December 2017 and 26th February 2018**- Received and noted.
- c) **Curriculum and Equalities Committee 20th February 2018**- Received and noted.
- d) **Health, Safety and Premises Committee 7th February 2018**- Received and noted.
 - Health and Safety Policy- Ratified by all.
- e) **Safeguarding Meeting 19th March 2018**- The note of this meeting would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting.

14. Governor visits

- a) **Review of schedule for 2017/18**- It was agreed that RW would review and prioritise the schedule of Governor visits for 2017/18. Pressure on staff time meant that it would not be possible for all visits currently proposed to take place.
- b) **Meeting with a teacher to discuss area of work and action plan (Autumn term visit 1)** - The report prepared by GR and RWi following this visit was tabled with the papers for the meeting.

15. Any other business- None.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 1st May 2018 at 6.30 pm.**

Actions from the meeting:

Governor name	Item number	Action	When
GR and GB	4 a)	Contact new parent governors, meet informally and invite to attend next Governing Body meeting	By 1 st May 2018
RW	5	Communicate Governing Body's view to Union representative	ASAP
GB	7 a)	Update Committee memberships	ASAP
Finance Committee	8 a)	Consider annual charge to parents for sun cream, wipes, Calpol etc	20 th April 2018
RW and GB	8 c)	Investigate steps needed to change name of Centre	ASAP
RW	8	Communicate decisions to parents	ASAP
GR	9 c)	Ask Mike Davey to encourage Abbey Meadows Acting Heads to liaise effectively with RW	ASAP
GR	13 e)	Prepare note of Safeguarding meeting held on 19 th March 2018	By 1 st May 2018
RW	14 a)	Review schedule of Governor visits for 2017/18	By 1 st May 2018

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