



MINUTES

PENKETH SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY – SPRING TERM 2024

Thursday 14 March 2024 at 5.00pm

PRESENT:

Miss Lorraine Browne (Acting Headteacher)	Mrs Carolyn Williams (Chairperson)
Mrs Claire Roper	Mrs Kathryn Bullivant
Ms Pamela Lucido	Mr Howard Platt
Mr Jake Smith	Mr Simon Carroll

IN ATTENDANCE:

Maria Warburton (LA Minute Clerk)	Ms Laura Atherton (Budget Officer)
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Part One – non confidential business

1 Welcome

The chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Ms Lucido and Mr Carroll who are attending their first meeting as new governors. Introductions took place.

2 Absence and apologies

Apologies have been received from Mr Hennessey.

3 Declarations

No interests were declared.

4 Finance update presentation (budget officer)

PSP monthly management accounts

The budget officer explained that they were looking at a £20,000 outturn at the last report and this has been confirmed by the auditors – the accumulative position is £51,000. The school is building reserves now.

For 2023/24 (from September 2023 to January 2024) they are looking at a small deficit of £2,000.

Supply budget: The budget officer informed governors that she had discussed staffing and supply with the headteacher and why they were overspending in those areas. The supply was for maternity leave in the Reception and the cover was due to the member of staff on maternity leave only returning to work part time (13 hours). This contract has now ended with the supply agency and the spend has stopped.

Educational support budget for staffing: Two teaching assistants (TAs) were recruited: one appointment was agreed by governors in the last academic year for a TA to cover the increase in nursery numbers. Another appointment was made in EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) to cover SEN (Special Educational Needs) support in November. This was unbudgeted. This was a result of the additional SEN funding for children in this setting; however, at this point in time it is not covered by SEN funding. **A governor asked** if that would continue to increase over time. The budget officer explained that it will; however, they will have an increased Nursery allocation and they hope to get more income from that to offset the expenditure.

Income: There is nothing in particular that stands out. Pupil premium is slightly below where they would expect it to be at this point in time – for pupil premium the budget is set based on the local authority (LA) funding pathway. This includes a couple of places that were funded, and this information was incorrect. This equates to a shortfall of approximately £3,500.

LA income high needs: This is in relation to SEN, and they are waiting for a lot of funding to come in for SEN and EHCPs (Educational Health Care Plans). They currently have eight EHCPs and further applications are being processed. They have a little extra LAC (looked after children) funding coming in and there is funding due from Virtual Schools.

Nursery: For paid places they set the budget cautiously at the time as it was an unknown. This will form part of the revised budget and they will adjust the budget accordingly. They increased the price last year from £4 to £4.50 per hour. The budget officer explained that an action from a previous meeting was to create a profit and loss for the Nursery. This information has been provided to governors.

Catering: This has gone in-house for all primary schools in the trust. The idea was to move from the LA and improve the quality of meals for pupils. Towards the end of last year and into this year the primary schools are looking at losses. They have carried out an exercise to make sure that all the information is gathered, and they are running the correct reports through Arbor, ie that FSM (free school meals) is recharged, and catering staff keep a better track of wastage and stock. By doing this exercise they feel that they are at the point where the price of meals needs to increase. The LA charges £2.60 per meal; the current charge for Penketh South Primary is £2.40.

A governor suggested that they could increase the price or join the TCAT initiative of a new catering contract; they have this as a choice for each of the schools. The budget officer informed governors that this is being looked at.

Mr McGuire has said that companies are not interested in taking on the catering for primary schools as there is little profit. It is therefore about managing the inhouse catering arrangements so that they can breakeven.

A governor asked what they receive for FSM. The budget officer confirmed that they receive £2.40 per meal. **A governor asked** when the cost of school meals was last increased. The budget officer reported that this was last increased a couple of years ago.

The budget officer explained that the forecast looks worse than that if they were to look at the revised budget based on these figures.

Revised budget

Catering: The worst-case scenario is a deficit of £9,547. This figure is based on everything to the end of January assuming that the weekly amounts remain the same. Since lockdown and Covid, inflation is high, and costs have increased, and they have not increased the meal price.

A governor asked if they were to increase the cost by 20p, how much would that contribute towards the deficit. The budget officer explained that an increase to £2.60 may not be enough. If they had charged this amount on everything by the end of January, they would have made an extra £1,200 – over twelve months it would equate to a deficit of £5,000 which is still a loss.

A governor asked if all primary schools are being reviewed. The budget officer confirmed that the same exercise is taking place across all the primary schools in the trust, and they will apply the same across the board.

A governor asked if they were to go with a catering contract would they determine the price of the meal. The budget officer confirmed that they would. A governor mentioned that there is also the possibility that the quality of the food reduces. Another governor highlighted that an increase in price could mean that there is less of a take up for school meals.

A governor asked when parents decide when their child will have a meal. The headteacher explained that they can choose on a daily basis. A governor mentioned that the LA operates a pre-order system and parents make choices on a Sunday evening for the week ahead, so they know what to order in for less waste. The budget officer explained that this is happening now – when they take the register in the morning, they ask the children what they want so that they know the numbers. The catering teams are being told not to overprepare.

A governor asked if they know about the quality of the food and if this has been improved and is evidence based. Mrs Roper and the headteacher confirmed that the quality has improved, and this has been commented on by staff. There are certain menus that have popular days.

A governor asked how much notice parents would have if there was an increase. The budget officer explained that they would look to increase this in September (for the next academic year).

A governor asked if the increase could be introduced for the summer term. The LA gave parents two weeks' notice for their recent increase. A governor suggested that they could increase this in the summer term and again in the autumn term. There was a concern from governors about the take up of school meals reducing as a result and the timing of a possible second increase in the autumn term. The headteacher explained that TCAT are guiding this at the moment.

A governor asked if there is a risk of having to staff catering and what happens if someone is off sick. The budget officer explained that this has been an issue, and it has resulted in some supply costs. There are losses across all primary schools.

A governor asked if all the schools that do catering in-house could work as a collective group, ie: economies from having a group of primaries working together. The budget officer explained that they have a bank of staff in TCAT, a supervisor and an assistant as a shared resource so that they are not paying an agency fee, they are just paying the cost of a day.

The chair summarised that they have TA costs of £10,000 and the deficit from school meals; however, they do have a reserve from last year. The budget officer highlighted the revised budget with a surplus of £10,800 – they went through the variance: pupil premium is down, and SEN has increased, the rates are increasing for the Nursery in April 2024, and they have revised the paid places and the funded places which has resulted in more funding (which could increase further). Mrs Roper informed governors that they are having an influx of children from April. A governor commented that a surplus of just over £10,000 is very thin and if something unforeseen was to happen they could be in a deficit. The budget officer informed governors that she has spoken with the headteacher, and they will be tight with the budget moving forward; it is being monitored very closely.

Mr Platt informed governors that for central charges 3.75% is taken out by TCAT. The budget officer clarified that this covers support for staffing, Mrs Briggs, Mr McGuire, insurances, accounting, auditing, IT, safeguarding and other additional support such as licences and subscriptions, ie. The Key. Mr Platt added that TCAT feel it is good value; however, it is still a substantial amount at £35,766.

The budget officer reported that the absence insurance has been put in place from 1 February 2024. Mr McGuire arranged a contract with an insurance company to cover all staff absences in the trust including supply costs. The cover costs £1,167 for the remainder of the academic year from February to August; the annual fee is £2,000. **A governor asked** what they pay for supply. The budget officer explained that they do not tend to use supply as the TAs act up and cover where needed; therefore, that is hidden within the educational support budget. TAs are paid extra to cover rather than go externally for that. The headteacher added that they do that where possible and use external agencies when it is unavoidable.

A governor asked what they pay for someone to act up, and if that is more than the cost of the insurance. Governors were informed that it is; however, if they do not have cover, the cost can be claimed for in any event since they are absent, ie: £250 for a teacher per day - they can also claim for support staff and admin at £50 per day and for TAs and canteen staff they are able to claim £180 per day. They are only able to claim after an absence of three days, ie: if a member of staff is off for five days, they can claim for two. The insurance premium is based on historical staff absence – as this is generally low it is reflected in the cost. The cost can rise if this changes.

The budget officer informed governors that they are looking to have the revised budget approved as it is due to be presented to the trust board later this month.

AGREED: Governors approved the proposed 2024/25 budget.

The budget officer explained that this is the worst-case scenario, and it will be better than that. The 2024/25 budget is in draft form at the moment; once the first draft has been completed this will be circulated. They have received the GAG funding figures through. The LA figures are now in – except for the Nursery – they are still finalising that.

Governors thanked the budget officer for attending the meeting.

Ms Atherton left the meeting at 5.39pm.

5 Chair's emergency decisions

There were no chair's emergency decisions to report.

6 Governing body membership

It was reported that two co-opted governor vacancies remain, which they will keep under consideration.

The chair informed governors that Stacy Stagg has been appointed to the role of Trust Stakeholder Engagement Officer at TCAT and one of her areas of work is to help schools to recruit governors as they recognised that it is not just Penketh South that has struggled to recruit governors and this was a problem across all schools. Ms Stagg has produced a publication to help recruit governors – hard copies of this were shown to governors. This is being promoted across the Warrington area and through local businesses.

The chair added that they are pleased to have two new governors on board. This is another example of TCAT supporting the school.

7 Previous full governing body minutes, matters arising and action log

- a) To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 and discuss any matters arising

AGREED: The minutes from the previous meeting held on 6 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

- b) Action log

The headteacher confirmed that all governors have now read KCSiE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) and completed their safeguarding training. Mr Smith commented that the presentation from TCAT for that was very good.

The chair explained that governors can confirm via their Governor Hub account that they have read KCSiE (Part One) which is a statutory requirement and complements the training.

ACTION: New governors (Mr Carroll and Ms Lucido) to read the KCSiE and complete the safeguarding training.

The following actions were carried forward:

ACTION: C/F: Mr Hennessey to review the Debt Recovery Policy. The revised version to be brought back to the next meeting.

C/F: The headteacher to arrange a meeting with the health and safety link governor (Mr Smith).

It was confirmed that all other actions had been completed.

8 SEND (standard agenda item)

Mrs Roper informed governors that there is nothing to update since the last meeting. More potential EHCPs are being submitted and there are more parental requests for EHCPs and more referrals to the CDC.

They have secured Sarah Brady who works at the CDC to come to the school on 17 April 2024 to hold a twilight session with staff to do some work around the signs for autism and ADHD, ie: what they are looking for, and to upskill staff. They will also discuss referral forms and how best to fill them in.

Mrs Roper added that they have sent out a newsletter recently to parents along with a parental sheet to explain the pathway process of SEN across the school from the point of identification to explaining an EHCP and that it does not necessarily equate to an additional person or funding. There are increasing pressures on schools to deal with parental requests that are submitted separately – the school must still deal with the paperwork.

A governor asked if they are still referring children to Iain MacDonald and Karen Howard at the LA. Mrs Roper confirmed that they are.

9 Policies

There were no policies for review.

10 Safeguarding, wellbeing; behaviour and attendance update

The chair reported that she attended a safe and sound meeting, and she will produce some notes from that (she has only recently become the new safeguarding governor).

The safeguarding team discussed the pupils that they are monitoring and any new additions – it is a fluid list. It is evident that they work collectively and there is a team approach. Miss Browne has taken over the interim headship and Mrs Roper and Ms Bennett work alongside.

The chair explained that she watched how the meeting was conducted and how they went through each of the children individually and decided actions they need to take and what they need to do. It was useful to see this in practice rather than just hearing about it. The meetings are held on a fortnightly basis. The school has to deal with some difficult issues and circumstances and a key point is that they now have supervision and support for staff via TCAT which is important as it can be emotive for staff. It is evident how much the staff care for their pupils. The headteacher added that they also support each other every day. The chair acknowledged that it is a team approach which allows discussion and takes the burden off one individual. There is also external supervision which is very good – when they know the families and children it can be harder to deal with.

The headteacher informed governors that she will be attending a peer-to-peer review next Wednesday at Dallam Primary which will be interesting.

Mrs Roper reported that a CPOMS drop-in session at TCAT is coming up shortly. They will be looking at categories as they are slimming these down.

The chair informed governors that the school has always received good outcomes in terms of safeguarding. They have an internal audit through TCAT and an LA audit also takes place; both provide assurance.

Mrs Roper informed governors that they have introduced a monthly safeguarding newsletter with a focus on a particular area. This month's newsletter is tailored around things occurring in school, ie: potential issues and directing parents to where they can find more information as well as highlighting online platforms that children should and should not have access to. The headteacher added that the newsletter is short and concise so that parents read it.

ACTION: The monthly safeguarding newsletter to be sent to governors that are not on the mailing list.

11 Scorecard and Priority Action Plan (business aspect)

The headteacher reported that they are currently doing a piece of work on attendance which is improving. Assemblies and behaviour are linked to play times with specific zones which is helping with this.

For attendance, persistent absence (PA) has come down from 10.7% to 8.5%. They have half termly meetings with Nicola Whyte (LA attendance officer). They are looking at local schools of a similar size in the area to see if the PA is comparable. A meeting is taking place with a member of staff from Bridgewater High School regarding a more formalised letter, ie: parents will receive this if their child has been absent for a certain length of time. They are also emphasising punctuality. Making children want to come to school is a big part of that.

The headteacher informed governors that one child was absent and had not been in school since November for a number of reasons; the child left on Monday to be home schooled. The headteacher added that she can understand why the parents have made that choice – it is the right decision for the child. They have received a lovely email from the parents.

Scorecard

The headteacher reported that the numbers have not changed.

Action tracker

They have been chasing the actions; anything highlighted in green has been completed.

Communication: Mr Carroll reported that he has been working on the telephony with another member of staff from TCAT. They have narrowed this down to the final three providers and they will be going out to tender for the whole trust for new phone systems. This will bring the cost down and provide a better system.

Wi-Fi: They carried out a survey with staff which was positive.

Playground flooding: They have emailed the LA for flood plans.

IT training: This is being held as a joint session with Great Sankey Primary School.

Governance: New governors have now been appointed to the board.

Operations (health and safety): The accidents in the playground have reduced. The MDAs report that changing the lunch times has had an impact.

Mrs Roper explained that there was a genuine reason why the numbers had previously been high; however, it prompted them to take a different action to avoid the number of incidents – they will continue to monitor this. The headteacher added that there is not a great deal of playground space at this time of year due to the weather conditions.

Priority Action Plan

The headteacher reported that the business section has been updated and many of those things have already been mentioned.

Section 2: There will be a meeting with Mrs Briggs to look at the FFT. It has been valuable having Mrs Briggs to support and to be able to call with any issues.

The headteacher informed governors that they are trying to market the school more and a 'Meet the headteacher' piece featured in the Warrington Guardian. The headteacher explained that she attended Greenbank Nursery in Penketh with Ms Stagg to raise their profile in the community. They also visited Kids' Planet but they do not have any children coming from there in September. They are looking at what else they can do to further raise the profile of the school within the local community.

Mrs Roper informed governors that most parents are likely to get their first choice – there may be an over spill from Widnes. They have received some information from the LA about birth rates and future predictions which do not seem to match what they are seeing and what they have for next year.

HR: The headteacher reported that they are doing a lot of work around AI (artificial intelligence) – Tim Long from TCAT has set up an AI hub which some staff have attended. The headteacher has set up a working group in school, which includes the computing lead and the ECT, to see how AI can be used to help with teacher workload and in other areas such as EAL as it can translate into many languages.

Finance: The headteacher explained that they email the budget officer before they do any purchasing or authorising. The iPads and balance bikes have been purchased by the PTA. The PTA is doing a very good job raising funds.

Wellbeing: They will be taking some children to Denmark in May; a meeting was held with parents on Monday evening, and they are looking forward to the trip. They have completed another funding request for next year to go back to Denmark and build on this relationship. Appleton Thorn may be joining the bid – it would be good for two TCAT schools to go together.

Building and resources: The work on the floors in upper KS2 have been completed; the forest school jobs have also been finished. With regards to the outside are, the contractor is coming out the week before Easter to look at the pirate ship and see what work needs to be done.

Technology: Senso is a filtering and monitoring system that TCAT have introduced.

Senso carried out a training session for DSLs (designated safeguarding leads) and then all primary headteachers via Zoom and they met with the head of IT at TCAT. It is now about getting used to the system – they must look at each violation and see if it is a false positive; however, there are too many.

12 Health and safety update (and link governor feedback)

This was discussed under agenda item 11.

13 Buildings and premises update

This was discussed under agenda item 11.

14 Staffing update (non-confidential)

The headteacher reported that there is some staff absence at the moment, and they had to source supply.

15 Governor visits

The chair reported that she shared the link governor roles amongst current governors as they had so few governors. When they consider the link governor roles again in the autumn term these will be shared amongst new governors as they become more familiar with the school. The school is required to have a safeguarding governor. Link governors produce a link governor report (there is a standard template for a formal record). For example, if TCAT carry out a safeguarding audit they would look at the latest link governor report from their visit. Some roles are not essential but are good practice.

16 Governor training

It was reported that Mr Smith attended health and safety training and Mrs Bullivant attended SEND training. Mr Platt informed governors that all the training modules are on Governor Hub and TCAT uses the National College. TCAT also has its own internal training hub which has improved with more support. Governors must access statutory training first. The chair explained that induction training is provided for new governors on Governor Hub which is very useful. There is also a checklist on Governor Hub for new governors.

17 TCAT governor skills audit

The chair mentioned that there is a note on Governor Hub for governors to complete this. Ms Stagg has asked that this is completed if governors have not already done so. The NGA has focused on experience outside of governance whereas this is specific, ie: as a governor what do you feel you do not know about. They will then look at training collectively and how TCAT can support governor skills. They will look at where the governing body has gaps, and they will encourage them to recruit new governors for that experience.

The chair asked governors if they see a notification on Governor Hub to 'like' the post so that it will show they have read it and therefore they will know that it is likely to be actioned. The chair added that it would be useful if they could have 100% completion for the skills audit as it will then be more beneficial to the governing body.

18 Any other business

- a) Headteacher interviews: The chair informed governors that the interview panel consists of the chair, Mr Platt, Mrs Briggs and Mr Moorcroft, she will ask if other governors may be involved. The interviews are due to take place on 17th/18th April; governors will be provided with any updates. A governor mentioned that staff are not being given the opportunity to meet potential candidates.

The chair explained that she will be in touch regarding governors' involvement. TCAT follows a set format, and it will be a robust process. The interim structure will depend on the outcome of the headteacher recruitment.

ACTION: The chair to find out further details of the headteacher interviews from Mrs Briggs and circulate these to governors.

- b) MAT update: Governors were informed that they are removing some things off local governing boards (LGBs) which are onerous such as HR, admissions, appeals, complaints and disciplinaries. Schools will use TCAT as a service for dealing with complaints and disciplinaries. Panels will be staffed by a group of governors from governing bodies across TCAT. Mr Platt reported that there is an opportunity for governors to volunteer and become involved if they wish. The chair acknowledged that being involved in these processes as a chair and a LGB can be very time consuming; the change is very positive.
- c) The chair reported that the admissions consultation has gone through for 2025. This has already been centralised through TCAT so that all primary schools follow the same policy. Mr Platt added that the policies for feeder primaries will be different.

19 Future meeting dates

Summer Term 2024:

Tuesday 25 June 2024 *(to remain as the curriculum meeting)*

Tuesday 16 July 2024 *(to remain as the finance meeting and also cover SATs)*

PART ONE OF THE MEETING CLOSED AT 6.50pm

SIGNED
Chairperson

DATE