



MINUTES

PENKETH SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY – AUTUMN TERM 2024

Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 5.00pm

PRESENT:

Mrs Claire Lawton (Headteacher)
Mrs Claire Roper
Mr Simon Carroll
Ms Carla Bonner

Mrs Carolyn Williams (Chairperson)
Mrs Kathryn Bullivant
Mr Steven Hennessey
Ms Pamela Lucido

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Maria Warburton (LA Minute Clerk) Ms Laura Fletcher (Finance Officer)
Ms Laura Atherton (Finance Officer)

Part One – non confidential business

Governors were informed that the Finance update (agenda item 10) will be discussed at the start of the meeting to allow Ms Atherton and Ms Fletcher to provide the information and leave prior to the meeting taking place.

Catering update (Ms Fletcher):

Ms Fletcher reminded governors that in 2022 TCAT took the primary catering in house to improve the quality for children and have more autonomy on the meals served and how often this is changed to promote healthy eating in schools. During the first year they did not look at budgets and focused on improving uptake and the quality of meals. In 2023/24 they looked at the budget and realised they were making a substantial loss. They projected a loss of -£9,000 which they managed to reduce to -£5,448.

From receiving those figures, they worked closely with colleagues to improve this and ensure break even for the catering budget. They looked at new suppliers and moved away from the broker they used in order to go direct to the suppliers. They also increased the cost of school meals and allowed the children to make their selections in the classrooms before going to the dinner hall in order to reduce waste.

Although they worked hard, they are currently showing a -£2,000 deficit after Period 1 and Period 2. There are number of factors and discussions took place today regarding the maintenance of the kitchen and whether this sits with premises or catering. It was decided that this would come under premises; therefore, a deduction of £801 will come out of that.

The meeting moved to Part Two (Confidential) at this point.

Ms Fletcher reported that they are confident that they will bring the balance to nil, and they will remove the -£2,000 from the remainder of the budget and will re-budget for the rest of the academic year. The supervisors will receive a weekly amount to spend on food, consumables and equipment which will be spread over a period of time. There are other initiatives such as a cash back scheme with the supplier which they could use for theme days. **A governor asked** if other schools are breaking even or if this is common for school meals. Ms Fletcher explained that it is difficult to assess with just two months of figures. Ms Atherton added that there are less costs for some schools that have had more days off at half term. They will look at the budget for the number of days trading in the month. A governor pointed out that during the first months it made a £400 loss, then a £500 loss and then a £600, so it was getting progressively worse, not better. Ms Fletcher explained that this is the reason they have made governors aware of the various issues that are contributing to that, and they have a process in place which is being followed. They are managing this on a month-by-month basis so they can advise what needs to be done to tighten the spending.

A governor asked if the take up for school meals has gone up or down. Ms Atherton explained that they are below where they should be at that time in October. Ms Fletcher highlighted that the information shows a percentage of the uptake rate and the numbers of days per week in the month and the possible number of children that could have had the meal compared to those that have, and they worked out that percentage. The numbers do start to increase, and they maintain above the 55% mark. In other academy schools the percentage is slightly greater; however, this is something they can work on.

A governor asked if the uptake for KS1 is 100%. Ms Fletcher explained that it is only the case if they take a meal. They still receive the funding. They want to look at the actual numbers of children that have a meal. The headteacher added that the menu changes seasonally and they will get the children involved with choosing that.

Ms Fletcher reported that if they look at a school that breaks even – their conversion rate is higher compared to that of Penketh South – the catering staff become involved with what is happening in school and get dressed up for World Book Day, they decorate the kitchen and they have Elf on a Shelf at Christmas time. They run it very much like a business to draw customers in.

A governor asked if there has been any feedback from parents regarding the meals. Ms Fletcher explained that prior to the menu change some parents were not happy with the menu choices, ie: there was a picnic day where they just provided a sandwich with crisps. They made changes to the menu and the uptake was better. A governor mentioned that some parents prefer their child to have hot dinners during the day so they can provide them with something lighter at teatime. Another governor mentioned that some parents at her school prefer a sandwich option, and parents can also order the meals in advance at home.

Ms Fletcher mentioned that there is an option available to order from home. The headteacher explained that the children can sometimes forget what they have ordered in advance which can cause some confusion. Ms Fletcher added that the kitchen staff have tick sheets so that can see what has been ordered for each child and allergens.

A governor mentioned that it is interesting to see the variable profit per person based on these figures; however, they need more children to buy the meals. Ms Fletcher reported that they are spending 50p more per child compared to another school so they can see where the problem lies. They need to reduce that each day, for each child, to put them in a better place.

The chair thanked Ms Fletcher for providing the information and explaining the process which has been really helpful.

Ms Fletcher left the meeting at 5.27pm.

Budget accounts (Ms Atherton):

Ms Atherton reported that last year's accounts are being completed. The trust changed systems in May 2024 which has brought some issues – this has slowed down the processing. An audit started last week, and they had all the brought forward balances. Once the audit has finished, they will share the final outturn and set of accounts. The governing body last received a set of accounts in April 2024 when they were in a surplus position with no real concerns. Nursery was doing well and was keeping the budget healthy. They have the Devolved Funding Capital (DFC) with a carry forward of £6,700 which came in in June 2024 and has not yet been spent on anything.

A governor asked when they are likely to receive the accounts. Ms Atherton explained that the audit started late; however, they hope to be in a position to circulate these before the school closes for Christmas.

During the summer term governors agreed a budget with just over a £3,000 surplus for the current financial year; however, that was prior to the government announcing the teachers' pay award of 5.5%. They also announced a grant to go with that (Core Schools Budget Grant) and as a result Mr McGuire made late changes to the budgets in the trust. They had included a 3.5% uplift for staff. After receiving the grant, the amended budget had a surplus of £25,264. Following that there were also staff changes towards the end of the year when two highly paid members of staff left and were replaced with lower paid members of staff which brought a saving of £28,000. Therefore, they now have a surplus of £53,000 which is a very healthy starting point for the school.

Period 1 accounts: Ms Atherton informed governors that they have just one month's worth of figures as they are so early on in the year. They would expect the variants to be around 8.33% at this point. They are happy with the income and a total of 8.15% overall.

Admin: They looked at the postage which was above due to under payment charges; this was minimal.

Ms Atherton highlighted the new ledger codes within the primary curriculum budget to break this down, ie: books, materials, consultancy, subscriptions etc. If governors wish, these can be grouped together in one larger figure to see what has been spent overall. The new system with ledger codes has been recommended by the DfE. Governors felt that if the DfE have recommended that the spends be broken down into individual codes they should follow that recommendation. They are then able to accurately spend against the correct code; a benefit of the system allows for a comparison and benchmarking against other TCAT schools.

IT: Ms Atherton informed governors that they need to factor in for the desk top servers at Birchwood – this was brought in last year as part of the IT works and it sits under cyber essentials (information is kept in the Cloud to keep it safe). Mr Carroll explained that schools are paying to rent space in the Cloud. Ms Atherton added that they need to factor in approximately £400-£500 per month to cover this. **A governor asked** if this is paid for by TCAT. Mr Carroll confirmed that this is paid for by the schools. In the past servers were situated on site in the schools. Schools would have had to pay for the servers and the warranties.

Ms Atherton reported that the pay award will be going through in December and backdated to September. The uplift for support staff was agreed and this was paid in November and backdated to April (the budget included a 3.5% increase, and it was agreed at 5% - they will factor this into a revised budget in January/February).

Indirect staffing: Ms Atherton highlighted a cost for an EYFS training day for £1,055. Mrs Roper stated that she did not recall the cost being that high and she will look into it.

ACTION: **Mrs Roper and Ms Atherton to discuss the cost of the EYFS training day on Thursday (which seems high at £1,055).**

The chair acknowledged that the budget is more positive than at the end of the summer term. **A governor asked** if they would receive – in terms of frequency – more regular updates. Ms Atherton reported that they already produce monthly accounts. The headteacher added that Ms Atherton comes into school every Thursday and they look through the budget accounts together.

Ms Atherton mentioned that they included a budget for marketing of £2,000 to have signage put up at the front of the school and they also arranged advertising through Livewire to promote the school.

The governors thanked Ms Atherton for attending the meeting.

Ms Atherton left the meeting at 5.43pm.

1 Welcome

The chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting; in particular Ms Bonner who is attending her first meeting as the new co-opted governor. Introductions took place.

2 Absence and apologies

Apologies have been received from Mr Smith and Miss Browne (Observer).

3 Declaration of personal interests for any item on this agenda

Governors were asked to declare any interest they may have, pecuniary or otherwise, relating to this meeting. No interests were declared for any item on the agenda.

4 Chair's emergency decisions

There were no chair's emergency decisions to report.

5 Governing body membership

There are two co-opted governor vacancies. It was agreed at the previous meeting that the newly appointed co-opted governor Ms Bonner would become the English and maths link governor. Ms Bonner confirmed that she is happy to do both those roles.

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

- a) To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 and discuss any matters arising

AGREED: **The minutes from the previous meeting held on 15 October 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the chair.**

- b) Action log
The chair informed governors that they have received a reminder from TCAT to ensure that all governors have completed their declarations of pecuniary interest forms.

ACTION: **Governors to check that they have completed their pecuniary interest form; the school to chase any outstanding forms.**

The following actions were carried forward:

ACTION: C/F: Mr Hennessey to review the school's proposed Bad Debt's Policy before sending to TCAT for information and feedback.

The chair informed governors that TCAT commented favourably that the governing body puts their training on Governor Hub. The chair asked that if governors access any other training, ie: via The National College, to upload this to Governor Hub. TCAT monitor this to ensure that training is up to date.

ACTION: The headteacher to send a link to Mr Hennessey for the TCAT essential training.

The headteacher reported that they have not heard about the TCAT skills audit and therefore assume that any analysis is not going to happen. The chair highlighted that they now have a breadth of experience across the governing body; however, it is disappointing to not receive a response from the trust. It was mentioned that this may be due to the low response rate.

The headteacher informed governors that Ms Smith has been into school, and they will set up regular health and safety link governor meetings. The chair explained that there are some sample template reports to record link governor visits.

The headteacher clarified that the word 'Community' does not have to appear in the school log. 'Nursery' has been added to the logo.

It was confirmed that all other actions have been completed or appear as an agenda item.

7 Headteacher's report

Business scorecard: The headteacher informed governors that the scorecard has been updated and remodelled. A lot of the information is based on the end of October. Some actions that appear as red on the action tracker are not red any longer. Following a meeting that was held last week the headteacher explained that she will be attending an academies induction and will be meeting with all the people in TCAT. The headteacher added that a variety of meetings have been taking place and she will work through the audit documents to look at the actions.

There was a single central record (SCR) review, and some training of the staff is required. The records need a little update. There has been some new guidance from Ofsted.

There has been some training on iAM Complaint to log incidents; the headteacher informed governors that she will also be attending the training for that.

A health and safety action plan was put in place last year and the new health and safety group will review and monitor that. The fire alarm board in school needs changing.

The headteacher reported that she met with Paul Sinnett, and they put together a 5-year estates plan for maintenance and how best they can use their money. They have previously discussed catering and how they are getting children involved in that. The headteacher confirmed that she has now been set up on Risk Mate for logging complaints.

Pupil demographics: They are nearly full in most year groups, and they will continue to promote the school. They feature on a radio broadcast in Great Sankey leisure hub, and they have new signage outside to encourage more parents to come. The birth rates in Warrington are dropping in the coming years.

A governor asked how many children there were in Nursery 2 last year. Mrs Roper explained in the year before (current Year 1) they were oversubscribed and had thirty three in Nursery in that year group. Last year they had less, and Nursery 2 was less. The headteacher added that they are now full. Mrs Roper informed governors that twenty five children will be moving up into Reception which will not leave many other spaces available.

The headteacher reported that she had shown a couple of parents around the school with twins which would raise Year 2 to twenty nine. The school is not far off being fully subscribed.

A governor asked what would happen if a parent has not put Penketh South down as their first choice and they do not get into their preferred choice. Mrs Roper explained that parents put down schools as first, second or third choice and they rank the applications according to criteria, ie: if they have a sibling at this school it is ranked higher or if they were in the Nursery. Distance and then out of authority are the last rankings. The information is then sent back to the LA. The children in Nursery are likely to remain at the school.

Health and safety: This breaks down accidents and these are tracked.

Operations: Anything that requires fixing is added to iAM Compliant. Their compliance rating is at 97%.

The headteacher confirmed there have been no GDPR breaches.

Governance: The chair reported that she went through this section with Adrienne Laing.

The headteacher reported that the newly revised PAP which was reviewed with Mrs Briggs has been uploaded to Governor Hub; some of this is still in draft form. The main point is high expectations and consistency and ensuring that the right amount of time is given to subjects and ensuring that they are not covering too much. Some things have not been changed.

The chair reported that they will discuss that in more detail at the next governing body meeting when they look at the educational aspect

School on a page: This is useful information in one place, ie: teachers, key data analysis, members of SLT, projects and numbers on roll etc – this will be updated each term.

Peer review: This was attended by Mrs Briggs and a couple of headteachers; there were a lot of positives from the visit. At the end of the report are some suggestions of what they could do better with a year or two to complete these. There are a number of quick wins which they have already put in place, and they will work through these. The headteacher reported that they have already carried out peer reviews at other schools which has been a good opportunity to share practice and see what is happening in other schools. Overall, it is positive – the results in summer were good and this is building on the foundations. The reviews provide an external viewpoint and perspective. It is good for headteachers and other staff to work with other people within the TCAT schools.

A governor asked how often these take place. The headteacher explained that they will have a peer review once a year.

8 SEND (standard agenda item)

Mrs Roper reported that since the last meeting they have an additional child whose EHCP has gone through which raises the total to 3.61% on EHCPs – this is slightly below national. The tenth EHCP has come through in draft form today. Two are seeking a change of placement as their needs are greater than what they can provide. With another child, the parental preference is for a designated provision (DP). Potentially there are some other EHCP children that may request a change of place.

The total number of SEND support children is at 15.6% (nationally it is 13.6%). The main area is predominantly speech and language, and this is the same across other TCAT schools.

They are due a peer review from the LA during this academic year which may happen in Summer 1. In preparation they have a lead practitioner for SEND coming in to support all the SENDCos across TCAT and to lead their hub meetings. Mrs Roper added that they will do some monitoring work with her in January, looking at a child with an EHCP and tracking them through school (Ofsted may look at this). They have also worked with the TAs in their assessment programme (Insight) that a lot of TCAT schools use – it has all of the children's learning plans on one page profiles. They have worked with TAs on how to input their interventions and how to measure some of those interventions – it is in the early stages.

9 Policies

- SEND Policy
The headteacher explained that the policy has been changed due to legislation. **A governor asked** if it is a TCAT policy. It was confirmed that it is not a TCAT policy; they looked at the policies from other schools within TCAT. The policy does not require approval and is for information.
- Bad Debts Policy

ACTION: To be reviewed at the next meeting.

- Behaviour Policy
The policy has been circulated for information. The policy has been updated. Each classroom has a recognition board, and this has been reviewed. In the past the children had name cards, and it was felt that they were not getting the recognition they deserved. If every child remains on the board at the end of the day based on the school's behaviour and values they receive a credit. At the end of the day the teacher will choose a 'Star of the Day' and will be rewarded with a Penketh South Star of the Day sticker, and they will give a reason for that. They talked to the children and decided that every child that remains on the board all week, will be entered into a ballot for an end of term prize. Therefore, the more times they are on the recognition board, the more chances they have of winning the prize. For the older children they have introduced Star of the Day pads.

If a child is not behaving or following the rules the teacher will not make an issue and will explain that they can earn their place back during the day to give positive reinforcement to change behaviour to enable them to be in the ballot at the end of the week.

A governor asked if this has been introduced yet – children love to receive stickers. The headteacher explained that it has not yet been introduced. Early Years need an instant sticker reward and the Star of the Day. They will introduce this in Reception in readiness for Year 1. The table points will still continue.

10 Finance

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

11 Report bad debts (standard agenda item)

There are currently no bad debts. Mrs Roper explained that since they changed the system to monthly invoicing there is less chance to accrue a larger amount.

They had to inform a family at the end of last year that if they did not pay their invoice their child would be reduced to funded hours only; the invoice was paid. The chair informed the headteacher that this has been included as a standard agenda item to monitor due to a previous bad debt which escalated and was difficult to manage.

12 Health and Safety (including link governor feedback)

This was discussed earlier in the meeting. The chair suggested that Mr Smith could provide a link governor update at the next meeting.

13 Buildings and premises

The headteacher reported that they have discussed the 5-year plan and what work needs to be done and what can be improved which includes the flooring in Year 1 and Year 2, creating break out spaces and the pirate ship also needs some work on it. The ceilings in some classrooms have water leaks. Upstairs where the library area is, this is to be blocked off to make a separate room; this would help with noise levels. They are also looking at what they can get bid funding for.

14 Safeguarding and welfare (including link governor feedback)

The headteacher reported that she has just met with the chair regarding this. The chair informed governors that she will provide an update and write up a governor visit report. They are continuing to work as a team with Mrs Roper as the safeguarding lead working alongside Miss Browne and Ms Bennett (working collectively). The headteacher explained that they are constantly updating each other with things that are happening. There should always be a safeguarding person in school, and they ensure this is the case. There are seventeen children currently on the vulnerable risk register and the cases can be very complex.

The chair acknowledged that the team provides support for each other when they are dealing with difficult cases. They need to be mindful as a governing body of the impact of the workload as well as the impact of dealing with cases and their support of one another. Safeguarding is strong in school and continues to be so.

15 Behaviour and attendance (including link governor feedback)

The Behaviour Policy was agreed under agenda item 9.

The headteacher reported that the government is clamping down on attendance. The LA was late in publishing an attendance letter to parents; this went out at the beginning of November and sets out what they are tracking in terms of holidays and lates.

The headteacher explained that she meets with the attendance officer and Miss Browne every half term or more if needed and they look at the data to see who has had holidays and persistent lateness.

The LA is now issuing notice to improve letters and if it continues they will fine parents £80 and then £160 and potentially take parents to court.

The LA is supporting schools as best they can, and they have sent out fourteen Notice to Improve letters to parents regarding holidays since September. Parents take holidays at the beginning of term which is then hard for the children to settle. Lateness is an issue. They will continue to fast track to prosecution and one of those may go through at Christmas.

The headteacher informed governors that the money from the fines goes to the LA and not the schools. A governor commented that it is good to see the attendance reported for each of the classes in the newsletter. Mrs Roper reported that the Reception class has had an outbreak of chicken pox for the past two weeks and nearly all have now returned back to school – it is an unusual time of year to have this.

A governor commented that they were below the TCAT average for attendance. The headteacher explained that it is about good habits when the children are young. The lost learning of phonics is huge, and they are working with some families who do not see the importance of their children coming to school. They are working with the attendance officer to put support plans in place to get them into school.

16 Governor training

Wellbeing conference: The chair reported that she has put some notes from this in Governor Hub. A charity pays for staff to be trained in mindfulness. It has been claimed that even if they do not practice mindfulness with the children, doing this for themselves provides benefits which will cascade down. A great deal of schools in Warrington are involved.

17 Any other business

There were no other items.

A governor mentioned that there has been some feedback from parents on Facebook and WhatsApp groups regarding the changes to the school logo and uniform policies – particularly Year 2.

The headteacher informed governors that she has received just one email regarding the changes and has not been approached by any parents. The headteacher added that she responded to the email at the beginning of November and has not received any further feedback. A governor suggested that they reiterate that the current uniform is still valid. The headteacher clarified that the uniform change just relates to new children coming into school, or those growing out of their current uniform.

18 Future meeting dates (Tuesdays at 5.00pm)

Spring (1): 4 February 2025
Spring (2): 25 March 2025
Summer (1): 20 May 2025
Summer (2): 15 July 2025

PART ONE OF THE MEETING CLOSED AT 6.42pm

SIGNED
Chairperson

DATE

