



St Laurence School  
Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 December, via Teams

Governors attending: I Maher Roberts (chair), P Lambert (vice chair), T Farrer (Headteacher), J Abecassis, I Blagbrough, T Chatfield, S Cooper, L Driscoll, C Hamilton, K Kilgallen, M Lee, T Lerwell,

Apologies: L Ash, M Dooley, M Smith, T Walsh

Also in attendance: R Beesley (clerk)

23/21 Open business:

Governors were welcomed to the meeting, which was quorate, there were no further declarations of interest and AOB was noted. A warm welcome was given to Catherine Hamilton on her election as a parent governor, she introduced herself and discussed her intention to link her professional work and university context with the school. She has agreed to join the C&E committee. PL would be her governor mentor.

24/21 Minutes of previous meeting 13 10 21, actions and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed with no matters arising.

25/21 Financial items

IB talked through the summary document and recommended it to the FGB.

He noted that the auditors have commented very positively on the school's preparedness for audit. The governors indicated that they were content with the audit letter.

IB explained some of the reasons for the school spending less than its income, governors noted that part of this was due to the timing of recruitment and in some cases not recruiting to positions.

Governors indicated that they were content that the Chair (IMR) and the Accounting Officer (TFR) sign on page 10.

Governors indicated that they were content with the governance statement on page 14.

Governors were content for the Accounting Officer to sign the declaration of probity and regularity on page 15.

Governors agreed that the Chair sign on behalf of the Governing Body regarding Trustees' Responsibilities on Page 16.

The auditor's report, pages 17-22, was noted and would be signed by them.

The financial statements, pages 23-24, with the end of year position figures and carry forward were noted by the governors.

Governors voted that LL and TFR sign on behalf of the FGB.

TL reported that the audit process was conducted in a professional manner and the further comments from the auditors were very useful, especially in terms of further input from their experience of being advisors to a wide range of academies.

The letter of representation sets out what was asked of the Trustees and what the auditors reported on. It was agreed that IMR and TFR will sign on behalf of the FGB.

The internal team were commended for their work. LL's work was especially valued.

Question: given the carry forward reserves of some £850k, should the FGB consider the Estate strategy from several years ago and address what is left to do?

R – this would form some consideration of the CIF bid proposal, below

26/21 Head's report (including comments on the Challenge Partner's visit)

In further update to the written report, Sixth Form application numbers were the same and the Covid position is broadly the same.

Preparations for the repeat of Teacher Assessed Grades has been done.

On staffing, two teaching assistants have now been recruited.

#### Mobile phone policy questions

Question: what is the update on the proposed mobile phone policy?

R – the decision from May half-term is that no mobile phones are to be used in school (except see below). There would be an action plan of communication from January. Online safety is the focus of the communication. The Student Council had been involved in the consultation and would be involved in the process of communication. There would be training for duty staff (ie. those supervising students at break and lunchtime). The logic of the timing was that, with year 11 having left for GCSE exams and the Sixth form having a different system (this is, permitted use in the 6<sup>th</sup> form centre), that there would be years 7-10 only, to manage.

Question: how did / does the student council fit with this?

R – ultimately, the school makes decisions on its running after consultation (with staff, parents and students), there is / was voting in the council. How else can we support students in making the shift? The school will seek to listen to them, aiming for the rationale to be understood.

Question: some students use their phones for legitimate reasons, eg. emergency top-up for lunch money or reassurance when at school, especially given the long school day, to what extent was thought given to this?

R – it would be a wider goal of the school to educate students to ensure their emotional and other resilience without recourse to a mobile phone. On food, students would not go hungry, there is always the opportunity to have a meal and top-up later. As to timing, the students had managed the primary day without phones. There are other forms of communication (via pastoral system) in emergencies.

Question: will the rationale for this policy be on the website?

R – the result of the parent survey was overwhelming support (not 100%) from parents. Reasons are to be worked through with the whole school community, there are 5 months to do this. FAQ questions and the rationale are to be on the website.

Question: what reasons will there be for allowing their use in lessons, is there enough tech' for all to be able to do this, irrespective of individual phone ownership?

R – the school needed to be mindful of possible conflicts over use of phones in class. Some parents do not allow their children to use some functionality and there are age-related, usage expectations for some Apps. Thus, care was required. The use of phones as a teaching tool will be part of the teacher's brief, eg. for research, but all need to be able to use a common approach. One aspect of this issue is fairness, there is competition on phones, as for other items of kit and equipment. This policy helps to underline the uniform expectation of fairness for all.

#### Other questions

Question: in the folder, the slides from the round table meeting of Wiltshire heads about academy status had been shared, what was the current position on this?

R – whilst there is external pressure to join a MAT, for example from the RSC desiring to hear from the school about joining one. Governors had instructed a watching brief with the opportunity to hear report-backs from meetings, via TFR. Overall, there is a split opinion in West Wiltshire schools over this issue. Now therefore, it would be best not to spend additional time on this but maintain a watching brief.

Question: was are the plans for any possible closure in January in connection with the spread of Covid infections?

R – there is to be a staggered start back to term 3, due to testing, appointment times have been issued. A contingency plan is in place. There has been a student and staff survey on IT, with a view to working from home. As to keyworker and vulnerable children, only the March 2021 criteria is available, so there has been no decision on provision for these students, yet.

Question: given the Covid situation, what mock exam preparations have been possible (especially thinking of year 13 – they did not take GCSE in 2020)

R – all year 11 have done mock exams, as normal and with all the additional exam arrangements in place. This is important in the context of supporting disadvantaged students. For Year 13, they have taken formal mocks in years 10, 11 & 12. But in the case of a school closure, it will be possible to conduct mock exams for year 13, invigilating with school staff, in the sports hall.

Note: Governors appreciated the planning for this and the possible impact of the emerging Covid situation.

Leadership structure, TFR requested that governor decide on the proposed changes to the leadership structure, to prepare for next September.

The recruitment process would involve governors as it was for Deputy Headteacher roles. Whatever the outcome, there might well be further external and internal recruitment and the timetable for such matters could be quite tight.

In terms of budget, the new model may result in a change to staffing costs.

The FGB agreed to the leadership structure, as in the model proposed and noted the budget forecast.

Challenge Partners report, there was limited opportunity to discuss this in the meeting but it would be on the agenda of the Strategy committee in term 3 and aspects would be on the agendas of Standards and C&E, going forward.

The whole review had been a significant effort on the part of the SLT and the staff. There were some very positive messages that would be used in school publications and the website, especially those mentioning disadvantaged students. It was noted that the lead inspector was an Ofsted inspector too. The category 'leading' was used for 2/3 of lessons observed. 'Good' was the description of

leadership, at all levels. The 'Even Better If' section was very useful for future planning and internal discussion for the SLT, it would also be discussed in the Standards Committee. The SDP and plans for CPD has been amended in the light of the report. Whole school INSET days were now focussed on pointers from the report too.

Governors welcomed the report and the encouraging nature of it.

#### 27/21 Committee minutes

F&E – it was a recommendation from the Committee that the FGB approve the pledging of the maximum amount allowed towards the CIF bids for 2021.

More CIF points are awarded if the FGB pledges to support the bid with school reserves. A fee is payable to the advisors and this is approximately £4k per bid, this is added to the bid (a change from the 'no win, no fee' basis). The notification date is likely to be in or even after May 2022.

Governors agreed to commit from the reserves, in support of the CIF bid.

If the CIF bid was not successful, the school could fund the perimeter fencing work from its budget and carry-forward, over the next two years. The AEN buildings could be refurbished and an indicative cost was c£570k). However, governors needed to be aware of the funding context which meant that after a future, two years of positive carry forward, it was most likely that the school would have to fund from its reserves, changes to employer NIC and pension contributions with no further funding from central government.

In terms of discussing the future direction of planning the school estate and considering options going forward, this would be the last time for fencing and AEN building to be in a CIF bid process. But given that these two items were in fact the next priorities in the Estate Plan, we should wait for the CIF bid before making further decisions on them.

Plans for the school estate is to be on the term 5 FGB agenda.

Standards – an excellent presentation had been received on Art, Graphics & Photography, the committee had been impressed by the enthusiasm of the staff and the range of activities available to students.

To note from the GCSE results report, the Progress8 measure was at its highest, disadvantages did not do so well overall but better in English and Maths, a similar pattern for SEN students.

On A level results, the B- average was down a sub-grade on the previous year, but the most positive was the number of students moving on successfully to their next step, 70% went to university, with 90% to their first choice. For current year 13, a grade B average is predicted but it was noted that they were carrying the impact of the pandemic, ideally the mocks will increase confidence and progress towards higher grades.

In summary, Covid has not got in the way of a set of great results, this being testament to the excellent work by the staff of the school in pursuit of this.

C&E – a very informative presentation on PSHE in the Sixth Form, showing this to be a distinctive offer for St Laurence, at post-16.

There had been an update on anti-bullying procedures, a rise in reports of bullying incidents to 23 reports (over 2 terms) indicated a better level of communication and demonstrated the proactive nature of the school's approach rather than an increase in bullying.

This had been echoed in myConcern reporting over safeguarding concerns, more reports because the system was fully set-up and well used (most reports were of concerns of low mood, reports of poor mental health and noted issues of eating disorders).

The initial response to the Everyone's Invited initiative had now concluded with the production of a well-designed leaflet which would be widely used for education and signposting. It was noted that Rebecca Overton had developed the significant work that Rachel Purnell had done in these areas of student support. The committee wished to note her welcome contribution to them all.

It was noted that governors would be asked to make some future contributions to the termly Connect newsletter. PL had started this process, this term with some Q&A on his role as chair of C&E.

IMR would be asking other governors to step forward with contributions for future issues.

28/21 School policies agreed this term, governors noted the delegation of policy approval to committees, as follows:

FFE – Charge Card, Financial Standards & Procedures, Tendering & Procurement, Health & Safety, Lockdown Procedure

Standards – Careers (and Entitlement Statement, Provider Access Statement), Early Career Teaching

C&E – Anti-Bullying, Looked After Children (designated teacher)

Strategy – Complaints Procedure

29/21 Policies for approval by FGB

Governor induction policy & procedures,

It was noted that Data Protection training was a requirement. With that amendment, the policy was approved. CH was invited to comment on the policy & procedures after her induction.

Pay, this was the delayed Wiltshire Council policy for adoption. There were two points of difference for the internal St Laurence procedures. Regarding a pay award for September for unqualified teachers, there were no staff at this level. For UPS, teachers were asked to apply in writing to TFR directly, and in so doing agree to move to a higher level of accountability.

Governors noted that the appraisal process has been completed. IMR and TFR had completed a moderation exercise looking at objectives and targets, ensuring that they were suitable and challenging. The Blue-Sky platform functionality had been demonstrated.

Comment: governor involvement in appraisal was encouraged by the LA and Ofsted.

30/21 Governor visits to school, further plans were suspended in the current situation.

31/21 Student voice, PL & LA, IMR & JA and SC had been involved.

SC had met year 12/13 students. Their discussion ranged over compulsory RE, the very positive level of support and feedback offered during their studies, the strong feeling (ethos) of learning in the Sixth Form and whether this could be replicated in the GCSE years.

PL & LA had focussed on pastoral matters, there had been a good level of engagement from students, the discussion echoed the strong pastoral support found in the school, the opportunity for student voice to be heard, that students were engaged with learning and that there was a good emphasis on inclusion in the school. Some constructive suggestions had been heard, for the school.

IMR & JA focussed on personal development, after school opportunities, extended opportunities such as DofE, the transition from GCSE into 6<sup>th</sup> and on to university. Students were engaged in the discussion and some suggestions were made, there was a question over after school opportunities for Sixth Form students.

Governors were asked to send feedback to the clerk for collation and circulation. This would go to the SLT.

Comment: it was very positive to have feedback via governors and the SLT valued the comments. On some immediate specifics, there were clubs for post-16, so it was a point of making students aware of opportunities and communication is the issue. The regularity of hearing student voice is a key point. It was noted that Challenge Partners heard from students and TFR meets the Student Council termly. Student leadership is an aspect of this process too.

32/21 AOB

Governor support is requested for offering interviews to year 13, non-UCAS students (it was noted that 94% are aiming for university this year). This would aid the working towards the Gadsby benchmarking of the careers education offer at the school. KK, IMR, PL, LD, CH, TFR, all offered their time, this would likely be via Teams,

It was noted that meetings of the governors, going forward would all be at 1700 and likely to be via Teams, until further notice.

The meeting closed at 1810.