



Meeting of the Full Governing Body of Castle School

held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017 at 6.30 pm in the School

Present:

- Mary Langran (Chair - MLa)
- Nick Brenton (Vice Chair - NB)
- Carol McCarthy (Head Teacher - CM)
- John Bastable (JB)
- Helen Dolling (HD)
- Kate Dove (KD)
- Janice Frankham (JF)
- Jane Merrett (JM)
- Katy Roberts (KR)

Also in Attendance: Sally Hempson (School Business Manager - SH)

The meeting was quorate throughout.

	<i>Before the formal start of the meeting, governors present watched a newly-completed video of the KS2 residential trip to Stibbington on April 24th/25th, illustrating the wide variety of activities undertaken. Eight pupils and six staff took part: CM remarked that for some of the young people involved this would have been their first experience of sleeping away from home. Governors asked CM to pass on their thanks and congratulations to the staff involved for voluntarily undertaking this additional responsibility.</i>
1	<p>Apologies for absence / clerking arrangements</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Jude Coad, Jane Elliot-Poxon, Mark Littlewood and Donna Lovett.</p> <p>MLa reported that, having advertised for a clerk before half term, there had been no responses. The position was being readvertised – details on the school website – but for this meeting neither MLa nor SH had been able to find cover for minuting. NB was therefore minuting this meeting. MLa noted that there is a legal requirement for a clerk with appropriate knowledge and skills, and would welcome any suggestions from other governors about how to ensure we recruit a clerk for future meetings.</p>
2	<p>Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda</p> <p>None.</p>

	MINUTES
3	<p>Minutes of the last meeting held on 20th March 2017</p> <p>Circulated in advance; approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.</p>
4	<p>Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting held on 20th March 2017</p> <p>4.1 <i>(Item 4.3)</i> CM reported that risk assessments are done in school but are seen by the CCC through the Evolve process. She ensures they are robust. In relation to Stibbington, they do their own risk assessment in addition to that undertaken by the school in line with Cambs CC policy on external trips.</p> <p>4.2 <i>(Item 10a)</i> KR has sent through some initial thoughts on coaching to CM, to be followed up this term.</p> <p>4.3 <i>(Item 7)</i> The report on Ofsted / CQC's area inspection of SEND provision in the county has not yet been published: CM would circulate when it became available.</p> <p>4.4 <i>(Item 4.1)</i> MLa will be uploading further material to the governors' secure area of the website before half term.</p> <p>Other actions from the previous meeting had either been completed or were elsewhere on today's agenda.</p>
	REPORTS
5	<p>Headteacher's report to Governors</p> <p>MLa thanked CM for a very full and comprehensive written report, which had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>CM drew attention to the following specific points in her report:</p> <p>a) - The different numbers of pupils in the tables 'pupils on roll' and 'equalities pupil profile' is accounted for by the figures being compiled from data on different dates.</p> <p>b) - Currently 42 families are seeking places at Castle in September, mainly in the primary phase. The school will not be able to meet this demand, as CM has explained to Judith Davies in the LA.</p> <p>c) - Regarding SEN 'primary need' data, CM reminded governors of the current view that ASD in girls remains underdiagnosed. In response to a question, she added that the preponderance of boys at Castle reflected the national picture, and <i>might</i> reflect boys' overdiagnosis.</p> <p>d) - The pupil attendance figures are positive given the range of challenges Castle pupils may face in coming into school every day. There are robust procedures in place for following up any absences and identifying patterns of non-attendance and how this might be addressed. CM's report highlighted the work being done with EWOs to improve attendance where it was low – six examples including staff picking up a young person from home to ensure attendance at school.</p> <p>e) - JM noted that governors should also receive information on staff</p>

	<p>attendance: CM undertook to provide this in future as far as individual staff confidentiality allowed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ACTION – CM</p>
f)	- CM assured governors that staff expecting babies, and returners who have given birth, are given support and guidance about health and safety taking account of their conditions.
g)	- CM reported another resignation from the nursing team, and her concerns that health e-learning for staff, though more efficient in use of training time, did not allow for Q&A sessions which staff found useful.
h)	- Safeguarding Policy / dual reporting: the school policy has now been updated and relevant details are in CM's report.
i)	- Transition: as last year, this will start in July to give pupils and their families time to get used to their new class arrangements from September.
j)	- Rochford report: CM and SEN Heads have responded to the Rochford proposals on 'assessment without levels'.
k)	- Staff and parent questionnaires have resulted in very positive feedback on the school's performance. Pupil questionnaire now being undertaken.
l)	- Pupil destinations post-school: CM reminded governors that the Annex to her report on this includes confidential pupil-level data so should not be circulated further. Castle seeks to ensure an appropriate setting and provision for all leavers, and continues to work closely with CRC and other post-16 providers
m)	- CM noted that MLa and JM recently went on a governor training course on Ofsted inspection. CM has compiled a set of resources so governors can assess whether they are up to speed with the questions Ofsted may ask as we seek to be judged 'outstanding'. Crucial to this is knowing the school through regular visiting: CM will circulate relevant papers following the meeting. <i>[Post-meeting note: this was emailed to governors on 4th May from the school office.]</i>
6	Chair's report to Governors
a)	MLa's report had been circulated before the meeting. MLa reported that we have been invited by Granta to attend a briefing on MAT roles and responsibilities for governors on May 17 th : the meeting agreed that, given CM was researching academy status as part of her performance management targets and we would have fuller information later in the year, we would not be taking up their offer. MLa would email Granta to confirm this.
b)	CM noted that Ofsted's inspection report on Granta has now been published and encouraged governors to read it – available on the Ofsted website.
c)	KR asked about any contact Castle has had with the Regional Schools Commissioner's office, and offered to send details of her contacts through to CM. <i>[Post-meeting note: this has now been actioned.]</i>
d)	MLa asked for support for the proposed tea party for staff on 17 July. Any help on the day, plus providing food for the tea, would be welcome.
	ACTION: ALL

7	<p>Summary of Cambridgeshire Governors' Annual Conference</p> <p>JB's paper on this conference held on 4th March had been circulated in advance. JB reported that the conference covered financial pressures; 'inspiring governance'; the importance of clerking; and the fact that governors were the largest group of volunteers in the country. JB felt that we are lucky in this country in our school governance arrangements compared to other countries he had worked in.</p> <p>JB highlighted a research paper on schools' strategic direction from Nicky Odgers, Chair of Morley Memorial Primary School. In a survey of GB members three quarters did not understand the importance of strategic planning as a core value of a school's GB. The key findings were: (1) Many schools did not have a strategic plan. (2) Where plans were in place a GB was more likely to have ratified their vision than their strategic plan. (3) Senior leaders in the school should contribute to shaping vision and ethos of the school. (4) Heads are generally more willing to be inclusive regarding other stakeholders than GBs. (5) Some schools never discussed long term goals although most believe that equal priority should be given to planning ahead and monitoring performance.</p> <p>CM commented that succession planning is important for the governing body, and perhaps this should be a future agenda item. As an example of this, she suggested that having someone else chair the meeting might enable skills to be maintained for the future.</p>
	<p>FINANCE</p>
8	<p>School budget</p> <p>CM explained where we have so far got to in setting the budget for this year, which is also touched on in her report and MLa's report to governors. There have been a number of meetings with Rob Cottle, our LA financial adviser, and Judith Davies. Castle, like other schools, is faced with spending pressures from the 1% payrise, the 'upward drift' of staff progression, and the Apprenticeship Levy (£12k). Cambridgeshire continues to suffer from one of the lowest per pupil funding rates in the country, and the message from the LA is that 'there's no more money'. Rob Cottle has told us that this is the worst set of funding pressures he can remember for all the schools he deals with.</p> <p>Castle has never been funded appropriately for the vision when it opened, and we have faced deficit budgets in the past, but not on such a scale as we now face. Having worked through the proposed budget line by line looking for savings, we are in the position of carrying forward about £16k from FY16/17 and facing a budget deficit of £132k (approx. 4% of our total budget) in FY17/18, increasing in subsequent years.</p> <p>In discussion, suggested possible <u>savings</u> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing PPA (non-teaching) time from the current 15% to 10%; - Making further savings on staff training and the supply teaching budget

headings;

- Reducing sickness insurance (eg by making it kick in after ten days instead of five);
- reducing the 'careers' budget (which covers a range of activities associated with the preparation for adulthood agenda;
- looking at replacing IT equipment through donation / sponsorship rather than lease purchasing as built in to the current budget;
- making more use of 'volunteers' to cover some TA duties;
- reducing music therapy provision.

Increasing class sizes and increasing admissions were discussed, but both raise difficulties related to health and safety and (if the school grows) the increased staffing levels required. Governors were concerned about the possible impact of making savings on the richness of provision the school is offering its pupils, and about the costs associated with implementing some of the above suggestions. CM said that Anne Haberfield would be working on next year's timetable on 16/17 May, and would ensure the most efficient use of teaching resources throughout the school taking account of this discussion.

Regarding generating additional funds, various suggestions were put forward:

- recovering costs from the NHS for their use of serviced space at Castle School;
- increasing lettings, for example through hosting summer school pupils from abroad;
- letting out the car park at times of peak demand such as Christmas;
- making more use of swimming pool down time;
- asking parents for contributions in addition to their contributions for specific activities such as horse riding.

Again, some of these proposals carry additional cost implications for the school, and would need to be carefully thought through for cost/benefit balance before being implemented.

Governors were clear that the current staffing structure and levels should be maintained, and staff reassured that there are no proposals to seek redundancies. This means that a deficit budget will have to be set and agreed with the local authority, and within it we will have to identify how to repay it over a three-year period.

It was also agreed:

- All governors needed to consider how their own contacts and networks might contribute to supporting the school financially: we need to become more entrepreneurial;
- We should not be expecting parents to pay for basic provision, but only for items / activities which have already been identified as rechargeable;
- We need to make more detailed calculations based on this meeting about the funding shortfall and return for a meeting to ratify a deficit budget in June;

9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This will include further discussions with the LA about the situation we face and how they will seek to justify any cuts to the provision we make as a result of these budget pressures; - Communication with parents and staff should be prompt, clear and objective about the situation we face. <p>MLa said that initial discussions with Rob Cottle had set a deadline for budget setting of half term at the end of May: she therefore proposed an extraordinary FGB meeting on June 12th to ratify the final budget and proposed recovery plan which she, NB, CM and SH would work with the LA on in the interim. Governors should come to that meeting with a clear idea of how they can contribute to improving the financial health of the school, based on the discussion at this meeting. This was agreed.</p> <p>Contract renewals for formal approval</p> <p>Because the F&P meeting had been cancelled, MLa had circulated three contract renewals for approval via email. These were approved by the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooler Aid; - Absence Insurance; - Anglia Security. <p><i>[Post meeting note: details are in an email from Mary Langran dated 4th May.]</i></p>
GOVERNING BODY BUSINESS	
10	<p>Remaining agenda items</p> <p>a) Given the lateness of the hour following the extended discussion on the budget, it was agreed to defer the following items to the 12th June meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised school visit policy; - Governors' development plan (including consideration of Maria Landy's contribution to March meeting); - Governor vacancies; - Clerking update; - Governors' role in health & safety <p>b) CM reported that a problem with the dinner register and its use by staff had resulted in the need to write off a debt of £85. The staff training issue has been addressed. Governors agreed the write-off.</p>
17	Date of next FGB meeting: Monday 12 th June 2017 at 6.30pm

The meeting closed at 2110.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....