



**Minutes of a Meeting of the Full Governing Body of Castle School
held at 1830 on Tuesday 7th May 2019 at the school**

Present: Mary Langran (Chair – ML)
Chris Baker (Headteacher – CB)
Nick Brenton (NB)
Donna Lovett (DL)
Katy Roberts (KR)
John Bastable (JB)
Helen Dolling (HD)

Also in Attendance: Sally Hempson (School Business Manager - SH)
Laura Oxley (Camclerk – LO)

The meeting was quorate throughout.

1	Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence
1.1	Apologies were received from Kate Dove (KD), Jude Coad (JC) and Janice Frankham (JF) and were accepted.
2	Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda
2.1	None declared.
MINUTES	
3	Minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting held on 11th March 2019
3.1	These were agreed as a true record of the last meeting.
4	Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2019
4.1	5.5 Nursing emails – Action: CB to send the relevant emails to ML. CB confirmed that this matter is on the special heads agenda for next week. Another audit has been completed and this has ascertained that there is not enough nursing provision to provide the hours to pupils that are needed. <i>A governor commented that this has been going on for years and is quite worrying.</i> CB said that at the moment the school is in the process of meeting with a family whose child has a very high level of nursing needs. <i>A governor commented that it is a lot of responsibility for the school staff.</i> CB said that there is

4.2 4.3	<p>a good system in place in the school but it could be supported better. Action: CB to clarify whether the Service Level Agreement (SLA) is with Castle school or with the Local Authority (LA). CB said that he is still awaiting an answer about this.</p> <p>7.4 School Development Plan – Action: CB to bring this to the next meeting.</p> <p>10 Head teacher’s performance update – Action: NB to write to Lynda Morgan (School Improvement Adviser) about this.</p>
	REPORTS
	GOVERNING BODY PLANNING AND INVOLVEMENT
5 5.1 5.2	<p>Link Governor visits update</p> <p><i>A governor asked if there was a pro forma for governor visits. ML said that this needed relooking at in line with the new Ofsted guidance. A governor commented that it would be helpful to go into a visit with some specific questions to answer in mind.</i></p> <p>Report from HD: HD visited the school on 20 March with Liz West with the aim to look at the literacy curriculum and English in primary. The visit covered discussions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roots for learning and how progress is tracked – the EHCP forms the basis of planning for roots for learning and targets are set appropriately for the student’s individual needs. - Assessment processes – the Rainbow assessment is based on the Early Years profile, discussed semi-formal learners and evidence for learning – an iPad assessment tool has been recently acquired, which is a good way of documenting evidence. <p><i>A governor asked if this tool is being used in secondary as well as primary. CB said that it is being used in both primary and secondary to formulate the end of year reports.</i></p> <p>HD said that there is the potential for sharing information with families using this tool. It had been discussed that another way of evidencing learning was through termly reports. CB said that the reports had been yearly, but next year they would become termly instead.</p> <p>HD said that during her visit it had been discussed that these reports will cover what the child has achieved each term. Photo and video evidence is being used. Parental engagement is encouraged, with achievements at home being shared in school.</p> <p>HD visited all the primary classes. She commented that many of the classrooms were empty and it was not clear where the students were. Some may have been on a break and some may have been swimming. HD saw Bees class, with 2 classrooms of 5 children each. They were having Rhymetime and one class was having a massage story based on touch. There was also a visit from therapy dogs. In</p>

Ladybird class, there was more focus on play and all the children appeared well engaged. They were doing phonics based learning using costumes and stories. In the classroom, video recording was used for evidence. HD also visited the classrooms of Dragonflies, Squirrels, Foxes, and Owls, where the pupils were learning key words based on cue. HD looked at individual reading records and at books to be taken home. In the Butterflies classroom, there was a more sensory led group who were on a mat on the floor doing individual learning. In Deer class, a more formal lesson was being held with more able pupils. The teacher explained that TAs are used as part of the assessment and students have their own workbooks annotated by TAs.

HD met with the Lead for Primary Literacy, who explained some of the more formal aspects of how the curriculum is set up. They also talked about:

- Structured learning and repeated learning
- Sensory circuits
- Touch and taste
- PE, horse riding and swimming
- Clever fingers
- Hello song

HD also looked at Bees and Butterflies using the sensory room and rebound therapy. This is very popular with the pupils. HD also discussed the support that is available to pupils in school, including:

- Individual support through intervention sheets
- Yearly meetings
- Occasional educational psychologist support who can introduce interventions when required

Overall, HD said that it was a very positive visit and it was lovely to see the children at work. HD commented that it was not clear that there was a good evidence base for some of the things being used, but there was not really the scope in that visit to explore this further. CB suggested that this could be the focus for the next visit. He said that the five most important learning targets for each child lead the learning for each individual child. *A governor commented that it may be easier to miss individual needs when a group is too diverse and asked how can it be determined where each child is working at their potential.* CB said that having a good group of professionals around them aims to cover all angles. The school has a new educational psychologist who started a couple of weeks ago. *A governor asked what the educational psychologist's availability will be.* CB said that in theory the school receives 90 hours per year of educational psychologist time, but this year they have not have their 90 hours. *A governor commented that it is difficult to know where a child's potential may be heading.* CB said that the majority of pupils have a 'spiky' learning profile with skills and deficits in different areas. Taking into account the difficulties with the budget, one of the things that CB is interested in putting more money into is the therapy support available as there is not enough time from the educational psychologist currently. There are also pressures from the SAT team, requesting that particular children get more TA support

	<p>and input from the educational psychologist. It would be useful to have more educational psychologist hours and more therapy hours. <i>A governor commented that the school has been talking about becoming a training school and for trainee educational psychologists, a special school may be interesting, and it would be cheaper for the school to have trainee educational psychologists.</i> CB said that the school does already work with some trainee therapists. <i>A governor commented that maybe some further collaborations would be useful as the educational psychologist may only be able to see a child once which is a very short time and is not sufficient to establish a base line.</i> CB said that it requires a good working relationship between the therapist and the school staff.</p> <p>HD asked about arranging a secondary visit. CB confirmed that the secondary coordinator is not currently at school and Anne Haberfield is covering the role in the meantime. Action: HD to contact CB/Anne to arrange a visit to secondary classrooms.</p>
5.3	<p>JC was due to submit a report but was unable to attend this meeting so the report is postponed. Action: JC to bring report to next meeting.</p>
5.4	<p>KD has arranged to visit Anne regarding maths early next month. They will be talking about the maths hub and other work going on in school in that area.</p>
5.5	<p>Report from JB: JB has visited Wolfson College to meet with Jane Clark, the president. Jane was pleased that this project had been picked up again. However, she said that it was not the best time of year due to exams. In June, after the exam period, Jane has been invited to visit the school. She will talk to her student body and the faculty about organising a science day and some visits next year. She is interested in ways that the students can become involved in the school. Many are overseas students and would like to be more involved in the community. Jane offered a visit to the school from the Wolfson choir who could come and sing to the pupils. The pupils could also visit Wolfson to see the college gardens. Jane talked about a connection with the Royal Society to involve schools in science projects. Jane's background is as a scientist and primary school teacher. Overall, it was a positive meeting. Jane had asked JB what would be the arrangement for DBS check for overseas students. CB said that if they were accompanied, it should not be a problem. Jane has offered that Wolfson can cover any costs associated with DBS checks for students visiting the school. She also mentioned that Simon Baron-Cohen may have students at Wolfson who may be interested in working with the school and pupils with autism.</p> <p><i>A governor asked how this project had come about.</i> JB said that it was through a teacher at the school who was a Wolfson graduate. The project had previously been discussed with Jane, but had not yet been carried forward due to changes in school staff. CB said that he was really keen for the school to link closely with the university. <i>A governor</i></p>

	<p><i>commented that the university may take a particular interest in the school. CB said that Cambridge University Press has chosen Castle school to be their charity for the next two years. The last charity was given £34,000 over the last two years through their link with Cambridge University Press. JB said that one of the strengths of linking with Wolfson is that one of their targets is to have community outreach and community action for their students. The school could provide something like this and perhaps graduates may become interested in teaching here in the longer term. A governor commented that if there are areas of research that staff would like to learn more about, there are often Masters students at the Faculty of Education who would like to be involved in research projects in a school and many of these students have an interest in special needs. A governor commented that many students from overseas have no experience of volunteering and part of being at the university is to have an opportunity for this. A governor said that there is a university wide volunteering organisation, called Student Community Action. CB said that the school does have some volunteers from this project already. A governor suggested that perhaps the university would be a good source to recruit governors from and, taking into consideration the gaps in the skills audit, it may be worth discussing this with Wolfson. CB said that he would welcome this. A governor asked how many vacancies there currently are on the governing body. CB confirmed that there are four. ML said that it would be good to have a range of experience in the governing body and to have governors who will ask questions and provide constructive challenge, and also be available to visit the school and attend meetings. Action: Any governors with ideas about who should be recruited to the governing body to contact ML. A governor asked what gaps were identified by the skills audit. ML said that this must be read in conjunction with the committees that everyone is on. For example, it may be that a governor does not have much knowledge of finance but that may be because they are not on the finance committee. It needs to be looked at holistically. A governor commented that it would help to know what specific skills we are looking for when talking to potential governors. Action: ML and CB to look at Skills Audit between now and end of June. ML said that Alison Richardson, who attended a governors meeting earlier this year as an observer, would still like to become a governor but cannot commit at the moment. In the meantime, she is still doing work for the Friends of the school and has done some fundraising for the school.</i></p>
<p>6</p> <p>6.1</p>	<p>Link Governor for Post-16</p> <p>It was agreed for this item to be postponed until more governors have been recruited.</p>

<p>7</p> <p>7.1</p>	<p>Governors Tea for Staff</p> <p>ML asked governors whether they would like to go ahead with the staff tea this year. <i>A governor asked what date this would be on.</i> CB proposed Tuesday 23 July. ML said that previously the tea has included strawberries and cream, which was paid for by the Friends of the school. <i>A governor asked if there is a budget for the tea.</i> ML said that there is no budget. The charity money is for the whole of the school and staff well-being is important, so this is a reasonable way of doing it. <i>A governor asked what time people would be needed to help from.</i> ML said that it would be from about 1:30pm. There are about 100 staff, including cleaners and therapists. The governors agreed that they would like to go ahead with the staff tea.</p>
FINANCE	
<p>8</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p>	<p>Budget 2019/20 for formal ratification prior to submission</p> <p>a) Budget forecast by Cost Centre</p> <p>b) Capital Budget</p> <p>CB gave an overview of the budget to governors. Currently the budget is worked out on the basis of the school having 166 pupils, despite the school having almost 200 pupils now. The majority of the funding is spent on teaching staff and TAs. The key thing for governors to be aware of is that staff costs have gone up but the basic rate of payment per pupil has not increased. About 92% of the budget is spent on staffing. This is reflected across the country, especially in special schools as the biggest resource is the staffing. The budget is balanced by £73,000 that has been brought forward from last year. This predicts about £6000 to carry forward into next year. There is a portion of the funding assumed in the budget that depends on the school working with the Local Authority (LA) as there are currently a number of students whose funding does not reflect the support they are provided with. The school needs to work with the LA to ensure that the funding received reflects what is actually being delivered in school. The school expects to receive £50,000 from this. CB is already in discussions with Michelle Docking about this. In annual reviews, staff will be working hard to ensure that students' EHCPs reflect the funding required.</p> <p>CB has spoken to Theresa Grady again about outreach. Castle school works with local schools to try and maintain students in mainstream school places. Funding for this outreach work has been cut. The LA have proposed that schools are paid £8000 per term and then evidence must be generated to show that outreach is happening in order to receive further funding. Theresa said that the new system is not yet in place.</p> <p>The governors would like to record their thanks to SH, CB and Rob Cottle (Castle School's Financial Adviser) for all their hard work in putting the budget together.</p>

8.4	<p>NB highlighted that, in order to balance this budget, staff illness is no longer insured. There is a sum of money built into the budget instead. If this were to be overspent, this would be an issue. NB also brought to the attention of the governors that last year £73,000 was brought forward and this year only £6000 would be carried forward, so technically the school will have overspent the funding it expects to receive. This will potentially have an impact on future years, as set out in the forecasts governors had received. <i>A governor said that this time last year there were concerns about the budget, but it seemed to go better than expected, and what had changed last year that led to the budget being better balanced than expected, and is this likely to be the same this year.</i> NB said that to balance the budget, assumptions need to be made about which pupils the school will have, what their needs will be, and what their funding will be. Last September, the school was unsure about the intake, but this year it is more certain. Some of the numbers included in the budget relate to students that are already at the school and the school are not receiving as much funding as they should for these students. CB said that he knows which pupils are coming to the school in September. Next year he plans to do this even earlier. Other schools across the county are having similar issues with their budgets. Action: CB to speak with other special heads.</p> <p><i>A governor commented that the funding seems to go down in future years and asked if this was confirmed.</i> SH said that the funding for future years was correct and the school must be getting a bit extra this year. <i>A governor said that the rises in cost across different staff types did not seem to go up by the same amount.</i> SH said that different staff get different pay rises and there is a higher increase in the cost of office staff as an additional administrator is being recruited. CB said that it was not very useful to look at the funding for two years in advance as it was too early to confirm anything. <i>A governor asked if it is realistic that the school will be in debt in the next two years.</i> SH said that it was. <i>A governor asked if the school would need to look at reducing staff numbers, as it could not become £250,000 in debt.</i> CB said that this may be something that has to be considered in the future. ML said that the Finance and Personnel committee would have to monitor the budget very carefully on behalf of the Governing Body. If money needs to be saved, then this will have to be from staffing costs and this could mean not appointing for September or other options. There are a lot of assumptions in the budget and ML has asked the School Financial Adviser if this is an acceptable budget to submit to the LA. Rob Cottle confirmed that it is, and that making assumptions are part of doing the budget. ML said that more pressure needs to be put on the LA to do this work much earlier so that the school knows what their income will be and can budget accordingly.</p> <p>CB made the governors aware that in the future one option would be for the school to potentially consider redundancies. However, this is only a possibility and the school is not currently facing this situation. <i>A governor asked how many people might be expected to leave over the year and might not filling these vacancies add up to the budget</i></p>
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	<p><i>deficit.</i> CB said that probably 6 to 8 staff members may leave in a typical year. The key question is whether it is safe to have less staff. At the moment, the balance is right. The school can keep pupils and staff safe and have a good learning environment.</p> <p><i>A governor asked why an additional administrator was needed.</i> SH said that this was because of the extra pupils being taken on. ML said that the more pupils the school has, the more staff members are needed. The money coming with the pupils is not sufficient to cover this cost. The LA is going to have to fund the new class that they want the school to take. <i>A governor asked if there is a new special school opening in Northstowe.</i> CB said that there is but the places will all be filled.</p> <p>ML said that most schools are struggling. <i>A governor asked what would happen if the governing body did not ratify the budget.</i> SH said that we have to find a way of balancing it. ML said that the LA would take over if the governing body cannot do this. The governing body will have to act quickly if anything goes amiss. CB said that it was important to raise awareness that the school is in plight and we cannot leave any stone unturned. ML said that the school cannot really fundraise for core budget items such as staff, premises and consultancy. Other things, like soft play and the library, can be fundraised for. This year, the decision was made not to take out insurance for staff sickness as the premium has increased significantly this year. Instead an amount of money has been put to one side.</p> <p><i>A governor asked whether something should be put in place now to pre-empt the budget going wrong, for example saying that there must be no further avoidable expenditure.</i> NB said that the school will have to stay within its means and the budget will need to be monitored carefully. ML said that the next Finance meeting is 24 June. This may have to become a FGB meeting as the budget may need to be brought back for further discussion. NB said that this was unlikely. In September, there should be a better idea of what this term's spend looks like and if the conversations that CB are having with the LA are not progressing, then a discussion may be needed about how to get the budget back on track. SH said that the discussions with the LA are key and we should know more by September. ML commented that this would be too late for making a decision about recruiting for September. <i>A governor asked how the school were able to recruit for September.</i> CB said that at the moment the school is filling positions that have been vacated by supply staff.</p>
8.5	All governors present agreed, by a show of hands, to ratify the budget.
8.6	ML asked if the school has a capital budget and what it will be spent on. SH said that this will be kept for emergencies. CB said that it would be likely to be boilers and windows, and the swimming pool doors may need replacing. ML confirmed that there was £9.6k capital budget. The governors agreed that it sounded reasonable to hold this as a contingency.

<p>9</p> <p>9.1</p>	<p>Minutes of the Finance and Personnel meeting held on 25th March 2019</p> <p>These minutes were uploaded for governors to read but were not discussed at the meeting.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>10.1</p>	<p>Cleaning Contract Update</p> <p>SH said that the closing date is 17 May and so far 6 people have come to look around the school.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>11.1</p>	<p>Staff contracts</p> <p>CB explained that there are two sets of contracts in the school; some staff have a contract to work with the school in general and other people have a contract to work with a named pupil. The people employed under the contracts to work with a named pupil are not in a stable position as they are temporary contracts. CB requested that the governors agree for all employees to be moved on to permanent contracts with the school instead. CB clarified that after two years, all employees have increased rights anyway.</p> <p><i>A governor asked how many staff this affected. SH said that it was quite a few staff. CB said it is also an issue when employing people as some people would not apply for a non-permanent contract.</i></p> <p><i>A governor asked if there are any benefits to having the temporary contracts for named pupils. SH said that originally there would probably have only been a small number in the school, but 1-1 support needs have escalated over the years and employment rights have also changed. A governor asked whether changing the contracts would make any difference to employees' employment status. SH said that it wouldn't for all staff as many employees have been on these contracts for a long time. CB said that the school has worked hard this year to decrease reliance on support staff and move towards having consistency in staffing. A governor commented that there will often be TAs who only come to the school for a temporary period so they might be interested in having a short term contract. A governor asked if staff who are employed to work with a named pupil can be redeployed to do other tasks if, for example, the pupils is absent from school on a particular day. CB said that he feels staff should be used where they are most needed. A governor asked if the staff who are employed to work with a named pupil have been employed as a direct result of that pupil's EHCP, and if so this could be a good argument to use with the LA when discussing funding. CB said that the conversation with the LA would not necessarily be about specific members of staff and all the evidence that is needed for this conversation is already to hand. A governor said that the school could employ staff on fixed term contracts without it being attached to a named child. SH said that the issue with this is that the school needs to have a reason for offering a fixed term contract, for example covering maternity leave or sick leave.</i></p>

11.2	<p>This is in accordance with HR. <i>A governor asked how often this causes an issue with recruitment.</i> CB said that it was quite often an issue. SH said that people are reluctant to leave a permanent job to come to a temporary job. <i>A governor asked if the school has used the fixed term contract to let any staff members go.</i> CB said that there is still the probation period if any new staff were not performing satisfactorily in their role. CB wants to create a more stable workforce. <i>A governor commented that there does not seem to be much benefit to having the short term contracts.</i> SH said that they may not be short term contracts anyway as the named child could join the school in Year 2 and stay until Year 12. <i>A governor said that the only situation these contracts seemed to be protecting against was if the named child leaves the school and there is not another vacancy within the school to redeploy the TA to.</i> CB said that if any pupil is likely to leave the school, this is usually known in advance. <i>A governor asked if there were any cost implications to changing the contracts.</i> SH said that there is no additional cost. They just change from temporary to permanent. It would have no impact on the budget. <i>A governor commented that there did not seem to be any disadvantages to this change, only benefits.</i> <i>A governor asked how the school evidenced that they are supporting the named child through the EHCP.</i> CB said that this was evidenced by who is in the class and the deployment of TAs. <i>A governor asked if there would be any parental feedback about this change.</i> CB said that in his experience having one named person with a child is unhelpful as the child may become reliant on that person. By having a team of adults around a child and ensuring that the child gets used to working with different people, the child is helped to become more independent. <i>A governor said that as long as a child's 1-1 requirement can be met and this can be evidenced, then the school can reassure parents that support is in place as agreed.</i> CB said that the motivation for changing the contracts is to have a consistent and motivated group of staff. ML said that if the money is coming in as part of the EHCP plans, then the governing body have an opportunity to ensure that the money is being used for the correct purpose. <i>A governor asked whether the school could return to using temporary contracts in the future for new staff if it was felt that there could be a benefit to using them.</i> CB said that this could be part of the plan for new recruitment as needed.</p> <p>All governors present agreed with CB's proposal to change all staff contracts to permanent. Action: CB to feedback to governors on this.</p>
	POLICIES
12	Critical Incident Policy for review
12.1	This item was deferred to the next meeting.

<p>13</p> <p>13.1</p>	<p>Health and Safety Policy for review</p> <p>This item was deferred to the next meeting.</p>
<p>14</p> <p>14.1</p>	<p>Items for the next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JC link governor visit report • School development plan • Governor terms coming to an end – ML • Critical incident policy • Health and safety policy
<p>15</p>	<p>Date of next FGB meeting: Monday 1st July 2019 at the school at 6.30pm</p>
<p>16</p> <p>16.1</p>	<p>Date of next F & P meeting: Monday 24th June 2019 at the school at 6.30pm</p> <p>The meeting closed at 20:54.</p>