

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON MONDAY 17 MARCH 2014

GOVERNORS PRESENT:

Mr A. Ankers, Laurence Jackson School
 Mr M. Bloomfield, Belmont Primary School
 Mr B. Coulston, Sacred Heart RCVA School (Chair)
 Mrs D. Falconer, Wheatlands Primary School
 Mrs A. Clayton, Westgarth Primary School
 Mr J. Horkan, St Gabriel's RC Primary School
 Mrs Y. Joy, New Marske Primary School
 Mr C. Marley, Riverdale Primary School
 Mrs R. Nicholls, Saltburn Learning Campus
 Councillor M. Ovens, Green Gates Primary, Rye Hills and Pathways Schools
 Miss J. Parncutt, Hummersea Primary School
 Mr V. Peel, Lakes Primary School
 Dr D. Thomson, Kirkleatham Hall School
 Mr J. Tombs, Lockwood Primary School
 Mr K. Wood, Normanby Primary School

ALSO PRESENT

Glennis Smith, Redcar and Cleveland School Governor Support Service (Minutes)
 Mrs R. Mayes, Executive Head Teacher, Saltburn Learning Campus
 Mrs A. Asprey, Chair of Governors, Saltburn Learning Campus

1. SALTBURN CAMPUS FEDERATION

1.1 Presentation from Mrs Mayes, Executive Head Teacher

1.1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Ruth Mayes, Executive Head Teacher of Saltburn Learning Campus, who in turn welcomed everybody to the Campus and introduced Anne Asprey, Chair of the Governing Body for Saltburn Learning Campus. Mrs Mayes agreed to e-mail her presentation to Mrs Smith, who would forward it to Governors' Association members.

1.1.2 Mrs Mayes reported on the origins of the Campus. Saltburn Primary and Huntcliff had been two separate schools in 2004, but neither of their buildings was fit for purpose.

(Councillor Ovens arrived at the meeting)

1.1.3 The LA had been very forward thinking. Huntcliff's site had been generously sized for a small secondary school. The school hadn't been included in the first tranche of the BSF (Building Schools for the Future) programme, but were to be considered for the next tranche. An additional source of capital would be funding from the sale of the primary school site. When planning for the Campus, it was realised that there was no need for two kitchens or two offices. The collaborative work began with plans for shared premises, but developed into plans for shared staffing. The

Mrs Mayes /
Mrs Smith

breakthrough came with a successful Target Capital Fund bid, which was traditional funding.

(Mr Horkan and Mr Woods arrived at the meeting)

- 1.1.4 Huntcliff School and Saltburn Primary School had formed a soft federation initially. There were still two separate governing bodies at this stage, but a collaborative committee was established with members from both governing bodies. The collaborative work had initially focussed on joint staffing, facilities, administration and finance rather than teaching and learning. It had been necessary to establish complex funding agreements for the distribution of costs.
- 1.1.5 In 2012/13, the Collaborative Committee was in place and appointments had been made to key shared posts. There were many opportunities for development amongst support staff, but no shared structures for teaching staff, although some informal collaborative work was taking place. There was a single staff room, so staff met regularly. This had led to ad-hoc joint work and helped to build relationships. Mrs Mayes gave some examples of successful joint initiatives.
- 1.1.6 Mrs Mayes reported that she had been the Head Teacher of Huntcliff School for 14 years prior to the federation. The Head Teacher of the primary school had decided to retire, which had opened up the opportunity to consider a formal federation structure. Other options had been considered but federation had been agreed as the best way forward. Although it is not essential to have a single Head Teacher for a federation, it was considered that it would drive forward teaching and learning if there was one Head Teacher with an overview of the whole Campus. At the heart of the federation proposal was a concern for what was in the best interests of the children.
- 1.1.7 East Cleveland Co-operative Learning Trust had been established in September 2013 and Mrs Mayes stated that the Trust underpinned the work of the Campus. 50% of the children at Huntcliff School were from primary schools other than Saltburn Primary.
- 1.1.8 A governor asked what involvement the Head Teachers and staff had had in the design of the building. Mrs Mayes confirmed that this had been quite significant, although there had been some restrictions on the shape of the footprint. Mrs Mayes explained how the building was configured between the primary and secondary schools. The principle of shared community areas in the middle of the building had been an important part of the discussion. The old building hadn't looked towards or celebrated the school's proximity to the sea, and this had been taken into account for the new build. The wide corridors and stairs and the beams in the atrium had been influenced by the Head Teacher and staff. In response to a query about how the architects had been chosen, Mrs Mayes confirmed that the school had been involved. The field had been narrowed down to two architect firms and staff had looked at examples of schools already built by them. In October 2005 the funding for the build was confirmed. On 1 July 2007 the first steel work had been put in place.

- 1.1.9 The Chair asked whether the two schools had been operating independently before they moved into the new building and Mrs Mayes confirmed that this was the case. They had been in separate buildings and the primary school had been on a split site, so the move to the Campus had been an even more significant change for the primary staff. From the end of July to the beginning of September immediately prior to the opening of the new Campus, Huntcliff did not have a building, having been required to move out so that the old school could be demolished.
- 1.1.10 In response to a question from a governor, Mrs Mayes indicated that, having been on the Campus for several years, there was nothing she would change. The primary and secondary wings were easily accessible with a swipe card and staff moved freely between the two. The staff room was very central within the building, but had now been reorganised to be more of a work room that could be used, for example, for PPA time. This had encouraged staff to use the room that might otherwise have been reluctant to do so because of its significant distance from the extreme ends of the building. There had been more joint working between staff during the current school year, which had made them more comfortable about going into different areas of the Campus.
- 1.1.11 It was confirmed that the primary and secondary children did start at different times and used different entrances. Primary children often came into the central areas of the building, accompanied, to use the facilities. A governor asked whether the children felt that they were going to a new school when they moved from Y6 to Y7. Mrs Mayes thought that they did, but that there was a good balance of familiarity and differences. She reiterated that only 50% of Huntcliff's students were from Saltburn Primary. There were 14 feeder primary schools in total, so an important part of the induction process was ensuring that children from other schools didn't feel disadvantaged.
- 1.1.12 A governor asked about the leadership structure and Mrs Mayes reported that she was the Executive Head Teacher and she had 2 deputy heads (heads of school) – one responsible for the primary school and one for the secondary school. There were also assistant head teachers in both schools. Training had been a key part of bringing staff together. A common training day had been held on 28 March 2013, at which staff had explored strengths and opportunities. It had been good to develop a common language of learning.
- 1.2 Presentation by Anne Asprey, Chair of Governors, Saltburn Learning Campus
- 1.2.1 Mrs Asprey reported that the governing bodies had been very fortunate to have two visionary Head Teachers who were focussed on what was best for the pupils. The single Campus proposal had become an obvious conversation. There were several governors who were members of both governing bodies so it was natural to consider working more closely and pulling the governance structures together. A Memorandum of Understanding had allowed the governing bodies to work jointly through a collaborative committee.

- 1.2.2 The federation consultation process had been complex, but had been well supported by the LA. Many different options had been considered before embarking down this route. Governors had been aware that the two governing bodies would cease at the point of federation and that they would not automatically secure a place on the new governing body.
- 1.2.3 On 31 August 2013, the two separate governing bodies had ceased to exist. On 1 September 2013 there was no governing body in place as the relevant regulations didn't allow for appointments to be made before the federation date. Elections had been held for parent and staff governors. At the first meeting, the Executive Head Teacher, new staff governor and two new parent governors had been present. Under the regulations, each school was allowed one parent governor, but there was only one staff governor permitted between the two schools. Prior to federation both governing bodies had agreed to recommend Mrs Nicholls as the nomination for the LA governor vacancy. This ensured there was a governor with previous experience of both schools. This initial group of governors co-opted the remaining governors.
- 1.2.4 The full governing body had met for the first time on 17 September 2013, at which point Mrs Asprey was elected as Chair of Governors. The outgoing governing bodies of the separate schools had written "state of the union" documents for the new governing body, highlighting key challenges for the future in terms of strengths and weaknesses of each school.
- 1.2.5 In the period before federation the governing bodies had agreed not to fill any vacancies that arose in their membership. Existing governors were invited to complete a co-option form, which included a statement about their knowledge and experience. One former governor had been appointed as an Associate Member so as not to lose her input. Some governors had decided they didn't want to continue on the new governing body. The co-opted places had not all been used to accommodate members of the former governing bodies. The governors wanted to ensure that parents and staff were reasonably represented, so some co-opted places had been used for this purpose.
- 1.2.6 Mrs Nicholls confirmed that the appointment process had been successful and Mrs Asprey indicated that the outcome was a group of governors who were enthusiastic and had the impetus and thirst to find out more about the other school phase that they had not previously been involved with. Governors felt this provided an opportunity for learning and development, but it was also a challenge.
- 1.2.7 In response to a governor's question it was confirmed that there were still committees as well as full governing body meetings. Saltburn and Huntcliff were technically still two separate schools, each with their own budget. However, the only committee that didn't work across the Campus was the KS4 Curriculum Committee. The chairs of the individual committees were also members of a Steering Committee, which co-ordinated work such as producing the agendas for full governing body meetings. Committee chairs were responsible for setting agendas for committee meetings and ensuring link governors undertook their work.

- 1.2.8 It was also confirmed that there was a single school improvement plan for the Campus. Most action points were common, but others applied to specific phases. The Executive Head Teacher's performance management objectives would relate to both phases.
- 1.2.9 A governor reported that his own governing body had had a Steering Committee for several years. It worked well in providing an overview of the governing body's work at the beginning of term and covered topics not covered by other committees, such as major whole school developments. The only concern he had was that it could be perceived as a "clique". Mrs Asprey emphasised that it also gave responsibility and accountability to other governors. In response to a governor's question, Mrs Asprey confirmed that there was a job description for committee chairs. The governing body had decided to elect chairs in the summer term to start in the autumn term for the purposes of continuity and succession planning.
- 1.2.10 A governor who served on both primary and secondary school governing bodies emphasised that there was a very different "feel" between the two and queried whether this had affected bringing the two phases together under one governing body. Mrs Asprey emphasised that the governing bodies had worked together for a long time anyway, particularly through the collaborative committee. Mrs Nicholls, who had served on both, agreed that each governing body had had a different style of working, but the new governing body had evolved naturally and it helped that there was one Executive Head Teacher and one Chair.
- 1.2.11 A governor asked about the system of link governors and whether there were enough to undertake the work across the Campus. Mrs Asprey reported that each committee had identified governors who linked to action plans. They tended to link to the senior leadership team member who was involved with the committee in question.
- 1.2.12 In response to a governor's question, it was confirmed that Ofsted had recently inspected the primary school as a separate entity and the school had been graded as Good. However, the inspectors had been fascinated by the concept of the Campus. Mrs Mayes gave details of the inspection experience. Whilst current Ofsted practice was to inspect federated schools separately, Mrs Mayes was aware of an example of a federation where concerns about one school had led to the earlier inspection of another school with the same Executive Head Teacher. She had a strong feeling that Ofsted would start to undertake joint inspections of federated schools in the future.
- 1.2.13 A governor emphasised the huge breadth of information that the Campus governors had to be aware of. Mrs Asprey stated that the governing body was hugely supported by the senior leadership team, who had identified the information that Ofsted would ask for. A new Head of School had been appointed for Saltburn Primary and the Executive Head Teacher had been required to learn more about the primary phase, which had been helpful because their learning meant that they had pulled together a lot of information. The initial focus had been on the primary school as it was known that it was likely to be inspected. The primary School Improvement

Adviser had attended a governors' meeting in the autumn term and a training session had been delivered focussing on the primary RAISEonline data. It was noted that the basic principles of primary and secondary RAISEonline were the same.

1.2.14 Governors were informed that the federation process had been challenging, but everything had gone according to plan, except for the first meeting of the governing body, which hadn't been ideal because the regulations prevented a full governing body being in place from the beginning of the federation.

1.3 Conclusion

1.3.1 Mrs Mayes gave a summary of the current position of the Campus and listed common areas. She felt they had made more progress than anticipated. There were common aims and a common vision. She gave an example of safeguarding staff in the primary and secondary schools understudying each other. In the area of inclusion the schools were working closely together and pooling resources. There were common structures for developing and quality assuring teaching and learning. A literacy review had been carried out across the Campus. There were many common policies, the most powerful one being the appraisal policy, with a common system for performance related pay. The Campus had purchased a system called Blue Sky for managing appraisals, which was very effective.

1.3.2 More shared administrative posts had been established, with common roles and responsibilities. This included positions that would usually be unaffordable in a primary school, but could be bought in by the primary school for a specified number of hours per week. Without this underpinning structure, primary head teachers could end up with too many responsibilities.

1.3.3 In the area of teaching and learning, it had been good to see the level of respect teachers had for each other's phases and skills. They had observed each other's lessons across the phases. There was a new curriculum for KS1-KS3. Mrs Mayes was very impressed with the progress that had been made.

1.3.4 The aspiration was to establish the Campus as a beacon of good practice, including securing "Outstanding" Ofsted grades for both schools. The key focus of the federation had now shifted from finances and administration towards the children. One of the aims was to further develop the benefits of membership of School North East and Mrs Mayes recommended membership of this organisation, which was providing training for schools in the area. A further aim was for the Campus to become a focus for the wider community. Mrs Mayes concluded by stating that the federation had been a very interesting journey.

1.3.5 In response to a query from a governor, Mrs Mayes confirmed that the mosaics displayed on the Campus had been designed by the pupils, working with community artists. This work had been funded through a

grant. A governor asked whether the federation had made a difference from the children's point of view. Mrs Mayes reported that moving from the old to the new building had made a difference. For example, the old building had narrow corridors and stairs, which made movement difficult. There were more opportunities for the secondary school students to demonstrate leadership with the younger children, which had given them confidence. The secondary students had a positive attitude to the primary pupils and there was mutual respect between the two. Any concerns primary parents had had in this respect had been unfounded.

- 1.3.6 The Chair thanked Mrs Mayes and Mrs Asprey for their interesting presentation. He was impressed with how far the federation had developed in such a short time. Before Mrs Asprey and Mrs Mayes left the meeting, Mrs Mayes thanked the Governors' Association members for their interest and emphasised that it had been good to have an opportunity to reflect on the federation journey.

BUSINESS MEETING

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the following governors:

- Mrs K. Allinson, Ings Farm Primary School
- Mrs N. Cromack, Newcomen Primary School
- Mr P. Kirkham, Galley Hill Primary School
- Mr M McNulty, Bydales School and Zetland Primary School

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Clerk /
Chair

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

4.1 Teaching School Alliance (Arising from Item 1)

In response to a question from a governor about School North East, which had been mentioned by Mrs Mayes during her presentation, it was clarified that it was a regional organisation providing training, information, guidance and networking opportunities for schools. It was very different to more formal collaborative structures such as the Teaching Alliance and Trust4Learning.

4.2 Bank Mandate (Arising from Item 5.1)

Mrs Smith reported that Mrs Nicholls had visited Barclays Bank in December and obtained the information necessary to update the bank mandate, which she had forwarded by e-mail to Mrs Smith. Due to other pressures, Mrs Smith had not had time to read this information, so had decided to forward it earlier that day to the four officers of the Association so that they could read it and make the necessary arrangements themselves.

Governors'
Association
Officers

4.3 Governor Newsletter Article (Arising from Item 6)

Mrs Nicholls had produced a report on the NGA national conference for inclusion in the governor newsletter. Mrs Smith apologised that this had not yet been published as no newsletter had been produced during the autumn or spring terms due to other work pressures.

4.4 Kirkleatham Hall NGA Membership (Arising from Item 6)

Mrs Smith had checked and confirmed with Dr Thomson that Kirkleatham Hall School was not a member of NGA in its own right. He was receiving regular NGA communications in view of his position as an Executive Committee member.

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting held on 12 December 2013 had been circulated for information. The following matters arose from consideration of the minutes:

5.1 Audited Accounts (Arising from Item 5)

Relevant bank statements had now been passed to the auditor to allow him to complete the audit. The Treasurer had left his e-mail address with the auditor but had not heard from him and had no means of contacting him other than visiting his home. Mrs Smith agreed to e-mail the auditor.

Mrs Smith

5.2 Presentations from Governors' Association Meetings (Arising from Item 6)

The Chair felt that there had been some good presentations at Governors' Association meetings and members had been able to access hard copies of slides if these had been produced. However, he considered that it would be of greater benefit for members to receive electronic copies so they could be more easily shared with other members of their governing bodies. Discussion had taken place about the possibility of uploading the presentations onto the Council's web-site, but this could involve more work and presenters may not want them to be made so widely available. Mrs Smith agreed to e-mail electronic copies of the presentations to members after meetings, with the permission of the presenter.

Mrs Smith

5.3 Reimbursement of Train Fare (Arising from Item 7)

As all financial documents, including the chequebook, were currently with the auditor, the Treasurer was unable to reimburse Mrs Nicholls for her train fare to the NGA conference. He would arrange the reimbursement as soon as he had the cheque book back from the auditor.

Treasurer

6. INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

6.1 A governor reported that he had received information about the new Ofsted inspection framework, which would include very "light touch" inspections,

possibly involving only one inspector and one subject. There was not much detail available at this stage but Ofsted would issue guidelines by the end of the month. Another governor had recently read a report from the Policy Exchange which indicated that Ofsted was not fit for purpose and that inspectors did not have the skills to inspect properly. It was noted that inspectors seemed to vary significantly in their approach.

- 6.2 Mrs Smith reported that Ofsted were increasingly including a recommendation under the heading “What does the school need to do to improve further?”, that an external review of governance should be undertaken. There was a framework for external reviews, produced by the National College for Teaching and Leadership and based on the nine points for effective governance outlined in the Ofsted inspection framework. Governing bodies could choose who to commission to undertake the review, but the cost was likely to be in the region of £900 - £1200. The Chair reported that his own governing body had undertaken a skills audit and was addressing the All Party Parliamentary Group for Education Governance and Leadership’s “20 questions for a governing body to ask itself” over two sessions.

7. CHAIR’S CORRESPONDENCE

(Mr Ankers left the meeting during the following discussion)

- 7.1 The Chair read an e-mail received from Graham Birtle, Scrutiny Officer at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, who was looking to identify a governor representative to attend a Crime Task and Finish Group. The group would be undertaking a review of the work carried out by the Police in schools, in light of budget constraints, and considering whether they were providing what schools wanted,. A report would be produced by June. Mr Birtle wanted to identify a Borough Councillor, head teacher and governor from each authority to participate in one meeting only at the end of April. Councillor George Dunning would be the elected member representative.
- 7.2 It was thought that some governors would have limited knowledge about the work of the Police in schools and suggested that, ideally, representatives should attend from both the secondary and primary sectors. It was acknowledged that anyone volunteering could realistically only hope to use their own skills and knowledge rather than gathering views from all governors in the authority. The Chair asked for volunteers
- 7.3 Discussion took place regarding the work of the PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers) within schools and it was noted that more support was provided in areas of high deprivation. Mr Tombs volunteered to attend and the Chair would pass his name to Graham Birtle. Mrs Smith offered to e-mail chairs of governors for their views before the meeting.
- 7.4 A governor suggested inviting Barry Coppinger, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, to the next meeting. This suggestion would be considered by the Executive Committee at its next meeting.

Chair / Mr
Tombs /
Mrs Smith

Executive
Committee

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would take place on 27 March 2014. Apologies were offered by Mike Bloomfield and Vince Peel.

Mrs Smith

(The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.)