

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON MONDAY 23 JUNE 2014

GOVERNORS PRESENT:

Mrs C. Barwell, Normanby Primary School
 Mr M. Bloomfield, Belmont Primary School
 Mr B. Coulston, Sacred Heart RCVA School (Chair)
 Mrs A. Clayton, Westgarth Primary School
 Mrs D. Falconer, Wheatlands Primary School
 Mr J. Horkan, St Gabriel's RC Primary School
 Mrs Y. Joy, New Marske Primary School
 Miss K. Longstaff, Lingdale Primary, John Emmerson Batty Primary and Bydales School
 Mrs S. Nicholson, Riverdale Primary School
 Mr K. Wood, Normanby Primary School

ALSO PRESENT

Glennis Smith, Redcar and Cleveland School Governor Support Service (Minutes)

BUSINESS MEETING

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

- Mrs K. Allinson, Ings Farm Primary School
- Dr D. Thomson, Kirkleatham Hall School
- Mr P. McCarthy, St Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Voluntary Primary Academy
- Mr D. Atkin, Nunthorpe Primary Academy
- Mr P. McElwee, Caedmon Primary School

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Clerk /
Chair

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

3.1 **Presentation from Mrs Mayes (Arising from Item 1.1)**

Mrs Smith had e-mailed Mrs Mayes' presentation to all Governors' Association representatives as agreed.

3.2 **Bank Mandate (Arising from Item 4.2)**

Mr Wood reported that he had received a cheque book and bank statement, which he would pass to the Treasurer. Discussion of progress towards updating the bank mandate was deferred to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Mr Wood/
Executive
Committee

3.3 Audited Accounts (Arising from Item 5.1)

The accounts had now been audited and would be tabled later in the meeting.

3.4 Reimbursement of Train Fare (Arising from Item 5.3)

Mrs Nicholls had not yet been reimbursed for the train fare to the NGA conference but was not present at the current meeting.

3.5 Crime Task and Finish Group (Arising from Item 7)

The meeting of the Crime Task and Finish Group was to take place on Wednesday 25 June 2014 at 5.30 p.m. John Tombs had agreed to attend on behalf of the Governors' Association and the Chair had sent him the e-mail with details of the meeting.

Treasurer

4. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting held on 27 March 2014 had been circulated for information and were noted.

5. APPROVAL OF THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 2011 TO MARCH 2013

5.1 Copies of the audited accounts were tabled at the meeting. Mrs Smith highlighted that the accounts covered the period August 2011 to July 2013. The remainder of the 2013/14 financial year now needed to be audited for presentation to the AGM in autumn 2014. Brief discussion took place regarding whether it was necessary to audit the accounts during this period and Mrs Smith advised that, in accordance with the constitution, they should be audited every year and presented to the AGM, irrespective of the number of transactions. A decision on arrangements for auditing the accounts for the 2013/14 financial year was deferred to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee

5.2 Discussion took place regarding payment to the auditor in view of the fact that he had audited more than one financial year. The usual payment was £40 per year.

5.3 RESOLVED that the Treasurer send the auditor a cheque for £80 in respect of the accounts just audited.

Treasurer

6. INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

A governor highlighted a reference in the previous week's NGA newsletter to a comment from Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools, recommending mandatory training for governors. She asked what this training was likely to involve and whether funding would be provided. Mrs Smith clarified that there was currently no mandatory training, but there had been many recommendations in the past from governance organisations or arising from national reviews of governance that governor training should be mandatory. The DfE had never responded to these

recommendations and introduced a mandatory requirement and Mrs Smith was not convinced that a comment from Sir Michael Wilshaw would lead to them making this change. If mandatory training was introduced, she anticipated that the starting point would be to insist that governors attend induction and that chairs attend relevant training about undertaking their role. Mrs Smith felt that a good chair could encourage governors to attend training so that it appeared to be a mandatory requirement for membership on their governing body. Discussion took place regarding the evolving mix of training available for governors from different providers, including the National College, who had been given government funding to run free regional workshops on RAISEonline, Performance Related Pay and Financial Efficiencies.

7. CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE / REPORT

The Chair had received no items of correspondence on behalf of the Governors' Association.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would take place on Wednesday 9 July 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

9. GOVERNING BODY SELF EVALUATION

9.1 Presentation by Mrs Smith

9.1.1 Mrs Smith, in her capacity as Manager of Governor Services, delivered a short presentation highlighting the range of self-evaluation tools available to governing bodies. These included:

- NGA's 8 points for effective governance
- NGA skills audit
- "20 questions for a governing body to ask itself"
- 9 criteria for effective governance included in the Ofsted Inspection handbook
- External review of governance framework (based on the 9 Ofsted criteria and incorporating the "20 questions")
- Potential Ofsted questions for governors (also based on the 9 Ofsted criteria), taken from the local authority's Inspecting Governance training, which could be delivered to individual governing bodies.
- Check lists from the NGA / National College guidance "Leading Governors"

9.1.2 Mrs Smith emphasised the importance of governors discussing their own performance at appropriate intervals and being open to using new tools as they became available, because they could offer a different perspective that highlighted new areas for development. She would forward her PowerPoint presentation, which included links to most of the documents, to all Governors' Association representatives after the meeting.

Mrs Smith

9.2 Presentation by Mr Coulston

- 9.2.1 Mr Coulston, Chair of the Governors' Association and Vice Chair of Governors at Sacred Heart School, delivered a presentation on a skills audit undertaken by his governing body and a self-evaluation exercise carried out using the "20 questions for a governing body to ask itself". His PowerPoint presentation would also be forwarded after the meeting.
- 9.2.2 Mr Coulston reported that every member of the governing body had been asked to fill in a survey ranking themselves against 38 skills (20 of them core skills and 18 optional). Governors were shown the matrix produced along with graphs of averaged skills levels. It was noted that the optional skills weren't necessarily required on the governing body as the school could buy back services in some of these areas. The analysis of skills had been broken down to committee level. Each committee had been asked to evaluate its ideal skills profile. A summary had been produced for each committee, as well as an overall governing body summary, showing where the required skills level was exceeded and where there was a shortfall.
- 9.2.3 Mr Coulston reported that the process had taken approximately three months to complete. The outcomes had been reported at a governor twilight session and cascaded to committees. The exercise had demonstrated that the governing body had a good skills set and this could be evidenced to Ofsted.
- 9.2.4 Sacred Heart's governing body had also undertaken self-evaluation against the "20 questions for a governing body to ask itself". Mr Coulston highlighted some of the questions included in this list. An NGA document had been used to record sources of evidence against the 20 questions. 17 areas had been ranked as green and 3 as amber. Extracts from the completed form were shown. The exercise had been undertaken over two 2-hour twilight sessions, with governors working in small groups. It had been a time consuming process, but a very good learning experience, particularly for new governors. The exercise had demonstrated that the governing body met the required criteria.

Mrs Smith

9.3 Discussion and input from other governors

- 9.3.1 Miss Longstaff, a governor from Bydales School, reported on an external review of governance undertaken by the National Governors' Association. A questionnaire had been sent out to all governors. The reviewer had met with the Chair and Head Teacher to discuss the analysis of the questionnaires and decide which areas were most important to focus on. The reviewer had a good grasp of the position of the school and governing body going forward. The significant changes at the school since the Ofsted inspection had been acknowledged and the process had helped governors to look towards the future. A draft report had been produced and would be sent to all members of the governing body when agreed. One area for development identified was the governors' knowledge of Pupil Premium funding. The question about vision and ethos had been a challenge to answer and the reviewer had emphasised that vision and ethos needed to be embedded in school. The governing body should set the strategic

direction and senior leaders should drive it out throughout school so that everyone, including the children, was aware of it. Challenging conversations could arise from whether the vision was being implemented in school.

- 9.3.2 Mrs Smith emphasised the importance of Bydales' governing body having pressed ahead with the external review despite its uncertain future, because it helped to demonstrate the suitability of governors to serve on a future local governing body set up by a sponsor. With reference to Mr Coulston's presentation she emphasised that governors should not be overwhelmed by the thoroughness of the skills audit and self-evaluation exercises carried out by Sacred Heart's governing body. It was important for governing bodies to undertake some kind of self-evaluation process and discuss their own effectiveness, even if a simpler process was used.
- 9.3.3 Mrs Joy, Chair of New Marske Primary School, reported that her governing body had undertaken a lot of self-evaluation over the last few years. The Finance Committee, as part of the former Financial Management in Schools (FMSiS) and the current Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) processes completed the R20 financial competencies form annually to keep track of governors' development. A governor asked whether New Marske had a training plan for its governors. Mrs Joy responded that the school improvement plan included four priorities for improvement and the governing body produced its own action plan, broken down under committees, with details of targets, actions, who was responsible and milestones. Committees were asked to report on what they had achieved. The increasing expectations of governors were commented on. Mrs Joy would forward to Mrs Smith a copy of New Marske's governor action plan to be e-mailed to Governors' Association representatives. She explained the format of the document and how the governing body would monitor the school's actions as well as its own action plan. This process ensured that the governing body was focussed.
- 9.3.4 Mr Wood, governor from Normanby Primary School, reported that the school held termly standards review meetings where data relating to every cohort was reported. Governors were invited to attend and the Chair of Governors reported on standards of governance and self-evaluation of the governing body.
- 9.3.5 Governors were encouraged to submit ideas for future presentations to Mrs Smith, to be raised for discussion at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Mrs Joy /
Mrs Smith

(The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.)