

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

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| FULL GOVERNING BOARD – IN SCHOOL | | DATE: | 16th January 2023 |
| CHAired BY: John Clements (JC) | | CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB) | |
| GOVERNORS PRESENT: | | Also Present: | |
| John Clements (JC) Russ Green (RG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Anna Wade (AW) | | Amy Hardinge (AH) – Deputy Headteacher | |
| APOLOGIES: Steph Harvey (SH), Rev. Jon Holder (JH) | | | |
| Absent without apology: | | | |

Governor questions are highlighted in grey

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| Agenda Items | |
| 1. | <u>Opening Prayer & Welcome</u> 1. Opening Prayer taken by JC. |
| 2. | <u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u> 1. Apologies had been sent by SH and JH which were sanctioned by the GB. |
| 3. | <u>Declarations of Interest & Correspondence</u> 1. No declarations of interest. 2. No correspondence. |
| 4. | <u>Finance Policy</u> 1. JB advised the GB that an amendment was needed to the Finance Policy to state that the Acting Headteacher has the same financial authorization limits as the Headteacher. The GB were asked to backdate this approval to the day that SH went on sick leave (11 th January 2023). Decision: The GB agreed to amend the Finance Policy so that it states that the Acting Headteacher has the same financial authorization limits as the Headteacher from 11th January 2023. Action: JB to amend policy as agreed. |
| 5. | <u>Developing the Hub – update from AH and RG</u> 1. The GB were advised that external agencies (including the Advisory Teacher from the DCC SEND Team) have visited the Hub recently and discussed with staff its purpose and the direction forward |

they would recommend. DCC has advised that the Hub cannot be classed as specialist provision as it is based within a mainstream setting. DCC has encouraged that the school now works towards earlier re-integration, even if this starts with a pupil only going to assembly or being registered with their mainstream class before returning to the Hub. Individual reintegration targets will be set for each pupil, building up to full reintegration where possible. A core of children will remain in the Hub as they wait for places at specialist provision. They have been assessed as needing more time before reintegration can be attempted.

Once pupil numbers in the Hub have decreased, Hub staff will be able to offer more support to class teachers and teaching assistants as well as offer a place to support children if they dysregulate – the aim is to avoid having children trying to regulate in corridors outside classrooms as this is not usually very successful. It is also hoped that this move to earlier reintegration will free up Hub staff to be able to do more outreach work with parents. This had been discussed previously but there has not been staff capacity to offer it.

A new assessment tracker will be used to record steps forward, impacts and attendance data for each child in the Hub. This will ensure all these aspects can be easily tracked and will evidence progress made with each child. All staff understand that progress will not be linear, and there will be flexibility around what support is needed from the Hub. There has not been any concern expressed by teachers regarding these plans.

AH has felt that since having these discussions, there has been greater clarity on the direction in which the school should be taking the Hub.

RG commented that the recognition of the Hub as an intervention and not a class has been very helpful. RG has met with teaching assistants to pass on specific strategies for individual children and to discuss plans for upskilling where needed.

JC asked what number of core children were likely to remain in the Hub until they have a specialist place. RG advised there were five.

JC asked if the Hub was still viewed as an intervention for these five pupils.

RG advised that it is still an intervention in the view of OfSTED – it is just a much longer intervention/process to enable them to cope with a mainstream class. Currently for that core of children, being in a mainstream class would be sensory overload.

AW asked if getting specialist places for this core of children was actually likely.

RG has said that the DCC Advisor has stated that there will be no specialist places other than for children who have been excluded. RG said that on a personal level he would prefer for that not to be the process as that will stay on a child's record, but that if that is how it has to be, then it may be that the school will need to consider exclusion more. It does provide the evidence that the child is not managing in a mainstream setting.

JC asked if whether in offering the provision of the Hub, is the school letting DCC 'off the hook'?

RG advised that SH has considered whether the Hub is doing 'too well' – staff are trying to put up with extremely challenging behaviour (and violence at times) to try and keep children in school and avoid exclusion, but it is not ok for staff to be on the receiving end of this. However, RG raised that it is also not okay that children are in an inappropriate setting – it creates high levels of anxiety for them.

JC observed that Devon has less specialist places pro-rata than other parts of the country and he feels that should be conveyed to OfSTED. The GB discussed that currently Devon, as a Local Authority, is not functioning properly to be able to appropriately support children with SEND. DCC is not offering solutions for those children who do need to be in specialist provision.

RG commented that he is aware that some specialist places have children whose needs are less complex than some of the core children in the Hub.

JE felt that there needs to be greater flexibility from specialist provision to enable better support for children that need it.

AH advised that OfSTED can view Hubs as 'dumping grounds' and it will be key to demonstrate how those who have been able to have reintegrated. There is plenty of evidence to explain why the core children need to remain within the Hub.

JC raised that he felt it was important that the school challenged OfSTED on some of their views on Hubs and the lack of specialist provision in the county.

The GB discussed that if schools were funded appropriately for working with children with complex needs, then it would be more feasible for children to remain within mainstream settings, and this could actually be more economically viable than providing specialist places. Further to this, there is an impact on the school data when children with complex needs are assessed in the same way as children who manage in mainstream education.

JC feels that the Hub works positively at St. Martin's because the children still feel part of the school community.

AH raised that some plans to reintegrate children previously had had to be put on hold due to staff capacity.

JC thanked RG for his time, effort, and positivity he puts into the Hub, stating he was a credit to the profession. JC also extended the same thanks to KB and JP who work alongside RG in the Hub and who show the same effort and positivity that he does. The GB agreed that it shines through from RG that the children are at the heart of everything the Hub staff do.

6. Year 3 Data – update on progress and achievement

1. JC explained he had asked for an update as there are a lot of children in this Year group not working at age related expectations and he was keen to ensure the GB understood how this was being addressed and if this was being reflected in outcomes yet.

AH advised that NFER tests were undertaken at the end of the autumn term. Data showed a slight upward trend in Reading and Maths, which was positive as it is common for there to be a dip in achievement when children move between Years 2 and 3 (i.e., between Key Stages). Achievement in writing had dipped so work was undertaken immediately to explore this.

The first line of enquiry was around assessment of writing and determining whether teacher assessments were accurate or too harsh. Jo Stranks (JS), the English Lead, had in a previous job been highly commended for her accuracy of assessment from DCC moderators and was therefore asked to support this enquiry work. JS looked at all the writing judgements for the year and agreed with the teacher judgements.

The Year 3 teachers drilled down to identify the gaps that the children have and determined that difficulties with spelling, capitals and full stops were holding the children back. As the children move up into Year 3, they begin writing more complex, lengthy structures. They are making progress with the Year 3 content, but because some grammatical aspects from Year 2, along with some Year 2 spellings, have not been embedded, this impacts on their achievements in writing.

Both Year 3 teachers are positive that these gaps from Year 2 can be filled, and the children are engaged and enthusiastic about their work. AH explained to the GB that in Year 2, that cohort did a lot of shared writing and copying from the board and therefore the more independent writing in Year 3 has been challenging for them.

AH is confident that the teachers understand the issues well and confirmed that they are addressing them through a number of strategies. These include:

- Using 'Talk for Reading'
- Having additional spelling sessions
- Revisiting spellings from Year 1 and 2
- Asking children to review their work if mistakes are found
- Creating more writing opportunities
- Working with greater depth pupils to further develop their progress

JC noted that there are a high number of EHCPs in this year group and asked what staffing resources are currently in place. AH advised that there have been some changes in staff working with this year group with less additional resources allocated to the Year 3 classes. The school-based tutor is now working in the Hub and VP is now based in Reception. RG advised that some of the Year 3 children also spend some time in the Hub now.

JC asked if AH believed that achievement and progress in Maths and Reading will accelerate. AH stated that she believed so – the teaching is of good quality and strategies are in place. This will be a key term for seeing progress - Spring Term is often found to be when Year 3 children 'find their feet' following the move up from Year 2.

JE asked whether the teachers feel that they have sufficient support now that resources have reduced. AH confirmed that teachers do feel the support they have is sufficient.

AH advised that pupil progress meetings will be held this week, which involve all teachers meeting with the Assistant Heads to discuss data, targets and whether any additional support is needed.

7. Training: Model of Great Teaching at St. Martin's

1. Before AH began the training section of this meeting, the GB agreed to discuss some matters around SH's sickness absence from school. The GB noted that AH will be stepping up to cover for SH in her absence and that both the Local Authority and Diocese are aware. JC advised that he is confident in AH's ability to cover the role, although the GB did acknowledge the additional pressures this will place on AH. JC advised the Board that he has been in school and that it is running well in SH's absence. Ali Hirst (AliH) who has recently started providing three days a week SENDCo time has agreed to work an additional fourth day during SH's absence.

JE asked if there would be any financial impact for the school in needing staff to take on additional hours. AH advised now as there will be an insurance payout for SH's absence which will cover this.

JC thanked AH for stepping up and covering the Headteacher role.

(RG left the meeting as he had attended the following training as part of staff inset)

AH introduced the Model for Great Teaching at St. Martin's, explaining that this had first been introduced to staff at the September inset. A PowerPoint presentation was used as the basis for the training and consequent discussions amongst the governors, and a copy of this will be kept with these minutes for reference.

AH explained that it had been felt that more consistency was needed amongst St. Martin's practice, along with more development of CPD, and more empowerment of teachers to further their practice and CPD. Teachers all have an appraisal target to evidence how they have engaged with this model, and all CPD will be linked to at least one area of the Model. The GB discussed which areas were already strengths at St. Martin's and which areas teachers have identified as areas for development. All teachers have both areas of strength and areas to develop.

JC referred to past discussions at GB meetings as to whether a more prescriptive curriculum could impact upon independence and creativity. He noted that in the past this has been considered as a

potential concern, but that the evidence they are seeing from prescriptive programmes such as Little Wandle which are now embedded in school practice is that they have been very successful, and that a more prescriptive approach does not necessarily affect the ability to individualise teaching practice.

GTH observed that evidence has also shown that the more prescriptive approach to Maths that has been introduced is also working.

AH advised that there is a need to ensure the wider curriculum is still delivered to balance out the more prescriptive elements. It is also very dependent on teacher delivery – a more prescriptive curriculum can still be rich and engaging.

JE noted that this model is very clear on not leaving any child behind, which is positive.

JC asked how the staff team has engaged with this model. AH advised that some of the existing staff had felt that some of the new staff may already know the model as they had worked with AH at a previous school, but this was not necessarily the case. Staff had engaged with the model well and there had been professional discussions around the content. Teachers are now observing each other's practice more which has been very valuable after the pandemic, during which time classrooms had to be closed and teachers were much less able to learn from each other.

The GB discussed arranging to meet with teachers to hear their experiences of the model directly, and their reflections on how it supports developing practice.

GTH commented that it feels like that the groundwork for this model has been present before, but this new model has created structure and refinements. JC considered the model to be part of developing the culture, and a way to gently hold people to account in a consistent way.

AH advised that she will be doing some training on the model with schools from the East Devon Church Schools Partnership to further share and discuss practice.

The GB thanked AH for the training and for her passion in developing this model, which has been a significant piece of work.

8. Discussion: 'How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school?'

Identified as follows:

- JC – gaining this understanding of the model allows governors to ask better questions and better understand/assess the quality of teaching
- JE – governors have gained a better understanding of strategies and resources in place in Year 3
- GTH – governors have received clarification that teachers are in a strong position to accelerate progress in Year 3

Governors also identified that understanding the development of the direction of the Hub means the GB is able to reflect well on what is needed to move children forward. The GB also reflected on how passionate RG is about the work he undertakes in the Hub – he is always positive, on-board with any proposals to develop how the Hub works and is flexible with whatever is needed to best support the children.

| <u>ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING</u> | | |
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| <u>Action</u> | <u>Person responsible</u> | <u>Date to be completed by</u> |
| 1. Amend authorization limits in Finance policy as described in item 4.1. | JB | 10.2.23 |
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SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB agreed to amend the Finance Policy so that it states that the Acting Headteacher has the same financial authorization limits as the Headteacher from 11th January 2023.

Next meeting: Monday, 6th February 2023 at 6.00-8.00pm – to be held virtually

Signed as accurate by the Chair:

Name of Chair:

Date: