

**Part 1 Minutes**  
**Arbour Vale School Local Governing Body (LGB) meeting**  
**21 November 2019 at 4pm**

**Present:** David Jeffrey [Chair] (DJ)  
John Wise [Vice-Chair] (JW)  
Isobel Callaby (IC)  
Matt Downey (MD)  
Motomori Labode (ML)  
Neil Sykes [Principal] (NS)

**Also in attendance:** Don Blaylock – Associate Principal (DB)  
Sarah Brooks – Deputy Principal (SB)  
James Plant – Whole School Data Manager (JP)  
Lisa Jewell (Clerk) (LJ)

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

DJ opened the meeting and welcomed all present. For the benefit of new Governors, all present introduced themselves.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Prav Bassi, Atif Nasir, Lee Clark and Brenda Scott (Management Accountant).

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made. DJ asked all Governors who had not already done so to return completed Declaration of Interest forms for this year to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity.

**4. SKILLS AUDIT ANALYSIS**

DJ asked all Governors who had not already done so to return completed Skills Audit forms for this year to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity

**5. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS**

- i Nominations for the Chair & Vice-Chair for 2019-20 were invited. DJ was proposed and seconded and **agreed** for reappointment as Chair. JW was proposed and seconded and **agreed** for reappointment as Vice-Chair.
- ii The LGB Board **agreed** to recommend the appointment of Lee Clark as HR & OD Portfolio Governor to the OHCAT Board
- iii The LGB **agreed** the updated list of portfolio roles.

## 6. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- i The minutes of the LGB meeting held on 4 July 2019 were **agreed** as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.
- ii The Confidential minutes of the LGB meeting held on 4 July 2019 were **agreed** as an accurate record and signed by the Chair

## 7. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes

## 8. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

- A NS presented his report in detail and matters discussed are detailed below:

### Potential Expansion of School

NS talked in detail about proposals to facilitate an increase in PAN of the school, and whether such growth was feasible. There is increased demand for special school places in the area.

There are proposals to accommodate predicted growth in pupil numbers by accessing and using the ground floor of Arbour Vale House. There is the potential for this facility to be used to accommodate approximately 24 post-16 MLD students. Classroom accommodation in the main building could then be realigned to create an additional 17 students to create an additional 17 students on roll with effect from September 2020. There is pressure to retain the bedroom accommodation in the House and it is therefore envisaged that any internal "works" would be minimised.

In addition to this proposal, Slough Borough Council have suggested that they would fund the building of a new unit on site to accommodate 40-60 extra places. Consultations on this proposal are ongoing.

NS explained that the school is currently full and has a waiting list and is not financially dependent on additional pupil numbers. However, both schemes offer the opportunity for controlled growth and expansion. The new spaces proposed would be designed to meet specific needs, so that growth could be strategically planned, and the school would have control over the allocation of additional places.

ML asked what pressure increasing student numbers would have on the on the current infrastructure of the school particularly parking and school transport. NS noted that this would be considered. However, a staggered start was not supported. DB explained that the 6th form MLD students are encouraged to be self-sufficient so travelling to school on public transport is a life skill to be encouraged.

NS said that any decision on either of these proposals would need to be made by the OHCAT Board and he would update Governors at the next meeting or by correspondence if necessary

### Staffing Issues

#### **Recruitment**

NS acknowledged that there were currently a high level of staffing vacancies including 5 teacher vacancies, and that this was putting pressure on staff. Where possible, agency staff were being recruited to permanent roles, but this is a slow process as references and DBS clearances must be obtained following Safer Recruitment procedures and OHCAT policy. There was a Recruitment Event planned, and recruitment to the role of Deputy Principal is progressing, with interviews being held in early December. NS confirmed that vacancies and the recruitment event have been widely advertised, and publicised to stakeholders, on social media and on the school and OHCAT website.

#### **Staff Absence rates**

NS informed Governors that staff absence was running at 10% across all staff. Some of this was due to long term sickness, and some was an indicator of staff morale, as all staff were currently working very hard to cover the current staffing gaps. PB had sent a question asking NS about strategies to deal with this level of sickness. NS explained that HR had recommended an absence monitoring system that included review meetings with staff who had been absent. He also said that issues of staff wellbeing were being addressed through Art Workshops and staff access to the swimming pool and an employee assistance scheme. He acknowledged that staff were working very hard at the moment and that progression opportunities for all staff needed to be improved.

### Therapy Service

NS explained to Governors that there was currently an issue with the external provision of Speech and Language Therapy. This service was not being provided to pupils and he had made the Local Authority aware of the situation and it had been escalated to the Director of Children's Services. Short term solutions were being implemented. IC suggested that the parents' organisation should also raise this with the Local Authority.

### Student Attendance Figures

PB asked about student absence in different parts of the school. NS explained that the reported data could be misleading as it was only for the first 9 weeks of the year, and data will get more robust during the year. Early years children were more susceptible to infections, and the absence rate does drop in the older age groups. Also, PMD children do require hospital support which affects their attendance. Monitoring attendance is a Safeguarding issue and all absence is followed up with a phone call to parents/carers. The target attendance rate in mainstream schools is 95%+.

Arbour Vale School's attendance rate is 90% which is good for a special school meeting such diverse provision.

DJ asked about strategies for tackling unauthorised absence, and NS replied that where there were requests to take children away from school during term time, he would not authorise these, although most were a reflection of the cultural diversity of pupils at the school. He also explained that prompt and accurate registration was a safeguarding issue, and that staff were improving in picking this up. IC said that she had noted this when visiting the school for her Safeguarding Portfolio holder visit and was also pleased to see that follow up phone calls were being made

## SEF

The Board noted that the SEF was available on the school website and that it had been modified following the Health Check visit by David Scott. DJ asked why the SEF contained a judgement that the current overall effectiveness of Arbour Vale School was at 2c (Ofsted rating), when the previous judgement had been 3a. NS explained that this was aspirational and given the progress already made and the hard work and commitment of staff he believed that a rating of 2c was justified. Whilst Governors agreed that they could see the enormous improvements made by the school and its staff, they felt that at this time the SEF should still reflect the rating of 3a.

NS agreed to amend the SEF, and also to provide Governors with copies of recent OFSTED inspections at other schools.

Governors **received** the Principal's Report and confirmed that they were happy with its format and content.

## **B DASHBOARD**

Governors noted the Dashboard.

## **C UPDATE ON CURRICULUM MODEL**

Governors received a presentation from SB that detailed the development of the new Curriculum Model. She showed Governors a mapping exercise of all activities carried out by staff in the school and explained how this matrix approach could be used to build a profile so that each learner could be prescribed an individual curriculum. Governors were very pleased to receive this presentation and thanked SB for this work which they noted as a significant achievement.

## **D TARGETS FOR PUPIL PERFORMANCE**

Governors received a presentation from JP that detailed the work that had been done on improving the setting of targets for pupil performance

IC asked who carries out annual reviews of EHCPs if the school only employees one SENCO. NS replied that other staff carry out these reviews.

Governors noted how much JP had achieved in this work and commended this approach which they agreed was a good use of data. They also commented that JP has achieved a system that teachers can now use to ensure that targets are reviewed every term, which is important as Ofsted will check this.

DJ asked how staff knew at what level to pitch the targets and JP replied that a number of factors were involved; staff had received SMART target training; there was a lot of input and middle leaders considered every single annual review, targets are taken from the EHCP, and finally that parents are involved in the process and would not accept targets that were too low.

DJ asked how the system worked at an individual level for the 19% who were not achieving their targets? JP explained that records are kept, and if targets are not achieved the reasons are recorded and an intervention plan put in place.

Governors congratulated JP on his work and said that they could see the progress made and how it impacts strategically and on individuals. NS added that the data was getting more robust and much more information is known. This term Arbour Vale was working towards 83% of pupils achieving their targets. He felt that this was a realistic target, and Governors agreed. JP asked Governors to note that some pupils only had 15% attendance owing to their needs, and it would be very difficult for these children to meet targets.

Governors asked JP to produce a termly report that could be shared on GovernorHub.

## **9. PORTFOLIO GOVERNOR REPORTS**

The Chair suggested that this was an area that the LGB should improve on at future meetings and asked the Clerk to look to send out timely reminders to Governors before the next meeting.

Governors discussed the informal meetings to be held on dates in between formal meetings and noted that it would be difficult for all Governors to attend all the informal meetings. NS confirmed that he would invite a local Head Teacher, with significant OFSTED inspection experience, to speak on the new OFSTED framework to the informal meeting on 30 January 2020. The Chair also asked for an update on any developments with Arbour Vale House to be reported at that meeting

The Chair informed Governors that he hoped to have a meeting with John Prior, JW and NS, and will report back on this

## **OTHER VISIT REPORTS**

There were no further reports to consider.

### **10 GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Some Governors had attended the OHCAT Governors Conference on 11 October.

### **11 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

#### **A FINAL ACCOUNTS**

Governors received and noted the draft unaudited final accounts for 2018-19 which confirmed the significant achievement made in reducing the deficit

#### **B MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

NS introduced the management accounts report for the period ending September 2019 and highlighted that a balanced budget was predicted for this year. Staff costs were being tracked and were below budget for September 2019 but as more staff were recruited this budget would rise. Currently spending on staffing was 66% of the budget but this should rise to 76-78%.

Governors **received** the management accounts report and were pleased to note the forecast balanced budget.

### **12 PAY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Governors received a verbal update from the Chair on the meeting of the Pay Committee that took place on 3 October 2019, and noted that DJ and AF had reviewed and approved the budget for teaching staff pay in accordance with OHCAT pay policies.

NS reported that there would be a review of TA's targets and progression next April.

### **13 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Governors noted the OHC&AT policies and procedures that had been approved by the Family Board at their meeting in June.

NS added that it was recognised that some policies would need to be contextualised for Arbour Vale.

**14 KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION SEPTEMBER 2019 (For Information)**

Governors noted that 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' has been updated with effect from September 2019 and that all relevant OHC&AT policies have been amended to reflect the changes, and a summary of the changes has been circulated to Safeguarding Portfolio Governors

NS informed Governors that there had been a whole school safeguarding event on the Friday before half term

IC reminded Governors that the recent changes to safeguarding focused on the issues of; up-skirting which was now a criminal offence, forced marriage and FGM. She asked if staff carrying out personal care had been trained to understand FGM. DB replied that they had and also confirmed that the school were aware of all these safeguarding issues

**15 REVISED PORTFOLIO GOVERNOR GUIDANCE**

Governors noted the revised portfolio guidance.

**16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Governors asked NS to pass on to staff their acknowledgement and thanks for all their tremendous hard work and the results they had achieved. NS replied how much staff appreciate the portfolio visits by Governors

**17 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Formal: 26 March and 2 July at 4 pm.
- Informal: 30 January and 7 May at 4 pm.

**18 CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items were deemed confidential.

**19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

NS conveyed to the LGB his thanks and appreciation for the support and interim leadership of the school from Don Blaylock. This was endorsed strongly by the chair and Governors added their thanks.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<b>6</b>	Clerk to ask for part 2 minutes to be removed from GovernorHub	ASAP
<b>8A</b>	NS to amend the SEF, and to provide Governors with copies of recent Ofsted inspections at other schools, via GovernorHub	ASAP
<b>8D</b>	JP to produce a termly report on targets that could be shared on GovernorHub	Ongoing
<b>9</b>	LJ to review system for reminding Governors about their portfolio reports	Before 26.3.20
<b>9</b>	NS to arrange Speaker on new Ofsted Inspection framework	30.01.20