



**Extraordinary Governing Board Meeting
Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 6.30 pm
online via Zoom**

Name	Role	Present	Name	Role	Present
Chris Ampofo	Foundation	√	Will Leaf (Co-Chair)	Foundation	√
Dan Brandt	Foundation	x	Zoë Miller	Parent	√
Ralph Cator	Foundation	√	Anthony Richards	Ex officio	√
Kwamena Duker*	Staff	√	Cristiana Silvaes de Melo	Parent	x
Victoria Heald-Barraclough	LA	√	David Sin	Foundation	√
Lucas Janssen*	Co-opted	√	Joel Wolchover	Parent	√
Marianne Jenkins (Co-Chair)	Foundation	x	Katie Kilgallon	Assoc Mem, T&L	√

* Present for part of the meeting

Also present:

Nicola Christopher Deputy Head (advising)
Janet Gordon Clerk

1. Opening Prayer and welcome

Will Leaf, chairing this meeting, welcomed governors and began the meeting with a prayer.

2. Apologies for Absence

Dan Brandt and Marianne Jenkins had sent apologies for absence. No other apologies had been received.

3. Declaration of interest for items on this agenda

There were no declarations of interest for items on this agenda.

Documents:

- HT Report to Governors spr 1 2021.docx
- Outline for governors on structure of meetings 2020-21.docx
- Princess Frederica BudgetModel2020 Dec 20 Monitoring Govs Copy.xls
- Princess Frederica Risk Assessment Upd 27.01.2021 v9.docx
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy COVID-19 Addendum Jan 2021.docx
- SIP 2018-Dec 2021 v10 2021.docx

4. Proposal for new meeting structure for the rest of the academic year

The Chair explained that this extraordinary meeting had been called so that the Headteacher could propose a new structure for meetings, as outlined in the document circulated in advance. The Headteacher explained that this idea had arisen from an LDBS training session on the Principles of Good Governance that he, Co-Vice Chair Zoë and the Clerk had attended. There had been discussion about how governors are supporting schools in the face of the pandemic and how they are making sure that they remain aware of key developments and have opportunity to carry out their role. The Headteacher felt that suspending the committees, so that all governors can come together more frequently, was a forward-thinking way of planning meetings for the rest of the academic year.

The Headteacher had discussed this idea with the Chairs and taking all factors into account, including some reservations about additional meetings, he proposed removing the committee meetings, focusing solely on FGB meetings to provide the opportunity for governors to meet more regularly, raise questions and have dialogue with SLT about developments which are happening at great pace in the current situation.

The chairing commitment would be shared between the Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs and there would be some understanding if governors were not able to attend all meetings, since some meetings may fall on a date when they had not been expecting to attend a meeting, but it will be important for governors to communicate clearly if they will be absent, so that a check can be made that meetings will be quorate. All governors would be welcome to send questions and comments in advance and minutes would be shared, as usual.

The Chair reminded governors of their responsibility to hold the vision and direction of the school and to hold leaders to account for how they are fulfilling the vision in the school community. In the current circumstances, all organisations are adapting and this is a way that the Board can provide the right kind of support and checks and balances that are needed. Governors may need to give greater attention to issues such as Health & Safety and the efficacy of the home learning offer.

Governors discussed the link roles for curriculum monitoring and considered whether, with the pressures of Covid, there may be a need to temporarily alter the link roles to cover more fast-moving issues and the key objectives and most pressing priorities on the School Improvement Plan, rather than trying to monitor all curriculum areas.

Governors suggested that at the end of the academic year, they could review what has turned out to be beneficial and what to take into the next academic year. Governors agreed that it was important to react and respond to the current challenges, to have a shared understanding of the unusual circumstances and to be in a position to support staff and pupil wellbeing.

Governors agreed that the budget and curriculum and assessment issues would be covered in FGB meetings, but the Admissions committee would continue as a separate entity. They

felt that there was an opportunity to link discussions about the School Improvement Plan with school finances, leading to a more joined up approach.

Governors suggested that the main headings from the School Improvement Plan could actually provide a good structure for meeting agendas.

Governors agreed that a working group could discuss agenda setting and monitoring responsibilities: Anthony, Lucas, Zoë and the Clerk. Dan could also be invited, as Chair of the T&L committee.

Action: Clerk

The Clerk will update the calendar invitations for governors with the revised schedule of additional FGB meetings, which have been arranged at times when there would have been committee meetings.

Action: Clerk

Governors **agreed** to the Headteacher's proposal to suspend committee meetings, with a revised schedule of shorter, more frequent FGB meetings in support of the school.

[6.40 pm Lucas joined the meeting during this item]

5. Headteacher's Report for Spring 1

The Headteacher informed governors that he intends to produce a focused report for each meeting. He invited governors to let him know if they would like regular reporting on anything not included in this report and welcomed any questions.

Governors asked whether there was any learning for the school from the Covid cases reported on page 2. The Headteacher explained that two class bubbles had closed in the week before the Christmas holidays, which links to what has since been learnt about the increased transmissibility of the new variant. From this experience, it became clear that the basics are vital: ensuring bubbles are adhered to and being strict about the areas that pose the highest risk of cross-contamination. The Risk Assessment and information to staff has become progressively stricter – the capacity of the staff room was reduced and staff must spend less than 15 minutes in shared spaces, but this has an impact on staff wellbeing. Best practice for ventilation is being followed, opening one window while the classroom is occupied, then opening all windows and doors when the children go outside, so that the room is well ventilated in a short period of time.

Governors asked about the implications of the GDPR breaches reported on page 3. The Headteacher explained that any potential breach is reported to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and he advises on the actions that are needed. A serious breach would involve further investigation and escalation. In the recent cases, this was not warranted, but the Headteacher was advised to record the incidents on a school log and to communicate with the affected subjects. No further repercussions are anticipated.

The Headteacher drew governors' attention to the fire alarm installation (p3), which has begun. The additional cost is because of necessary asbestos removal on the second floor. This is completely sealed and is not dangerous to anyone in school. Removal will take place during half-term, when no-one is on site.

Governors asked about the logistics of remote learning. The Deputy Head explained that teachers are teaching online from home. The children at school are in year group bubbles and join the remote learning led by a class teacher, with LSAs present to support them. In this way, everyone receives the same teaching via online learning.

Governors asked how the Assistant Head/SENCO's role is being covered in her absence. The Deputy Head is liaising with parents and outside agencies. Urgent issues are being dealt with by the Headteacher or Deputy.

Governors asked whether the number of children in school is stable. Applications are still being received from parents who would like their children at school for various reasons. There have had to be some difficult conversations, as it is unsustainable to keep increasing numbers, with close to 25% of children already in school. The Headteacher will be writing to parents to gather information to help (re)allocate places after half-term using a tiered system, but this issue has been challenging. The LSAs have stepped up in supporting the children and their wellbeing has been considered, offering flexible working conditions where possible.

Governors asked whether any support was needed from the Board in communication with parents if they would like their child in school when there are insufficient places or they are ineligible. Messaging about who was eligible was confusing at first, but after an initial mixed reaction, parents have generally been understanding. The school has tried to support parents if children are struggling to access remote learning, for example with 1:1 conversations with their teacher. The Headteacher thanked governors for the offer of support.

Governors asked whether staff lateral flow testing twice a week was a Brent initiative. It is a national, voluntary scheme, which the Deputy Head is leading and the school is encouraging.

Governors asked about how staff wellbeing is being measured and whether there is anything they need to know to be able to support the various issues that might need to be considered, including online teaching and for those working on site. The Headteacher's report mentions weekly check-ins (p3) and the staff are reminded regularly about the online support available to them. The Head and Deputy have invited the staff to speak to them about any concerns and there have been positive online conversations about what is going well, but there is no formal monitoring.

Governors offered to attend an online meeting to express their appreciation to the staff directly.

Action: Lucas

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for his report and governors for their questions.

[6.59 pm Kwamena joined the meeting during this item]

6. Risk Assessment v9

The Headteacher had shared each version of the risk assessment with governors, as it has been updated to reflect changing guidance. The recent LA Clerks' Briefing raised the possibility of Chairs of Governors signing off updates to the risk assessment on behalf of the Board. The Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs could approve updates, although a copy would be available to governors on Google Drive. Governors noted a link with the Health & Safety link role and suggested that this be considered when the link roles are reviewed.

Governors considered the responsibility of approving the risk assessment. The Headteacher informed governors that unannounced visits by the Health and Safety Executive include a review and challenge of school risk assessments, if a telephone conversation is not considered satisfactory.

Governors asked about the amendment relating to non-essential visits and whether this has an impact on the Admissions committee meeting to review applications for Nursery and Reception. This would be considered an essential visit, as some of the work cannot be carried out remotely, although preparatory work can be completed in advance. The aim would be to keep the meeting short and to involve a lower number of governors than usual, while maintaining the same level of scrutiny. Any essential visits or meetings at the school are held in a well-ventilated room in a socially distanced manner.

The Risk Assessment will continue to be a standing agenda item, with updates shown in red. The current version includes small but significant changes related to staff lateral flow testing.

Governors thanked the Headteacher for his work on the Risk Assessment and **approved** version 9.

7. Update on financial position

Resources Committee Chair Lucas reported that he had attended a budget monitoring meeting with the Headteacher and external adviser Steve Llewellyn on 27 January 2021. He felt that the school has done a good job in maintaining a stable financial position. The forecast predicts a slight increase in spending from reserves, but this includes the cost of problems with the drains and other recent challenges.

The Headteacher explained that there are no contracts with catering companies, which has been a benefit compared with other schools. Staffing and resources have been managed so that there has been little financial impact. The music teacher has ensured that music lessons have been able to take place remotely, which has maintained music tuition income in the spring term. Funds have been allocated to boosting IT, for example Chromebooks to support families and laptops for staff use. The overall overspend is anticipated to be around only £3,000.

The Resources Committee Chair reported that the school has received some Covid catch up grant and is fortunate not to rely heavily on lettings income, but budget setting will be challenging again, as a deficit is forecast in Year 3.

The Headteacher explained that this three year position assumes no staff turnover and incremental rises for all staff. The stable, experienced workforce is an asset, but leads to significant rising costs.

Governors queried the increase under E27 for Support Staff Agency. An agency member of staff is being funded from the Catch Up Premium and two EHCPs were agreed after the budget was set, leading to an increase in SEND income and agency staffing costs. Permanent appointments have not been made because some children with EHCPs who need support are coming towards the end of their time at the school.

8. Addendum to Safeguarding policy

The Headteacher explained that the addendum had been updated to reflect the current context, where children are working predominantly remotely from home.

Governors discussed the challenges associated with cameras and knowing who is with the children when they are connecting remotely. The Headteacher explained that this has been raised at staff meetings, although they appreciate that there can be technical issues. A letter will be going to parents about changes in curriculum provision with advice to check in with children to make sure that they are still working.

The recording of sessions is an important Safeguarding precaution for staff and students. The IT consultant has confirmed that this is a sensible approach and storage is in line with GDPR regulations.

9. School Improvement Plan v10

The Headteacher had revised the School Improvement Plan document after feedback from governors, adapting it to focus attention on the most important key objectives for the coming calendar year (p1-2). The rest of the document has been edited and developed, so that governors can refer to relevant sections for monitoring.

Governors were interested to hear more about the Mental Health strategy mentioned under objective 1 (Safeguarding). This relates to the training and use of Mental Health First Aiders and their involvement in the development of a whole school Mental Health strategy. Training for two members of staff is underway. The Headteacher explained some techniques which are being used to help the children to express how they are feeling.

Governors asked whether the Early Years objective (5) will be delayed or delegated in the Early Years lead's absence. The Headteacher, Deputy and other members of staff are continuing with this work with the Reception and Nursery teachers. The Early Years link governor offered help with this, as needed.

10. Minutes of the previous meeting (2nd December 2020)

- i. Accuracy
- ii. Matters arising

The Chair explained that approval of these minutes would be deferred, as this was an Extraordinary meeting.

11. Any other urgent business

Training

Governors discussed the best way to feed back to the Board from training attended, as verbal reports are not always effective. Key points or bullet points about the most important issues the Board should know from any training session can be shared online and a training log is a useful record.

The Clerk was asked to create a spreadsheet for this log.

Action: Clerk

Governors were encouraged to take advantage of the range of online training available.

Membership

The Clerk had informed governors by email that Marianne Jenkins had been **reappointed** as a Foundation governor and Lucas Janssen had been **appointed** as a Foundation governor.

Governors agreed to **appoint** Chris Ampofo to the arising Co-opted governor vacancy which has a term of office of one year.

The Co-Chair thanked governors and reminded them that the next meeting would be on Wednesday 24 March. The meeting closed at 7.52 pm.