

**The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames**

**The Russell School  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on  
Monday 08 November 2023**

**Constitution, Membership and Attendance**

<b>LA - 1</b>	<b>PARENTS - 2</b>	<b>CO-OPTED - 3</b>	<b>STAFF 2</b>
<b>Mr. Rob Woolner (RW)</b>	Ms Claire Smith (CS)	Mr Neil Cutting (NC)	Miss Rebecca James Deputy Headteacher (BJ)
	Mr Coulter Patton (CP)	Mr Tom LLOYD (TL)	Mrs Nicola McCann Teacher and SENco (NM)
		Ms Louise Allen (LA)	Ms Laura Brooks Headteacher (LB)

**bold = absent**

**Apologies: RW**

**Clerk:** Amanda Bungey

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies for absence:</b>  The Chair welcomed Governors to the first meeting of the FGB for 2023- 24.	<b>Actions</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of interest:</b>  There were no declarations of interest. All Governors present signed Declarations of Interest forms and Code of Conduct forms. RW to sign Declaration of Interest form.	<b>AB, RW</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair:</b>  NC remains committed to the school despite his relocation to Wales and all Governors approved his term of office as Chair for a further 4 years (NC may chose to step down after a year).  TL nominated LA as Vice-Chair and this was seconded by NC.  Governor comment: TL commented that NC has done an amazing job as Chair.	

4	<p><b>Previous minutes (acceptance or alterations):</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 were reviewed and some areas were moved into the Confidential Part Two section. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record and the Chair agreed his signature.</p>	
5	<p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <p>See update on other matters arising from the FGB meeting on 8 November 2023 at the end of the minutes.</p> <p><b>The following items were closed:</b></p> <p><b>Item 1:</b> The Ofsted Inspection Governor Team item can be closed. NC put a key messages paper together which all Governors have seen. A remote meeting date was set for 2.30pm on Wednesday 15 November for NC, TL and CS to go through this. CP will try to join as back -up Governor. NC to set up. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> TL and CS have met with Heather C and carried out a walk about. They will feed back to the Curriculum Committee which TL has now joined. The first meeting will take place on 6 December. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 4:</b> BJ gave feedback from new teachers about why they chose to work at The Russell. Reasons given were that the website was intriguing, Community was key, the open space and the opportunity for outdoor learning. None were particularly local (one teacher was from Birmingham), but they were attracted by what they had read. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 5:</b> Progress of PPG and EAL children is covered in the Headteacher's report. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 6:</b> Safeguarding training at St Richards took place in September and Governors were invited to attend. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 7:</b> AB and LB can approve Governor's training. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p><b>Item 8:</b> Curriculum Committee report has been sent by CS to NC. A report from the walk-about with LB, following the informal Governors tea meeting, needs to be recorded as all classes were visited. <b>Action for LA and TL.</b></p>	<p>TL, CS</p> <p>LA, TL</p>

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## **Safeguarding and Wellbeing:**

LB has assumed the role of DSL, Designated Safeguarding Lead. All staff have done their level two safeguarding training, (apart from one member of staff who is remote and therefore is not required to do so).

**Governor question: Presumably every member of staff with outside organisations has had training?**

LB: Other providers do their own safeguarding training.

LB has created a safeguarding register to highlight any children who may cause concern. Historic concerns are on the register and the document is shared weekly with SLT as an internal tracker. LB is keeping an eye on children who cause concern.

See confidential Section Two about Section 47 assessment.

There are just three families who are being monitored, two SPA referrals, (one for an extended holiday) and the other was a Child Protection concern. A Social Worker was involved and this has been closed.

### **Well being:**

LB: It is a time of change with new staff and a slimmed down team of support staff since the beginning of the year. LB has relied on experienced teachers doing corridor duty, but they have now trained Year 5 children who have assumed the role with gusto.

Community is at the heart of the school and everybody knows everyone. If staff have an appointment, LB makes sure that the school will try to accommodate and support individual needs.

This term LB has given subject leaders release time as she appreciates the need to respect what is being asked of them. Thursday afternoons have been blocked for one, to one and a half hours, and release time given on a rolling programme to cover all subject areas.

All new staff have been partnered with experienced staff as mentors.

A mental health support worker attends once a week and spends a 30 minutes reflective session with staff who are being released in order to attend.

**Governor question: What's the uptake on that?**

	<p>So far the office staff, BJ, and all new staff have done it.</p> <p>A Special Leave policy has been put in place to make sure that the rules and criteria around giving leave are fair.</p> <p>Governor comment: It is likely that it will be more scrutiny from staff in this area as the school is functioning with less staff than last year.</p> <p>Governor question: With all the changes and adaptations, who do you think is feeling the crunch the most?</p> <p>LB: SLT feels it the most as their protected hours don't count, which is very hard but there is no choice.</p> <p>There is a move to recruit parent volunteers to support with lunch duty, as LB is currently doing one and a half hours lunch duty every day. There has been some response to this need and DBS checks will be carried out.</p> <p>BJ: A safeguarding meeting is also needed with them beforehand and a plan is being made to plot where they can be fitted in.</p> <p>LB: Also there is a Sports Coach coming in at lunchtimes and this does help. The Sports Coach can offer sport and structured play and it is funded in a different way – from the Sports Premium funding.</p> <p>Governor comment, many schools are in a similar position but Governors need to keep checking in with LB as the situation needs to be sustainable, particularly if it starts affecting leadership.</p> <p>Governor comment: lunch duty gives LB an opportunity to get to know the children but it is not sustainable long term.</p> <p>Governor question: Could we associate ourselves with local colleges?</p> <p>LB: has emailed Richmond college as it is useful for students to do work experience. However they could not be counted in ratios, as they are not always reliable.</p>	
7	<p><b>Headteacher's Report:</b></p> <p><b>School context:</b>  The numbers are now at 199, one more than stated in the report.  There is a new child in Year 4.  The roll is falling.  The numbers of Free School Meals children is still well below the national average.  SEND numbers is near the national average.</p>	

EAL numbers are high compared to the national average. Most do speak English and pick up English quickly.

Governor question, do you have concern about the falling numbers?  
It would be remiss to gloss over it.

LB: There is some stability in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 with a net loss of three over those years. There's been an increase in Year 4. The worry is Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. The school is dealing with demographics and a big dip in the birth rate.

Governor question: Year 2 have gone to 23?

LB: There has been a loss of five. Two have moved abroad, one moved out to the area and two committed but had gone to other more local schools. LB and BJ have looked at mobility and are confident all leavers have a story behind.

Governor comment: the website is getting The Russell School on the map.

LB is passionate about the school and wants to get the message out there.

Governor question: Matters arising addressed the need to promote the Nursery. What is the update?

LB: Staffing is an issue due to ratios. If under three, the ratio is one to five. Plus three is one to eight.

BJ: There are five children starting nursery in January. Three of them will come if they can get a full day.

LB: A lot of tours have been done, which LB loves doing, but mainly for Reception. The school has never done an Open Morning so far but LB would like to do one and is looking at the best place to advertise this. LB has asked the Business manager to find out where other schools advertise.

Governor comment: A full day would make a big impact. My child did not go to the Russell nursery because of lack of childcare for a full day. Even 3.30 pick up time was not do-able for my family. Otherwise we would have chose to go to The Russell.

LB: It is also hard to get staff. LB has reached out to local colleges who run Early Years courses. PVI nurseries are losing staff due to low numbers. The school has the advantage of offering something more stable, with a career structure and CPD which may be attractive to them.

	<p>Governor question Are we advertising for nursery children or staff? LB: both.</p> <p>Governor question: Could we speak to AFC to see if they have any ideas of where to advertise? <b>LB: to action.</b></p> <p>Governor comment: I think we're hearing from Governors that though we have had to pared things back, we really should be giving full support to focus on this real income-generating opportunity. It should be top priority.</p> <p>Governor question: Could we do a simple on-line questionnaire, for example, did your child attend nursery? Would your child have been more likely to attend if a full day had been offered? This will provide robust best evidence of need and for a market amongst existing parents.</p> <p>Governor comment: when the Resources Committee next meet it should consider implications on the budget. We can't afford to be risk averse.</p> <p>Governor comment: We have the facilities, and private nurseries are very expensive.</p> <p>Governor question: When is the census? LB: It happened in October. Matthew P has managed admissions for years. He thinks the low numbers is a blip we will have to ride it.</p> <p>LB: Other schools are in dire straits. One school she is aware of has 60 places and only 15 children. So the Russell is not in a completely dire situation. There are enough children in the classes to have a full sense of community.</p> <p><b>Quality of Education:</b></p> <p>SDP priorities led the INSET days this term.</p> <p>All new staff have been observed.</p> <p>Focus has been on English and maths.</p> <p>Focus has also been on hearing children reading phonetically decodable books.</p>	LB
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	<p>ECT is in their second year of the two year programme with half termly observations on core subjects.</p> <p>IDSR has now been released. Looking at Richmond's outcomes rather than national.</p> <p>The Early Years is something to celebrate - in line with national which will be hopefully be raised the following year.</p> <p>Because the school numbers are small, it is hard to read the data for individual groups.</p> <p>The multiplication check was an area of concern - 13% achieved 25 out of 25, whereas nationally 31% achieved that. The focus is on this not happening again.</p> <p><b>Behaviour and Attitudes:</b></p> <p>This has been a big focus since September. Behaviour in the classroom is good. We have bubbly children, so running in the corridor has been an issue. So Year 5 are now monitors and they created posters telling the children to walk. There are logistical concerns as the site is so big. Children need to know which areas they can use and when an adult needs to be present to supervise.</p> <p>Attendance is a national concern. The Russell School compares well nationally. Attendance is also a safeguarding concern. LB is trying to get to know families on the gate every day, and working hard to remove barriers for individual families who struggle. LB will continue to work with the EWO to help improve attendance.</p> <p><b>Personal development:</b></p> <p>LB: The emotional support provided by the SEN department in the Reef is excellent. The SEN team is team is very proactive.</p> <p>Linking with the community is unique and is an example of community at its best. The school is taking part with the "We are listening" project, reaching out to twin local schools on the frontline of the climate crisis. It will culminate in an art exhibition and makes the children feel part of the global community.</p> <p>A community tea was held for our local mature residents. Year 4 did a brilliant job, making invitations and serving tea. Personal development is embedded in the school.</p>	
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**Staffing:**

LB: There is a need to recruit to Breakfast Club members of staff. If this does not happen, it will need to be staffed by SLT as the school cannot lose the Breakfast Club.

**Appraisal:**

LB: All staff are being appraised.

**Communication with Families:**

LB: The website needs work, to make sure everything in there that the families need and want.

There have been opportunities for families to go into school to meet the teachers, learn about the curriculum and go to the PTA coffee morning.

Governor comment: The Headteacher's report is easy to read and it is useful to have data in there for all Governors.

Governor comment: It is a concerning prospect that LB may have to man the Breakfast Club as this takes LB away from strategic matters. SLT morale is important.

LB: This is just tricky time as it is so hard to recruit.

Governor question: Could PTA funding potentially be used to fund staffing?

Governor reply: The rules around funding means it is not viable.

LB: The school needs to recruit more volunteers.

Governor question: If we have more EHCPs, will we need to recruit more staff for this?

NM: at least a full time TA.

LB: It is hard to find them. Agency staff means no on-costs but they are not necessarily reliable.

Governor comment: AFC data value-added scores show some significant numbers there. Clearly something very good is happening. Are we considering which things we are doing well which need to be reinforced?

LB: Maths is a real success story. The NCETM scheme has been in place for 4 years and is embedded along with engagement with the mass hub.



	<p>BJ: BJ and NM teach together and are taking time to learn the process so that it is possible to see the flow of maths through the school. Lots of reasoning and talking, not just answers to questions.</p> <p>Governor comment: As a school we have a very mixed socio-economic cohort and a cohesive community. This helps to create atmosphere where children coming from less advantageous positions are supported by children from more advantageous positions.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the importance of children taking risks and acquiring independence, and whether more opportunities should be opened up to promote independence, balanced against the need to protect children for their health and safety.</p> <p>LB gave examples of the responsibilities and opportunities for independence given to every Year group (including corridor duties, play buddies with Strathmore, walking training, scooter training, bikeability training – though LB would like bikeability to be earlier - in Year 5, overnight stays at Thames Young Mariners, Sayers Croft and the Isle of Wight). LB was comfortable that children are getting enough opportunity for independence.</p> <p>Governor comment (CS): I would be happy to look at the risk assessments.</p> <p>BJ to forward the Sayers Croft risk assessment to CS. <b>Action</b></p> <p>Governor question: How was the PTA Halloween disco?</p> <p>LB: Very successful.</p> <p>There was also had a Cheese and Wine night for the Petersham and Ham Horticultural Society. The aim was to raise revenue.</p> <p>Governor comment: Promotion of the School's musical offer would be a draw for parents.</p> <p>BJ: The music teacher Liz T has achieved the Music Mark status again for the school.</p> <p>The need to promote the Nursery was reiterated and the need to advertise it in the press. One of the Governors mentioned that Ham parade Costa Coffee have a notice board which could be utilised.</p> <p>The Fire Evacuation Plan has been changed and one evacuation has taken place with one more to come this term.</p>	
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**BJ, CS**

<b>8</b>	<p><b>School Development Plan:</b></p> <p>Governors have seen the SDP. LB is doing a RAG rating which is very much a working document.</p> <p><b>Governor question: How are Subject Leads responding to the areas they're taking the lead in?</b></p> <p>LB: It is part of their role and LB is trying her best to give people time. LB does modelling - "distributed leadership model" NM: Staff are supporting each other. BJ: They are coming to SLT and asking the right questions. LB: Making sure there are clear messages takes time and this a period of change. LB's door is always open and new staff come in every day.</p> <p><b>Governor question: In terms of SDP priorities, do you feel confident that the plans and actions are speaking to the problems that you are aware of. Do you feel confident that they are adequately described?</b></p> <p>LB went through the SDP priorities for Quality of Education and confirmed that she thinks they are achievable.</p> <p>Regarding the maths multiplication check, the test needs practice. The children were not used to that practice. There is a practice site opening the month before, so the school will make full use of that.</p> <p><b>Governor question, what feels like the biggest stretch?</b> LB: EYFS target.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Resources Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2023/24 Budget</b></li> <li>• <b>Recovery Plan</b></li> </ul> <p>The Resources Committee meeting is to be re-scheduled but Governors have approved the Pay policy.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>School Policy Updates</b></p> <p>All Governors approved the policy updates.</p> <p>LA had discussed the Pay and Health and Safety policies with Rebecca O'S and LB. Teachers pay is 6.5% increase. (The school had originally</p>	

	<p>budgeted for 5% -on the advice of AfC). This needed to have Governor's agreement so people can receive their pay increase.</p> <p>TA's pay increase has been budgeted for and will be backdated from April.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Policy has named people in it. There needs to be a Health and Safety Link Governor who can walk the site and check compliance and COSHH. CS has some experience in this area and the Board approved her appointment as Health and Safety Link Governor. AB to find a break down what a Health and Safety Governor needs to do as well as any other job descriptions for Lead Governors. <b>Action</b></p>	<b>AB</b>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Headteacher Performance Management update:</b></p> <p>The Headteacher's Performance Management meeting was very constructive and attendees are waiting to hear back from the SIP Emma S. There was no retrospective review as LB is new to the role. Objectives were set. Emma S added in success factors. A mid-term review date and end of year review date needs to be set.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Confidential Section:</b></p> <p><b>Headteacher's Report on Complaints and Exclusions (Reports on Parental Complaints, Pupil Exclusions, or any other Confidential Matter)</b></p> <p>None reported.</p> <p><b>Headteacher's report on Racist Incidents (Governing Body to agree any action deemed necessary)</b></p> <p>See confidential Section Two .</p>	
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Any other Business:</b></p> <p>Governor question: Are we using CPOMS? LB: yes it is our system for recording safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Governor question (LA): It would be helpful to know what makes a meeting "quorate". <b>AB to action.</b></p> <p>A discussion took place around the best way to recruit another Governor, including moving a Parent Governor to be a Co-opted Governor to create an opportunity to recruit another Parent</p>	<b>AB</b>

	Governor (which is a 4 year term) versus appointing a parent to be a Co-opted Governor for a 2 year term. It could be advertised and the applicants would be interviewed by the Chair and one other. The diversity of the Governing Body should be considered.	<b>NC, LB</b>
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### **The Russell School**

**Update on Matters Arising from the Governing Body meeting held on**

**Monday 8 November 2023**

	<b>Matter Arising</b>	<b>Date raised</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>1</b>	All Governors to sign Declaration of Interest forms	08/11/23	AB, RW	24/01/23	AB to send and RW to sign Declaration of Interest form.
<b>2</b>	TL and CS visit with Heather C	08/11/23	TL, CS	24/01/23	TL and CS to report back to the Curriculum meeting on December 6 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>3</b>	Report from walk about with LB	08/11/23	LA, TL	24/01/23	Report from the walk-about with LB needs to be recorded as all classes were visited.
<b>4</b>	Advertising Nursery vacancies	22/05/23	LB	24/01/23	To consult AfC for best way of advertising.
<b>5</b>	Risk assessment checks	08/11/23	BJ, CS	24/01/23	BJ to forward the Sayers Croft risk assessment to CS.
<b>6</b>	Link Governor job descriptions	08/11/23	AB	24/01/23	AB to consult AfC for job descriptions for Lead Governors.
<b>7</b>	What makes a meeting "quorate"	08/11/23	AB	24/01/23	AB to check quorate rules with Governor Support.
<b>8</b>	The best way to recruit another Governor.	08/11/23	NC, LB, BJ	24/01/23	To consider asking a parent to take on the role of Co-opted Governor.

Signed by the Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Full Governors Meeting date:      Wednesday 24 January 2023 at 6.00p**