

**The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames**

**The Russell School  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Body held on  
Monday 23 January 2023**

**Constitution, Membership and Attendance**

<b>LA - 1</b>	<b>PARENTS - 1</b>	<b>CO-OPTED - 5</b>	<b>STAFF 2</b>
Mr. Rob Woolner (RW)	Mr Adam Curtis (AC)	Mr Neil Cutting (NC)	Miss Rebecca James(BJ) Acting Headteacher
	Ms Claire Smith (CS)	Mr Tom LLOYD (TL)	Mrs Nicola McCann Teacher and SENco (NM)
	Mr Coulter Patton (CP)	<b>Mr. Brian Miller (BM)</b>	

**bold = absent**

**Apologies: Brian Miller**

**Clerk: Amanda Bungey**

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies for absence:</b>  The Chair welcomed Governors to the second meeting of the FGB for 2022- 23. Apologies received from BM.	<b>Actions:</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>New Parent and Teacher Governor Welcome:</b>  CP and NM were welcomed and thanked for joining the Governing Body. They introduced themselves to the Governors. NC encouraged new Governors to take up any CPD opportunities available from AfC, many of which are on-line.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Declarations of interest:</b>  No declarations of interest were declared.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Previous minutes:</b>  The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record and the Chair signed them.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters arising:</b>  See update on other matters arising from the FGB meeting on 23 January 2023 at the end of the minutes.  The following items were closed:	

	<p>Item 1. Safeguarding audit. NC and BJ have met and will review it again in early Summer, and NC will continue to monitor as Safeguarding Lead. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 3. A series of dates are now in the diary for parents to come into the school to meet. There was a coffee morning last week for new parents and there was a good turn out. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 4. Monitoring of energy consumption will be ongoing for the Resources Committee. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 6. NC gave Liz T a gift and card to thank her for all her hard work and achievements with music at the school. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 7. Both staffing issues are covered in the Headteacher's report. <b>Items closed.</b></p> <p>Item 8. NC has spoken to Rachel N and thanked her for her contribution. Rachel was very positive about the school and the children's behaviour and was very complimentary about the job BJ has been doing. SLT are focusing on the areas that need developing. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 9. BJ has sent out links to parents about IT safety and will send again after half term. <b>Item closed.</b></p> <p>Item 10. Guidance on communication with the press, with an AfC contact name and email, has been added to the Staff Handbook and has also been added to the Business Continuity Policy. <b>Item closed.</b></p>	
6	<p><b>Headteacher's Report:</b></p> <p>BJ has produced a short, 3 page, Headteacher's report and ran through the key points of the contextual information.</p> <p>BJ: The report contains attendance figures. Numbers nationally have dropped since COVID. In November and December, there was a big outbreak of viral infections, especially in Reception. (One week there were only 10 Children in Reception class). The majority of the children with poor attendance have been due to the rise of illnesses. There have been a few families flagged with the EWO and the school nurse. Some parents have been more reluctant to send children in, even if illnesses have been minor, due the fear of Strep A. The media suggested children might die and subsequently there was a lot of panic around parents. Generally, the attendance is not too bad everywhere else, and attendance will hopefully continue to rise.</p> <p>EAL numbers are 76 Children (35% of school). 31 languages with Cantonese and German being the most common followed by Farsi, Czech and Turkish.</p> <p><b>No exclusions.</b></p>	

27 free school meals.

4 nursery age children getting Early Years Pupil Premium.

No looked after children.

One adopted child.

Numbers on roll were listed.

7 spaces in Nursery which is a bit healthier.

Numbers are back up in Year 4.

Lower numbers in Nursery are consistent across the borough. Parents need 8am to 6pm childcare and it is a problem for schools to provide this.

8 children have been admitted since September.

Applications are in for Reception, but the school won't know who has applied until April.

There was one racist incident, a mixed race child and a white British child. This was dealt with, with parents, and using the Relationship Policy. No further action needed.

Safeguarding - another spa referral was made on Friday. Two since the last Headteacher's report.

One child in need.

Two requests for information.

26 children receiving SEN support.

Five EHCPs, 2 are going through the process with 2 possible others.

Two EHCPs will be lost from Year 6 when they leave.

One child is awaiting a place at Strathmore school.

**Governor question: Are you receiving any funding support from AfC for these children?**

It is funded within the resources of the school.

One child is autistic, non-verbal and not independent, and hoping to join Strathmore, but it is oversubscribed.

Staffing:

Lauren O has gone on maternity leave. She has had twins who were born two months early.

**Governor comment: Governors requested their regards are to sent to Lauren.**

The school has appointed cover for the TA position. Joseph O'H will work four days a week. He plans to train to be teacher and will be kept until September. Stuart J has been given one day, and is still volunteering on the other three days. Both are on temporary contracts for Lauren's maternity leave.

**Governor question: What about the dining hall vacancy?**

	<p>BJ: Debbie G is still off awaiting an operation. One of the parents has been volunteering three days a week up until next week. Stuart J has offered to cover lunch for three days, and the gaps on Mondays and Fridays are being plugged.</p> <p><b>Governor comment:</b> Levels of attendance the school had managed to achieve pre- COVID were hard-fought and hard-won. If children are not here they cannot learn. It really is an important metric for us. While we recognise everything included in the report, nevertheless, it is important to keep it front and centre in parents' minds. Messages need to be about the importance of them coming to school. The level was 97% which was fantastic.</p> <p><b>Governor question:</b> Do we have many people going on holidays?</p> <p>BJ: Prices of holidays go up dramatically outside of term time so that is an influence.</p> <p>To encourage attendance the school still has attendance cups every week. BJ is not keen to go down the route of fining parents for their children's non-attendance. An analysis on those flagging has been done and it has mainly been due to illness or holidays.</p> <p><b>Governor comment:</b> Children lose confidence if they stay off school for long.</p> <p><b>Governor question:</b> Is attendance a standing item at parents evenings?</p> <p>BJ confirmed it is and she sends out letters to individual families. BJ also sent her a parent questionnaire recently and there was some feedback about how the school pursues school absences. It is a priority for BJ.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Resources Update:</b></p> <p>BM, RW and TL attended the recent Resources Committee meeting. BM is concerned about the unprecedented lack of funding support from the Government and the school's current financial position. He suggested setting up an emergency Crisis Committee.</p> <p>The Government have said there is £35,000 of funding to go to schools but the allocation of this is unclear.</p> <p><b>Governor comment:</b> The worry is the trajectory of the red numbers for the budget.</p> <p>Governors discussed the fact that it is not possible to set a negative budget, but the problem is the staff salary increases. Also, other costs have gone up, including things such as paper, school meals etc. There is a currently a C/F of £65,000, which will be wiped out, and therefore there has to be some cutting of costs. There should be more of an idea of how much funding the school will get, from AfC by February or March.</p> <p><b>Governor comment:</b> More regular reports will be needed from RO with monthly projections on out-turn and any shifts in the budget.</p> <p>In case of the necessity of staffing cuts, RO and BJ are having a meeting with someone who deals with re-structuring at AfC.</p> <p><b>Governor comment:</b> There should be a plan for generating income. For example, summer camps would be lucrative.</p>	<p><b>BJ</b></p> <p><b>BJ</b></p>

	<p>BJ and RO to ask Rachel N about summer camps as they run them at Tolworth.</p> <p>Parental contributions have recently raised £5,000.</p> <p>Another consideration going forward is the status of the school. An option is federation with another school, (as opposed to Academy status). The majority consensus is that Academy status is not appropriate for the Russell school. A discussion took place around the difference between Academies and Federations and it was felt that a Soft Federation, which would be an agreement to share resources, procurement and staffing provision, was something to be considered, as the school would maintain its own status and Governing Bodies.</p> <p>The next Resources Committee meeting is the 22nd March.</p> <p><b>Governor comment: a projection will be needed to include a range of possible deficit numbers (eg at least X and potentially X).</b></p> <p>BJ: The numbers on roll will affect the funding. These are better than expected. The Reception numbers will be known by April, but Nursery numbers will not be known until the end of term.</p> <p><b>Governor comment: In terms of numbers, RO should look at the last 3 years and trends and make an educated guess/ assumption.</b></p> <p>A discussion took place about possibly writing to the local MP about the lack of Government funding.</p>	<p><b>BM</b></p> <p><b>NC</b></p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Headteachers Recruitment:</b></p> <p>A discussion took place around the Headteacher recruitment, which is imminent. The shortlisting review is tomorrow and CS, TL and NC will meet with Emma S. There have been six applications so far. Interviews are to take place on 30th January. Most applicants visited the school and were seen by BJ who is quietly confident that there will be a suitable applicant. This time round the advert was out early, and that has given extra time, which has made all the difference. The strongest applications were from Deputy Heads. A couple of applicants have shone through, in terms of their commitment to the community. NC will update Governors.</p>	<p><b>NC</b></p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Governor CPD and Training Opportunities:</b></p> <p>This will now be a standing item on the agenda.</p> <p>CP to receive information on Governor's training. AB to update AfC.</p> <p><b>Action.</b></p>	<p><b>NC</b></p> <p><b>AB</b></p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Health Safety and Wellbeing:</b></p> <p>This agenda item to be re-titled "Safeguarding and Wellbeing".</p>	<p><b>NC</b></p>
<b>11</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>There was one racist incident, a mixed race child and a white British child. This was dealt with, with parents, and using the Relationship Policy. No further action needed.</p>	
12	<p><b>Any other Business:</b></p> <p>No any other business</p>	
12	<p><b>Close:</b></p> <p>NC gave very warm thanks to AC for the contribution he had made as Parent Governor and had continued to make, despite his re-location to Norfolk with his family. NC thanked him for his fantastic support and involvement with the school, gave regards to him and his family and assured him of a warm welcome, should he ever visit.</p>	

The Russell School

Update on Matters Arising from the Governing Body meeting held on

Monday 23 January 2023

	<b>Matter Arising</b>	<b>Date raised</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>1</b>	Link Governors	23/01/23	NC	27/03/23	NC to suggest which Governors could step into the Link Governor vacancies.
<b>2</b>	Information about Federated schools	23/01/23	NC and BJ	27/03/23	NC and BJ to discuss with Rachel N at Tolworth as a Federated school.
<b>3</b>	Governor vacancies	23/01/23	NC	27/03/23	NC to circulate skills assessment to all Governors and new Governors to fill out so that it is up to date. NC to approach AfC following this.
<b>4</b>	Update on support from Rachel N	23/01/23	BJ and NC	27/03/23	A formal review with Rachel N for how things have been going and her insights into the school's current financial position.
<b>5</b>	Re-structuring	23/01/23	BJ	27/03/23	BJ and RO to have meeting with HR contact at AfC about the possible re-structuring process and how to inform staff.
<b>6</b>	Summer camps	23/01/23	BJ	27/03/23	BJ and RO to ask Rachel N about summer camps at Tolworth as a possible revenue source.
<b>7</b>	Policies	21/11/22	BJ	27/03/23	Complaints Procedure - Page 2: Role of Governing Body – change from “statutory duties” to “duties”.
<b>8</b>	Health Safety and Wellbeing	21/11/22	NC	27/03/23	Change title as regular item on the agenda to “Safeguarding and Wellbeing”.

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Full Governors Meeting date: Monday 27 March 2023 at 7.00pm**