

MERTON INFANT SCHOOL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Full Governing Body meeting held on Thursday 27th February 2020 at the school

MINUTES

Present:	Lee-ann Dirienzo		
	Larissa James	Headteacher	
	Laura Bennett		
	Jan Beard		
	Christopher Martin	Chair	
	Emily Mean	Vice Chair	
	Louise Silverton		
	Andy Thompson		
	Kady Pike		
In attendance:	Paula Bennett	School Business Manager	
	Members of Staff (please see attached Attendee Sign-In Sheet for details)		
	Mark Livesey	Clerk	
Apologies:	None		
Absent:	None		

The meeting started at 6.30 pm.

		ACTION
1.	Welcome by Chair of Governors Mr Martin, as Chair of Governors, welcomed everyone to the meeting, following which each member of the Governing Body introduced themselves in turn. Mr Martin advised that the meeting has been convened to discuss the Proposal under the Redundancy and Restructuring Policy, including the process to be followed and the rationale for the changes detailed in the Proposal. Mr Martin reminded everyone of the need to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.	
2.	Headteacher presents Report to Staff and Governors Mrs James, the Headteacher, advised that a similar meeting to the present one took place 2 years ago. She questioned whether the school should have undertaken more extensive staff restructuring at that time, when it was decided to limit the restructuring in order to maintain the employment of staff at the school, as far as this could be done. Mrs James also advised that since that meeting, pupil numbers have not increased significantly and therefore in order to prevent the school being in a position, in a further 2 years' time, more drastic measures are required and therefore this Proposal has been produced. Mrs James then advised a number of points, as follows: - the rationale for the Proposal is the Numbers On Roll (NOR) figure, with the Proposal being based on a NOR of 168 in academic year 2020/21 and a forecast NOR of 180 in academic year 2021/22 - the school was extended to 3 form entry and at that time the school was advised that the PAN would increase to 90 per year group so that the full capacity of the school would be 270 - in 2016/17 the PAN was reduced to 60 because of the low birth rate; the effect of this was that the number of classes was reduced from 9 to 8, although as the school was able to sustain staffing levels, no staffing restructuring proposals were necessary at that time	

• in academic year 2018/19 the school was advised to change the PAN back to 90; subsequently the NOR remained low and therefore the school was advised to keep it at 60 • currently, the number of applications for school places is 63, although it is believed that 2 of these children may not take up their places because they have EHCPs (Education Health Care Plans) • it is possible that the school may take 2 or 3 additional children from the Second Preference List and the Third Preference List although whether or not this will happen will not be known until April • the school will not know what its Budget Share will be until late February or early March, • the timeframe for providing information from both previous bullet points does not match the timeline for a staffing restructuring process • another reason for the Proposal is rising staffing costs in the form of pension increases for support and teaching staff, and staff salary increases, where these are not fully subsidised by the government • Page 1 of the Proposal documents how pupil numbers have been affected; the October census determines the amount of funding received by the school, with each pupil attracting £2,742 of funding • Page 2 shows that pupil numbers on roll have reduced from 205 in the academic year 2018/19 to 165 currently on roll during this (2019/20) academic year; this reduction in pupil numbers has resulted in a reduction in funding of £109,680, i.e. 40 pupils x £2,742 • the current staffing profile, as included in the Proposal, will result in a budget deficit of £163,994 by the end of the 3-year budget plan in financial year 2021/22 • the restructuring process has become necessary as, by law, school governors cannot agree a deficit budget Mrs James then advised a few points regarding the appendices to the Proposal, as summarised below: • the school has 2 budgets, the main budget (or 0 budget) into which the Budget Share from the government is received, and the Y budget • the Y budget covers the rent received from the Preschool, and also the After School and Breakfast clubs • Education Personnel and Education Finance consider the 2 budgets together; a deficit is shown in the main budget but not in the Y budget • following her meeting with her Education Personnel caseworker, it has become apparent that there are a significant number of issues to be considered when embarking on a staffing restructure proposal • Page 3 of the Proposal document contains information on potential staffing reductions with regard to certain school posts • regarding the Administrative Officer (D grade) post, the Proposal is that this post is removed and that a new Senior Admin Assistant (C grade) post is introduced, with the displaced postholder to be offered the new Senior Admin Assistant (C grade) post with salary safeguarding for 2 years if the displaced postholder accepts the new post; the rationale for this change is that the School Business Manager completes all of the financial aspects of the D grade post • regarding the Extended/Out of School Deputy Leader (D grade) post, the Proposal is that this post is removed and that a new post of Extended/Out of School Assistant Post (C grade) be introduced, with the displaced Extended/Out of School Deputy Leader postholder to be offered the additional Extended/Out of School Assistant Post (C grade) for which salary safeguarding would apply for 2 years if they accepted the post. The rationale for the Proposal is that when the Extended/Out of School Deputy Leader (D grade) and Extended/Out of School Assistant (C grade) posts were introduced and the After School Club was set up, it was believed that it was necessary to have the Extended/Out of School Deputy Leader post; however, as falling pupil numbers have resulted in fewer children attending the Club, it is believed that 2 Assistants could manage the Club under the direction of the Headteacher • there needs to be consideration regarding 4 LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) who cover Midday Supervisory Assistants (MDSAs); the Proposal is that the LSAs should be paid for on a different grade (MDSA A grade) from their LSA grade, under a different contract for the cover work • under the Proposal, LSAs will be requested to work the 15-minute mid-morning breaks, as these breaks are currently paid for as part of the LSAs' contracted hours • under the Proposal, the number of classroom C grade LSA posts will be reduced from 9 to 7
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- the Proposal includes the removal of the Special Needs Assistant D grade post, as by means of CPD the school has developed a strong team of highly qualified LSAs who are able to deliver specific interventions and programmes across all year groups - the Proposal includes the removal of a B grade LSA post due to the cessation of a fixed-term contract - the Proposal includes the removal of the trainee teacher post due to the cessation of a fixed-term contract - the Proposal includes the removal of a DHT post, the rationale being that the postholder is predominantly deployed into a full time class teaching role with 0.1 release time for leadership responsibilities although the types of activities that the DHT would be expected to do are no longer needed in a school the size of Merton Infant for the reasons outlined in the bullet point below - the reasons for the DHT activities at Merton no longer being needed are a) the school has numerous experienced class teachers, some of whom are undertaking middle leadership roles, who are increasingly effective in supporting school improvement, b) the Headteacher, who is experienced at the role, is leading the development, organisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the school curriculum, and also undertakes the monitoring of Teaching and Learning in addition to the formulation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), its cycle of implementation and review and the Self Evaluation Form (SEF), c) there is an experienced Inclusion Manager whose role is the strategic leadership of SEND and vulnerable pupils, leading and supporting colleagues, working with the Headteacher to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement and contributing to the performance management process of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), and d) the Headteacher is able to fulfil her existing role, drive the school forward with her Proposal for staffing restructure and is able to undertake the responsibilities currently listed in the DHT job description - Page 5 of the Proposal contains budgetary information for the previous financial year 2018/19, the current financial Year 2019/20, the planned budgetary information for 2020/21 based on the current staff structure and the planned budgetary information for 2020/21 based on the proposed staff structure; this information describes how the school's costs are changing - if the staffing restructure under the terms of the Proposal is undertaken, the planned budgetary information shows that there is no deficit and that the school has savings of £42,363 in staffing costs, even when the salary safeguarding for the relevant members of staff is taken into account - regarding the planned budgetary information for 2020/21, if the staffing restructuring takes place, the surplus from the Y budget eliminates the Cumulative Deficit Carried Forward of £45,000 - Page 6 of the Proposal contains the current staffing information - strategies employed to avoid staff redundancies included a) revision of and rigorous monitoring of the Budget Plan, b) reduction of expenditure where possible and appropriate, e.g. staff training, educational supplies, photocopying, purchase of IT equipment and software, reduction in trips for future years, removal of posts filled by postholders on fixed term contracts, c) review of SLA (Service Level Agreement) contracts with County by governors, d) Senior Leadership covering all supply costs for absent teachers to avoid additional expenditure, e) decision not to replace a member of staff involved with the Breakfast Club who resigned, resulting in a saving of approximately £2,000 per year, f) initiatives to attract applications for YR each year, including updating the school website, producing leaflets for local nurseries, preschools and housing developments, and advertising in local papers and / or community booklets - every effort will be made to support staff in finding suitable alternative employment with dismissal being a last option for the school - the proposed selection process is documented on pages 6 & 7 of the Proposal - the proposed method of calculating redundancy payments is determined by County and is documented on page 7 of the Proposal document - LJ has offered staff the opportunity to discuss voluntary solutions - appendices 1 and 2 of the Proposal document the current and proposed staffing structures respectively Mr Martin thanked Mrs James for her Report.	
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3.	Questions from Staff / Staff Representatives Mr Martin invited questions from the staff and staff representatives. A staff representative advised that news of the restructuring process was disappointing and concerning and that although most of the staff she represented were fortunate enough to have a position after completion of the restructuring, the process will have an impact on the future of the staff at the school. Q. A staff representative asked when the Proposal will be confirmed. A. Mrs James advised that according to the guidance, after this meeting, there will be a meeting between Mrs James' caseworker and the unions in March with a view to having the process completed by May. Q. A staff representative asked if any other proposals were considered before the current one. A. Mrs James advised that no other proposals were considered before the current one. Q. A staff representative asked if any changes to expenditures such as the costs of a football coach or a Trailblazers' Coordinator had been considered. A. Mrs James advised that such changes had been considered and that she had had to look at the needs of the school and consider how to manage PPA; at that time the question was how PPA could be covered if a football coach was not employed. The staff representative suggested that if the football coach came in at another time, the children would still benefit from the experience of having the teachers with them and it would then be possible to access the sports budget and cover the cost. Mrs James advised that the sports funding would not be appropriate to fund PPA. Q. Another staff representative asked if the cost of the football coach could have come out of the staffing budget. A. Mrs Bennett advised that the cost of the football coach comes out of a particular budget line, although this line is not for staffing as the coach is a bought-in service rather than a member of staff. Q. A staff representative asked if the curriculum managers will still be given time to manage their subjects. A. Mrs James advised that she could not see any reason why the curriculum managers could not be given time to manage their subjects. Q. A staff representative asked how staff absences will be covered. A. Mrs James advised that the school will have to manage any staff absences on a day to day basis when they occur. Q. A staff representative, referring to page 6 of the Proposal, asked if any more information could be provided on the school's marketing strategy. A. Mr Martin advised that the Governing Body (GB) had discussed such matters as the marketing of the school to the community, and that minutes of the GB meetings were available on the school website. Mrs James and Mr Martin then advised that a number of activities either have been, are being or will be carried out to raise the profile of the school locally, as summarised below: • the GB aims to publish a monthly article in 'Popley Matters' • the school contacts the local preschools and nurseries, that are feeder organisations for Merton Infant, to let them know about the school's open events • the school office contacts the preschools when a closing date is coming up and asks the preschool to ask their parents whether they have applied to Merton Infant • the school usually has a presence at the Popley Festival and celebrates the school's achievements through social media • children at the school take part in local competitions • the school has published articles in the Basingstoke Gazette, and contacted the radio station e.g. when the school celebrated its 50th birthday • the school has campaigned with Public Highways in an attempt to arrange for a larger school sign to be assembled on Popley Way, although this campaign proved to be fruitless Q. A staff representative referred to the role of Inclusion Manager as having many aspects, including Safeguarding, SEN and covering for class teachers. For this reason, the representative advised that there is concern regarding the strength of leadership in the school and the lack of support for the high percentage of SEN children. A. Mrs James advised that this issue is something that the school will have to manage when it arises, and that the tools of prioritisation and delegation will need to be used. Q. A staff representative advised that staff have noticed that there has been expenditure on new gym equipment for Y2 and on smart tables and although this equipment is regarded as nice to have, the staff feel that there have been conflicting messages with it generally being felt that the school has been trying to save money on photocopying while at the same time there have been major expenditures. The representative asked Mrs James if she would be open to suggestions regarding the smart tables, e.g. as they are not a well-used resource, what would she think of a suggestion	
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that it might be a good idea to sell them if it aided the budget ? The representative advised that she and other staff would be more than happy to provide input for these sorts of discussions. A. Mrs James advised that the school is interested in any ideas for saving money, for example there was a recent review of educational supplies in drawers and cupboards with a view to saving money on orders for supplies and resources. Mrs Bennett advised that the play equipment for the outside areas was funded from the PE Sports Funding and had already been paid for, the money having been ring-fenced. The general principle for ring-fenced money is that it should be spent on the pupils who are currently in the school, and cannot be spent on just anything. However, expenditure on items like photocopying and education supplies is under the full control of the school and therefore may offer the opportunity for internal cost savings. She also explained that when the building work was being carried out, the school did not spend a great deal on refurbishment and therefore a sizeable balance was carried forward; once the school had been expanded the school was able to use the money to develop the outside areas, and it concentrated on work that the council had not been prepared to fund. Mrs James advised that FOMS money had been used to pay for some of the work. Mrs Bennett advised that the school used to receive Growing Schools Funding, which was approximately £60,000 to £80,000 per year and was received for 4 years, although the funding ceased when that cohort left the school and, when combined with the reduction in pupil numbers, accounts for the budget situation that the school is in. Q. A staff representative asked if Hampshire could regulate the funding for the school. A. Mrs James and Mrs Bennett advised that funding is affected by the catchment and post code of the school, in terms of deprivation funding. Q. A staff representative asked if the problem was due to not enough forward planning being carried out at County. A. Mrs James advised that the school has already contacted Glenn Parkinson, the Planning Officer at County, to explain the school's problems, although the response was that essentially the much-needed children are just not there. Q. A staff representative asked Mrs James where she stood on future CPD in view of the budget situation. A. Mrs James advised that it is important that staff undertake the statutory training courses which will have the highest priority; expenditure on other staff training and CPD will be prioritised within the constraints of the budget according to the needs of the school at that time. Q. A staff representative asked for clarification as to which members of staff will constitute the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) as the Deputy Headteacher (DHT) role is being removed. A. Mrs James advised that she believes that the structure of the SLT can be visited at a later date. Q. A staff representative asked who will represent the teachers and ensure that there is clear communication to all staff, as up to this point the DHT had represented the teachers. A. Mrs James advised that representing the teachers as a 'go-between' is not part of the DHT role and communications to all staff will take place by means of business and staff meetings as is the case at present. Q. A staff representative advised that page 4 of the 'Report to the Governing Body: Staff Restructure' document details the many activities undertaken by the Headteacher, to which will be added, following the removal of the DHT role, the responsibilities of the DHT as listed in the DHT job description; in view of the large number of activities and responsibilities involved, the representative asked what backup plans would come into effect in the event of the Headteacher being absent as a result of sickness. A. Mrs James advised that in the event of her being absent from the school through sickness the school would need to contact the District Manager who would put a plan in place. Q. A staff representative asked when the skills audit has to be completed by. A. Mrs James advised that this depends on what the outcome of this meeting is and what the next step will be; she will let staff know about the skills audit in good time so that staff can start drafting their skills audit documentation if necessary. Q. A staff representative asked what the position looks like next year for LSAs. A. Mrs James advised that what the position will look like depends on what the outcome of this meeting is and on what is planned for the school subsequently; at present she envisages class roles and interventions. She also advised that there will need to be consultation and agreement regarding breaks, as this will affect all staff. A staff representative advised that one of the concerns regarding breaks is morale, especially if a	
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	member of staff has to cover break duty and lunch duty; the feeling is that this would have to be carefully managed and timetabled, bearing in mind any possible effects on classroom performance. Another concern regarding breaks is that it may make communication between teachers and LSAs quite difficult, especially as team meetings are no longer held. The representative also advised that the teachers have previously indicated that they are happy to do break duties if necessary. Mrs James advised that she understands the concerns regarding breaks and their impact on staff although the changes regarding breaks had to be included in the Proposal document; these concerns will be considered by the governors during their discussion under the next agenda item. A staff representative advised that staff had concerns regarding the use of LSAs to manage the specific needs of children. Mrs James advised that although she understands and shares these concerns, she does not currently have all of the answers; the school is fortunate in having full time LSAs and once the way forward has been agreed following this meeting, it will be necessary to consider how the school will meet the needs of the children with the staffing structure that will be in place. It will also be necessary to look at what the needs for SEN children are and where the highest SEN needs are, for example if higher SEN needs are found in a particular year group then it may be necessary to deploy the resources needed to that year group. Q. A staff representative asked whether the school might hire LSAs next year for the 2 children with EHCPs (Education Health Care Plans) that might be joining the school, if those children need 1:2:1 provision. A. Mrs James advised that if the children join the school, it will be necessary to look at the resources and LSAs that the school has, and that it may be necessary for the school to put support in place for these children. Mrs James advised that just because a child has an EHCP does not necessarily mean that they have a 1-2-1 adult. Q. A staff representative, referring to a pupil progress meeting held during the Autumn term last year and an approach to Mrs James about a special unit for the school, asked if the question of the special unit had been explored further. A. Mrs James advised that she had had a meeting with Glenn Parkinson and a Headteacher of a special school, who have to look at transporting the children from the special school into a unit, for example at Merton Infant; however, by the time such an arrangement has been made, it is likely that the special school in the old Chineham School building will be ready for academic year 2020/21. Financing the transport costs would be quite heavy for the LA to subsidise. Q. A staff representative asked how PPA might look, and the distribution of LSAs within this activity, following the restructuring. A. Mrs James advised that this was not an issue with regard to the restructuring, and that she could not describe how PPA would look following the restructuring, as it depends on the outcome of this meeting. Q. A staff representative, regarding the removal of the DHT role for which salary is safeguarded for 3 years, asked whether Mrs James is expecting a transition period or whether the role will disappear from September. A. Mrs James advised that what happens to the DHT role needs to be clarified with EPS (Education Personnel Services).	
4.	Governor Discussion Please see confidential minutes.	
5.	Conclusion by Chair of Governors Please see confidential minutes.	

The meeting closed at 8.31 pm.

These minutes are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Signed _____ Chair Date _____