

PORTESBERY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Meeting of the full governing body

held at the school at 18.30 on Thursday 6th July 2017

Present	Mrs Susan Carpenter	Mr Nathan Aspinall (Headteacher)
	Mr Patrick Dawson	Brig. Stephen Shirley
	Ms Tracey Haigh	Mr Jonathan Spink
	Mr Chris Hamilton (Chair)	Mrs Jane Vaughan

In attendance: Ms Debbie Attard, School Business Manager
Mr Christopher Thomas, Clerk to the Governors

Number of governors in post: eleven. The meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence

Mrs Ruth Buchan (on holiday), Mrs Margaret Dean (prior engagement), and Mr Hudson Holt (on holiday) had sent their apologies for absence, which were accepted by governors.

2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interests in any agenda item.

3. Constitution of the Governing Body

- a) There had been no resignations from the governing body since its last meeting.
- b) Name and category of governors whose term of office was due to expire:
 - before the next meeting: Mr Jonathan Spink, parent governor, on 24 November 2017. Mr Spink said that he was willing to stand for a further term of office.
 - the end of the 2017 -2018 academic year: Mr Patrick Dawson, parent governor, on 31 December 2017. Mr Dawson said that he was willing to stand for a further term of office.
- c) Name and category of those governors appointed or elected since the last meeting: Ms Tracey Haigh was re-appointed as Staff Governor, following an election process at the school. .
- d) Category of any vacancies to be filled: there was a vacancy for one parent governor.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 16 March 2017, were accepted as an accurate record, and were signed by the Chairman.

5. Action points and Matters Arising from the minutes

- a) *Item 6; Constitution of governing body: Clerk to prepare governor details and pass to school website manager for publication. Done.*
- b) *Item 8 c, Headteacher's report: HT to provide copy of school leadership structure to all governors. The Headmaster suggested that he provide details of the leadership structure for the 2017 – 2018 school year in September 2017, at the start of the term, when all the school leaders would be in place. Governors agreed with his proposal*

ACTION: HT to provide copy of school leadership structure to all governors at the meeting of the FGB on 14 September 2017.

Mrs Vaughan asked what training would be made available for the school's middle leaders; the Headteacher reported that he planned to attend a meeting of other local special schools on 7 July to discuss shared middle leadership training.

- c) *Item 8 e, Headteacher's report: School to send Parents' questionnaire to non-respondent parents.* The Headteacher reported that he had sent out further reminders about the questionnaire (which comprised the twelve questions asked by OFSTED) to non-respondent parents on three separate occasions, via the Parent Mail system, but had so far received only one completed reply. He would approach parents again at the next parents' meeting. In ascertaining the parent view, he had met many parents, both individually and in groups, and had a clear qualitative understanding- but still lacked a statistically-analysable set of responses; the school needed a balanced response from all parents.. The Chairman recalled that there had been 23 parent responses at the last OFSTED inspection.

Mrs Vaughan thanked the Headteacher for making the Parent Mail system accessible to governors.

6. Chairman's Actions

- a) The Chairman reported that he had taken no emergency action on behalf of the governing body. He had met the Headteacher at two-week intervals.
- b) Items for inclusion on the next FGB agenda. Mrs Vaughan reported that she had attended an event at which Maria Dawes, the Deputy Director, Regional Schools Commissioner, had given a talk in which she had listed three key questions that governors should be asking of their school:
- Does the Governing body know what needs to be improved in the school and do they know how to do it ?
 - Do the school leaders have the capacity to improve standards ?
 - Do the Governors have enough strategic experience to hold the leaders to account ?

Mrs Vaughan suggested that it might be worthwhile to consider these at the next meeting of the FGB. The Chair said that it would be of value to do so, especially in the context of the new School Development Plan that was being drafted. Governors agreed.

ACTION: Clerk to include item on XXX on the agenda for the FGB meeting in December 2017

- c) Academy status. Governors noted the position on academy status and agreed that there was no immediate need to reconsider it.

7. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Governors agreed that the term of office for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should continue to be one year. They agreed that the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the 2017 - 2018 school year would take place at the first Full Governing Body meeting of the Autumn Term on 14 September 2017. Governors wishing to nominate themselves for the positions were invited to do so. In the event that an election was necessary, it would be conducted by a show of hands.

8. Report by the Headteacher

Copies of the outcomes of the Self-Evaluation Summary, and the 'Stop, Start, Continue' exercise carried out by the Headteacher had been circulated in advance, and form part of these minutes. Further comment and discussion included:

Self-Evaluation Summary:

- a) The Headteacher felt that the school was generally assessed as 'Good'.
- b) Effectiveness of Leadership and Management. The Headteacher said that in terms of governor involvement, and the policies and procedures that were in place, the school was close to being assessed as 'Outstanding', based on his previous experience of an 'Outstanding' school. The new leadership structure had bedded in well.

Mr Spink asked what would happen when the substantive members of the leadership team, whose absence on maternity leave had brought about the revised leadership structure, returned to the school. The Headteacher said that the staff concerned had been to the school and understood the changes that had been made, and would be fully briefed on those changes on

their return to work. Mrs Vaughan asked whether the substantive staff planned to return on a four-days-per-week basis; the Headteacher said that he did not yet know what their wishes were, although they had previously worked four days a week before taking maternity leave. Mrs Vaughan asked what the school's position would be if staff wished to return on a job-share basis, working a two or three day pattern. The School Business Manager explained that staff who returned to the school following maternity leave were only entitled to resume work on the same contracts as were in place when they commenced their leave. Staff were required to inform the school eleven weeks in advance of their return-to-work plans. The Headteacher said that he proposed to talk to the staff concerned at the start of the autumn term. He said that he was also aware of the need to maintain the morale of the staff who had stepped up to provide cover for their colleagues. Mrs Carpenter commented that it was common for staff to step up to take on the role of an absent colleague, and then to resume their previous role when the situation returned to normal.

Mrs Carpenter believed that the arrangements that the school had made emphasised the need for there to be a plan in place to cope with a sudden absence of the Headteacher; Mrs Vaughan supported that. Governors agreed that they should consider whether there was a structure in place that would cater for an emergency. The Headteacher said that he would consult with other local special schools and consider what structures might be appropriate for the school.

ACTION: Headteacher to consider contingency plan for Headteacher absence

The Headteacher mentioned the support he had received from the members of the senior leadership team and the SBM on his arrival at the school.

The Chairman commented that the succession plan had been good, and the school set up a sustainable system that went into place well.

- c) Governor engagement: the Headteacher said that he felt this to be good, with the contacts through Parent Mail and the two-weekly meetings with the Chairman. Governors had a clear understanding of the school; Safeguarding involvement was excellent – Mrs Dean and Mrs Carpenter had visited the school to review safeguarding, and Mrs Dean attended the school's monthly safeguarding meetings. Mr Dawson asked if there was a new policy in place on children in wheelchairs. The Headteacher explained the new system of sending body maps to parents of children who arrived at school with evidence of bruising or other injuries, inviting the parents to confirm the nature of the incident.
- d) The Headteacher said that the school's staff were generally happy in their work, and team work was good.
- e) Parents were generally happy with the school and 97% of those who responded to the survey said that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- f) The Headteacher said that he would like to feel that the school was very close to being 'Outstanding'. The previous SES had mentioned only a few minor issues and it was now for the school to concentrate on those. Mrs Carpenter noted the Headteacher's comments in the SES about Teaching and Learning opportunities, and asked whether that meant that there were leadership and management issues at the school; the Headteacher said that he had considered whether in fact to delete the comments, but there were some inconsistencies in Teaching and Learning opportunities. He had been tempted to assess the school as 'Outstanding'. Mrs Vaughan commented that as long as the SES stated that the Teaching and Learning was not yet 'Outstanding' but the school knew what it needed to do to get there, then that would satisfy OFSTED. If the school said that Teaching and Learning was 'Outstanding' when it was not, the school would attract criticism, but if the school said that Teaching and Learning was not yet 'Outstanding' but the school had a valid plan to bring it up to that level, the school could still be assessed as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED.

School Development Plan 2017 – 2018. Copies of the draft plan had been circulated in advance.

- g) The Headteacher said that in preparing the SDP he had spoken with staff, pupils and parents, both individually and in groups. The draft had been discussed with the senior leadership team and had been sent out to the staff, who had been invited to add points. The plan was to be

launched in September 2017, when it would feed in to everyone, including - for the first time - the support staff. Teachers were being trained in how to appraise the support staff, a further new development.

- h) The Chairman commented that his first reaction had been that the document represented a good summary; the only changes might come from OFSTED observations during an inspection. Mrs Carpenter noted that the plan, at five or six pages, was more succinct than its predecessor.
- i) Mr Dawson noted the comments on transitions between year groups; the Headteacher gave further background on the process, in particular the handover meetings. Mr Dawson asked if those arrangements also included the support staff; the Headteacher confirmed that they did, and said that the therapy team was also involved.
- j) Mr Spink asked about the resource implications of the new SDP. The Headteacher said that there would need to be investment in staff training for outdoor education. Mr Dawson asked if this were essential; the Headteacher said that outdoor education was of massive importance for the students, and it was a new and different way of learning. Many students learned much better outdoors; there were great communication and interaction benefits. The Chairman said that the SDP document that governors were examining was an executive summary; once the full document was available, there would be an opportunity to consider the resource implications in detail. Mrs Carpenter said that she would expect that the final SDP would show detail on costs, and governors would have the chance to decide whether to include new initiatives or to defer them.
- k) Mr Dawson asked about the development of new assessment systems; the Headteacher explained the development work being done in conjunction with other special schools.
- l) Mr Dawson noted that the SDP document mentioned communication only once, and asked whether the development of communication should be made more explicit. Mrs Carpenter said that the SDP was a document that focused on aspects of the school that it wanted to develop, and less so about elements that were already working effectively. The Headteacher said that he felt that communication within the school, with its use of visual symbols, was excellent. Mrs Vaughan suggested that the subject be discussed in detail at the next meeting of the Children and Learning Committee; governors agreed

ACTION: Clerk to include item on communication: assessment, how it can be improved, and how the school can demonstrate that it is good, on agenda for C&L meeting on 11 October 2017.

- m) The Headteacher asked that governors e-mail him any additional comments on the draft SDP.

9. Committee Structure

The Chairman asked governors for their views on whether the current committee structure was the best for the school. The Headteacher felt that the structure in place, with a Children and Learning and a Resources Committee, worked well. Each committee had a clear remit. Governors agreed that the committee minutes appeared to cover all the necessary points.

Governors noted that a consultant from Babcock promoted a 'flat' governance structure, whereby all governors met perhaps three times each term, with individual meetings focusing on particular aspects of the school. Governors considered the matter, and agreed that the current committee arrangement met the needs of the governance of the school well; they agreed to continue with the two-committee structure for the time being while keeping it under review.

10. Committees and Nominated Governor Reports

Resources Committee meeting, held on 14th June 2017.

- a) Mr Spink reported that the committee had discussed the proposal by a specialist schools lettings company to take on responsibility for arranging lettings of the school premises at times when the school was not occupied. The company's initial proposal had appeared to be of interest, but had contained provisions that had not been acceptable to governors. An amended proposal with revised terms had now been presented, following the intervention of

the Chairman of the governing body. The contract now provided for early termination by both parties at any stage in the contract.

- b) The SBM explained that the company would market the school's facilities and would manage the lettings, which would be made to types of organisations that had been approved by the school. She hoped that the first lettings would start in September 2017. Brig. Shirley asked whether the school could vet the proposed users of its facilities; the SBM confirmed that it could do so. The company would be asked to prioritise those organisations that had already been in contact with the school about lettings, and would then let to other groups that conformed to the agreed criteria.
- c) Brig. Shirley reported that he had contacted the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst about their past support for the school, and the possibility of their continuing to support it in the future. He was awaiting the contact details of the most appropriate officer with whom to speak.

Children and Learning Committee meeting held on 18th May 2017.

- d) Governors noted the minutes of the meeting. Mrs Vaughan reported that the committee had received a presentation on Intensive Interaction and the way it was used in the school. The committee had discussed the 'My Outcomes' approach; the Assistant Headteacher (Primary) was to distribute a one-page briefing note on 'My Outcomes', incorporating input from staff using the system.

11. Nominated Governor Reports

Governors noted that Mrs Carpenter and Mrs Dean had made a monitoring visit on Safeguarding on 5 July 2017. A copy of their report was distributed at the meeting.

12. Safeguarding

- a) See item 11 above. Mrs Carpenter reported that there was to be an updated version of SLEUTH, the school's behaviour management recording system, which was being tightened up; there would be cost implications. The Headteacher felt that the cost could be justified. Mrs Carpenter said that she felt the role of the Home-School Link Worker should be continued; she was currently supporting five families. The HSL worker had also updated the website on pupil premium matters in conjunction with the SBM.
- b) Mrs Carpenter confirmed that she and Mrs Dean were making safeguarding visits at least two times per term.
- c) The school was using a new program, 'SoSafe' (*Clerk - a set of visual and conceptual tools designed to promote social safety for people with learning difficulties*) and she suggested that governors considered looking at it. The school was also participating in Operation Encompass, a programme designed to ensure that the police advised schools of domestic violence incidents within the families of pupils.

13. Headteacher's Performance Review Process

The Chairman reported that the Performance Review Panel, comprising himself, Mrs Carpenter, Mr Dawson, and Mr Spink, together with an external advisor, would continue in its current membership. Mr Dawson and Mr Spink would participate in training in connection with their work on the panel. The panel would in normal circumstances conduct the Headteacher's performance review on the basis of targets set earlier in the year, but in view of the fact that the Headteacher had only recently joined the school at the start of the summer term, the review would be based on objectives that would be agreed at the beginning of September 2017. A full appraisal would be conducted at the end of 2018, possibly involving feedback from all staff.

14. Teacher's Performance Review Process

Governors noted the arrangements for the teachers' performance reviews. Governors considered whether to appoint a separate Pay Committee; after brief discussion it was decided that there was no need for such a committee, and to continue with the current arrangement of discussing the

performance review process in the full Resources Committee. The next such discussion would take place after the Resources Committee meeting on 22 November 2017.

ACTION: Clerk to include item on staff pay and performance on agenda for Resources Committee meeting on 22 November 2017

15. Governor Self-Evaluation

The Chairman suggested that governors conduct a self evaluation exercise during the autumn term. Governors agreed.

ACTION: Clerk to include item on governor self-evaluation on agenda for FGB meeting on 7 December 2017

16. Governor Update & Training

The Chairman confirmed that all governors received copies of Babcock's messages on training available. He suggested that governors consider their training needs following a self evaluation in the autumn term, to be based around the three points set out in para 6 above.

17. Dates of Next Meetings

Autumn Term

Thursday 14 September	FGB (<i>for business matters, e.g. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman, Declarations of Interests, appointments to committees etc</i>)
Wednesday 11 October	Children and Learning
Wednesday 22 November	Resources
Thursday 7 December	FGB

Spring Term

Thursday 8 February	Children and Learning
Wednesday 21 February	Resources
Thursday 15 March	FGB

Summer Term

Wednesday 25 April	Resources (Budget Approval meeting)
Thursday 17 May	Children and Learning
Wednesday 13 June	Resources
Thursday 5 July	FGB

18. Any Other Business.

Mr Spink circulated a copy of a report to the governing body on Looked-After Children, written by himself as the designated LAC governor and approved by the designated LAC lead. There were three Looked-After Children at the school; in general they were treated in accordance with their individual requirements, as were all other pupils at the school. The LAC guidelines were oriented to the requirements of children in mainstream schools and were less relevant to those at special schools.

The meeting was the last to be attended by the Clerk, following his decision to retire from the role. The Chair presented him with gifts from the governing body. The Clerk thanked the governors for their generosity, and for their help and support to him in his work over the previous six years.

The meeting closed at 20.45

PORTESBERY SCHOOL

Full Governing Body Meeting

6th July 2017

Action Points

Item 5:

- HT to provide copy of school leadership structure to all governors at the meeting of the FGB on 14 September 2017.

Item 6:

- Clerk to include item on XXX on the agenda for the FGB meeting on 7 December 2017

Item 8:

- Headteacher to consider contingency plan for Headteacher absence
- Clerk to include item on communication: assessment, how it can be improved, and how the school can demonstrate that it is good, on agenda for C&L meeting on 11 October 2017.

Item 14:

- Clerk to include item on staff pay and performance on agenda for Resources Committee meeting on 22 November 2017

Item 15:

- Clerk to include item on governor self-evaluation on agenda for FGB meeting on 7 December 2017