

Invited:

Academy Heads:

Dan Turner	Bearnes Primary School
Jason Keenan	Hennock Primary School
Sam McCarthy-Patmore	Ilslington C of E Primary School
Alex Waterman	Moretonhampstead Primary School
Des Stokes	Widecombe in-the-Moor Primary School

Governors:

Chair	Lynda Cooper, Parent Governor (Hennock)
Bearnes Primary School	Peter Reed, Community Governor Ewa Ziubryniewicz, Parent Governor Jo Carter, Co-opted Governor
Hennock Primary School	Olivia Gentile, Staff Governor
Ilslington Primary School	Dr Carmel Skinner, Parent Governor Dr Paul Brassley, Community Governor
Moretonhampstead Primary School	Vivienne Hodges, Community Governor James Gething, Parent Governor Kate Wellings, Associate Governor Holly Edginton, Staff Governor
Widecombe Primary School	Rob Steemson, Community Governor Caroline Rolls, Staff Governor
Penny Young	Clerk

Present:

Lynda Cooper, Kate Wellings, Carmel Skinner, Holly Edginton, Des Stokes, James Gething, Paul Brassley, Ewa Ziubryniewicz, Caroline Rolls, Jo Carter, Peter Reed, Sam McCarthy-Patmore, Vivienne Hodges, Peter Reed, Olivia Gentile and Penny Young

Apologies: Dan Turner, Jason Keenan, Rob Steemson

Welcome

Lynda Cooper (LC) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Declaration of Business Interests

None.

Minutes of previous meetings 15.12.2021 for approval

All agreed.

LC updated Governors on feedback to issues raised:

- Gifted & Talented pupils – S&C have confirmed that Alice Eeles will be responsible for G&T pupils. It is in her remit to do this although she is focusing on disadvantaged children currently, with an emphasis on talent development (i.e. where a child presents as already having an ability that is to be encouraged).
- LC has the link to the Ofsted practice video and will send this out to all governors.
- LC took the staff concerns (anonymised) raised at last meeting around remuneration to the S&C meeting; LC reported that these were received in an open-minded way.
- LC updated governors on some changes:
 - Kyle Brook sha stepped down as Parent Governor at Hennock due to personal reasons. He has been a great help and support and LC will be sorry to see him go.
 - Evelyn Edworthy has also stepped down at Widecombe due to time pressures.
 - Ewa Ziubryniewicz's (EZ) term of office had ended and Bearnes sent out a Parent Governor letter too. EZ has offered to stand again for Bearnes and if all governors present are in agreement we will accept this. All governors were in agreement.

LC noted that it would be great if Governors knew anyone who could be encouraged to take on vacancies. Widecombe sent out a Parent Governor letter but nobody came forward. Any ideas on what brings in a new Governor would be great to hear.

1. Strategic Governance

1.1 Focused visits for this half term (data if not covered before, SEND and Pupil Premium) with a brief report on the main findings from each school

Ilington – Carmel Skinner (CS) not had a visit this term. It has been an eventful half term so far. Had been due to meet but CS had an emergency meeting and will reschedule. Sam McCarthy-Patmore (SMP) – there has been a major outbreak of Covid at school, and there has also been a lot of staff absence. One teacher has had almost 4 weeks off since September. A visit for SEND & PP was arranged on Friday 18th February and LC will join CS and Paul Brassley (PB). SMP does have a meeting with Lizzie Lethbridge at 10:30am but happy for Governors to come in.

Moretonhampstead – James Gething (JG) not been in yet this term but going in on Tuesday, discussed data before Christmas. There is an OPD and then will have a meeting after that. LC asked how it is going. JG said it was all very positive and going in the right direction.

Widecombe – Des Stokes (DS) - not met yet this term. Discussed data in December and will meet before half term.

Bearnes – LC and Jo Carter (JC) went into Bearnes. Bearnes has a high SEN need. Met with Becky Hawling, the SENDCO, and she had completed a pro forma which was really useful. Excellent data coming out of Bearnes. The pressure that SENDCOs are under and particularly at Bearnes is immense. It is a huge job with limited resources. JC – SENDCOs are under a lot of pressure everywhere, Bearnes always has lots of SEND need but other schools are a bit of a juggling act to ensure correct amount of time is spent. There are a lot of administrative tasks around the SENDCO role, this stood out at the meeting. Can we spread that workload with a floating SENDCO administrator that might be able to take up some slack? SMP commented that the admin role is essential to what you are doing – it couldn't be done by anyone else, it needs to be done by the person involved who knows the child. CS – was there a response from S&C regarding the role of AHs being a SENDCO. LC – there was a clear and robust response. AHs can be SENDCOs, but not across multiple schools. The Code of Practice requires us to have a qualified SENDCO at each school. There will be new framework on websites for each school. There is a two-tier system, with a named SENDCO attached to each school and a SEND Lead that has the qualification but covers several schools. We do not want to lose the local knowledge of people in the school. LC wanted to check with the schools whether they are happy with structure and

provision and any concerns? What are the implications, what do we need to be aware of? CS asked how does this relate to small schools like Ilsington and Widecombe.? DS said he has just changed his name to “school based SENDCO” with Becky Humphreys as the SENDCO lead overall, but nothing has changed in practice. DS does all the work for TAF meetings (minutes etc) and EHCPs and Becky Humphreys oversees, this includes all the work teachers etc have done to get all the information. LC this agrees with what we heard from Becky Hawling at Bearnas. SMP said realistically there are no structures; no money in the budget to pay somebody a day a week to come in and do the work. No obvious fix. DS said he fully understood that SEND was attached to the Academy Head role when he took the job. He has given it a go and it is not for him. CS what forum do Academy Heads have access to to raise these issues? DS: Becky Humphreys is great, she is not actually my named SENDCO lead though. JC – there is not a quick fix but a push for any middle/senior members of staff that want to progress and do the SEND role to do that award and then take it. SMP said this wouldn’t help, she has three teachers who work full time and no time to become a SENDCO. It is not practical for them to do this. We knew when we took the role of Academy Head on that this was part of it. It’s hard but we are best placed to do it. We do have time to take a half a day here and there. We are experienced senior teachers. It can’t change. More people at the top like Becky Humphreys would help but be very expensive. CS – I would agree but listening to DS and the fact he has to type up TAF minutes etc, why does it take half a day to do an EHCP? If you had administrative back up that would lessen the load. SMP - it takes skill to complete the document and bring in what you know about the child. It is a process. CS - I agree but I see a lot of these from other schools and it’s amazing what meets threshold. There could be a team of people that you feedback to. LC said she would pass back this strategic issue, it is a question for the Trust and to raise ongoing concerns that resources are available. LC noted concerns around not being able to release class teachers if they want to pursue this qualification. We can’t resolve it here. LC will summarise and give a balanced view to S&C and will feed back to Governors in due course.

Hennock – nothing to update, visit planned shortly.

1.2 Focused visits coming up (Teaching and Learning/ASP), including overview of questions

LC – Everyone should have the prompt questions. Nobody had any further questions but LC happy if anyone wants to contact her direct.

1.3 Update from Standards and Curriculum and Local Board Working Party meetings

S&C meeting:

- Trustees: there are two new Trustees who are focussing on strategic governance and they attended the S&C meeting.
- SENDCO restructure: just discussed. This makes us compliant on paper. Good to know there was a response to the concern raised.
- Gifted & Talented: see above. Interest in looking at where interest and skills lie and building on those.
- Remuneration: as noted above, concerns were flagged.
- Safeguarding: query raised at S&C meeting over whether somebody on the Local Board need to be a Safeguarding Governor? JC said that the legal responsibility sits with the Trustees, so there needs to be a named Safeguarding Trustee. It would be nice to have a Safeguarding LBG but we are not breaking any roles not having a one. JC did Safeguarding Governor training through Babcock and that was really good. LC asked if there was any interest in anyone being a Safeguarding Governor for the Hub? Nobody interested. JC said she will do it as already done the training.
- CEO update this time included work being done on GDPR/digital audit, growth within the Trust and potential new schools that may join. Updates will follow.
- Kitchens: quality of food provided to pupils was raised to S&C and LC wanted to check in with the school staff as well as Governors around whether this has been raised as an issue across Moorland. Are we generally happy with the quality? JG – meals at Moretonhampstead had been taken over by external company and were poor. They are now in-house and much better quality. CS – hard to judge the quality at Ilsington, it sounds and looks good but not tried. SMP – as part of my job I do taste the meals! They are great. The rolls should have more with them than just a few vegetable sticks. OG – quality good, our cook says a couple of the meals are really unpopular but she doesn’t get to choose the menu. Parents want them to try new things but as a teacher I want them to have a proper meal and know they have eaten. LC explained the meals are planned centrally. JC if you want really bad meals come to Cheriton – Devon Norse are the provider.
- Hub system: strategically Nicky Dunford and the Executive team are putting strategy on middle leadership and Hub leads and whilst this has been in place for some time they are focussing and developing currently. Interesting for Governors going in to see how it’s playing out at ground level etc.
- Growth in central business team: external financing that will fund some things.
- Data: a data picture that has emerged last year is the impact on Y3 and how that year group has been affected. They lost a lot of time due to Covid. LC: this is question for schools when you visit - is that an issue, what’s being done to improve it?

Working party meeting:

Focussed on how we can make our governance more effective, defining roles, making documents clear, recruiting and retaining Governors, etc. Hoping to have a separate follow up day to sort this out so it feels coherent and there is a pack of information when Governors start, policy documents etc.

1.4 Governor training

Nothing requested.

2. Procedural matters (if not covered above)

2.1. Safeguarding

LC asked DS if everything had been finalised at Widecombe. DS has still not had a report yet but has chased recently. He had Becky Humphreys and Lizzie Lethbridge on the call with him and everything was ok. LC did ask at S&C to check if anything had come in at Governor level – nothing received.

LC asked OG if JK had had his Safeguarding training? He has and is the lead and OG is the DDSL.

2.2. SEND

Nothing new.

2.3. Sports Premium grant, Pupil Premium grants

No questions.

2.4. Health & Safety/Risk Assessments

DS reported that there was still no maintenance technician within the Trust.

OG advised that it is very easy to get out of Hennock school. They had the button raised out of children's reach today. No exterior gate once out the door. JK has it on his list. LC said she mentions it every time, it is not a "nice to have", there is a real need for it now. Need to have it minuted and followed up.

HE – problem with our cleaning companies and difficulty for a couple of months now. Hopefully got somebody to start next week. Staff have been having to clean for a while, cleaning toilets, emptying bins etc. Hard to attract people to Moreton and really difficult with Covid. All staff have mucked in. SMP caretaker/maintenance man an issue. Day to day things are an issue.

3. Personnel (if not covered above)

3.1. Staffing:

Staff wellbeing and workload, including feedback and observations on term from Staff Governors

HE – had a chat with staff members individually. AH is great but a lot of pressure from curriculum hubs. We are a bigger school so privileged but I think the Executive Team need a reminder that people wear a lot of hats. HE is RE, PE and Maths. Heightened expectation from Ofsted that whatever you are teaching you need to be an expert in but need to know what preceded it and where you are going at the end. Lots of actions from curriculum Hubs for staff to carry out. If everything is a priority then nothing is a priority. Particularly with things such as OPD, have deep dive questions, it does create pressure. All teachers want to do the right thing and it is important it does not take one away from teaching the class. There is not the release time to lead our subject and improve it. Pressure from outside and not given the time to improve our subjects as well as having to be an expert in everything and fill Covid gaps. There needs to be an understanding of what is being carried by each person.

OG – my staff said exactly the same. Very small school, one teacher on early career, so three teachers including AH to take on all the subjects. Want release time to do the subjects but don't want to leave class to TAs (they are great however). Need to balance everything.

CR – echo the same things. Strategically need to raise the middle leadership across the academy. CR noted that she has a Hub meeting tomorrow, one next week. Everyone is leading 2/3 subjects at least. Staff feeling real pressures. Need to make wellbeing a priority. If it gets 'shaky' and I have seen 'wobbles' lately, it could tip too far. Hub meetings very useful, you can focus on your subject, but you are not just focussing on that subject, three at least. The expectations are that you are an expert in all subjects, Can't quite manage everything. There is anxiety around it. Feeling overwhelmed. LC will feed this back. JC – Woodleigh is along those lines. Really tricky because we are not supposed to use Covid as an excuse for gaps which is unfair as staff and pupils are missing because of Covid. Don't know what the answer is. Sharing of good practice between the teachers and Hubs. It comes down to time again, not right to be out of the classroom doing other things and not teaching your children. All we can do is raise it and see if the management team can come up with a more generous timetable on Hub meetings. CR – I have an interim Hub

meeting, lack of people responding because it is an 'interim' meeting. Everyone has a subject they are leading so that then tends to take priority.

HE – interim Hub meetings after school, I know they have put supply in to cover curriculum Hub meetings. Don't want to be out of class doing these things, work has to be done and it has to be done somewhere. Several meetings are after work. I know that is the nature of our job, but it is really hard to fit the work into the working day and not eat into home/life balance.

OG – the impact on small schools when a staff member is off on long term sick is huge. You can't replace as school is still paying but it is having an huge impact. Need to make people aware how this impacts across the whole school. LC not about asking for a solution but making Trustees and Management team aware that it is part of the picture.

OG – started doing Friday Fundays at Hennock. This is the last Friday of every month, staff from one class do something for other staff. It raises morale and is fun. CS very aware of the resilience the Ilington staff have shown.

PB and CS want to make parents aware of what the pressures are and are going to put something in the parish magazine and in the Sway newsletter. The PTFA are planning to organise something for staff to think about their wellbeing. Really coped fantastically in the face of adversity, thinking they were going to be on the road to normality. LC really encouraging to hear Governors are taking a proactive approach in supporting staff.

3.2. Parents: parent forum meetings, PTFA, areas for concern/complaints

KW all a bit quiet after Christmas, had conversations with parents and everyone seems happy.

OG - parent engagement really great, at events before Christmas there was one parent for every child. New home learning has been initiated and parents really involved.

LC wished everyone good luck with the next set of visits.

Close – meeting closed at 18:45

Next meeting: Wednesday 6th April, 1730