

BIRSTWITH C E SCHOOL
Governing Body Meeting held on

Tuesday, 8th March, 2016, at 8.30a m

Present	Mrs Bedford	Headteacher
	Mrs Britton	Chair
	Mrs Johnson	
	Mrs Lacey	
	Miss Holmes	
	Mr Van Parys	
	Mr Walker	

1 Welcome and prayer (DB) – the Chair welcomed Governors to the meeting with her offer of a prayer appreciated.

2 Apologies – had been provided by Mr Baugh for work reasons: Governors gave their consent for absence. There were no **declarations of business interest**.

3 Minutes of meeting held on 19th January, 2016, were accepted as a true record therefore it was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the above meeting. The Chair confirmed that approval had been given by the PCC for release of a Church key for School usage in the event of a “disaster” situation whereby the children could not be contained on the School site. Provision took a little time to conclude. **Query was made as to whether the two pupils mentioned in item 5 had arrived in School**, with the Headteacher saying that those particular children had not, but a different two had with numbers standing at 89. **An alert was drawn to Governors’ attention regarding the comparably (to an external pension provision) generous superannuation payments which School’s revenue account would sustain once the two staff members of Time Out Club were transferred “in house”**. Headteacher added that Birstwith School was exceptional in having had its Club accounts provision made – to-date – outside School’s main account and that it was an action endorsed by NYCC finances. **Enquiry was made as to the “risk element” noted within one of the Ofsted Self-evaluation elements** with satisfactory response made. **Governor queried the wisdom of the Friends’ bank balance being so substantial and that use should be made of the parents’ fundraising**; it was confirmed that the Friends were fundraising for iPads which for the best of reasons School had not as yet had the time to “best value” research and acquire. **Friends’ Governor added that the committee felt it important that their bank balance must be at a level to cover expected expenditures (such as the subsidisation of School’s swimming provision) for a year in advance together with other predictive costs**. The minutes were initialled / signed by the Chair at meeting end.

(Action – Chair to obtain Church key)

4 Any matters arising on above Minutes

Any actions (carried forward):

- Ofsted self-evaluation – to be included on next agenda – *below*
- Disaster Recovery Plan – to be carried forward to Summer term agenda
- Headteacher to contact Mrs Heather Mensah re Chairing of SDC collaborative committee on proposed date of 4th May – *confirmed: 12 noon at Bishop Thornton School (further **action:** with Mr Baugh unable to attend, Mrs Lacey agreed to stand in his place)*. Headteacher confirmed to the Chair that School’s “learning walk” with Mrs Mensah would, instead, take place at Birstwith on 27th April.
- Miss Holmes to complete / provide certificate copy of online Child Protection training - *completed*
- Headteacher to add missing figure and check Yr 1 phonics results as per summary SEF: *Headteacher qualified that these were now correct and that she would email the information to Governors - Action*
- School year GB meeting dates 2016/2017 to be included on Summer term agenda
- SDP to be included on agenda - *below*

5 Headteacher's (written) Report – Staffing and pupils: pupils on roll stand at 89. She qualified that the Class 4 recruitment had been problematic given its very tight timescale and she had been unsure as to whether an appointment would be possible. Together with the Chair and a teacher, she had interviewed three candidates with the successful appointee standing out over the other two. Headteacher confirmed that the observed lesson had been appropriate and stimulating for the children and that he was a current Year 6 teacher who had received the recent SATs training. She confirmed Governors' knowledge that he was unable to accept the employment offer until he had taken his own children through their SATs: although disappointing this was quite understandable but his decision had left School with the dilemma of effectively filling an important 5 week block. Headteacher had been very pleased to report that she had been able to locate an experienced and strongly recommended Year 6 teacher from Pannal who had accepted this work. Class 4 teacher will provide her very good and comprehensive plans for this teacher together with individual pupil reports. In addition, she, in conjunction with Mrs Lacey, will provide any needed support. **Governors were very appreciative of the difficulties posed by the situation and commended the Headteacher's solution. Governor commented on the parent-informing Year 5/6 meeting which had been held adding that he felt some inappropriately expressed parent's views had been made which were not, however, representative being unmatched by others.**

- Update on (KS2) Assessments – Class 2 teacher talked to Governors confirming that she had attended the new KS2 training which, normally, was only relevant for those new to KS2 but, because of the recent significant changes, all KS2 teachers had been invited and felt the need to attend. She recognised that the new curriculum exerts much higher expectations for Year 2 children with considerable work to cover and skills to acquire given that this new level of learning is quite different. There are significant changes in SPaG (Spelling and Grammar) with the new test requiring teachers to provide a lesson focus specific to this discipline. Teacher added that she is pleased with how the children have picked up this new learning saying that all children are now required to undertake the easier and harder elements of the tests. **Governors expressed concern for the children and recognised that their levels of esteem could suffer as a consequence of being overly stretched** with the teacher saying that the tests are generously time scaled (the whole of the May month can be utilised) and can be undertaken on a 1:1 basis or in small group situations. **In response to query, it was confirmed that the children would recognise that they were taking a test because of the different method and approach.** She was now doing half-termly testing to familiarise the children with the SPaG testing process adding that there were also two readings tests, an arithmetic paper and a reasoning paper which included shape and space type questions. There is no external reporting undertaken with it only being teacher assessment which was governed by specific statements. The pitch of expectation is now set very high with absolutely no leeway or margin for error provided. As Governors are aware, Levels have now been removed with teachers and their children working towards “emerging”, “expected” and “exceeding expectations”. **Governor queried as to how progression is identified and marked with response given that, as yet, this is not clear. Governors' concern for children and teachers was not diluted by the fact that this situation would be the same for all primary schools** with the teacher adding that they had been told they should not teach to the assessment criteria but address the breadth of the curriculum. **Comment was made with some strength of feeling that the assessment process and criteria should have been published with the advent of the new curriculum rather than so many months afterwards. Governors strongly endorsed the Headteacher's intent to hold a meeting with the Year 2 and Year 6 parents as discussion was much easier to absorb and understand than any written element. Governor felt that this difficult situation could well encourage and motivate an increase in home help and support for pupils.** Headteacher said that the same pressures and difficulties were exerted on teachers and children at the top end of KS2 with the St Aidan's retired head making comment during yesterday's visit that a group of A Level students had been unable to do the KS2 paper. **Governors unanimously recognised that it was very important that parents should be kept informed and “onside” regarding the effects of these radical changes with their recognition, too, that the teachers' learning curve would be similarly steep. Governors thanked the teacher for her clear presentation.**

- Marking Policy – qualification was made that teachers spend considerable time on marking – for themselves, the children and their parents and this was particularly so in the older years when productivity can be copious making the teacher process a daily very long task. Staff had asked themselves if there could be change in some areas that would increase effectiveness and manageability? The Early Years teacher said that her marking was necessarily very different to that of a Year 5 and 6 teacher when she would provide two sentences commenting on good elements with a further two making address of corrections. Clearly this marking was for parents and a Headteacher as the children could not read her comments. She presented Governors with a sheet

which was destined for parents at the forthcoming parents' session evenings which would clarify and explain the marking changes that have taken place. **In response to query, it was confirmed that verbal feedback always had been and would continue to be provided to children and that, yes, the new way of marking had reduced teachers' workload.**

6 S D P – Headteacher provided verbal feedback regarding the status or progression of the S D P elements. 1) The new assessment targets were confirmed as a work in progress with regular staff discussion taking place. The four points within the target were timelined for July with a final assessment to be made at the end of the year. 2) With regard to development of the ICT computing curriculum, this is now established with the new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) having online content which will provide worthwhile resources for teacher use. It will also be the vehicle for holding Governor papers. ICT co-ordinator to provide a demonstration of this facility at the Summer term meeting which she confirmed will work across and be accessible to a variety of hardware systems. iPad purchase will be researched during next term for purchase and staff training. 3) The music targets are not as advanced as intended with other priorities exerting an effect. A start, however, had been made with further instrumentalists to be sought for School and an audit exercise to be undertaken. **Response was made that these offerings – given the discipline need for practice and some maturity – were primarily offered to KS2 children.** A number of schemes had been bought for the teaching of music to support staff with training in the teaching of music not easy to locate. 4) Headteacher confirmed that the “quality of teaching” target was always under consideration with observations regularly taking place and feedback given (often supported by Mrs Mensah). Address is made of the Equality Action Plan as and when needed.

6 Consideration of collaborative extension date (currently to 31 August 2016 from 31 August 2014 (two year Governor agreement)) – Headteacher provided historic background to the extension timescales that had existed since the formation of the collaboration adding that if either school wished to extract themselves from the current arrangement then this would necessarily take a few months. She confirmed that the sharing of a Headteacher salary across two schools significantly reduced what might otherwise be considerable financial pressures adding that no new parents make comment on the collaboration. Collaborations are now common place between schools whereas when Birstwith joined with Bishop Thornton it was deemed innovative and different. Discussion had taken place at Bishop Thornton's Governing Body meeting last week when a period of extension had been considered. She confirmed that primary school Headteacher recruitment was often for executive heads over more than one school in recognition that succession planning and recruitment of primary Headteachers was becoming increasingly difficult. After some discussion, Governors were unanimously in agreement that the collaboration should continue for five years with the proviso that – should it be necessary and in response to any requiring circumstances arising – both Governing bodies would meet for review.

7 Finance / Premises

- BM summarised the situation as illustrated by the December 2015 Monitoring Statement v Revised Budget (RB) 2015 / 2016 – confirming that figures were based on adjusted Autumn budget reflections and that the finance year was about to conclude at the end of March. BM drew attention to the variance figures which would, ultimately, have a positive or negative effect on the carry forward figure into April, 2016. The RB projected year's income of £413,720 was expected to be less by approximately £1,200 and was accounted for by the postponement of the Time Out Club's virement to support capital ICT expenditure but had been offset by the £3,000 Dales Teaching Alliance supply reimbursement.

Modest over and underspends within the expenditure budgets had resulted in a reduced overall expenditure of some £1,400 to £417,899 from £419,368 which was accounted for by a £1,700 overspend to cover the purchase of a new Virtual Learning Environment which was anticipated to effectively support teachers (with online resources) and pupils in addition to it being the new provider for School's website. A deferment of £5,200 ICT expenditure until the new finance year resulted in a slight increase in the carry forward from £11,952 to £12,198.

BM was thanked for her presentation with no questions posed.

- Traded services – BM had provided Governors with a breakdown of School's purchased traded services of which some three quarters of those bought were NYCC provided given “best value” considerations. School externally purchased a good portion of its ICT support (via J P Consultancy)

with premises maintenance organised through D B E Total Property Management Services and a new contract for grounds maintenance to be taken up by Farm and Land Services Limited.

- Grounds Maintenance contract – as above
- Charity Commission Return 2015 (hard copy tabled) – the statutory return for the School Fund charity had recently been completed with a copy provided for Governors' attention.

8 Ofsted's self-evaluation re "Effectiveness of Leadership and Management" – given the length of the meeting Governors decided that this item should be postponed to the first meeting in the summer term when the final four points would be considered and addressed. Request was made to Governors that they please make pre-meeting notes in preparation for its completion.

(Action – clerk to include on agenda / Governors to make preparatory notes)

9 Update regarding the Friends – Link Governor confirmed that Friends had recently raised funds through the Bags2School collection, through the organisation of a children's disco and via a cake stall and raffle. The AGM was planned for after Easter with the ever-popular Mark's Magic Kingdom planned to entertain the children and a summer fete in June diarised. At present, the iPad fundraising figure is not known above the "barometer" now fixed to the front of School.

10 Any Governor Training – Teacher Governor has completed her Child Protection training and it was (retrospectively) confirmed that the Chair had completed her online Prevent training.

11 Governor observation visits: Spring Term –

Science (Mrs Johnson) – confirmed as being 8th March, 2016, at 1.30pm

Maths (Mrs Britton) – report thought to have already been sent (clerk to ascertain)

Clerk to email Mr Walker the Governor Observation report with confirmation made that Governor reports should, in the first instance, be emailed to the clerk which would then be forwarded to the Headteacher and teacher concerned.

12 Date of next meeting: Summer Term 2016

Tuesday, 3rd May, 2016, at 8.30a m

Tuesday, 7th June, 2016, at 8.30a m

Tuesday, 5th July, 2016, at 8.30a m

13 Any other business (Chair's request please for pre-meeting notice, if possible) – Chair had received a letter from School's Eco-Warriors making an appeal for the planting of further trees on the School grounds: the children wished to utilise a portion of the cardboard milk cartons used daily to plant seeds and wondered if these could be used as (tree) seedling pots. After some discussion, it was felt that a couple of additional trees by the perimeter fence would be good and would not impinge on the open spaces used for children's play and sports. Governor wondered if further trees could be planted on the Mill field side.

Mr Van-Parys gave advance notice of his Parent Governor resignation in July given that, although he has one further year's term remaining, he would have no more children in School in September and wished to release his position for another parent.