

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Full Governing Board
of Duncombe Primary School
held online using Zoom on
Thursday 10th February 2022 at 6:30pm**

Governors present:

Pete Bacon Darwin - Co-opted Governor (*Chair of the Governing Board*)

Sophie Bridge - Co-opted Governor

Rachel Kinnock Bentham - Co-opted Governor

Natalie Faiwo - Parent Elected Governor

Laila Naanaa - Parent Elected Governor

Monique Roberts - Staff Elected Governor (*and School Business Manager*)

Helen Ryan - Headteacher Exofficio Governor

Paul Tonkinson - Co-opted Governor

In attendance:

Victoria Mitchell - Clerk to the Governing Board (*London Borough of Islington employee*)

Pauline Mayne - Observer from London Borough of Islington

Pete Bacon Darwin chaired the meeting and Victoria Mitchell wrote the minutes.

1. Election of a Chair of the Governing Board

1.1 This meeting was quorate.

1.2 The Clerk opened the meeting. It was noted that Judith Fortune had resigned from the Governing Board and a new Chair of the Governing Board was now required. The Clerk outlined the procedure for election of a new Chair and welcomed nominations. Pete Bacon Darwin was nominated as Chair. There were no other nominations. Pete Bacon Darwin then logged out of the meeting and an election took place. The result was Pete Bacon Darwin was elected as Chair of the Governing Board by over 50% of the governors. He then returned to the meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to update GovernorHub.

2. Election of a Vice-Chair of the Governing Board

2.1 The FGB noted that as Pete Bacon Darwin was previously the Vice-Chair of the Governing Board a new Vice-Chair was now required. The Clerk outlined the procedure for an election of a new Vice-Chair and welcomed nominations. Sophie Bridge was nominated as Vice-Chair of the Governing Board. There were no other nominations. Sophie Bridge then logged out of the meeting and an election took place. The result was Sophie Bridge was elected as Vice-Chair of the Governing Board by over 50% of the governors. She then returned to the meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to update GovernorHub.

3. Governance

3.1 Following the resignations as governors of both Judith Fortune and Gareth Williams it was noted that there were now two vacancies for co-opted governors on the Governing Board. The school will seek to fill these vacancies with appropriate governors soon.

3.2 It was noted that the Department for Education website "Get Information About Schools" had now been updated with the current membership of the Governing Board, although the resignation of Judith Fortune had not been updated, nor had the election of Pete Bacon Darwin and Sophie Bridge been noted on that website.

ACTION: School Business Manager to update Get Information About Schools

website.

4. Apologies for absence

4.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Carter and Richard Watts who were not able to attend this meeting. Their apologies were noted and accepted.

5. Declarations of pecuniary interest

5.1 None were reported verbally.

5.2 It was noted that all governors had submitted a Declaration of Pecuniary Interests Form to the Clerk.

6. Minutes of the previous Governing Board meeting held on 9th December 2021

6.1 The FGB read through the minutes of the Full Governing Board meeting held on 9th December 2021. There were no amendments requested and these minutes were approved as accurate.

Matters arising

6.2 It was noted that all the matters arising had now been actioned. All other items have been done or are agenda items.

6.3 The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 9th December 2021 were then approved as accurate and it was agreed that the Chair of Governors can now sign them off and place them on file at the school.

ACTION: Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 9th December 2021 were approved as accurate and are to be signed off by the Chair of Governors and then they are to be placed on file at the school.

7. Report from the Headteacher to the FGB

7.1 The Governing Board received a written report from the Headteacher with their meeting papers sent prior to the meeting.

7.2 The Headteacher reported that the preceding half-term has been very positive for the school. This term the Headteacher has been walking around the school talking to the children to listen to pupil voice. There is a great enthusiasm for learning among pupils in the school. The pupils are now settled back at school and starting to make progress.

7.3 The main focus for this half term for the senior leadership team has been the teaching of maths. The school leadership have triangulated the monitoring, looking at every single teacher's lessons, looked at the pupils' maths books and Assistant Head Caroline Hayden listened to pupil voice in order to establish if what was being taught in lessons was what was being learnt by the pupils. The Headteacher reported that maths had been the subject that was hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Headteacher believed this was because parents were less confident at teaching maths at home than other subjects.

7.4 There has been maths teaching and teaching of basic number facts taught to year 3 pupils. Years 4 and 5 have had their classes divided into three for the teaching of English literature and maths. Reception class has had many language interventions as assessments show many pupils are behind on their vocabulary and sentence formation.

7.5 It was reported that phonics sessions are going very well in the early years classes.

7.6 Government catch up funding does not cover everything that needs to be taught in order for pupils to catch up with work lost during the period of the Covid19 pandemic but it is a very helpful amount of funding that assists the school pay for as much catch up work as it can.

7.7 The school is developing a broad and balanced curriculum. The school has very good links with other schools. Staff from Duncombe Primary School are working with their equivalent subject teachers in the schools Duncombe has formed links with in order to learn from each other.

7.8 There has been continuing professional development (CPD) for the two Assistant Heads who have both been doing courses in headships. There have also been two experienced staff who are doing NVQ courses in higher level teaching at the University of London. There has also been training for staff in teaching maths and religious education.

7.9 Question: Are these CPD courses funded by the school?

Answer: No, funded by the Government Department for Education.

7.10 Question: In the data provided in the report writing is well below the average. Is more work being done to address this?

Answer: Yes. Some pupils are being taught by the SENCO in writing. There has been some interventions for a group of year 4 pupils who are well below the national average in writing so are now being taken out of class and taught writing by the SENCO and Assistant Head. There has now been good progress in writing in year 4. The whole school target for writing is 65% to reach the expected level by the end of this academic year 2021-22 but there is still a big gap in writing for many pupils in the school. There are also some anomalies that have been noticed in the data that are being addressed - for example there is a large gap between girls and boys in phonics, with some girls doing less well. As a result a separate group for girls has been established to teach phonics. There have also been a lot of targeted interventions.

7.11 Question: Is a reason for the gaps in writing a societal trend as a result of people writing less and less nowadays?

Answer: We think it is because writing is harder to teach than some other subjects. It is important for children to be able to read sufficiently in order to progress in writing. Also it is harder for pupils to write if they have a limited vocabulary or poor oracy, therefore English as a second language (EAL) pupils and Special Educational needs (SEN) pupils may have other issues to address for them to progress in writing. Children nowadays don't do daily writing unlike years ago, however we find that once they reach year 5 they progress well in writing. The school uses "Talk For Writing" methods and these appear to be working really well in getting pupil progress. The "Talk for Writing" methods involve children speaking the words and this is then written down. This gets children to rehearse their sentences verbally. Also the school is aiming to increase the amount of writing in subjects such as geography and history as it can be tiresome for pupils who are not interested in these subjects.

7.12 Question: Cursive writing is expected of pupils in the school, joined up writing, but some pupils can find that harder than other pupils. Some pupils may find it much easier to write on a computer keyboard than handwriting cursive sentences.

Answer: Yes, the Headteacher agrees with this observation and the use of computers and keyboards for writing is much more commonplace in this age. However at present academic exams are written with a pen all the way up to A level standard, and pupils may only not use a pen if the pupil has a specific SEND need that prevents them writing cursively with a pen. If pupils are not able to write cursively then the Government Department of Education considers that pupil to be below the expected level in writing.

7.13 Information from Target Tracker was shown. The Headteacher highlighted the table showing progress in each year group. The school is concerned about EHCP pupils not making rapid progress in maths. There is much greater progress among other pupil groups in other subjects. Year 6 are making rapid progress in their work.

7.14 Question: Is there a very specific defined plan for pupils who have an EHCP or high level SEN?

Answer: These pupils are taken out of their class and given individual interventions by the SEN lead. However this is much harder for us to organise in the year 1 group in key stage 1 as there are so many pupils in year 1 this one.

7.15 Question: Is the gap in early years writing between girls and boys only in phonics?

Answer: No, if there is a gap in phonics then these pupils will also have a gap in writing.

7.16 Question: Last year you were streaming pupils on literacy ability across all years. Is this still happening now?

Answer: Yes in the middle phase. In the year 5 group we stream in maths but not literacy. Year 6 we stream in all three core subjects. In the early years we take out pupils for interventions rather than streaming the whole year groups as there are large numbers of pupils.

8. Premises and health and safety

8.1 The School Business Manager reported that a Fire Drill with full school evacuation took place on 7th February 2022. The school was evacuated in 5 minutes 10 seconds. There have been no reportable accidents or near misses.

8.2 There have been carbon dioxide monitors delivered by the Government Department for Education. The carbon dioxide monitors will enable staff to act quickly where ventilation is poor and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working to prevent Covid-19. Monitors have been placed in all classrooms and are checked daily by the Premises Manager as part of his daily checks.

8.3 Islington are looking around all school premises in Islington maintained schools to look at where works will need to be carried out.

8.4 The kitchen compliance upgrade work in the school has begun. An initial site visit has taken place and plans for the works will be submitted to the school once they have been agreed. The early years playground works have now been approved and a consultation with staff and children on the new playground design has been agreed. Works on the playground will take two weeks during the Easter break 2022.

9. Report from the Chair of the Governing Board

9.1 The Chair of the Governing Board observed that the Governing Board of the school was a very young Governing Board in terms of time spent as governors and so there is less confidence at this stage compared to a very experienced board of governors. A framework for governors has been developed by the Headteacher in order to assist the Governing Board. The school is currently working to that framework.

Link governor roles

9.2 The Chair explained that the role of link governor is a way for governors to learn what is going on in the school. It allows governors to speak with some knowledge and confidence at Governing Board and committee meetings about what they have observed in the school. A framework for link governor visits is now in place for governors to follow. During the autumn term of each year each link governor will meet the lead teacher for their link governor area and discuss what is happening in their area of focus. During the spring term the link governor will meet the children in the school and find out what the pupils are learning through pupil voice. During the summer term the link governors will meet with the lead teacher in their focus area again and check on what progress has been made and what are the challenges etc. The information obtained by the governor in this summer term meeting can then be compared with what was reported to the link governor at the meeting that took place with the link governor during the autumn term.

9.3 The Chair has prepared three Link Governor proformas for reporting link governor visits that take place each term. One for the autumn term link governor visit, one for the spring term link governor visit and one for the summer term link governor visit. These proformas are to be completed by link governors when they visit the school and then uploaded into the folder on GovernorHub for dissemination to the rest of the governors and the relevant committees at their next meeting.

9.4 The Chair noted that some link governor roles are slightly different, such as the Safeguarding link governor role and the Health and Safety link governor role. However the framework the rest of the link governors are following can be adapted for these specific roles. There are specific training courses provided by the London Borough of Islington Governor Services and also on The Key to train these specific governors.

9.5 It was noted that there are a number of vacancies for link governors. However the Governing Board currently has vacancies for two new governors to be appointed who will fill these roles. There is currently no link governor for the early years and this is currently a priority area.

9.6 The Chair requested the list of link governors and link governor areas have the names of the relevant staff lead for each link governor area – a number of these staff lead names are missing at present from the list. It was requested the Headteacher fill in these missing staff lead names soon.

ACTION: Headteacher to supply the missing information on the list of the staff leads in the school alongside the relevant link governor areas. This is to be sent out to all governors please to read and keep for reference.

9.7 The Chair stated that he will meet with every governor this term in order to discuss their roles as governors and look at governor development.

Thank you to Gareth Williams and Judith Fortune

9.8 The Chair noted that both Gareth Williams and Judith Fortune had resigned from the Governing Board during this term. It was noted that both had played an important role in developing the school and its new Governing Board, Judith Fortune as the Chair of the Interim Executive Board that had preceded the FGB and had set up the new FGB and she served as the Chair of the new Governing Board, and Gareth Williams who had brought his wealth of experience and provided training to governors on their role as governors. He had also been the Committee Chair of the Achievement, Behaviour and Curriculum Committee.

9.9 The Governing Board placed on record their thank you to Gareth Williams and Judith Fortune.

10. Report from the Achievement, Behaviour and Curriculum Committee

10.1 Governors were reminded that Gareth Williams had now left the school and the committee has yet to appoint a permanent Committee Chair since then. As a result Pete Bacon Darwin chaired the previous meeting until another governor is confident about taking on this role as Committee Chair.

10.2 The committee noted that pupil absences from school were improving since the first term of this academic year 2021-22. The school has focused on improving pupil absence where there has been persistent absence and parents of persistently absent pupils have been invited into the school to speak to the Headteacher about improving their child's attendance at school. There has also been local authority involvement in trying to resolve three cases of persistent absence among pupil families.

10.3 The two Assistant Heads gave a presentation to the committee on their interventions in each year group. Interventions have been very targeted and specific and the committee felt these were well thought through interventions in order to achieve progress. A Saturday school for pupils has been taking place to keep pupils progressing - this has been staffed by a small number of senior staff in the school including the Headteacher. The Chair of the Governing Board stated that in his view everything appears to be going well in this regard. In addition the two Assistant Heads presented well and confidently to the committee.

10.4 The committee heard that a Ruth Miskin consultant had visited the school to view the Read, Write, Inc and phonics work that was taking place in the school. Support was given to teachers in this area.

10.5 Link governor progress was talked about and the Chair of the Governing Board has thought about a new reporting system for link governor reports so that the reports can be shared to all governors via GovernorHub. Governor Paul Tonkinson has also taken over the role of Safeguarding Link Governor from Judith Fortune and will check the Single Central register each half term.

11. Report from the Resources Committee

11.1 Committee Chair Sophie Bridge reported on the work of this committee so far this term.

11.2 The Committee Chair had received a proposal from the school leadership to spend an existing sum of Capital money on the refurbishment of the early years playground. The school had a sum of money to spend on Capital expenditure that had to be spent on Capital this financial year or it would be clawed back by the local authority. As a result this came to the Committee Chair to take a decision on between meetings so that the work could be scheduled to take place during the easter holidays if agreed. As part of the decision process in deciding whether to spend this sum of Capital expenditure on the refurbishment of the early years playground or another Capital expenditure project in the school the Committee Chair considered if expenditure on the school playground was the best use of this money. It was noted that the school kitchen was being refurbished this summer 2022 anyway and this was already fully funded, the roof of the school building required urgent work to prevent leaking and flooding but this was already allocated funding from the local authority, and that the early years playground was noted by Ofsted in its previous inspection of the school as an action point to bring this up to the required standard. The refurbishment of the early years playground was therefore decided to be the best use of this money. The committee reviewed this decision and agreed on the Capital expenditure for this project.

11.3 The committee heard during its autumn term meeting about the cumbersome multiple computer systems that were used by the school for financial management through the local authority. The meeting this spring learnt that the school was now moving to a new unified financial management computing

system based on Access. This is being introduced over the next six weeks with a view to going live at the beginning of the new financial year 2022-23 in April 2022, with a final deadline of May 2022. A migration to the new system is already being carried out and there is staff training on the use of the new financial system for School Business Manager Monique Roberts and another member of the office staff. The committee was pleased to learn this new system would be less time consuming and that the school will be able to receive live budget monitoring report updates when required.

11.4 The committee discussed the possible disposal of the school house. It was noted that this was an asset that, although owned by the local authority, the school had invested money into it to keep it running over the years, although it was underused at present. The sale of this school house could, in theory, allow the school to pay off its budget deficit if the local authority allows the school to keep the money from the sale. The committee decided to find out how much the school house was worth, how much investment has the school made in the school house over the years, and how much money the school will get from it if the local authority were to sell this house.

11.5 It was noted that the Headteacher had made administrative strides in establishing that the budget deficit the school has is an historic budget deficit that was inherited from the previous school leadership. The Headteacher has informed the committee that the local authority has now sent to the school in writing a confirmation that this budget deficit was historic.

11.6 The committee also received a budget monitoring report. It was noted that the processes for setting the new school budget for financial year 2022-23 will take place over the next few months leading up to May 2022 and that governors will be involved in these decisions.

12. Safeguarding

12.1 A report on safeguarding was issued as part of the Headteacher's Report. It was reported that the school staff have focused on improving two specific areas this term: Online Safety and the development by pupils and parents of a "Duncombe Digital Charter". This is designed to promote a healthy attitude towards online learning and use. The school has also focused on peer on peer abuse. Peer on peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, or coercive control exercised between children and within children relationships, friendships, and wider peer associations. Staff training on peer on peer abuse has taken place.

12.2 The following categorised incidents were also reported:

- Incidents of bullying = 3;
- Reports of sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic harassment = 4;
- Number of referrals to Children's Social Care this term = 3;
- Number of Children who are looked after = 2;
- Number of children on Child Protection = 1;
- Number of children who are Children In Need = 9;
- Number of fixed term exclusions = 1 (*a fixed term exclusion for two days for bullying*);
- Reports of Female Genital Mutilation = 0.

12.3 Governor Paul Tonkinson checked the school's Single Central Record. He has uploaded a written link governor proforma to GovernorHub. Governors are asked to read this document.

13. Covid-19 update

13.1 The Headteacher reported that there has been an impact from Covid19 with an average of two members of staff per week having to go home due to Covid-19 positive tests, contact with an infected person or Covid-19 symptoms. This has been a problem for many schools. There are also many pupils remaining at home due to needing to isolate or having Covid-19 symptoms. There is a financial impact for the many staff absences as the school is having to hire agency staff to cover for these staff. The Headteacher is also covering for one of the Deputy Safeguarding Leads and this is significantly impacting on her work time.

14. Any other business

14.1 The Headteacher informed governors that the school has a celebration assembly every Friday and governors are welcome to attend this event if they wish.

14.2 The Chair of the Governing Board reported that he has recently joined a discussion group for

Islington Chairs of Governing Boards. His observation was that many of the problems being reported to the FGB at this meeting are experienced by many other Islington schools and that Duncombe Primary School seems to be managing these problems better than some others.

15. Dates of next meetings

15.1 Next meeting of the ABC Committee will be Thursday 10th March 2022 - the time will be decided by the committee members as not all can attend at 8am due to children being taken to school.

Next meeting of the Resources Committee will be Thursday 24th March 2022 at 8am;

Next Full Governing Board meeting will be on Thursday 28th April 2022 at 6.30pm.

16. Confidential items

16.1 The confidential minutes of the FGB held on 9th December 2021 were emailed out to governors to read through and suggest amendments. No amendments were received and these minutes were approved as accurate, and can be signed of and placed on file at the school by the Chair of the Governing Board.

ACTION: Confidential minutes of the FGB held on 9th December 2021 approved as accurate and are to be signed of and placed on file at the school by the Chair of the Governing Board.

Meeting ended at 7:50pm.

Summary of Action Points

<u>Action Point No.</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Action Required</u>	<u>Responsibility/ Deadline</u>
1	1.2 and 2.1	Clerk to update GovernorHub with details of the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the FGB.	The Clerk
2.	3.2	School Business Manager to update DFE Get Information About Schools website with the new Chair of FGB	Monique Roberts
3.	6.3 and 16.1	Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 9th December 2021 were approved as accurate and are to be signed off by the Chair of Governors and then they are to be placed on file at the school. The confidential minutes can also be signed off and placed on file as accurate.	Pete Bacon Darwin
4	9.6	Headteacher to supply the missing staff lead names on the list of the staff leads in the school alongside the relevant link governor areas. This is to be sent out to all governors please to read and keep for reference.	The Headteacher