

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
Full Governing Board  
of Duncombe Primary School  
held online using Zoom on  
Thursday 9th December 2021 at 6:30pm**

Governors present:

**Judith Fortune** - Co-opted Governor (*Chair of the Governing Board*)  
**Pete Bacon Darwin** - Co-opted Governor  
**Sophie Bridge** - Co-opted Governor  
**David Carter** - Co-opted Governor  
**Rachel Kinnock Bentham** - Co-opted Governor  
**Natalie Faiwoo** - Parent Elected Governor  
**Laila Naanaa** - Parent Elected Governor  
**Monique Roberts** - Staff Elected Governor (*and School Business Manager*)  
**Helen Ryan** - Headteacher Exofficio Governor  
**Richard Watts** - Local Authority Governor (*arrived at 6:45pm*)

In attendance:

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

Judith Fortune chaired the meeting and Victoria Mitchell wrote the minutes.

## **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

1.1 Judith Fortune welcomed everyone to this Full Governing Board meeting. There were apologies for absence received from governors Paul Tonkinson and Gareth Williams. These apologies were both accepted.

1.2 The Governing Board were informed that a parent governor election had taken place and Natalie Faiwoo was elected to the Governing Board for a four year term in office. Natalie Faiwoo was welcomed to the Governing Board.

**ACTION: Clerk to update GovernorHub.**

1.3 This meeting was quorate.

## **2. Membership of the Governing Board**

2.1 The Governing Board had received written notification that Rachel Kinnock Bentham was being proposed as a new co-opted governor on the Governing Board. Governors considered this nomination and Rachel Kinnock Bentham was introduced to the meeting. Rachel Kinnock Bentham then logged out of the meeting and an election took place. The Clerk counted the votes and Rachel Kinnock Bentham was co-opted onto the Governing Board. This will be reviewed after one year with the other one year co-options. Rachel Kinnock Bentham then returned to the meeting.

**ACTION: Rachel Kinnock Bentham co-opted onto the Governing Board. Clerk to update GovernorHub.**

### 3. Declaration of interests

3.1 None were reported verbally.

3.2 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests Forms are to be completed by the two new governors and sent to the Clerk, this is a statutory requirement.

**ACTION: Declaration of Pecuniary Interests Forms to be completed by the two new governors Rachel Kinnock Bentham and Natalie Faiwoo and sent to the Clerk**

### 4. Minutes of the previous Governing Board meeting held on 29th September 2021

4.1 The FGB read through the minutes of the Full Governing Board meeting held on 29th September 2021. It was noted that these were a first draft of the document and amendments had not been received by the Clerk. Amendments were requested verbally as follows:

4.2 One governor asked that governors are not prefixed with the word "Governor".

4.3 Item 5.2 - One governor requested the description of the presentation is deleted and this is replaced with a cut and paste of the presentation slides.

#### Matters arising

4.4 It was noted that all the matters arising had now been actioned except for Action 8.11 - the school is still to define the measurable targets requested. This has been delayed due to a heavy workload prior to this meeting this term.

4.5 All other items have been done or are agenda items.

4.6 The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 29th September 2021 will be amended as requested and then sent to the Chair of Governors for signature.

**ACTION: Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 29th September 2021 to amended and then sent to the Chair of Governors.**

### 5. Report from the Headteacher to the FGB

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

5.2 The Headteacher explained that this term the school has continued to focus on the core subjects and has planned across all year groups how to bridge the gap following the lockdowns. At the same time there has been intensive work on developing the wider curriculum, with particular focus on History, Geography and RE. The full delivery of the school curriculum is now being taught except for computing which will be reintroduced from January 2022. There have been a number of challenges ranging from staff sickness to the budget. The Headteacher stated that this is the first full term of the school being open with no Covid-19 closure since 2019.

5.3 The Headteacher reported that the School Improvement Partner had visited the school. A follow up visit also took place on 29th November 2021 after the school had implemented the recommendations made.

5.4 Question: What other benchmarks could governors be provided with in terms of the curriculum?

Answer: Governors can look at the curriculum which is on the school website. The school has

reviewed this and ensured there is a real sequence of progress from early years to year 6. The school is teaching a subject specific vocabulary and moving away from the idea of topics. Governors can compare the Duncombe School curriculum with the curriculum that is being taught at other schools and displayed on their websites.

5.5 Question: Is it enough for governors to rely on what the Headteacher is saying in this report?  
Answer: The school curriculum has been quality controlled by an external professional partner. Governors would also be given training on how to ask the pupils questions about their learning when governors carry out link governor visits. Governors can also ask to look at the books to see if what is in the books reflects what is being taught in the school curriculum. Training will be provided to governors for them to do this effectively. If this teaching is working then that will be reflected in the data towards the end of the academic year.

5.6 Part 4 of the Headteacher's report was a report on the SEND provision at the school. This gave an overview of the number of children who have SEND at the school and also the training that is being put in place for staff to provide effective SEND provision. This is because the progress of SEN pupils was identified as an area that needed to be improved at the school during the previous Ofsted inspection that took place in 2017.

5.7 There are two staff members leading SEND at the school, one who focuses on the early years SEND pupils in order to put in place all the interventions necessary for that pupil while they are in early years, and the SENCO focuses on SEND pupils in years 1 to 6.

5.8 Training has been provided for all staff including the teaching assistants. This is to ensure that every pupil who has an SEND, not just those who have an EHCP, but pupils with milder moderate learning disabilities, autism, dyslexia or dyspraxia through to more high needs pupils are all given sufficient education. This training has reinforced to staff that just because a pupil has SEND it does not mean they are less able than other pupils. Instead it means they may learn in different ways. Training has been given to teaching assistants on the intervention work that can be given to small groups of pupils to help them progress.

5.9 The school has identified groups of pupils in the school who are displaying signs of SEN but may have to wait 20 months delay for an educational psychological assessment for an EHCP.

5.10 The Headteacher and the Link Governor for SEND, Laila Naanaa, have drafted a letter to the Head of SEN at London Borough of Islington, Candy Holder, to request more funding for the school to support the high number of SEN pupils at Duncombe Primary School. The Link Governor for SEND stated that it was important that the school was supporting pupils it had identified as having SEN prior to any EHCP being provided as if support was only put in place after that 20 month delay for an educational psychology assessment and an EHCP to be awarded then the school will lose the fight in ensuring these pupils get a good level of learning. Staff member Lucy Hyde was thanked for providing this SEND report to the governors as part of this Headteacher's report.

5.11 The Headteacher stated that early years teaching has really been tightened up this term. A new framework for early years teaching was provided by the Government in the previous year but there was a delay implementing this due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Assistant Head Khatija has worked with the early years staff focusing on literacy and early years maths. The school has fairly formal early years provision and this is found to work for the pupils of Duncombe Primary School. However there is plenty of scope for pupils to use their imagination

and creativity as they circulate around the environment of the early years provision.

5.12 Progress in early years maths has been most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. The gap in learning in maths is notably higher than in reading and writing. The Headteacher believes this is because the parental confidence in teaching maths was lower than in other subjects during periods when pupils were learning at home. Maths also needs daily teaching and daily learning and reviewing and consolidating. A consultant has visited the school from London Borough of Islington who has worked with the year 1 staff team in their planning and delivery of maths. The schools maths lead Jessie Brill is currently teaching a year 6 class to cover for a member of staff on maternity leave, but next term she will be out of class and able to work with all classes across the school on maths teaching.

5.13 Question: This term the priority for the school was reading. Will maths be the priority for next term?

Answer: Yes, all our priorities for next time will be in maths.

*(6:45pm - Richard Watts arrived at the meeting)*

5.14 The Headteacher informed the meeting that the school has one early career teacher. An early career teacher follows the new Early Career Framework that has been introduced this academic year by the Government. This early career teacher is also part of the Teach First Programme. Both the Headteacher and this early career teacher have been attending training on implementing this new framework. The Early Career Framework focuses on mentoring for 2 years for early career teachers to achieve their goals. Mentoring has been very structured and focused.

5.15 Talk For Writing methodology has been introduced across all year groups which has targeted the gaps that have built up in writing during the Covid-19 lockdown. This approach is where pupils vocalise their writing and then read and analyse it before writing down their own version. This has also helped pupils with their oral communication skills.

5.16 Question: We have been informed that Talk For Writing is to be introduced subject to funding being provided - is this still the case?

Answer: This was subject to funding during the summer 2021 and this has now been funded.

5.17 The school has also been given funding from the Department for Education for phonics. This has been to spent on phonics books.

5.18 The school's extended day provision has continued to run this term and has a large number of children attending. An average of 435 pupils attend across the week. This runs from 7am in the morning and then after school until 6pm in the evening. This includes breakfast club, enrichment activities and an after school club provision. Activities range from sports and fitness, cooking, arts, dance, piano, British sign language and homework support. One governor noted this very high attendance figure.

5.19 Part 10 of the Headteacher's report dealt with pupil attendance and absence. Various data tables showing pupil attendance and the attendance of different demographic categories of pupils were set out in the report.

5.20 The national average pupil attendance is 93.3% at present. Duncombe Primary School is

above the national average for pupil attendance. Parents have been cautious sending their children to school following the pandemic lockdowns. There are 22 pupils whose attendance is well below 90% and the school is working with these persistent absentees to try and improve their attendance. In these cases the school contacts the parents and often works with Children's Social Care Department at the local authority to try and improve pupil attendance. This sometimes means fines are issued by the local authority but fines are not favoured by the Headteacher.

5.21 Question: Where national average figures are available it would be really helpful if the school can ensure these are added to the data so governors can benchmark the data provided by the school. If previous data in the school can also be supplied then governors can see how current data compares to previous data.

Answer: Yes this can be supplied for the next report.

5.22 Question: Is the school anticipating a dip in pupil attendance as result of the rising number of Covid-19 cases in London and infections as a result of the reported newly discovered variant of Covid-19? Can the school also give clear messaging out to parents as I as a parent do not believe I have received a clear message from the school on whether to bring my child to school if they are unwell or whether to keep them at home?

Answer: We can try but unfortunately the guidance issued by Central Government is not that clear. However if a child has a high temperature then they should not come into school. Unfortunately Covid-19 symptoms are similar symptoms to a common cold and if they have a common cold they should come into school.

## **6. Safeguarding**

6.1 Safeguarding data was provided to the Governing Board in the Headteacher's report. The safeguarding data was as follows:

Reports this term = 370;

Number of referrals to Children's Social Care this term = 8;

Number of children who are looked after = 2;

Number of children on Child protection = 1;

Number of children who are Children In Need = 7;

Number of fixed term exclusions = 1;

Reports of female genital mutilation = 0;

Peer on peer abuse = 4 (*external from a secondary age pupil to 4 year six girls*);

Reports of bullying = 5;

Reports of racist, sexist, transphobic, homophobic behaviour = 3.

6.2 There has also been safeguarding training for staff this term. This has been Annual Safeguarding training for all staff, Part 1 of "Keeping Children Safe In Education" with updated Annex B. Safer recruitment training, Prevent training, First Aid training. There has also been volunteer and governor safeguarding induction.

## **7. Health and safety**

7.1 The Headteacher reported that a full school fire drill took place on 29th November 2021. The whole school was evacuated in 5 minutes and 10 seconds. A fire drill takes place every term in the school.

7.2 There have been no accidents or near misses to report this term.

7.3 All mandatory checks and maintenance is up to date and there has been health and safety related training for 73% across the school workforce.

## **8. Finance and Budget**

8.1 The Headteacher gave an update on the school finances.

8.2 The budget remains in a projected deficit at the school. There has been a detailed discussion on this at the recent Resources Committee meeting this term. The school has devoted a lot of time to work on the school budget and finances. The Headteacher reminded the Governing Board that the school has saved over £200,000 as a result of staffing restructures over the previous 18 months.

8.3 The Budget Monitoring Report for period 8 of financial year 2021-22 shows an in-year surplus of £11,000. However at the date of this meeting since this budget monitor was produced this budget surplus has risen to nearly £24,000.

8.4 A deficit recovery meeting is to take place on 14th December 2021 with the Headteacher and School Business Manager from Duncombe and Finance Officers from the London Borough of Islington. This meeting will discuss budget scenarios for the next financial year 2022-23 in advance of the budget setting period next term. Budget planning for 2022 -2023 is underway, with the Headteacher and School Business Manager beginning to look at scenarios for the staffing structure for next year. A spending freeze is to be imposed from 1st January 2022.

8.5 Full budget paperwork and projections at period 9 will be received by the next meeting of the Resources Committee on 2nd February 2022.

## **9. Provision for two-year-olds**

9.1 A paper written by the Headteacher was issued to the Governing Board with their meeting papers sent out prior to this meeting on the school's two year old provision. This paper was previously received by the Resources Committee and is now to be received by the Full Governing Board for ratification.

9.2 The Headteacher explained that the proposal to cut the two year old provision is linked to the school's projected budget deficit. Two year old provision has been provided by the school since before the current headteacher was employed by the school. It is a good provision with a lovely environment. It is likely it was set up in the days when schools had more money.

9.3 The Headteacher informed the Governing Board that unfortunately this provision is very expensive and does not receive enough funding in line with its costs. It is not a statutory provision. In addition the person who is running the two-year-old provision at present has now been recruited by a much larger Children's Centre and so will leave the school at the end of next week. The Headteacher has found it difficult to recruit a New Early Years practitioner to run the two year old provision to replace this member of staff. There has been a difficulty in recruiting new skilled school staff since the Brexit decision by the Government to leave the European Union, and in addition Australian and New Zealanders are not able to travel to the UK at present to fill teaching jobs due to travel restrictions as result of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are only 5 children registered to begin in the two year old provision from January 2022 and the school has always found it hard to attract sufficient children to this two year old provision. The Headteacher is therefore proposing that the two year old provision ceases to run from January 2022 as a temporary measure.

9.4 Question: Is it correct that this two year old provision costs £15,000 per year per child?

Answer: Yes.

9.5 Question: If the school does cut this two year old provision is it compelled to put the savings made towards paying off the projected financial deficit?

Answer: The savings will not be put against the deficit no. This area of the provision will be used for SEN provision of children in early years and for higher need SEN pupils. This will give them a quieter space in the school.

9.6 Question: Can you explain why this decision is being made as a temporary measure? Why doesn't the school wait until it can close this provision down properly?

Answer: At this moment in time the school needs to go through a number of possibilities and discussions before it can make a permanent decision. Therefore the school is making a temporary decision until September 2022 in order to give the school time to consider the options more fully. Also as the school is currently unable to recruit a New Early Years practitioner to run this two year old provision to replace that member of staff who is leaving the school at the end of the autumn term 2021.

9.7 Question: How valuable are these two year old provision pupils to the local authority? Have you informed the Islington Finance Department that you intend to cut the two year old provision in advance of the deficit management meeting that is to take place on 14th December 2021?

Answer: The Islington Finance Department have been informed in advance of the deficit management discussions that the school is looking at this option as part of the deficit management and that this proposal will be brought to the Full Governing Board. The Islington Finance Department have not offered to school a solution. There has been no discussion about how to bring more children into the provision.

9.8 One governor stated that given the school is unable to recruit a sufficiently high quality member of staff in order to ensure this is a high quality provision then the school will not be doing the two year old children who are admitted any benefit by continuing to run this provision. Another governor stated that the school is now able to inform Islington Finance Department at the deficit management meeting that cutting this provision is a practical solution to a current problem.

9.9 The Headteacher informed governors that the school currently has a waiting list for places in the nursery provision from 3 years old and the nursery provision is currently capped at 45 children. The space may be able to be used to gradually increase the nursery size to 50 children and also begin to offer full-time nursery places to families. There is a demand for full-time nursery places to be provided. This will also aid the school bringing pupils into the reception year from nursery.

9.10 Question: Are there alternative two year old provisions elsewhere for parents in the community?

Answer: Yes there is a very good nursery further along the road called Barbara McMillan Nursery. There is also Archway Under Fives.

9.11 Question: Is there a reason for keeping the two year olds and three year old children separate? At other nurseries they are not kept separate.

Answer: The Headteacher is not sure the answer to this but will find out from the early years practitioners and email the answer to the governors after the meeting. The two year old children are still in nappies which need changing and this is a reason. These children are supposed to be toilet trained by the time they move into the nursery provision.

9.12 Question: Why is the two year old provision not a full-time provision but the 3-year old provision is full-time?

Answer: The school does not get funding for full-time places in this provision.

9.13 One governors suggested that the two year old provision could be cut in favour of

increasing the number of full-time places in nursery.

9.14 The Chair then asked the Governing Board if they were in support of the proposal to temporarily cease to run the two year old provision at the school for the next two terms while the school investigates all other options before a permanent decision on its future is made in the summer term 2022. Governors considered the matter and a vote was taken. The Clerk counted votes and all governors voted in favour of temporarily ceasing to run the two year-old provision for the next two terms. There was one abstention and no votes against.

## **10. Committee report from Resources Committee**

10.1 Governors received a report from the Resources Committee. Chair of Governors Judith Fortune chaired this meeting of the committee on an interim basis for its first meeting. The Resources Committee looked at several areas of its responsibilities from the terms of reference. Sophie Bridge was selected as the permanent Committee Chair going forward after this meeting. The committee received the budget monitoring report and also looked at the deficit budget. The school is currently working with a school budget that was ratified in May 2021 and since that time the school has discovered that the budget repayment amounts are based on the savings that the school makes on its current budget. This therefore means the school can only make small repayments as the budget situation is currently very tight. It also means the school is unable to carry out any development work on the premises due to shortage of available finance. The school is currently paying the running costs of the school house but has been unable to progress with its sale. If the school was able to sell off this house then the school would be able to pay off its budget deficit and the local authority could still make significant money from the sale. However the school has been unable to progress with possible sale of the schoolhouse.

10.2 The Headteacher informed the meeting that energy costs are currently rising significantly for the whole school as a result of a significant rising energy prices in the UK and energy is likely to cost £42,000 for this financial year. The cost of running the schoolhouse is therefore very expensive.

10.3 Question: What is the school house currently being used for?

Answer: The school uses it for extra classrooms occasionally. There are currently some phonics lessons that take place in there.

10.4 Question: If the school house was sold then the school would have to find another classroom for these phonics lessons?

Answer: Yes but it is unusual for a school to have a house where it can have its phonics lessons. Phonics lessons would usually take place in the school building instead.

10.5 Question: If the school stopped using the school house then the energy could be switched off in that premises and therefore save the energy costs and running costs of the school house.

Answer: Yes but the house has to be kept running or otherwise the premises will become derelict.

10.6 One governor informed the meeting that the local authority has lots of school houses of this nature on its list of assets. The local authority wants to decide a strategy for dealing with all of these school houses that are currently not used rather than dealing with them on a school-by-school basis.

10.7 Question: Is the school able to close up the school house and shutter it's windows during the winter months in order to save energy costs? This action may also prompt the local authority into helping to resolve the sale of the schoolhouse if it is sitting there empty and shuttered?

Answer: Yes this can be done but we will have to check the practicality of doing this with the Premises Manager and School Business Manager.

10.8 The Interim Committee Chair also reported that the committee decided to receive



monthly budget monitoring reports from the school rather than quarterly budget monitoring reports in order to get the most up-to-date information. School staff are having to use cumbersome multiple financial software systems in Islington and working on school finances and budget is currently taking up a significant amount of staff time. The committee also looked at the health and safety incidents in the school and discussed the future of the two year old provision.

10.9 There were no outstanding personnel or health and safety issues reported to the committee.

10.10. The Governing Board will also need to set up a Pay Committee and there is also a need for a Headteacher's Performance Review Committee. In addition a number of governors will need to be trained in safer recruitment. Anyone interested should contact the Chair Judith Fortune. David Carter is already trained on this a few weeks ago. The next safer recruitment training is in March 2022.

## **11. Committee report from the Achievement, Behaviour and Curriculum Committee**

11.1 As the Committee Chair Gareth Williams was absent from this meeting there was no report received from this committee. However the minutes from the previous meeting are available to be read on GovernorHub.

## **12. Report from the Chair of Governors**

12.1 The Chair noted that this new Governing Board of the school was now six months old and made a number of observations of progress so far.

12.2 The FGB began with 10 governors and this has now risen to 12 with all spaces filled. 10 governors have completed governor safeguarding training. The remaining two will be trained soon. There has also been training on how to be an effective governor and preparing for Ofsted. There has also been committee specific training on the role of each committee.

12.3 There have been 7 link governor visits to the school so far. Attendance at Governing Body meetings has been good with few absences. The Chair is concerned about building better communications with the governors and will meet with the Headteacher to discuss this soon. A diary will be drawn up to schedule the remaining link governor visits to ensure they are effective.

12.4 Question: I am concerned at the workload and feel the role so far has been receiving information rather than any governance as such? I feel there is little scrutiny or decision making so far.

Answer: Yes this is normal for new governors. You will begin to learn that there is information you will have a full understanding of and information that other governors will have a full understanding of, spreading the load after a time. Much of the decisions and setting up has been done by the Interim Executive Board prior to the FGB being set up so less to do at this stage, but as time goes on there will be far more for the FGB to do in terms of decision making and scrutiny.

12.5 Question: For those of us doing other jobs there is a need for crystal clear information to be provided far more about exactly when meetings are taking place and when papers will be sent out to governors prior to meetings.

Answer: Yes I agree this may need to be tightened up.

## **13. Covid-19 update**

13.1 The Headteacher reported that schools are not affected by the Government Plan B guidance at present. Adults in the school are required to wear face masks in the communal areas while in school building. The December nativity performances and the parents meetings are not able to take place face-to-face and will instead be online. It has been decided that holding these in the school would be too risky for the staff. The Department for Education has issued instructions in case the school goes into another lockdown. The Headteacher

commented that it has been very pleasing that the school had been able to remain open throughout this term.

#### **14. Any other business**

14.1 None.

#### **15. Dates of next meetings**

Next meeting of the ABC Committee will be Thursday 13th January 2022 at 8am-9am;

Next meeting of the Resources Committee will be 2nd February 2022, 8am-9am;

Next Full Governing Board meeting will be on 17th February 2022, 6.30pm.

#### **16. Confidential items**

16.1 The Governing Board then discussed a number of confidential items. These items are noted in the confidential minutes of this meeting which appear as a separate document.

#### **Summary of Action Points**

<b>Action Point No.</b>	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	<b>Action Required</b>	<b>Responsibility/ Deadline</b>
1	1.2 and 2.1	Clerk to update GovernorHub.	The Clerk
2.	3.2	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests Forms to be completed by the two new governors Rachel Kinnock Bentham and Natalie Faiwoo and sent to the Clerk	Rachel Kinnock Bentham and Natalie Faiwoo
3.	4.6 and 17.1	Minutes and confidential minutes of the FGB meeting held on 29th September 2021 to amended and then sent to the Chair of Governors.	Clerk / Judith Fortune.