

HUNSLET CARR PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on Tuesday 14th January 2020 at 5.00 pm.

PRESENT John Hairsine (Chair) Martin Lumb (Headteacher)
 Olamide Ayemowa Sarah Gardner (by phone)
 Ian Cunningham Lindsay Kemp
 Clare Davidson Paul Wray

IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Howarth (Clerk – Governor Support Services)
 Hayley Stewart (School Business Manager)

1.00 APOLOGIES

1.01 Apologies were accepted from Minoti Parikh.

2.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.01 A declaration of interest with regard to tonight's agenda was made by Clare Davidson who has a child in the school, potentially affected by the decisions made.

3.00 BUSINESS PLAN LINKED TO THE SEND PROPOSAL FOR SEPTEMBER 2020

3.01 The Headteacher explained that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to principally consider items 3 and 4, make a decision, and begin the implementation of a Managed Staff Redundancy (MSR) process, if agreed by governors.

ML stated that the proposal's aim was to reduce the number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) from 28 to 22 for the outlined two reasons. He offered governors an amount of time to carefully read through the Business Case document, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, then ask any questions they had regarding the two reasons:

- A strategic response to promote best SEND (Special Educational Need and Disability) practice
- Management of budgetary challenges in the school's three year forecast

3.02 After reading the document, a governor sought clarity on the purpose of the meeting. The Headteacher explained that for the school staffing structure to change, governor agreement was necessary. Tonight's meeting set out the reasons for the proposed change and sought governors' permission to begin the process. The Chair added that if governors were in agreement, a fair and proper MSR process would subsequently be made clear.

The Headteacher explained that there had been a delay to any agreement and possible implementation due to the difficulties surrounding a member of staff's exit from school. As this End of Contract arrangement was now settled the timeline which would, hopefully, enable a new beginning after Easter (at best) or the June Spring Bank holiday (dependant on any notice period necessary), was evident in Appendix F.

ACTION

3.03 ML explained that following the Ofsted report in 2018, it was realised that a lack of skilled TAs, and their implementation within school, was not enabling the best practice SEND provision. Governors' attention was drawn to the quote from Ofsted

“That all children, regardless of whether they have SEND or not, deserve to have access to the broadest and deepest possible curriculum for as long as they possibly can.”

Of interest to governors were the current pay arrangements for the incumbent TAs. Since the majority were paid at level one, there was no financial incentive to develop their skills. This affected recruitment, retention and delivery of the above focus, as pointed out by the SEND governor. ML added that the old model of removing the most vulnerable from class, and having one TA per class, no longer served the focus.

3.04 To address this, the proposed staffing structure for KS1 and KS2 provision – April 2020 (page 3) had been developed following input from the Authority lead on SEND, the SIA (School Improvement Advisor), the Chair and Headteacher. ML took governors through the details, explaining how professional development and qualifications would underpin the new responsibilities. Appropriate increased pay levels would be implemented for these new roles. ML reminded governors that whilst the posts would change, the personnel need not, subject to taking up training opportunities as appropriate.

A governor asked why the offer of free training, in-house and in-school time, had not been taken up by the current TAs. The PA to the leadership team expressed surprise since the professional development requirement had been made clear to them.

A governor asked if there was money in the budget for training and to support the increase in pay for the higher level TAs going forward. The Headteacher explained that some of the HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) posts would hopefully be filled by staff members already with that qualification but currently paid at level one. They would be encouraged to apply under the new staffing structure. Additional money for training was available through the Local Authority apprentice levy.

A governor enquired if there was any concern regarding teachers adjusting to not having a TA in the classroom. Of the fifteen teachers, eleven showed good classroom practice. The remaining four, not used to teaching a full class of thirty were receiving support from the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). The Headteacher reminded governors that this move simply brought Hunslet Carr into line with all other primary schools in Leeds.

3.05 The Headteacher informed governors of the different legal requirements for EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) breaking down the proposed staffing structure (bottom of page 3).

A governor asked if the current TAs were all on permanent contracts or whether there might be a possible natural reduction. It was explained that all had been at school more than two years, offering them permanent status.

4.00 CURRENT BUDGET MODEL INCLUDING THREE YEAR FORECAST

4.01

The Headteacher drew governors' attention to the suggested budgetary prudence helping to drive the proposed change to the staffing structure. ML took governors through page 5 of the Business Case document and Appendices D and E, informing them that staffing costs, as a proportion of the budget, represented an ongoing challenge if no action were taken.

The Headteacher explained that the costs of redundancy were taken into account in the figures.

A governor asked how these figures had been reached and questioned whether they were a little optimistic since those over 55 years of age, most likely to accept redundancy, would require a bigger pay out. A governor asked why this was. It was explained that pension contributions, whilst contractual and not a legal obligation, would be honoured for those over fifty five, adding to the amount payable. Governors suggested that the redundancy costs in the budget be weighted towards the older, longer serving members of the current staff.

A governor was informed that there were three staff currently over fifty five. The Headteacher was confident that, even with their potential increased redundancy pay-out, the budget difficulties would still be resolved, especially in years 2 and 3 of the forecast.

ML also pointed out to governors that if it was agreed tonight that the new staffing structure go ahead, HR and union advice would be sought regarding redundancy costs. He agreed, however, to change the figures in the meantime, as per governors' advice, to produce a new prudently cautious balance to carry forward.

5.00 DISCUSSION AROUND POSSIBLE STAFF REDCUCTION PROGRAMME

5.01

The Chair asked governors for their questions following the Headteacher's information. Governors felt that most questions had been answered along the way but the Chair had a concern.

JH wondered what would happen if those still in post, following the re-structure, declined the necessary training and professional development opportunities required of them to carry out their new roles. He enquired if a model had been developed for this scenario.

The Headteacher responded that the two re-structuring processes would not run concurrently. Following the MSR, concluded by Easter, the SENCO would pursue an in-house recruitment for the four higher needs posts. ML was pleased to report that there

existed in school already ten members of staff, qualified at that level but currently paid at level one.

ML added that the selection criteria for the new posts within the amended staffing structure would be based on scores awarded from training and experience, rather than individuals.

A governor asked if he felt confident these new posts would be filled internally. ML replied almost certainly at the higher level.

A governor wanted consideration given to the likelihood that those with the most experience might accept voluntary redundancy, to the school's detriment, asking what skills would be lost from that cohort. The Headteacher replied that whilst a concern, the situation represented those staff with outdated ideas and a reluctance to change versus brilliance and experience. ML felt confident that the fair selection criteria would disadvantage those whose exit would benefit school, and produce a situation where those fully behind the changes remained on the staff.

6.00 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chair asked if governors were fully aware of the situation and felt in a position to vote on the proposed staff re-structuring.

Governors voted unanimously to support the proposal.

Resolved:

The SEND proposal was accepted and the implementation process would begin.

7.00 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.01 A nominations committee was necessary to begin the implementation process. This would meet on Tuesday 21st January at 4.30 pm.

Jon Hairsine, Sarah Gardner (by phone) and Lindsay Kemp agreed to form the nominations committee. Clare Davidson would be an emergency member if required for reasons of quoracy.

A governor asked that a draft be available for all members of the committee before the meeting. The Headteacher explained that himself, the SBM and HR would meet beforehand to produce a draft document which would be made available.

7.02 An appeals committee was necessary to complete the proposed re-structuring.

Paul Wray, Ian Cunningham and Olamide Ayemowa agreed to form the appeals committee.

7.03 The Headteacher informed governors that he would be meeting the staff, to inform them of the agreed re-structuring, on Thursday 16th January 2020.

8.00 TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING
Thursday 2nd April at 5.00 pm

The Chair closed the meeting at 6.40 pm.