



Thaxted Primary School
Minutes of Full Governing Body Meeting
Wednesday 11th July 2022, 5.45pm
Held at the school

Name	Ref	Type	Present	Role	Term
Donna Briant	DB	Parent	Present		
Peter Boorman	PB	Parent	present		05.11.24
Justine Brooks	JB	Acting Headteacher	Present		
Emma Dymond	ED	Staff	Present		26.09.25
Hazel Gotfraind	HG	Co-opted	Present		19.11.23
Maggi Griffiths	MG	Co-opted	Present		24.01.26
Jamie Henderson	JH	Parent	Present		26.09.25
Anne Hopkins	AH	Partnership	Present	Chair of Governors	14.09.22
Colin Howell	CH	Co-opted	Not present	Vice Chair	30.06.24
Debra Legge	DL	Partnership	Not present		29.04.25
Jenny Reilly	JR	Parent	Present		13.11.22
Jon Spencer	JSp	Local Authority	Present		20.03.26
Charlotte Tillbrook	CT	Co-opted	Not Present	Vice Chair	27.06.25
Saroj Velamakanni	SV	Parent	Present		25.06.25
Attendees					
Jackie Sweeting	JSw		Present	Clerk and SBM	
Caroline Crompton	CC		Present	Incoming Headteacher (Sept 22)	

Item	Detail	Action
1.	<u>ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> None. PB joined the meeting at 6.30pm.	
2.	<u>WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS</u> CC was formally welcomed and introduced to each member of the board.	
3.	<u>DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTERESTS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST</u> There were no new interests or conflicts relating to any items on the agenda.	
4.	<u>AOB</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request of change of year group for one child • School hours from September 22 or 23 (if time) 	
5.	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u> 5.1 New Parent Governor DB was welcomed to the board. 5.2 Chair and Vice Chair from September 22	

	<p>AH had made it clear that she planned to step down at the end of the summer term, leaving the Chair's position vacant. JSp had met with AH to discuss the role and had declared himself willing to become Chair. AH nominated JSp for the role and ED seconded this nomination. All were unanimous that he should become Chair from the 1st August 2022. The position of Vice Chair from the same date was discussed and it was agreed that it would be filled by two governors. AH nominated SV and CH for this role and HG and JR seconded the nomination. All were unanimous that they should become Vice Chair from the 1st August 2022.</p> <p>JH joined the meeting at 5.50pm</p> <p>5.3 Future vacancies</p> <p>Due to AH coming to the end of her term and CT standing down due to ill health there were two vacancies, one Partnership and one Co-opted. An acquaintance of PB, Ivan Fleming, had met with AH to discuss the role and the level of expectation. He was currently considering whether to confirm his interest and would get back in touch with AH with his CV if that were the case. CC mentioned that she was acquainted with a gentleman who had expertise in ICT and safeguarding. He lived in Blackburn, but regularly travelled to the area. Again, it was suggested that he submit a CV if he was interested in becoming a governor. As an alternative, if required, AH mentioned that the other parents that were part of the recent election were well qualified and had skills that would be useful for the board. Whilst it was not good practice to have too strong a parental representation on the board, it would be possible to enlist one of these parents if the vacancy was open for a prolonged period of time. The other possibility was to advertise on Thaxted Online as this had also been fruitful in the past.</p>	
6.	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</u></p> <p>It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting on the 25/05/22 were a true record and were signed by the Chair.</p>	
7.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 6: ED and HG to review the feedback from the staff focus group and agree a way forward The governors confirmed that a meeting had taken place. Some of the information produced by Ed Gallier, a former governor, was no longer relevant, but other parts were used to put together a RAG-rated action plan. ED requested that she and HG were given a slot at the non-pupil day on the 1st September to present the plan and ask for feedback. The opportunity would also be used to ask staff for ideas and suggestions related to staff wellbeing. • Item 6: JR to list outstanding actions from the safeguarding audit JR said that there was a list on the tracker in the safeguarding section on the governor zone. It was agreed that she would meet with CC to review the actions. • Item 6: AH to write a piece for a newsletter before the end of term <i>Action complete</i> 	<p>ED/HG</p> <p>JR/CC</p>

- Item 10: AH to contact DEEP heads about a joint letter regarding ECC SEND funding
AH confirmed that she had approached the Chairs, but that the response had been somewhat lacklustre. Most felt that it would not achieve anything. Despite this she felt it was something that the board should monitor if the level of support from ECC deteriorated further.
- Item 14.2: Data Protection
All governors had been asked to refresh their data protection knowledge by watching a video produced by ECC Information Governance, the body that provided the school's Data Protection Officer service. HG and JH confirmed that they had watched the video, but had forgotten to confirm this to JSw. **PB, DL and DB were still to confirm that they had seen it.**

PB, DL, DB

8.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

8.1 Headteacher's Report

A report had been included with the meeting papers 2 weeks prior to the meeting. AH, DL and MG had met to review the report together and had raised questions that had been answered during the w/c 4/7/22 (document attached). There were no further questions.

8.2 SATS results

JB had reported the 2022 SATs results to governors by email but the email had not been received. She ran through them again briefly at the meeting as follows:

KS2 SATs Results 2022

-	Expected	Greater Depth	National Average
Reading	84%	47%	74%
Writing	68%	5%	69%
Maths	74%	34%	71%
Combined	63%		59%

KS1 SATs Results 2022

-	Expected	Greater Depth
Reading	86.5%	27%
Writing	75.7%	8%
Maths	86.5%	30%
Combined	77.8%	

	<p>The governors wished to congratulate the school on an excellent set of results. The number of children exceeding the expected level was particularly impressive. JB thanked the governors for their comments; she felt the staff had worked extremely hard and this, together with a number of different interventions and the support given by parents during lockdown, had produced positive outcomes in all areas. In particular she highlighted the times tables results (69% of children achieving a good standard) as she felt the school was going from strength to strength in this area; the introduction of medals had been extremely effective, resulting in a majority of the KS1 children already knowing their tables. This could only be a good thing for the future.</p> <p>The governors also reviewed the excellent results for the Early Years Foundation Stage where 75% of children had achieved a good level of development (GLD). This had originally been predicted at 78% but had been brought down by two mid-year joiners, plus one child, who was predicted to achieve GLD had left the school.</p> <p>Once again, the governors congratulated the staff on an excellent set of results; all of the hard work had paid off.</p>	
9.	<p><u>FINANCE</u></p> <p>9.1 Reports A finance report containing a commentary on the budget vs actual report, virements and trading accounts for 22/23 had been included with the meeting papers.</p> <p>The governors thanked JSw for a comprehensive report, which had covered any of the questions that were likely to arise. It was recognised that it was very early in the financial year to be able to assess the financial stability of the school.</p> <p>9.2 Financial Regulations for 22/23 An updated document had been included with the meeting papers.</p> <p>A governor had noticed that there was an unpopulated section p under Financial management and asked JSw to investigate why this was the case. JSw guessed it was because a section that was no longer relevant to the school had been removed, but agreed that she would report back on this once checked.</p> <p>A governor asked how often the Headteacher checks listed in section 5 (Internal Control) were carried out. The recommendation was monthly, but this had been judged as unachievable and had always been half-termly at Thaxted.</p> <p>Under the banking section 6.15, it was requested that the titles of the people authorised to have access to the bank account on line should be listed in the same way as they had been for signatories. JSw agreed that this would be amended.</p> <p>JSw had noted in the agenda that she had revised expenditure limits for the headteacher up to £10,000 as proposed by the board at a previous meeting. The amendment was discussed and a decision was made to return the expenditure limit to £5,000.</p>	<p>JSw</p> <p>JSw</p>

	With the above amendments in place, the governing board approved the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation for 2022/23.	
10.	<p><u>PERSONNEL MATTERS</u></p> <p>See Part II, Confidential Minutes</p> <p>PB joined the meeting at 6.30pm.</p>	
11.	<p><u>ATTENDANCE</u></p> <p>As stated in the agenda JB was requesting that the board agreed to extend the awarding of penalty notices to parents who took their children out of school during term from 20 sessions (10 days) to 10 (5 days). She explained that this would bring the school in line with other schools in Essex. Thaxted, like many other schools, was suffering attendance levels that were significantly below those seen before Covid, primarily because more families were taking their children out during term for holidays. She felt it was important to address this in as many ways as possible, including this proposed revised rule.</p> <p>The question was raised whether the introduction of stricter rules would actually impact the attendance data; with the increase in the cost of living, some families had no choice but to book holidays during the term. JB argued that schemes were available for families that were eligible for free school meals, which greatly reduced the cost of holidays. She was asked why she felt it was important to introduce the new rule now. Her response was that attendance had never been as bad and families had begun to disregard the need for <i>their</i> children to be consistently in school in order for them to learn.</p> <p>A governor asked whether a child arriving late impacted on the attendance data. JB explained that they were marked as late if they arrived before 9.20am and that this did not affect overall attendance. Some children were regularly late and if this trend continued the parents were asked to attend a meeting with the headteacher to see whether anything could be done to support them getting their child to school on time.</p> <p>A new Attendance Policy based on an Essex Primary Headteacher Association template had been provided with the meeting papers. The board agreed to adopt the new policy.</p> <p>A governor pointed out that the board might want to consider nominating an Attendance governor moving forward; the role of the governors was quite explicit in the new policy and governor representation at the attendance meetings with parents could potentially be useful.</p>	
12.	<p><u>DATA PROTECTION</u></p> <p>JSw had provided a summary overview of the recent Data Protection Officer Audit, which confirmed a good level of assurance, but she was still querying the actual audit as it didn't correspond with this outcome. Most significantly it currently stated that the school had not sought assurances from suppliers that they were complying with GDPR. This was not the case, and needed to be rectified, hopefully before the end of term.</p>	
13.	<p><u>POLICIES</u></p> <p>The three policies stated in the agenda, the Capability Procedure, the Leave of Absence policy and the SEND policy were due to be reviewed by governors over the summer term.</p>	

	All of the policies were approved. A request was made for the school to review the spelling and grammar in the SEND Policy.	JB/JSw
14.	<p><u>GOVERNOR BUSINESS</u></p> <p>14.1 Chair's Action AH referred to her meeting with Ivan Fleming (see 5.3)</p> <p>14.2 To review plans for monitoring of the SIP All of the monitoring reports were now available for review on the governor zone. AH pointed out that there would be more reports in the 22/23 academic year due to the delay in starting at the beginning of 21/22. CC outlined the SIP for 22/23, saying that there would be fewer targets for each priority. Governors were assigned to each one as follows:</p> <p>Quality of Education (writing) – CH, HG, MG, DB Leadership and Management – DL, JH Behaviour and attitude - JR, JSp Personal development – SV, JSp SEND – PB</p> <p>14.3 To review any recent training The training spreadsheet had been included with the meeting papers. AH reiterated her opinion that the governors had not attended enough training over the course of the year. She hoped that they would embrace training to a greater extent in 22/23, either by attending Balance courses or using the NGA e-learning modules. She also recommended the training offered by ECC. The quality had improved and was now worth considering, particularly related to safeguarding, such as the course that AH had recently attended on harmful sexual behaviour. CC agreed that it was vital that governors attended training related to safeguarding.</p> <p>14.4 Feedback from the NGA and Essex CC forums AH reported that the main agenda item at both events was the prospect of academisation for state-maintained schools. Whilst things had quietened down due to the impending changes in the Cabinet, it was expected that the matter would be back on everyone's agenda in the near future. Thaxted would need to revisit its options once this was the case. ECC was planning to set up its own academies, but its model was yet to be publicised.</p> <p>AH briefly described the differences between maintained schools and academies. Larger academy trusts worked on a business model with a standardised package for curriculum, assessment and school management. The danger of joining a large MAT would be that Thaxted would lose some of its special characteristics. The other option would be for the DEEP schools to form a MAT, but this again might result in a watering down of Thaxted's vision and ethos. She said that there was no rush for the board to make a decision as it had to be right for the school.</p> <p>14.5 Climate Change Link Governor AH reported that there was a big push within ECC on making children more aware of climate change and the impact on the environment. She recommended that a new role be created on the board for a governor who was interested in this subject.</p>	

	<p>14.6 Results of the Skills Audit and Self-Assessment The results of the skills audit and self-assessment had been compiled and added to the meeting papers during the week of the 4/7/22.</p> <p>The overall position was very positive. AH suggested that the areas that still required attention were engaging with stakeholders and improving governor induction, plus the board needed to carry out more work on the school’s vision. She was aware that there had been no Chair’s 360-degree appraisal this academic year, plus she had not managed to meet with each governor for an annual review. She had previously done this over the course of the summer holidays and suggested that this might be a useful initial activity for JSp to get to know the governors. She felt that the board’s assessment of its effectiveness might be slightly exaggerated considering the disappointing amount of training carried out through the year.</p> <p>CC pointed out that Ofsted’s assessment of Leadership and Management was not solely about the performance of the SLT, but also the governors. It was important that they visited the school regularly and made themselves visible. It was possible, for example, that an inspector might ask a random member of staff when they last saw a governor. A governor pointed out that the board had run two parent forums just before the end of term, which had been very poorly attended. The board discussed other ways of improving their visibility, and the question was raised whether it would be useful to reinstate a Governor Day, where all governors visited the school to carry out monitoring. The overall feel was that this had felt a bit too much like an Ofsted inspection when it had been done in the past and had led to the staff feeling on edge. Another governor pointed out that there were many ways of meeting with children and staff informally, such as attending assemblies or events such as Sports Day or having lunch with a group of children.</p> <p>It was agreed that there was a need for more Interaction with the staff; CC and JSp agreed to meet to discuss how best to put this into action.</p> <p>The prospect of additional Governor Forums was also discussed. All agreed that there were likely to be more attendees if the events became more established, and if each one focused on a particular theme. The suggestion was made that the forum was added to the headteacher coffee mornings, which took place once every half term. In doing this it might put the forums on a slightly more informal footing and give parents more confidence to attend. This would be discussed again at the next meeting.</p> <p>14.8 Board Structure for 22/23 Overall, the new structure, with regular six-weekly board meetings seemed to be working well, with the exception of the area of finance, which, it was felt, was not getting enough scrutiny. After some discussion it was agreed that the board meetings would remain the same, with the addition of a Finance, Premises and Personnel (FP&P) committee that would report back to the board at each meeting. This would be set up at the Planning Meeting in September.</p> <p>14.9 Dates for the 22/23 academic year JSw agreed to issue a new set of dates to allow for the FP&P meetings.</p> <p>14.10 RAG rating</p>	<p>CC/JSp</p> <p>JSw</p>
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	The board's performance was RAG rated for a final time in the 22/23 academic year (see attached).	
15.	<p><u>MEETING REVIEW</u></p> <p>15.1 Confidential sections to be agreed Information on leavers and joiners.</p>	
16.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>14.1 Deferment request JB had been contacted by the parents of a child in Year 4 who was academically behind. They felt this was partly due to them being August born, and partly due to Covid, but were requesting that they be put back one academic year, so that they repeated Year 4 again. JB fully supported this request and was seeking approval from the governing board. Approval was given.</p> <p>14.2 Price of school meals The governors returned to finance, and in particular JSw's request to increase the cost of school meals from £2.20 to £2.45/meal. As things stood Thaxted's meal price was the lowest within DEEP and based on the current business plan, it was not sustainable if catering was to avoid a deficit by year end. The main reason for the price increase was the cost of food, which had increased significantly since January 2022. Meal costs had been consistently below £1.00 per head up until January, but had jumped to well over £1.00 since then.</p> <p>The governors were torn on this matter; on the one hand some governors felt it was the responsible thing to do as the school was already making a loss on its breakfast and after-school clubs so a price increase was appropriate. The rising cost of living was very much in the public eye at the current time, so the increase would not come as a big surprise to parents. The remaining governors felt that the time was not right for a price increase; it would reduce the number of children getting a hot dinner at lunchtime, and penalise those families that were most hit by the increase in the cost of living. Furthermore, concerns were raised about the quality of the packed lunches that the children were bringing in as an alternative as it meant that the school had little control on what they were eating. After much discussion it was agreed that the price would remain at £2.20, but that parents would be warned that it was likely that prices would increase in 2023. CC would do this early in the autumn term.</p>	CC
17.	<p><u>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETINGS</u></p> <p>21st September 2022 5.45 – Planning Meeting</p>	

	The minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting	
	_____ Date _____	
	Chair	