

## Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting

Held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at The ACE Centre Nursery School

Present Catherine Hayward (CHa) – Co-opted Governor & Chair  
Sally Purssell (SP) – Co-opted Governor and Vice-chair  
Sophie Elliott (SE) – Co-opted Governor  
Cat Hemmings (CHe) – Co-opted Governor  
Rob Horsfall (RH) – Co-opted Governor  
Phoebe O'Donnell (POD) – Parent Governor  
Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Headteacher  
Zoe Wakefield (ZW) – Associate Member

Apologies: Rachel Caseby (RC) - OCC

Absent:

In attendance Hazel Sheridan (HS) - Clerk

The meeting started at time 6:06pm and was quorate.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Rachel Caseby.

### 2. Notification of any urgent business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

### 3. Declarations of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

### 4. Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and matters arising

4.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**ACTION: Clerk to send approved minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 to CHa for signature and filing at the school.**

Previous actions were:

4.2. Item 1 LJ to telephone CHe as there has been limited contact from her - completed.

4.3. Item 4.1 Clerk to send approved minutes to CHa for signature and filing at the school - completed.

4.4. Item 4.5 LJ to contact National Network of Maintained Nursery School Headteachers re standard measures for SBM use. Clerk to note as agenda item for FGB meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – on agenda, item 12.1.

4.5. Item 4.16 SP to contact Koala to resolve email set up and access issue and then inform Governors – completed.

4.6. Item 5.1 Clerk to amend Governor Hub to show the change of roles to Chair and Vice-chair for CHa and SP respectively- completed.

4.7. Item 6.2 Clerk to note budget 2024-2025 as agenda item for FGB on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – on agenda, item 6.2.

Signed (by Chair): *Catherine Hayward*

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- 4.8. Item 8.2 Clerk to update Governor Training Record with POD's training date – completed.
- 4.9. Item 8.2.1 All Governors to complete bite-size finance training via the OCC Governor Services website – The Chair asked all Governors to ensure they complete this training before the next FGB meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- ACTION: All Governors to complete bite-size finance training before 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and inform the Clerk when this has been done.**
- 4.10. Item 8.2.1 LJ to arrange a short session with Governors on education provision at the school – action carried forward.
- ACTION: LJ to send possible dates to Governors for a brief online session to show them the education provision available at The ACE Nursery School.**
- 4.11. Item 8.2.2 All Governors to read the risk register and determine if any risks are no longer relevant to the school. Clerk to note as standing item on future FGB agendas – on agenda item 10.
- 4.12. Item 8.3 LJ to revise SDP and Clerk to note as agenda item for meeting on 30th April 2024 – on agenda item 8.3.
- 4.13. Item 9.2 POD to contact fencing organisation regarding possible discounted fencing – action closed. POD did not contact the fencing organisation due to the owner's personal circumstances.
- 4.14. Item 12.1 SP to complete safeguarding visit report and file on Governor Hub – on agenda item 12.1.
- 4.15. Item 12.2 In addition to the children with high-level SEND, LJ to consider the range of needs and identify those children who have lower-level SEND and those that have short-term 'additional' needs rather than SEND. Children with lower-level SEND to be included in the number/percentage data – action carried forward. LJ and CHa to meet to discuss the identification of SEND needs.
- ACTION: LJ and CHa to meet to discuss SEND identification.**
- 4.16 Item 12.2.1 CHa to look at SEND processes at the school and report back at the next FGB meeting. Clerk to note as agenda item – on agenda item 11. Please also refer to item 4.15 above.
- 4.17 Item 13.3 All Governors to look at the schedule, book their visits for a mutually convenient date and time between them and the relevant staff and update the schedule – on agenda, item 13.2.
- 4.18 Item 14.2 LJ to amend Behaviour Policy regarding no exclusion at nursery schools and resubmit to FGB. Clerk to note as agenda item for the meeting on 30th April – on agenda, item 15.3.
- 4.19 Item 14.4 LJ to amend the Child Collection and Uncollected Child Policy (removal of reference to OSCB protocol) and send to the Clerk – completed.
- 4.20 Item 14.5 LJ to Disciplinary Policy (replace CRB with DBSO and send to the Clerk – action carried forward.
- 4.21 Item 14.9 LJ to remove reference to TF in Wellbeing Policy and send to the Clerk – action carried forward.

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**ACTION: LJ to amend the Disciplinary Policy and Wellbeing Policy as stated above and send to the Clerk. Clerk to send amended policies to CHa for signature and update policy register.**

4.22 Item 14.9 Clerk to send approved policies to CHa for signature and update policy register - completed.

4.16. Item 15.1 LJ to send Thank You cards to the individuals named - completed.

## **5. Appointment of Co-opted Governors**

5.1. RH and SE were invited to give a brief overview of their skills and background before Governors discussed and voted upon their appointment as Co-opted Governors. A pen portrait of both candidates had previously been circulated to Governors with copies filed on Governor Hub.

5.2. RH was previously an IT Manager and Head of Department before he took early retirement. He has experience of dealing with IT governance matters. SE is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and is working as a Policy and Regulation Manager, dealing with policies and risks, etc. She was previously a maths teacher and safeguarding officer at a secondary school.

5.3. RH and SE temporarily left the meeting while Governors discussed both candidates' skills and knowledge. Governors **agreed** that RH and SE have the skills needed by FGB, as identified in the recent skills audit, and they would be an asset to the Governing Board.

**DECISION: It was agreed to appoint RH and SE as Co-opted Governors.**

**ACTION: SP to arrange for school email addresses to be set up and DBS and Section 128 checks. CHa to conduct induction and discuss Link Governors areas. Clerk to add RH and SE to Governor Hub.**

## **6. Finance**

6.1. Final budget 2023-2024: The final budget for 2023-2024 was not made available to Governors and was not discussed.

6.2. Budget 2024-2025: The three-year budget proposal (2024-25 to 2026-27) and PODs visit report were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and are filed on Governor Hub. POD met with LJ and RT (SBM) on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 to review the budget and enquire about assumptions, calculations and how it links to the core nursery values and SDP.

6.3. The budget 2024-25 shows a brought forward deficit of £123,953. The deficit brought forward in 2022-23 was £183,440 but this has been reduced by the surplus of £59,487 made in 2023-24. LJ confirmed the school needs to show a balanced budget over the three-year period and to make a reduction in the overall deficit (which was built up over a period of years before LJ became the Headteacher).

6.4. The childcare facility, a charitable trust which also uses The ACE Centre building, makes a contribution to the building and energy costs, however it does not fully pay for what it uses. This historical arrangement is being looked into with the aim of recovering the full £33K which the nursery school is currently having to pay for building and energy costs that it does not use. LJ clarified that the heating system cannot be split between the nursery school and other users so energy costs need to be shared on a ratio basis.

6.5. LJ outlined four strategies that are being considered to improve and secure the financial situation of The ACE Nursery School. The costs of the strategies have not been included in the budget. The strategies are:

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- i) Re-purposing the building: The nursery school and childcare could occupy one part of the building with the remainder being leased out to other OCC agencies. OCC is putting out a tender to see who may be interested in such an arrangement.

**Q1. Do you expect significant start-up costs if other organisations use the building?**

**A1.** No as OCC will pay for any building works that need to be carried out.

- ii) Expanding provision: The number of child places at the nursery school could be increased to include two-year-olds, for example.

**Q2. Are they mutually exclusive, it is re-purposing the building or expanding provision?**

**A2.** No they are not mutually exclusive. If there is scope for the ACE Nursery School to expand provision and use more of the building, OCC will be informed that the school no longer wishes to proceed with re-purposing. However, if there is an interested party and building work has begun, then that option will no longer be available to the nursery school.

**Q3. What is OCC's opinion on just re-purposing?**

**A3.** OCC is open about the options.

- iii) Combined childcare and nursery school: This situation has been discussed with the Trustees of the charitable trust for childcare provision. Childcare and the Nursery School could come together, which would give financial security and sustainability, and have one Governing Board. However, childcare would have to remain as a charitable trust and Governors would need to be willing to take on this additional responsibility. Governance of the Nursery School will also have to be strong position to take on the childcare provision. There are seven nursery schools in Oxfordshire and three of them operate with this joint model.

- iv) Linking in more with the community and being a family centre, which will go beyond nursery-school-age children.

- 6.6. Governors asked further questions about the budget that were answered to their satisfaction.

**Q4. Does it cost the school to run a deficit? Is it like a loan?**

**A4.** OCC do not charge the school interest on the money owed in the deficit. They are fully aware of how the deficit accrued and that every effort is being made to gradually pay the money back. The nursery school has to be financially viable.

**Q5. Looking at the Early Years Funding calculations, the number of children coming to the school is down. Has this been taken into account? Is there anything that Governors can do to help, e.g., engaging with the community?**

**A5.** LJ confirmed that the numbers of children are down. However, there is now an unusually high number for the autumn and spring terms and it is looking healthier financially. Funding figures are based on the number of children with a realistic outlook for future numbers in the next year. It was suggested that Governors could help advertise that The ACE Nursery School has places available.

**Q6. Where does The ACE Nursery School rank on Google searches (the school did not feature when searching for nurseries in Oxfordshire)?**

**A6.** This is not known. LJ added that she had searched for feeder nursery schools to primary schools and The ACE was not mentioned. SE undertook to investigate this as key words in a Google search could help the school more visible. It was noted that the school's website is out of date, as following the previous Chair's resignation no one was

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able to update it. LJ confirmed she now had login details for the website and could make changes; SE offered to assist with this.

**ACTION: SE to investigate if search criteria for The ACE Nursery School could be improved and report back to FGB. LJ and SE to look at the school website.**

**Q7. Is it possible to get all the compliance documents onto the website and then make improvements?**

**A7.** LJ and SE will look at the website to see what can be added and what changes can be made. They will also revoke passwords for any staff or Governors that have now left.

**ACTION: LJ and SE to add compliance documents to the school website and discuss future changes.**

**Q8 to POD. Do you feel that school leaders have a grasp on good financial management?**

**A8.** POD stated that in her opinion it was a realistic, prudent and cautious budget. RT is in control of financial matters and he has set up separate cost centres so funding and expenditure for different funding streams, e.g., SEND, can be monitored, tracked and evaluated. It is also more user-friendly. POD confirmed that there is very little 'wiggle room' and is confident that there will be no significant variances.

**Q9. Do we know what the main risks are with this budget? What is stable and what may change?**

**A9.** The main risk is the number of children coming to the nursery school. RT knows what he has control over and about ensuring the school gets the best value contracts. Staffing costs at approximately 71% are about right, however LJ would like this to be slightly higher at nearer 80% (more staff need to be recruited when finances allow).

**Q10. If there are only two main things that can be changed, is the school a going concern?**

**A10.** LJ answered that in the education sector there is a certain amount of flexibility and it is not about being a going concern. The budget aligns with the Programme of Support (POS), the SDP and the matters identified by Ofsted at the inspection in October 2023. LJ holds weekly meetings with RT to discuss the budget position. Discussions will be about monitoring staffing levels and the associated costs. POD added that there was no financial risk with RT in control.

- 6.7. Governors acknowledged that some elements of the budget are outside of the school's control, e.g., funding received. The budget will be submitted to OCC, however they will not be able to formally approve it as they cannot approve a deficit budget. Given the situation, they will be able to 'okay' the three-year balanced budget.

**DECISION: FGB approved the budget for submission to OCC.**

## **7. Headteacher's report**

- 7.1. LJ's Headteacher's report was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and is filed on Governor Hub. Governors noted the report and **requested** that quality of education is included in the report as this was one of the key elements in the Ofsted report. LJ asked Governors to let her know what other information they would like to see included in future reports.

**ACTION: CHa to let LJ know what items need to be included in future Headteacher reports.**

- 7.2. Governors asked the following questions that were answered to their satisfaction.

**Q11. How often do you monitor teaching and is it consistent?**

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**A11.** A programme of teaching monitoring, which will tie in observations, feedback and training, is being put into place with adult support linked in. The programme will include observations and learning walks and these will be planned in. This also follows on from the observations made by the School Improvement Partner (SIP) and the Inclusion Team.

**Q12. Is supervision up and running?**

**A12.** Yes, it is being conducted on Fridays. Staff are also monitoring the wellbeing of the children.

**Q13. Your report shows there have been five safeguarding referrals this year. Are you confident that staff are following safeguarding procedures accurately and exactly?**

**A13.** LJ confirmed she is confident that staff are processing all referrals and know what their responsibilities are. There is evidence of referrals being sent and weekly briefings are held. Different scenarios are also discussed so staff can apply their knowledge.

**Q14. Would they approach you if they did not hear back from you?**

**A14.** It is made clear to staff that if they have made a referral, it is their responsibility to ensure the necessary actions have been taken. ZW also confirmed that feedback is given.

**Q15. Where do the referrals come from? Is it just internally?**

**A15.** No, it is not necessarily just internal referrals. Referrals can be made in session or can be received from MASH and there is a given time to respond.

**Q16. Would it be useful to arrange an external safeguarding audit?**

**A16.** An annual safeguarding audit (section 175/157 form) is conducted by the school and submitted to OCC. A Local Authority safeguarding audit is carried out every two years with the next one due in November 2024. **Governors discussed** the possibility of an external audit, as it could highlight any issues that need to be addressed before Ofsted's expected return in the autumn 2024. However, considering the cost and the impact on the school staff when they are already dealing with many projects, **Governors decided** that an external audit will not be progressed at the present time.

**Q17. Do you have peer reviews?**

**A17.** The school has not done this but it may be something useful to consider for the future with other nursery schools.

## 8. Driving Progress at The ACE

The four documents for this item were circulated to Governors before the meeting and are filed on Governor Hub.

- 8.1. OCC Programme of Support (POS): Items on the OCC POS have been RAG-rated and at the moment are either amber or green. LJ informed Governors that discussions about the current Progression Steps curriculum and a clear plan of action had taken place with the SIP. The actions have not been completed in the time scales given as the staff are also dealing with the re-alignment and re-purposing projects.

**Q18. How confident are you that we are on track? Are you concerned about the curriculum and steps progression?**

**A18.** LJ stated that some actions have been pushed to July and there are more steps necessary to address the many variances. Ofsted are likely to return in autumn 2024 and although LJ believes the main priorities will have been addressed, it will not be in the time frame given by OCC. This is mainly due to the impact and pressures of the collaboration with Grandpont and also the main reason why the collaboration was ended.

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**Q19. We have reviewed and discussed items, but have they progressed?**

**A19.** LJ informed Governors that the SIP has suggested that they re-do the curriculum and key knowledge, however this will add to everything else that the school is trying to do and would be a big piece of work.

**Q20. Do you think that changing the curriculum again is needed? Does the existing curriculum align with what Ofsted is looking for?**

**A20.** Ofsted reported that they were happy with the progression steps curriculum but there were times when they witnessed children not engaged and this is being worked on.

**Governors commented** that the SIP is a school advisor and if Ofsted were happy with what the school was doing LJ could consider whether there was any need to change it. By changing things now, it will devalue what the team have already done. LJ assured Governors that they are clear as leaders about having a shared focus on ensuring all staff are in the right place for teaching and ZW added that teachers are aware of what is happening in their own space. The school has an engaging and inspiring environment for children who are not being directly taught for a short length of time. **Governors added** that staff can focus on this if they are not having to re-do the curriculum.

- 8.1.1. A discussion took place about the number of actions and action plans the school is having to deal with. **Governors commented** that actions need to be looked at to assess the impact of not doing them, the costs involved and the value added. This will help to prioritise actions and can be broken down to be done on a termly basis. LJ replied that she already uses this methodology to prioritise actions, however it may be more useful to write them down too. She added that the main priority is that staff are keeping children safe, using 360° awareness, children are engaged and low-level behaviour is dealt with.

**ACTION: LJ and RH to meet to discuss action prioritisation.**

- 8.2. Governor Action Plan: The Governor Action Plan was submitted to the recent Strategy Group meeting and they were happy with the progress being made. They commented that Governors were working well with LJ to get everything on a more secure footing. All items are rated as either amber or green. The focus has been on recruitment of more Governors and with the appointment of RH and SE it is now a strong governance team that can support LJ.
- 8.3. School Development Plan: LJ and CHa are to meet to discuss the SDP. The school and Governors need to have a clear vision for the school to effectively put an SDP in place. **Governors commented** that the objectives in the SDP are linked to the POS and the POS has to take priority at the present time. With a clear vision LJ could ensure the SDP is ready for implementation in September. **Governors suggested** that the POS becomes the SDP for the remainder of this academic year and this was **agreed**. (Please also refer to item 9 below.)
- 8.4. School Improvement Partner Visit Report 15<sup>th</sup> March: Governors noted the report. The meeting focused on the POS and the comments made by Ofsted. The next visit is scheduled to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> May. (Please also refer to item 8.1 above.)

**9. ACE Vision and Values**

- 9.1. As discussed in item 8.3 above, the school and Governors need to have a clear, agreed vision for The ACE going forward. **Governors suggested** that a separate meeting at the beginning of term 6 be arranged to discuss and agree the ACE vision. LJ will arrange to meet with James Robertson before the May half-term.

Signed (by Chair): *Catherine Hayman*

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**ACTION: LJ to meet with James Robertson before May half-term then send possible meeting dates to Governors to agree the ACE Vision.**

## 10. Risk Register

10.1. The Risk Register has been RAG rated, is filed on Governor Hub and was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. Governors were asked to look at the items that need to be dealt with and, due to time constraints, this will be discussed at the next FGB meeting.

**ACTION: Governors to look at the risk register and prepare for the next FGB meeting. Clerk to ensure risk register is an item on the agenda for the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024.**

## 11. Safeguarding update

11.1. This was not discussed as a separate item but covered in item 7.2 above (Q13 onwards) and 13.1 below.

## 12. HR matters

12.1. Standard measures for SBM to use: LJ confirmed that she has spoken with other nursery schools and they did not have separate KPIs for the SBM to use, everything was linked into the SDP. LJ and POD will be discussing this further.

## 13. Link Governor reports

13.1. Safeguarding visit report: SP's report is filed on Governor Hub and has been shared with Governors; she will be looking at safeguarding monitoring in about one month's time to see how the process is going. It was suggested that CHe and SE could 'buddy' as the Link Governors for safeguarding going forward.

**ACTION: CHe and SE to meet to discuss safeguarding and documents currently on Governor Hub. Clerk to move or link current safeguarding documents on Governor Hub into the dedicated safeguarding folder.**

13.2. Monitoring visits schedule: Monitoring visits for the summer term include the safeguarding culture and CPOMS.

**Q21. When will CPOMS be in place?**

**A22.** It will be ready to use at the start of the new academic year.

## 14. Governance

14.1. Updates: All the required information is on the SCR but it is difficult to use. Software is being researched that will make using and interrogating the SCR easier. LR monitors the SCR regularly.

14.2. Governor training – attended and planned: Governors were asked to complete any mandatory training as soon as possible (Induction A and B, Safeguard (Level 2) and Prevent Duty).

**ACTION: Governors to inform Clerk when training has been completed. Clerk to send training record and schedule of training for the summer term to all Governors.**

## 15. Policies for approval

As new Governors had not seen the policies, they were unable to agree them. Because of this and time constraints, policies, except the Behaviour Policy, will be carried forward to the next FGB meeting.

15.1. Admission to Local Authority Nursery School Policy (OCC): As in 15 above.

15.2. Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy: As in 15 above.

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Date:



- 15.3 Behaviour Policy: Due to time constraints this policy will be re-circulated via Governor Hub for Governors to comment, question and approve.
- 15.4 Charging and Remissions Policy: LJ and POD need to discuss this policy further before it is submitted to FGB for approval.
- 15.5 Data Protection Policy: As in 15 above.
- 15.6 Personal Data Breach Policy: This is included in the Data Protection Policy.
- 15.7 Stress at Work Policy: As above.
- 15.8. Equality and Diversity Policy: As in 15 above.

**ACTION: Clerk to circulate Behaviour Policy via Governor Hub and note other policies as agenda items for FGB on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024.**

**16. Any other business**

16.1. No items were raised.

**17. Next meeting date**

17.1. The next meeting will be held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 6pm at the school.

The meeting closed at 8:12pm

*Hazel Sheridan*  
2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024

*Sent to Chair/Head on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 and FGB on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024*

Signed (by Chair): *Catherine Haywood*.

Date:

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## APPROVED

Final Audit Report

2024-06-28

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