

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY (FGB) OF STEEPLE
MORDEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON 21 MARCH 2024 AT 7PM**

Governors Present: Mark Arnold (Chair), Gabrielle Edwards, Tracey How (Co Headteacher), Debbie Littlefair, Ann Lynn, George Lynn, Gill McGuire, Helen Ogilvie, Catherine Seward.

Also in Attendance: Jacquie Watts (Clerk), Jo Daniels (Co Headteacher), Rachel Wells (Observer).

The meeting was quorate.

(NB: Governor Challenge, Questions and Monitoring are highlighted in bold)

Action By:

1.	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>NOTED: apologies for absence had been received from Vicky Hutter and Lucy Nightingale (Associate) because of work and family commitments. George Lynn apologised in advance for his late arrival.</p> <p>AGREED: to accept all apologies tendered.</p> <p>NOTED: Rachel Wells was observing the meeting as a potential governor.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>NOTED: there were no declarations in relation to items on the agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>Vacancies and Appointments</p> <p>NOTED: the two governor vacancies as listed on the agenda. The Foundation (Ex-Officio) Governor position remained unfilled as the Diocese had yet to appoint a rector for the Shingay Group of parishes. The parent governor vacancy was created by the resignation of Leanne Holt. The School would arrange for parent governor elections to take place after Easter.</p> <p>NOTED: Catherine Seward was coming to the end of her term of office in April. The school would need to seek further nominations for a staff governor.</p>	<p>JD</p> <p>JD</p>
4.	<p>Minutes of Last Meetings: 7th February, 14th March and 18th March 2024</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the full governing body meeting held on 7th February 2024 as uploaded to GovernorHub with the agenda.</p> <p>NOTED: the following MATTERS ARISING from 7th February 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies for Absence (min.1 refers) – Jan Saunders had resigned as an Associate Member. Alternative document formats were therefore not required. • Matters Arising - Committee Structure etc. (min. 3 refers) –The Curriculum Committee had yet to approve its 23/24 Terms of Reference. It would do so at its next meeting. • Matters Arising - Resources Committee (min. 3 refers) and OFSTED (min. 6 refers) - Academy Status had been a discussion and information 	<p>Curric Cttee</p>

	<p>agenda item at an extraordinary meeting of the FGB, rather than the scheduled March FGB meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters Arising - GB Skills Audit (min. 3 refers) – was on the agenda for the meeting. • Committee Membership and Link Roles (min.8 refers) – would be discussed under AOB as the situation had changed since the document had been agreed. • Governor Monitoring and Visits (min. 16 refers) – Lucy Nightingale had reviewed the school’s website. • Headteacher Appointment (min. 18 refers) – agreed actions had taken place and an appointment had been confirmed at an extraordinary meeting of the FGB held on 18/3/24. <p>NOTED: all other actions listed in the minutes were considered completed.</p> <p>AGREED: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th February 2024 as a true and correct record. The Chair signed the minutes at the meeting. They were passed to the school for safekeeping and publication on the school website.</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the extraordinary full governing body meeting held on 14th March 2024 as uploaded to GovernorHub.</p> <p>NOTED: the following MATTERS ARISING from 14th March 2024: the establishment of a working party to investigate strategic options further would be discussed under item 15 on the agenda.</p> <p>AGREED: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th March 2024 as a true and correct record. The Chair would sign the minutes and pass them to the school for safekeeping and publication on the school website.</p> <p>NOTED: the part I and part II minutes of the extraordinary full governing body meeting held on 18th March 2024 as uploaded to GovernorHub.</p> <p>NOTED: the following MATTERS ARISING from 18th March 2024: the appointment of a new Headteacher had been confirmed subject to appropriate safeguarding and other checks and the individual’s acceptance of the contract.</p> <p>AGREED: the part I and Part II minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th March 2024 as a true and correct record. The Chair would sign the minutes and pass them to the school for safekeeping and publication of the Part I minutes on the school website.</p>	<p>MA</p> <p>MA</p>
5.	<p>Minutes of Meeting of Resources Committee – 13th March 2024</p> <p>AGREED: to postpone this item until the Chair of the Committee, George Lynn, could be present.</p>	
6.	<p>Minutes of Meeting of Curriculum Committee – 14th March 2024</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the meeting as uploaded to GovernorHub just before the FGB meeting. The Committee Chair provided an oral commentary. The meeting had considered the post-OFSTED action plan in relation to Pupil Behaviour, Phonics and Early Years. The support provided by frequent LA visits was resulting in additional work for staff. Further visits by the</p>	

	<p>English and Maths advisers would be taking place shortly, as would a meeting to discuss PP. A Safeguarding meeting had not proved possible this half-term. Preparation for SIAMS was ongoing.</p> <p>NOTED: the Head fed back on the recent RIG meeting as she would not be able to do so to the next Curriculum Committee meeting. She highlighted that LA support visits had overlapped in focus, had required duplication of work for staff and had not been co-ordinated. The RIG had undertaken to hold a meeting to co-ordinate visits going forward. The school was hoping for no more than one visit per week.</p>	
7.	<p>GB Skills Audit</p> <p>NOTED: two governors still needed to complete the Skills Audit.</p> <p>AGREED: the governors concerned would complete their skills audits asap to enable the Chair to report back meaningfully to the next meeting.</p>	Govs./ MA
8.	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>NOTED: a letter requesting a routine report to the Parish Council had been received. Ann Lynn was dealing with the request.</p>	
9.	<p>SFVS 2024</p> <p>AGREED: to postpone this item until George Lynn could be present.</p>	
10.	<p>Budget Process 2024/25</p> <p>AGREED: to postpone this item until George Lynn could be present.</p>	
11.	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>NOTED: the oral update provided by the Head. It had been a busy half-term. She provided a staffing update, including members of staff returning from maternity and sick leave, the arrival of the new Finance and HR Manager and interviews for the Office Manager and School Secretary.</p> <p>NOTED: a number of deregulated pupils were still a cause for concern. The Head was seeking further support from the LA. Pupil numbers were stable. The September 2024 Reception intake was likely to be around 20 pupils, but figures were still subject to change. The meeting briefly considered local demographics and the wide range of villages the school drew its pupils from.</p> <p>NOTED: staff were understandably anxious about the future given the change in leadership.</p>	
12.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>NOTED: as previously noted, it had not proved possible to arrange a safeguarding visit this half-term, but one was planned for the next half-term. Governor training on the SCR was being considered, but there was a cost of £35.</p>	

	<p>AGREED: Ann Lynn would investigate other SCR training options, including 15 minute training bites at the start of each meeting. Also the LA adviser might be asked to provide a brief session.</p> <p>Noted: possible Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements and related training needs once Tracey How left. The proposed Interim Head was a Designated Safeguarding Lead.</p>	
13.	<p>School Development Plan</p> <p>NOTED: Jo Daniels provided an oral update on the plan. The school would be developing it with the Interim Head. A termly plan was being considered. Development priorities included Reading and Phonics, Behaviour, Attitude and Personal Development, Leadership and Management. Progress was being made with key pupils on reading and phonics and work would carry on into the Summer Term. New clubs were being established. Training had taken place on deregulated children and STEPS training was taking place next term. Work on Leadership and Management would need to take place between the Interim Head and the Governing Body. A governor queried the RIG view of governor capability. It was felt the RIG was more content with the FGB's approach now a Headteacher had been appointed and discussions were taking place regarding a longer term strategy.</p> <p><i>George Lynn joined the meeting at this point.</i></p> <p>NOTED: the importance of completing the Skills Audit, as experienced governors would soon be leaving and the FGB would need to consider any resultant skills gaps in terms of governor training and development, and governor recruitment. Governors asked if governance should feature in the SDP? Tracey How confirmed that governance was already referenced in the SDP. Governors asked when they would be able to see a copy of the SDP? Jo Daniels felt that timelines would be clearer once she had been able to discuss things with the Interim Head. Some governors expressed frustration at perceived LA delays in facilitating an Interim Head appointment.</p>	
14	<p>Minutes of Meeting of Resources Committee – 13th March 2024 (item 5 on the agenda and also minute 5 above)</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the meeting as uploaded to GovernorHub. The Committee Chair provided an oral commentary. Key issues for discussion had been the SFVS, future planning, premises and policies.</p>	
15.	<p>SFVS 2024 (item 9 on the agenda and also minute 9 above)</p> <p>NOTED: the proposed SFVS as uploaded to GovernorHub. The Clerk advised this was an annual statement by the FGB that needed to be signed by the Chair on behalf of the FGB and submitted before the end of March.</p> <p>NOTED: governors queried point 22 that stated the school shared staff and undertook joint purchasing? Joint purchasing was undertaken with Smarties and would take place in relation to the Interim Head. The school had shared a contractor with Guilden Morden Primary School. Governors queried what benchmarking took place as part of point 17? Benchmarking was discussed by the Resources Committee. For example, it was known that the school's SLT</p>	

	<p>structure cost more than for other schools of comparable size, but historically it was felt the structure was important for the school's development.</p> <p>AGREED: the SFVS for 2024 as presented. The Chair signed the document. The Head would submit it to the LA on Monday, 25 March 2024.</p>	TH
16.	<p>Budget Process 2024/25 (item 10 on the agenda and minute 10 above)</p> <p>NOTED: George Lynn provided an oral summary of the budget process. The deadline for submission was 10/5/24. There were still many financial unknowns, but Ray Byford of the LA felt there was time to create a budget by the deadline. The school would need to run with an operating deficit the following year, but would need to demonstrate a return to financial stability across the next three years. As the next scheduled meeting of the FGB was after the budget deadline, an extraordinary FGB meeting might need to be called to approve the budget.</p> <p>NOTED: Ray Byford was forecasting a deficit in the region of £8k for 2023/24, but the Head felt it would be larger as a number of payments were not due until the end of the financial year. At the end of 2022/23 there had been a surplus brought forward. The deficit of 2023/24 included consumption of that surplus. Governors queried the pay position and whether, as per 2023/24, the school was not being funded to meet national pay deals. A similar position to 2023/24 was expected. Increases were unlikely to cover the pay award. It was stressed that the school was funded based on the number of pupils it had, not the number of staff. The Head also highlighted that for every EHCP approved by the LA the school was expected to contribute £6k.</p> <p>AGREED: an extraordinary FGB would be needed to approve the budget.</p>	MA/ Clerk
17.	<p>Policies (item 14 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the list of policies recorded on the agenda and uploaded to GovernorHub for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid and Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions <p>NOTED: governors questioned what training was provided to staff and whether the new Office staff would receive first aid training. The school confirmed they would receive first aid training.</p> <p>AGREED: the First Aid and Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions Policy.</p>	
18.	<p>Strategy 2024 (item 15 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the extraordinary FGB meeting on 14/3/24 had considered long-term strategic options open to the school. The Chair advised it had eliminated some, but wished to explore further those remaining and to this end was recommending the formation of a Working Party to take investigations forward.</p> <p>NOTED: the nature of the two options being considered. A governor expressed concern that the FGB did not currently have a common vision of what the school should look like over the next three to five years and questioned how a Working Party could consider options if it did not have</p>	

	<p>an ultimate goal in mind? He favoured a governor strategy planning session and the creation of a common vision so the desired outcome could then shape investigations into options. The meeting discussed this proposal. The Head highlighted that shaping the school’s teaching structure to meet pupil and budget needs was not a long-term strategy option to be considered theoretically, but required FGB approval now in order to permit the school to take operational decisions for 24/25. Governors questioned their ability to make a decision on such an option when no information had been provided to the FGB in advance? It was pointed out that the matter had been discussed and explored in detail by the Resources Committee. The Head explained the process of moving to a six class structure, the pros and cons of the approach and the implications for curriculum development, staff and pupils. It was a proposed operational change to class organisation, not staffing levels. The Staff governor stressed all teachers were already used to and practising differentiated teaching in the current class structure. Governors discussed proposals in detail. Some governors felt the need to take a decision before budget implications for 24/25 were known was unfortunate. It was stressed that clear and appropriate communication was key, and a clear, practical plan from the school was needed for governors’ consideration. The Clerk reminded governors that once a decision had been made, the operational details were the responsibility of the Head, not the Governing Body. Governors accepted this and stressed they were seeking reassurances and analysis of risk, not looking to manage the day to day operation of the school. Some governors were also concerned that the detail of the proposal had been submitted to and discussed at the Resources Committee, but not shared with the broader FGB, if only by email or GovernorHub. Further discussion took place.</p> <p>AGREED: George Lynn should organise an FGB strategy session, proposing possible dates and times, and initial ideas for discussion. The first half of April was considered an ideal time for the session, although governors were divided regarding suitable times and days of the week. As these were longer-term strategic discussions, the New Headteacher should be involved, though not necessarily the Interim Head, (unless she chose to be a governor), as she was only involved in the school in the short term.</p> <p>AGREED: the school should plan for a six-class structure for the academic year 2024/25 on the understanding that the proposed plan and strategy for parent communication would be shared with the FGB for information.</p> <p>AGREED: at this stage, not to proceed with the recommendation of 14/3/24 to form a Working Party to explore strategic options.</p>	<p>GL</p> <p>TH</p>
<p>19.</p>	<p>Health and Safety (Item 16 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: Lucy Nightingale, the Health and Safety lead, was not present. She had reported to the recent Resources Committee meeting that there were few health and safety issues. The Head advised the LA would be conducting an Asbestos survey at the school over the Easter holiday.</p>	
<p>20.</p>	<p>Governor Training and Briefings (item 17 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: Ann Lynn advised there had been limited training activity since the last meeting. No one from Steeple Morden had attended the LA’s annual governor conference as it was felt the agenda had contained few</p>	

	<p>topics of immediate relevance. It was stressed that the FGB needed to keep on top of its regular training and updating plan and Ann Lynn encouraged all governors to undertake and log some form of training/ updating.</p>	All
21.	<p>Governor Monitoring and Visits (item 18 on the agenda).</p> <p>NOTED: reports from recent History and Early Years visits were outstanding. A governor advised she was still waiting for the member of staff to respond to her report. Debbie Littlefair was undertaking an Art visit the following day. Lucy Nightingale had undertaken the annual review of the school website. Ann Lynn would send the list of required changes to Tracy How.</p> <p>NOTED: Ann Lynn was planning to draw up a timetable of governor visits for next term in order to maintain visit momentum.</p> <p><i>Rachel Wells left the meeting at this point.</i></p>	<p>AL/TH</p> <p>AL</p>
22.	<p>AOB (item 19 on the agenda)</p> <p>22.1 Appointment of Interim Head</p> <p>NOTED: the LA had recommended an Interim Headteacher to work with Steeple Morden for two days a week during the Summer Term. For 1 day a week she would be assisted by an Assistant Headteacher from the same school. She was an experienced Head who had supported other schools. Jo Daniels was willing to continue as Co-Head for the Summer Term. Governors thanked Jo Daniels for agreeing to continue to as Co-Head and take forward curriculum development.</p> <p>AGREED: to the appointment of Mrs Alana Brown as Interim Head for 2 days per week and to authorise the Chair to negotiate with the FGB of her school over costs relating, in particular, to the Assistant Head.</p> <p>22.2 Governing Body Committees and Link Roles</p> <p>NOTED: the Chair advised that the Committee and Link role structure approved at the previous meeting had changed following governor departures. A revised version of the structure had been uploaded to GovernorHub in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>AGREED: the revised structure on the understanding that further revisions would be required following the departure of Tracey how.</p> <p>22.3 Appointment of Headteacher</p> <p>NOTED: the appointment of Alexandra Housden as the School's Headteacher would be confirmed to staff on the following day.</p> <p><i>Catherine Seward left the meeting at this point.</i></p>	<p>MA</p> <p>MA</p>

23	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting and Meeting Venue (item 20 on the agenda)</p> <p>AGREED: the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 22nd May 2024 at 7pm at the school.</p> <p>NOTED: Debbie Littlefair apologised for non-attendance in advance of the meeting, as she had a long-standing prior commitment.</p> <p>NOTED: this was Tracey How’s last FGB meeting as Head. Governors thanked her profusely for her many and considerable efforts on behalf of the school. Gabrielle Edwards, as a long-serving governor, said a few words of thanks on behalf of the governors and highlighted, amongst key strengths, Tracey’s leadership of the school during the pandemic and the significant improvement in school data. She had handled change with care and sensitivity, tackling and overcoming a large amount of challenges. Tracey How said a few words in response, highlighting the governing body’s support of the school and the appropriate way it challenged the school leadership.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">The meeting finished at approximately 21:40</p>	
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Drafted by: Jacquie Watts
Clerk To The Governors
22nd March 2024

Approved by the Full Governing Body on:

Date:22nd May 2024.....

Signature (Chair):.....