

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body of Stormont House School held on Tuesday 8th November 2016.

The meeting opened at 5.30pm.

Present:	Mr Bernard Hawes	Co-opted Governor – Chair
	Mr Kevin McDonnell	Head teacher
	Ms Lynn Dalton	Co-opted Governor – Vice Chair
	Ms Yvonne Packer	Associate Member
	Ms Ann Hollingworth	Parent Governor
	Ms Emma Kingsley	Parent Governor
	Ms Hannah Lilley	Co-opted Governor
	Mr Geoff Owden	Co-opted Governor
	Ms Katie Foster	Staff Governor
	Claire Napier	Staff Governor

In attendance:	Ms Frances Jessie	Deputy Headteacher
	Ms Chris Elford	Deputy Headteacher
	Ms Carol Weston	School Business Manager

Apologies:	Dr Hans-Christoph Hirt	Local Authority Governor
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Absent:	Ms Mary Slocombe	Parent Governor
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Clerk:	Ms Elizabeth Bart-Williams
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PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

1 ATTENDANCE

1.1 Welcome: Mr Bernard Hawes welcomed all to the meeting. All members present introduced themselves.

1.2 Apologies: was received and consented to as above.

1.3 Declarations on interest: none was received.



- 1.4 Register of Pecuniary Interest: A new (blank) register was circulated for signatures. All present at the meeting signed the register which was kept at school by the SBM, with a copy to Governor Services.
- 1.5 Membership of the Governing Body and Committees: There was a discussion around the membership of both the GB and its Committees.

Ms Lilley of Linklaters has now joined the GB as a Co-opted Governor, bringing the number of Governors to 11. The Chair pointed out that the Constitution provides for 12 members, and the number of staff governors, including the Head teacher, must not exceed 25% of the total number of governors. Katie Foster who was Staff Governor during Claire's maternity leave has made tremendous contribution to the body, particularly with the staff consultation. It would be of immense benefit to keep Katie as a staff governor. Also, Ms Yvonne Packer has been an Associate Governor for a while, but this role no longer exists on governing bodies; therefore a new role needs to be considered for her. If the membership increases, the Hackney Learning Trust Governor Services team will need to be informed. After some discussion, the following were agreed:

ACTION 1:

- a) **The Chair, Vice Chair and Ms Yvonne Packer to have a discussion re Ms Packer's role on the governing body;**
- b) **Ms Weston to conduct a staff election with a view to retain both Ms Napier and Ms Foster.**
- c) **Ms Lilley to join the Teaching and Learning Committee, and act as the Student Voice Lead and Liaison Officer for pupils.**

ACTION 2: Clerk to update the Governors list and notify HLT Governor Services.

- 1.6 Committee membership: This was also updated to include new members – see attached.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND ACTION TAKEN

- 2.1 Minutes of the last meeting held on 14th June 2016 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed off.

The Chair signed the minutes to be retained by the School and a copy will be forwarded to the Core Team.

- 2.2 Matters arising from the minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda:

The following items remain outstanding:



- The updated record of Governors' training was not available from the Core Team. It was decided that Ms Weston should compile the record of training.

ACTION 3: Ms Weston to produce an up to date record of governor training.

- The Skills Audit from certain Governors is still awaited. Governors were again reminded to send this to the Chair as soon as possible.

Governors considered the Confidential Minutes of the previous meeting, and agreed it to be an accurate record.

2.3 Any urgent action taken since the last meeting: The Chair reported that no urgent action had been taken.

3. MAIN BUSINESS

3.1 Review of Whole School Priority "Positive Team Working": The Head teacher stated that this item relates to the confidential business of the meeting held on 14th June 2016, and that this update is consciously tabled at this meeting as a non-confidential item.

The staff governor, NUT representative, UNISON representative and the head teacher have held a series of discussions and a communique was issued earlier and emailed to all staff (and governors) today. The discussions have been positive and constructive; and the main key issues were identified as being around the school planning calendar and clarity around line management.

The head teacher pointed out that teachers are crucial in moving this issue forward as they are the main line managers. TAs meet every fortnight and will feed into these meetings in an open dialogue. There has been no staff consultation yet, but there is a generally positive attitude from all concerned.

The initial agreed plan of action is 3-prong:

- a) Start with an initial survey on line management: using simple open-ended questions and led by the admin team. The responses will be collated by the group and not the head teacher.
- b) A second survey drawing from the first, and asking more probing questions: this will happen very quickly after the 1st survey.
- c) Outcomes of 2nd survey to be published to all staff and governors.

Timescale: all 3 actions to be completed by end of the Autumn 2016 term.

The issue will be kept live as requested by the Chair and Vice Chair, with regular report to the GB. The number of staff response will help establish how staff really feel about the whole process but it is hoped that the anonymity of the surveys will encourage open dialogue.

Governor question: what if the response to the surveys are poor?

Answer: the group will re-think and adapt. Members of the group felt very positive from the discussions they have had with the members that they represent. The leverage for key issues identified will act as a starting point.

Governors applauded the head teacher's decision to deliberate on this matter openly rather than as a confidential item. It was however suggested that from previous experience, the absence of senior management on the main steering group enabled frank discussions. The current arrangement seems to have polarised the staff and focused on line management which appears to be only one aspect of the reported underlying concern of some staff. This initial staff forum was some 20months ago and it appears that some concerns are not being considered by the appointed group? It was suggested that staff would be wary of talking confidentially to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher assured governors that the group, including staff representatives, is working with all parties concerned, and the wider issues will be captured in the survey/discussions as the working group progresses.

The Chair suggested that the communiqué and the resultant actions should be discussed by a smaller governor group once the results of the action plan were known. He however pointed that the issues of line management and differing treatment of pupils - the 2 main areas of staff concern - were addressed in the communicate. Others will be fed to the representatives and brought up to the Headteacher if considered necessary.

ACTION 4: The Chair and Vice Chair to meet with the staff governors once the results of the survey were available.

3.2 How Good Is The Governing Body?

The Chair led members through an in-depth self-review of the effectiveness of the GB. Questions had been raised in advance and some governors had responded in advance of this meeting.

Using the last Skills Audit conducted 2 years ago and various online tools such as the <https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/> guide to reviewing GB performance and a presentation by the University of Manchester on What makes a good Governing Body?

The Chair reminded governors that OfSTED consider GB effectiveness in schools, by how the GB conducts itself and how it challenges and supports the SLT.

Some of the questions considered were:



- Does the governing body know the school? e.g. what are the special needs of the pupils in the school? Why are they here?
- Where would essential information be found and how often do governors look at the school's website? What details are available on the website and is the website compliant, accessible and accurate?
- What are the school priorities and how is the school meeting those priorities?
- Budgets – do governors understand the budget – whether the school is over or under-spending?

(Claire Napier joins the meeting having been at parent-meetings)

Governors reviewed the last Skills Audit conducted 2 years ago, considering the areas identified as strong (Green) and weak (Red). It was highlighted that follow-up of actions need to improve, as it is currently based on immediacy rather than long-term planning. An Action Log had been devised and circulated by the Clerk and governors were urged to use this to monitor actions. Governors will agree timescales for actions at meetings and Chairs of Committees will monitor this.

Governors agreed that the GB has a strong skills base, with a wide array of skills available from governors.

A new audit, based on the NGA, had been circulated earlier and those governors who had not completed it were asked to complete it and send to the Chair as soon as possible.

ACTION 5: All governors to complete the Skills Audit as soon as possible, and check the Action Log regularly.

Governors reviewed the GB performance in the 5 essential areas highlighted by the Key for Governors:

- a) Effective working practices – the Terms of Reference of Committees and the GB are very clear, but governor training needs to improve.
- b) Vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school – governors are well informed.
- c) Holding senior leaders to account – GB is reasonably good at this, but the Headteacher's performance management needs to improve.
- d) Effective use of school finances – this is an area for improvement. The level of challenge also needs to improve, especially around financial matters: understanding the budget spend, ensuring value for money etc. Governors agreed that Hans-Christoph would lead in this area as the Finance Link governor and as he has the required expertise.

AGREED: Dr Hans-Christoph Hirt to be the Finance Link Governor

- e) Overall impact and contribution to school improvement - governors considered that links with pupils and parents were quite weak and governor presence is not seen at parent meetings. As a special school, the main time when governors can meet parents is at parent meetings since most pupils are bussed in and parents are not seen at the school

gate. The Headteacher pointed out that the governors' role is strategic and not operational. It is not so much the physical presence and contact with pupils but how governors impact the school. This could be best done through Link Governors.

Links with the wider community also needs to improve. While the Vice Chair has established good links, there could be greater community links with the school. Ms Weston confirm that school facilities are available to the community and some local organisations such as NHS and Hackney Learning Trust have run events from the school. It was agreed that this is an area for development.

Induction of governors: this needs to be carried out for the new members of the GB.

Link Governors: these have been agreed as:

- ICT, including Website: Mr Geoff Owden
- Finance: Dr Hans-Christoph Hirt
- Homelink: Emma Kingsley
- Safeguarding: Bernard Hawes
- Student Voice including School Council: Hannah Lilley
- Careers Link: Claire Napier gave a brief outline of what this would entail and asked for nominations. **ACTION 6: Ms Napier to circulate expectations for Careers Link Governor and Nominations are required for a Careers Link Governor**

GB leadership: members considered that the incumbent Chair has been in post for many years and has been re-nominated bi-yearly. It was suggested that this be reviewed to build capacity within the GB.

ACTION 7: Governors to consider the GB's Chair and Vice Chair tenure.

Overall, Governors' evaluation confirmed that the GB is not weak, and highlighted the areas needing attention as Governor Training and Link Governance which has been addressed by the appointments above.

ACTION 8: All Governors were encouraged to consider the analysis and suggest ideas for better involvement to the Chair by 18th November 2016. This will be collated with the Vice Chair and circulated to all governors.

ACTION 9: Chair and Vice Chair to collate suggestions and circulate to all members ASAP.

ADMINISTRATION

4. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

This had been circulated earlier, comments had also been raised and circulated to all members in advance of this meeting.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES



Reports from the Committees and Working Parties were omitted from the meeting pack. **ACTION 10: Ms Weston to resend to members immediately.**

Annual SIP Report: This was very positive and will be considered in detail by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

6. POLICIES

- 6.1 The Pay and Appraisals Policy which had been circulated in advance was **ADOPTED by Governors.**

7. GOVERNOR TRAINING

Governors were reminded to give details of any training attended to Ms Weston, to enable her to collate an up to date record of governor training – see **ACTION 3.**

Governors were also encouraged to visit the Hackney Learning Trust website for details of available training courses. These training sessions have been bought into and should be fully utilised.

The Chair highlighted the Annual Hackney School Governors' Conference in conjunction with HASGA to be held on Sunday the 29th January 2017.

8. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 21st March 2017
Tuesday 13th June 2017
Tuesday 7th November 2017

HASGA MEETING DATES

Governors to note – all meetings hold at the Learning Trust from 6pm on:
Tues 29th Nov 2016 (AGM)
Wed 8th Feb 2017
Mon 20th March 2017
Tues 16th May 2017
Wed 5th July 2017

10. There was no Confidential Business

The meeting closed at 7:25pm.

Signed _____
Chair of Governors



STORMONT HOUSE SCHOOL
achievement for all

Date _____