



**West Hill Primary School**  
(a partner in the SMILE Learning Trust)  
Beech Park, West Hill, Ottery St Mary, Devon EX11 1UQ  
**01404 812599**  
[admin@west-hill-primary.devon.sch.uk](mailto:admin@west-hill-primary.devon.sch.uk)  
Headteacher: Cheryl Boulton



## **West Hill Primary School**

### **Final Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting**

**held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 at 6.30 pm at the school**

**Actions (Bold) GB questions, decision making and challenges (*Italics*)**

**Present:** Chair - Sally Sycamore (SS), HT - Cheryl Boulton (CB), Vice Chair - Jonathan Brook (JB), Dot Bioletti (DB), Hilary Eade(HE), Danny Murphy (DM), Simon Pedrazzini (SP), Ashley Pocock (AP), Jenny Meredith (JM)

Apologies: Debbie Hudson (DH), Matt Fripp (MF)

**Clerk:** Sarah Woolfries (SW)

#### **1. Introduction (SS):**

- **Apologies** – Debbie Hudson, Matt Fripp – both sanctioned unanimously.  
**Declaration of Interests** – AP advised accepting a role as Trustee for Step One, a mental health charity (an interim appointment until November when it will become a 4 year appointment)
- **Code of Conduct** – SS reminded governors of the duty noted in the agenda relating to developing effective working relationships with those involved with the school, the local authority, other relevant agencies and within the community.

#### **2. Julie Jarman (Education Welfare Officer)**

CB introduced JJ as the Local Learning Community (LLC) Education Welfare Officer (EWO). At a recent LLC meeting, JJ had discussed attendance and penalty noticing, and it was evident that some schools were issuing them and some were not. Ottery St. Mary (OSM) were not currently penalty noticing but were intending to start soon. JJ said Devon's overall attendance rates had recently dropped from 96.2 to 96%, which is now below the national average and therefore a cause for concern. The expectation was that WHPS would have high attendance rates due to the low number of children in vulnerable groups. JJ noted Ofsted would look carefully at attendance figures. JJ said Feniton issued penalty notices and have high attendance and therefore high performing children. **SS asked how long Feniton had been doing this?** JJ responded 3 – 4 years. **SS asked what was the impact when it first started?** JJ did not know, but explained any requests for 'exceptional' reasons were given to the governors to decide upon. JJ had guidance details for Head Teachers if required. **HE asked for details of how much was charged?** JJ said £120 per parent per child, so £240 per child where 2 parents. If the payment is made within 21 days, the charge drops to £60 per parent per child. However, parents choosing not to pay will receive a court summons. **JM asked when the penalty notice kicked in?** JJ confirmed after 5 days, which do not have to be consecutive and are over a 12 month rolling period. JJ noted the same fine applies for 5 days or more. **AP asked how Feniton apply the procedure in practice?** JJ advised the request goes to the HT first, who will pass to the governors if they feel there is possible grounds for 'exceptional' circumstances to be considered. **DB asked how long the penalty notice lasts for?** JJ confirmed 2 years, so if another 5 days of school is missed then it goes straight to a court summons, with the potential for a higher fine, especially for incidents that take place 2 years running. **HE asked where the fine monies go?** JJ

confirmed it goes to DCC to cover their costs, and not the school. **JB asked what is the ultimate purpose of penalty notices?** JJ asked what is the point in not authorising absence if no action was going to be taken as a result. **JB asked if schools or governors have a legal duty to penalty notice?** JJ said no, but would like to think schools in the LLC support each other and are consistent in applying policies. CB noted another Head Teacher had said there was a legal duty at the recent LLC meeting. JJ felt it was important for schools to be seen to be supporting rules and regulations and children's learning, recognising that if a child misses school the teacher has to make sure they catch up, taking their attention away from other children. JJ noted 121 days were lost last year at WHPS due to unauthorised absence. **SS questioned if penalty notices really make a difference?** Governors then discussed the fact that holidays are much cheaper outside of school holidays so the fine might be considered worth paying to some parents. Also, that some parents are prepared and able to pay for holidays due to the demographics in West Hill, and valued family time together. **JJ asked how parents might feel about a court summons if children are taken out for 2 years running?** Governors had mixed views on the impact of this. JB noted parents with certain jobs are not always able to take off school holidays. DB noted if WHPS were to join a MAT in the future, WHPS would have to follow a consistent policy. Governors felt that repeat offenders were the real issue, and that consistency of approach in the LLC community was important. Governors agreed that whether parents could or could not afford to take children out of school outside school holidays was not the point. **HE asked if parents that could not get time off work in school holidays could make a case for 'exceptional' circumstances?** JJ said evidence from the employer could be requested, but often it is not provided and parents will go anyway. **JB asked if asking for this evidence was already policy?** JJ said not, but it is within the HT's remit. JB noted that the whole penalty noticing policy is not clear and understood by parents, so would need to be publicised if it were to be implemented. JJ said that turning the discussion around, it would be better to authorise absence than not authorising and having people going anyway. CB guarded against giving everyone a list of reasons for what would be considered 'authorised' absence. Governors felt implementing penalty notices would be a big cultural change and was likely to cause concern for parents. DM felt how it was worded was important, and that reference to advice from DCC, JJ and consistency with the LLC were all key messages. JJ agreed that there was always an initial reaction to any change, but parents generally got used to it. JB was keen that parents were made aware that 'exceptional' circumstances would be considered. JJ noted some schools send out an annual reminder of the penalty notice rules. This is because some parents go away first and then fill in the form on their return, so they cannot be penalty noticed as they have not had the warning on the form before going away. **SS asked for Feniton's unauthorised absence figures?** JJ was unable to provide straight away. **AP asked if CB felt penalty notices put her under additional pressure to make a decision?** All felt it would be the second penalty notice in two years that would cause real issues. DB felt it was important that governors were clear on why they were doing it if they do decide to implement it, as there would undoubtedly be initial disquiet. Also that a start date, consistent with OSM and The Kings School should be agreed. **HE asked if there was an attendance leaflet that could be sent out?** JJ confirmed she could send information out that could be changed locally as required. Governors discussed the situation where parents may ring up and say children are ill rather than saying they are on holiday. JJ said where it can be clearly established that this is the case, an 'o' code can be used when recording their absence.

**Action: JJ to send attendance leaflet details to governors for consideration. CB to contact OSM and The Kings School to find out their implementation date. Clerk to add to March agenda for further discussion/agreement.**

JJ left the meeting at 7.05pm

### 3. Confirmation of Minutes of meeting 25.01.18:

The minutes were agreed by all present and signed by the Chair.

- a. **Matters arising from previous minutes** – JM, SS, HE and SP agreed to hand out leaflets in the small playground on 23 February to promote the launch of the new values. JM clarified the purpose of handing out the leaflets was to talk to parents and reinforce the new values so that they will be remembered. **Action: CB to arrange print out of A5 colour leaflets with new shine logo (done).**

b. **Actions still pending from the previous minutes:**

Meet with office staff to review use of Office 365 functionality (JB) – JB outlined the advantages of using the Microsoft 365 product 'teams' functionality, with means groups can easily communicate and share information, which would be beneficial for any panels e.g. Admissions where governors need to correspond regularly. Whilst fairly new, JB explained it removed any GDPR issue. JB suggested governors should have a separate school email address, which the clerk noted removed the problem of governors using personal emails if there were to be any freedom of information requests. **Action: LD to arrange creation of school email addresses for all governors (done). JB to arrange set up of the relevant groups. It was further agreed that JB would talk governors through functionality at the next FGB meeting in March. Clerk to add to agenda.**

### 4. Dates of next meetings

- Meeting to discuss MATs to take place on Thursday 08 March 2018 at 6.30pm. SS sent her apologies in advance and JM agreed to act as Chair. At the previous FGB meeting, there was an action for JM to re-circulate a previous MATs presentation. However, JM explained that things had moved on in terms of MATs since the presentation was prepared, so it was now out of date and not relevant. JM gave a brief overview of the current situation. JB gave details of the SMILE implications for West Hill Primary School if it were to consider moving to a MAT. All agreed these issues would be reviewed in further detail at the meeting on 08 March. **Action: SW/JM to agree agenda.**
- Next FGB meeting Thursday 22 March at 6.30pm at School
- Next scheduled Pay & Performance meeting Tuesday 27 March at 9am at School to review interim appraisals

### 5. Policies, Statements & Provisions for Review:

- a. **Staff Disciplinary Policy (Statutory) All** – CB noted that this was a more recent/updated model policy and recommended for adoption. **Agreed by all present.** JM noted that the allegations section is closely linked with the same section of the Safeguarding Policy and had requested a hard copy for the Safeguarding File (provided). **Action: Clerk to arrange addition of revised policy header to reflect new 'shine' values once agreed with CB & SS.**
- b. **Admissions Committee Terms of Reference (Statutory/Website)** – updated to reflect new membership. **Agreed by all present. Action: Clerk to arrange publication on website (done).**

### 6. Strategic

a. **Headteacher's verbal report**

CB was pleased to advise governors that EP was back to her normal hours prior to February half term, and DH had commenced a 6 week phased return to work. CB felt this approach had been beneficial for the staff members and children as there was consistency and an effective handover.

CB noted the financial implications of the phased return, meaning a doubling of staff being employed for that period of time, also the deficit incurred between the staff costs and insurance payment received. ***The clerk asked if the governing board should consider the level of insurance cover being changed? CB noted this would mean a significant increase in premiums.*** Governors discussed the staff pay scales at WHPS, and ***AP asked if the school was under insured? CB said that this had been reviewed last year and as there had been very few previous claims in previous years it was not progressed.*** HE noted that there are others offering insurance in addition to the Devon Mutual Fund (possibly SAS), which might be worth comparing. ***Action: CB to ask Lara Dart to look at the budget implications of increasing the insurance both with the Devon Mutual Fund and other providers, for consideration at the next FGB meeting. Clerk to add to agenda.***

- b. Update on provision of breakfast club by FISH (Fun in School Holidays)** – CB said the survey conducted by FISH had clearly identified there was a need for a breakfast club, however FISH had no staff willing to work for just those hours, so the roles were being advertised. CB suggested to FISH that said staff at school and preschool could be advised of the opportunity, and requested information from FISH on the role, pay etc. Also, parents had been updated via the school newsletter. CB confirmed she would keep the governing board updated, as she was very keen to have a breakfast club up and running by September 2018 at the latest.
- c. GDPR** – CB noted that she had attended a course on 30 Jan 18 and circulated the accompanying slides to all governors. CB explained that the DPO (Data Protection Officer) role had been discussed. It was a legal requirement to have one and they had to have ‘expert’ knowledge. They could be a consultant or an employee that had the relevant training, however there must be no conflict of interest arising and the employee had to be invited to SLT meetings. CB said that the subject was discussed at the recent LLC meeting, where the feeling was that Babcock was too expensive. However, other providers were cheaper but may not include all the services Babcock were offering. Therefore the LLC had decided to research further given the deadline was not until May 18. SS noted that using Babcock might provide a level of protection against being sued. JB suggested there could be a GDPR governor, which everyone felt was a good idea. CB further advised that a GDPR course on 21 March had been rescheduled for the autumn term. CB flagged training, privacy notices and seeking, recording and managing consent (which cannot be inferred) all need to be addressed before the May deadline. CB advised governors that the guidance and audit template due from Dawn Stabb’s office had still to be received.

**Other matters:**

- **SEF** CB confirmed the SEF had been amended in February 2018 to reflect up-to-date data, changes in pupil groups etc.
- **New Marking Policy** – CB advised the new marking policy had been implemented that week.
- **New Behaviour Policy** – CB confirmed this had been implemented with the new ‘consequences ladder’, with teachers reporting it was already having an impact.
- **Teacher Observations** – CB noted these were ongoing, as were mid-year reviews, which would be completed by the end of this term.
- **Easter Service** – CB invited governors to attend this service of 45 min/1 hour, taking place in the school hall on Wednesday 28 March at 1.30pm.

## **7. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

JM referred to two recent incidents in the news where there had been a death at home of a parent, and the children had been left alone with the deceased parent for some time without it coming to light. The action of their schools had been called into question in terms of whether the schools had made sufficient effort (using their emergency contact records) to establish why the children were not at school. **JM asked CB what WHPS's procedures would be in such a situation, would the office staff keep trying until the 3<sup>rd</sup> emergency contact? DM cautioned that care is needed, as parents might be separated, or a third party contact may not know where the child is and should they be expected to know? CB said that it is acceptable to contact separated parents if they still have parental responsibility. JB noted it could create conflict and gave an example where one parent had taken a child out of school without telling the other parent, who had then been contacted to find out where his child was, which had led to disagreement. Governors felt it was important to be clear on what an emergency contact was for, and that with the new GDPR it may be necessary to explicitly notify parents of the policy and its implications. Action: CB agreed to double check the procedure with the office and discuss again at the next FGB meeting. Clerk to add to agenda.**

- a. **Discuss parking/access around school at drop off and pick up; impact of proposed refurbishment of McColl's** - JM said that when she and IH met teachers in December 2017 to discuss safeguarding, staff had raised the increase in traffic at drop off and pick up time as a concern that they would like the governing board to consider. Also, they were concerned about the steep steps down from the small playground, with no barrier at the base should a child slip and fall towards the road, and no grab rail. IH subsequently did an observation at drop off time, which JM presented depicted on a map of the area in question. JM made the following observations:
- Noted that all cars or walkers currently have to come up Beech Park Road.
  - The situation is worse on wet days.
  - Applying for a zebra crossing would mean safe crossing and no parking on the 'zig-zag' zone either side. This would to some extent also address the concern about cars parking on Beech Park Road.
  - Creating pedestrian access via the play park. The Clerk noted this had been discussed by the Village Hall Trustees, and CB said there had been an incident where a young child went through the hedge and close to the road on the other side, causing a driver to raise their concerns with the School. DB said that there had been access some years ago, but it caused parking issues on West Hill Road and Ashley Brake.
  - JM noted a recent incident where a car had pulled round a car parked on Beech Park Road and had to brake sharply to avoid a child that had crossed the road without looking first.
  - Could the steep steps be turned to run left down the side of the playground fence (currently covered in shrubs), with a gentle slope and grab rail.
  - JM flagged the proposal to refurbish McColl's and the possible availability of Section 106 money to provide or contribute to local community facilities, such as a zebra crossing.
  - Governors were also concerned about the impact of this development by potentially further reducing parking.
  - Concern was raised that the mini buses cross the path of pedestrians when parking in the spaces next to the school field/small playground, and JM suggested moving their spaces next to where the Head Teacher's space is reserved. Governors noted that this might mean 2 staff are required to supervise the turning circle area in the morning.

- AP suggested the use of traffic cones as a parking deterrent? CB pointed out that they cannot be legally enforced, but governors still felt it was a deterrent.

**Action: JM to speak to West Hill Parish Council about the Section 106 money and the options of a zebra crossing, double yellow lines on Beech Park Road, turning the steep steps sideways and adding a grab rail. Clerk to raise issues of access via West Hill Road and parking of coaches with Chair of West Hill Village Hall Committee. (Done) Clerk to add to next agenda.**

- b. Confirm central record of recruitment and vetting checks up-to-date** – JM advised the SCR had been reviewed and was in good shape. A half termly procedure is in place where CB checks the record and identifies any actions, then the next half term JM checks the actions have been completed and carries out a new check, with any actions identified. Governors thanked JM and CB for implementing this robust procedure and their associated hard work.

## **8. Financial Monitoring**

- a. Review Budget Monitor / 5 year Budget (Circulated prior to the meeting)** CB said the 5 year income/expenditure analysis report had been completed with the help of David Dominey, and was based on what we currently know. CB noted that clearly any staff changes (other than those already known) could have a significant impact, but the figures were looking better than originally anticipated, with a deficit not anticipated until the 2021-22 financial year (Y4). CB said part of this was due to good cost savings being made by staff on expenditure. CB highlighted an allowance had been made for the cost of GDPR (reducing each year after implementation), and a raise in staff costs based on the current staff and annual increments due. ***DM questioned the reason for the increase in admin costs, which CB explained was due to the job re-evaluation recently approved by the Pay & Performance committee. AP asked if staff have a large discretionary budget? CB responded that previously there was a budget for each subject leader, but now that had been taken away and staff bid for resources so they are allocated more from necessity. CB said DD had noted how pleased he was with the impact of this on the overall budget. AP asked why going into deficit in Y4 was deemed a good position to be in? CB said this exercise is done yearly and experience shows that the budget tends to go into deficit in Y3 or 4. JB noted there are income variables that cannot be included in the budget as they are not confirmed but are generally received, such as PTFA contributions.*** CB asked for any questions on the detailed budget monitor – no questions arising. CB advised governors that there will be some spending required on buildings maintenance (and the money is allocated) to ensure the school premises remains fit for purpose.
- b. Agree Devon Portfolio Buy In of services/Service Buy Back/Support Services (2 documents circulated prior to the meeting)** – Governors agreed the proposals all looked reasonable and sensible. **Agreed by all present. Clerk to advise Lara Dart (done).**
- c. Update on Financial Benchmarking (including community focus school funding)** in the absence of MF will be carried forward to March's FGB meeting.

## **9. Lead Governor Reports – (all circulated prior to the meeting) - Questions arising?**

- a. School Improvement(SS)** - CB noted the amount of information contained in it, which SS said was completed in an hour's meeting with CBe as SS had requested various information in advance of the meeting. All governors thanked SS for a very detailed and informative report. **Action: Governors agreed SS's proposal that performance data would only be brought to**

**governors meetings at the end of each term, rather than the current half term, unless the SLT had serious concerns.** CB said this would fit in with her termly written report. It was noted that the School Improvement, Pupil Premium and SEN Lead Governors will have a special interest in the information and may want to see it more frequently.

- b. **SEN (DB)** – JM thanked DB for her comprehensive report, noting SEN children are a governor priority. However, JM still felt that their progress was a concern. DB said it should be noted that 29% of SEN pupils are also PP. DB noted discussions had taken place with CBe about how to improve ARE and felt current interventions should help. DB said CBe and the staff are very focussed on SEN children.
- c. **Maths (HE)** – HE said it was evident that the children liked maths, and were very positive about it. However, HE noted problem solving was still an area children found harder, as they were not always sure which skills to apply, but HE felt that could improve with more practice. CB noted that data was starting to show the positive impact of daily Maths and English on pupil outcomes in general, which was very encouraging.
- d. **Humanities (JB)** – No comments.

#### **10. Governor Training Reports – (circulated prior to the meeting) - Questions arising?**

##### **a. Level 2 Safeguarding Report**

- SP advised the course was conducted by Jonathan Galling, with a lot to cover in a short time.

#### **11. Matters brought forward at the Chair's Discretion** None

#### **12. Impact of the meeting on outcomes for pupils' teaching and learning**

- Discussion surrounding issuing of penalty notices and impact of children missing school on their learning
- Potential safeguarding risks for children around drop off and pick up
- GDPR and impact
- Update on potential breakfast club offering by FISH
- Review of 5 year financial position

**The meeting closed at 8.55pm**