

WESTMORLAND SCHOOL GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

AUTUMN TERM 2023

Date: 12th October

Time: 3:30pm

Venue: School

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr K Thompson (Chairperson), Mr M Henderson (Headteacher), Ms Karla George (Deputy Head) Ms K Andrews, Ms F Newton (remote), Ms J Shaw, Mrs W Hill, Mrs Pauline Robinson, and Mr C Murray.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs T King Governor Support Officer

Ms Jacqui Terry Associate Member

Bold = governor comment/question

The meeting started at 3:40pm.

GSO OPENING THE MEETING AND ELECTION OF CHAIR

Election of Chair

Nominations or expressions of interest were invited. Mr Thompson noted his interest in remaining as Chair. There were no other nominations or expressions of interest.

Mr Thompson withdrew from the meeting. The HT highlighted to governors that Mr Thompson has indicated that this will be his last year as Chair. It would be ideal if governors could start thinking about succession so that a shadowing arrangement could be in place before Mr Thompson steps down. The Board will also need to consider a suitable gift for Mr Thompson.

It was proposed by Ms Andrews, seconded by Mrs Hill, and unanimously RESOLVED that Mr Thompson be elected Chair for the agreed term.

Mr Thompson re-entered the meeting and was informed of the board's decision.

Mr Thompson in the chair.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Governors were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair.

There were no apologies to note. The HT advised the board that Mrs Gupta had resigned as she had moved away from the area. Mrs Gupta had sent her thanks to the board for her time and intended to pursue a more local governing role, which is a positive.

The board was quorate with 9/10 governors in attendance

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Nominations or expressions of interest were invited. Mr Thompson nominated Mrs Hill. There were no further nominations or expressions of interest.

Mrs Hill withdrew from the meeting.

It was proposed by Mr Murray, seconded by Ms Shaw, and unanimously RESOLVED that Mrs Hill be elected Vice-Chair for the agreed term.

The HT wished to recognise that Mr Thompson and Mrs Hill have been exceptional in their support of the school over the last year.

Mrs Hill re-entered the meeting and was informed of the board's decision.

At 3:49 Mrs Terry joined the meeting.

3. DECLARATION OF A.O.B.

Governors had been invited to declare any items for any other business.

1. Link governor visits and the process for that in terms of reporting back. Governors were advised that there is a report to complete after a visit.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

a) Declaration of Business Interests

Governors were asked to declare any business, financial or personal interests in any agenda items; no declarations were made.

Governors were reminded that they should declare any interest which arose during the meeting.

b) Business Interest Form

Copies of the declarations of Interest form 2022-23 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Governors were asked to complete and sign the form and return it to the school business manager for the interests register and to update the school website.

c) DBS Checks and Section 128 Checks

The Headteacher confirmed that DBS checks were in place for all governors and that Section 128 checks have been carried out.

CORE OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURING CLARITY OF VISION, ETHOS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

5. AUTUMN BUSINESS ITEMS

a) Adoption of new Code of Conduct

Governors were referred to the previously circulated document and considered the proposed amendments. The Governing Board Code of Conduct 2023-24 was duly adopted.

b) Board structure and membership

Governors discussed and reviewed committee structure and membership as per Appendix 1.

The decision was taken to keep committee structure as it currently is. Panel membership was agreed as follows:

- Headteacher Performance – Mrs Hill, Mr Thompson, Ms Maskell and Mrs Robinson.
- Pay – Mrs Hill, Mr Thompson, and Ms Shaw
- Appeals – Ms Andrews, Mr Murray

c) Review of Committee remits

It was agreed these would remain the same. The HT drew governors' attention to the roles and responsibilities document.

d) Appointment of Link Governors

Appointments to Link Governor roles were agreed as per Appendix 1.

e) Approval of school policy schedule and delegation levels

Governors approved the updated Policy List and the review date cycle which was to be personalised to the school.

f) Review LA Policies for this term;

Governors considered and APPROVED the following policies which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Safeguarding (The HT confirmed that James had adapted the LA model policy to reflect the needs of the school school)
- Confidential Report and Whistleblowing

Instrument of governance

Governors duly approved a continuation of current arrangements.

Appendix to the medical needs policy

Governors duly NOTED the supporting medical needs policy appendix.

Pay Policy

This item was deferred until the Pay Policy is available.

g) Previous Governing Board Minutes

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June, copies circulated previously, be approved, signed by the Chair, and authorised for publication.

h) Action Points and Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

The actions from the summer term minutes were reviewed as follows:

| ACTION NUMBER | MINUTE POINT | ACTION REQUIRED | ACTION FOR | DATE ACTION TO BE COMPLETED |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | 5b. | GSO to provide up-to-date list of TOOs | GSO | Complete |

| | | | | |
|----|-----|---|----------------|--|
| 2. | 5e. | Governors to consider roles and express any interest to GSO | FGB | Complete |
| 3. | 7. | School will analyse the attendance data with specific circumstances removed | HT | To be discussed at agenda point 7. |
| 4. | 7. | Mrs Beckingham will share National College log-in details with governors. | Mrs Beckingham | Complete. It was noted that copies of the weekly safeguarding reports go to Ms Newton and Sarah in addition to the HT. |

6. SCHOOL VISION AND ETHOS

The Chair advised that the school vision and ethos is detailed on the school website. The DHT noted that, when the OFSTED framework changed, the school sought to make sure that intent, implementation, and impact were at the forefront. Staff were surprised when external individuals commented that the intent did not “smack them in the face.” As a result, the school spent a lot of time with the children working out what they wanted to be when they came into school. They also spoke to staff about their vision for school, spent time drafting pictures and logos of intent and came up with Westmorland Warriors, where each letter is a value. The children colour in the values for the week and have challenges. There are rewards, which the children have chosen, and the school has invested in signs with the values set out and the intent statement.

Were the children on the school council approached for the ideas?

The DHT advised that staff spoke to every child to ascertain what they wanted from school, what they strive for etc. The children chose the word “warrior.” The HT commented that, in essence, the children in school are warriors; they strive for great things and achieve them, but life is a struggle for many of them. The school aims to get them to embrace that, and OFSTED confirmed their success.

7. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND SEF

The DHT noted these documents have been discussed at committee level and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The SDP was significantly changed post-OFSTED. One of the key issues that arose was around absence; OFSTED could see the school were tackling it, but it was not obvious what was being done.

The second key change, specific for this year, is Early Years (EY). Numbers are incredibly low compared to how they have been previously. There are 33 children in nursery across the week, which means some days as little as 12 children, as opposed to 75 at end of last

year. The HT clarified this is not simply a Westmorland issue – it is authority wide across nursery and reception. The school has always had 3 reception classes and been full at 75 whereas this year, the number started at 50. As a consequence, the teachers have had to change their approach in the classroom; the children almost had too much space and things to choose from. Staff have reduced the size of the room and are not using the undercover area. The HT noted there are difficulties within that cohort too.

The DHT confirmed there are now 59 children in reception. Nursery will be low this year in general but there will be January and Easter intakes.

The SEF had been previously circulated. The OFSTED inspection validated the grades in the SEF i.e. “good” for everything except Leadership and Management and EY which are outstanding.

8. BOARD/STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

a) Agree Governing Board Development Plan

Governors were reminded that governor visits are linked to the GBDP. Each governor has a link with an area of school life.

b) Outcome of skills audit

This has been undertaken previously but it may be time to consider completing a new one. The Development Governor role needs to be considered.

c) Plans for new governor induction and succession planning.

This item had already been discussed.

d) End of term of office

The GSO had provided a list of governors with their TOOs on request of the HT.

e) Board vacancies and plans for recruitment.

1 x parent vacancy.

f) Agree training plan for the year for the board.

A training morning has been planned for the Spring term. It will take place on a Saturday morning. The HT suggested it may be useful to agree a date towards the end of the Spring term and governors can contact HT with ideas for training, areas of specific interest etc.

Governors were asked to consider Saturday 11th or 18th May for a governing board session. Governors provisionally agreed 18th May. **ACTION**

9. BRIEFING PAPERS OF THE LA

Governors noted the following articles:

- Governance update, governor development
- School Effectiveness Update; Data Outcomes 2023
- Safeguarding; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Inclusion Service
- Health and Safety in Schools
- Schools Finance
- Internal Audit Function
- Early Years Update
- Solar Panels in Schools

- DfE updates for schools

The HT noted that when you read the briefing papers, with knowledge of the LA, it makes sense as to why services are being directed the way that they are.

CORE OBJECTIVE 2: HOLDING THE HEADTEACHER TO ACCOUNT FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS PUPILS

10. The Headteacher's Report had been circulated to the governors prior to the meeting; key points were noted, and questions invited:

The Headteacher updated the governors upon matters arising from the Report:

The HT confirmed that overall attendance is 94.9%. The school took a lot from the OFSTED inspector about attendance and the breakdown of groups within that. At the end of the Report is a suggested breakdown of some key groups. The HT acknowledged that governors may feel this is a bit lengthy but those are the key groups to be identified. OFSTED wanted to know about those groups, and it gives the school a good insight into those children who are not attending school more frequently. The persistently absent cohort needs to be reduced, ideally it would be down to 17%. A lot of work will go into that. The Attendance Policy has already been re-worked. The HT recommended that the attendance report at the back goes to committee level moving forward, not FGB.

The DHT advised that Emily and Amanda work with James as part of the pastoral team not just on the learning mentor aspects but also on attendance. This half term Emily has started her role as Parental Engagement Officer. Emily has started Roman Roar reading mornings, coffee mornings with every year group, stay and play sessions in nursery, and organised a reception workshop for phonics targeting those parents not reading with their children. Similarly for nursery, a talking workshop took place, which was very successful in terms of numbers but not in its impact. The DHT went into nursery after the workshop to do some activities and the taught behaviour was not evident. Staff held SALT drop-ins for 8 targeted EY parents; there are not only cognition and learning difficulties but attendance issues too. Staff are holding regular meetings with parents. They have been knocking on doors etc. There was a further nursery talking workshop this afternoon; 3 parents attended but not the right ones, the other parents will be contacted. The team need to assess what the impact is and what happens if people are not attending. The SLT have spoken with Emily about a 3-strike rule, when the family will then be referred to Amanda to hold pre-TAC meetings and finally progressing to TAC meetings with James.

How does James oversee the work and know if it is working?

The DHT advised that Emily has a list of those she has worked with, what was done and the follow-up actions. An anonymised copy of that for governors would be useful.

Does James have access to that document?

The DHT advised that he does. Emily also has a red book with low level concerns, any teacher can add to it but it needs to go to James first as safeguarding lead as he will have more information.

It is fabulous that the team are all working together but it will take time to establish the team structure i.e., where does the safeguarding manager sit with the senior learning mentor and the parental liaison.

The DHT noted that Emily will need to evidence the impact of her new role; it needs to work for the school and allow James to have oversight.

The HT requested that governors review the re-worked Attendance Policy, to be ratified at the next meeting. **ACTION**

Governors suggested they could add any comments on the new Policy on GovernorHub. There was then a brief discussion around use of GovernorHub as some governors are finding it difficult to navigate. The Board requested that the GSO feed this back. **ACTION**

Accessing a big policy on a phone is nearly impossible, if governors are being asked to read and comment, that needs to be explored.

With regards to pupil data, the DHT noted that the baselines get lower every year. The nursery children in particular are lockdown babies. Understanding the world is zero at age related. It is always low but not usually the lowest area of concern. This is another reason for the change to the SDP; a lot of the continuous provisional activities need to be based around language and understanding around outside of school. They have had too much time inside. The staff have spent a lot of time looking at this. There are a number of EAL children in EY with a range of languages and needs. It is a huge shift from a couple of years ago.

The HT noted that one of the issues with the EAL cohort is that some of those children are missing out on EAL assessment at previous providers. The school has flagged that to the service. The school have asked the EAL team to come and look at the cohort, but they said there was nothing else the school could do. The children are coming straight into reception and staff do not know if the language barrier or SEN issues are the difficulty as they have had no assessments. Children are having to wait for first-language assessments in October so there is a half-term without knowing what their needs are.

With regards to SALT input, a lot of those children have missed out on pre-school offering. If they attended the school nursery, they could access it, but it is no longer offered in reception. School has a SALT and assistant SALT, but the intention is for that to be in addition to NHS input. There are currently 25 clear or slight concerns out of 58 children that are below the 19th centile. Of those, 10 are EAL. Staff want to avoid any of those children being identified as SEN when they might not be. The HT queried whether Carol Sperring could be contacted. Carol is Head of Therapy.

What are the needs of the parents of those children?

The DHT confirmed that Emily is getting families in to try and identify the issues. Positively, the school is trying different activities and has everything in place to support them.

The HT noted that there is an assessment issue with SALT children coming in. Those children appear to do less well with once in school. This needs to be flagged up with the SALT service.

The school are in the process of recruiting an EYFS teacher for the third class. The cohort started with 50 children and there are now 58, soon to be 59. This afternoon Mrs Hill visited the EY department. The size of the pods is not suitable for 30 children and a teacher. It is a low attainment cohort; 14 were new to the school and 5 had not been anywhere else. All children start with SATPIN phonics, they are supposed to keep up not catch-up. For the last two weeks the children have not moved on; they can recall for flash recall and in a play situation but cannot segment and blend or recognise a grapheme in the middle of the word. Staff have made significant progress by focussing on that the last two weeks

and are hopeful that with a third teacher, adaptive teaching can be utilised, and those children can catch-up during morning or afternoon sessions.

When will the new teacher start?

The HT confirmed ASAP.

The HT noted that SEN is an issue across the school, The school is part of a project with John Elder to reduce EHCPs; those children will have a costed provision map in place. The DHT stated that the system works. The school tripped itself up with OFSTED as the inspector had a pre-conceived idea that the school had poorly behaved children who were being physically violent and required a nurture room. On paper, it does not appear that the school has the need that it does. Mrs Terry noted that, having seen a similar pattern with other schools, it would be useful to do some work with inspectors. Schools need to get the first level of support right first (that is the national agenda) and sometimes that can avoid anything further being required. The question from the inspector should have been what is this school doing well. Mrs Terry is due to speak with someone at the LA. The HT clarified that the OFSTED inspector was open about initially not understanding the need for the nurture room.

The current position with the Inclusion service is summarised in the Report. The HT feels like it is a longer and drawn-out process. Lyn Perry now has lead of it. The school has not had a replacement mental health worker from Beacon since the previous one finished at the end of July. The HT will chase the service for an explanation. **ACTION.** That is off the back of a very slow start to the service and taking over a term to allow their staff to work directly in schools with children, despite the 12-month pilot which had been in place and was working.

The feedback from parents is that needs are not being met. The HT understands that a Stockport Send group within the estate are offering to support families in getting diagnoses and assessments for their children. School is monitoring the situation. Mrs Terry noted that there is a general group of families who are being encouraged to fight schools, despite needs being met by the school. There is a culture that you need a diagnosis or an ECHP and that needs to be addressed within the narrative with Stockport families and nationally. It is something that is happening with social care as well, not just in schools. The DHT confirmed that the school meets the needs of the pupil, regardless of a diagnosis. There is a difficulty caused by parents describing behaviours that are not seen in school, so the children go via social care.

Pupil behaviour is decent throughout school. Safeguarding issues are set out in the Report. There are no TAC children led by health.

There has been 1 racial incident, which was reported to the LA. There have been zero homophobic and disablist incidents. Visible disabilities have not been a picture for school over the last 18 months but there will be two children in wheelchairs in the next few weeks. There may be a rise in incidents then. It might be worth doing some pre-emptive education with peers beforehand. There has been one incident of bullying; the HT is going to check that teachers are still recording those as it is a significant decrease.

The HT advised that technology within school has been an ongoing issue for many years, including the sound system in the hall. The HT understands now that various bits are not working. A technician came in last week to assess it and noted that there was a lot wrong with it. He is returning next week to take an initial look and build a new system that will work more simply. The technology has changed since it was fitted. It could be the start of something for the performing arts side of the school.

With regards to school uniform, the HT was asked at committee level to look for another provider and has identified a suitable one. Stitch Design. They have a new supplier which has alleviated previous issues and there have been less incidents than with the previous supplier. Goodies were not competitive price wise, and My Clothing were also slightly more expensive. The Stitch Design remote ordering system seems to work for parents. The company will buy old stock off the school and will post new orders directly to parents or it is free to deliver to school in bulk. They have advised they will not dramatically increase prices but may increase slightly if supplier costs increase, so the deal can be reviewed at any stage.

What is the price for a sweatshirt?

The HT confirmed between £9 and £11.

Can the logo be bought separately?

The HT advised it cannot.

Governors agreed to moving forward with Stitch Design after the half-term break.

Finally, the HT commented that he had a lump in throat reading the OFSTED report and his reflections are based around being at the school for 20 years. The progress since 2005 is generally very positive, including removal of special measures. When looking back over the reports, the HT had forgotten the immense amount of change that has been managed here. It is really interesting to read the chronology. The change and improvement are down to the staff, who are committed and dedicated, the governors and the children and families. The number of comments from the LA are lovely and spot-on and the comments from governors were brilliant and have been fed back to staff. It was the toughest inspector that the HT had encountered. The HT thanked everyone for their support. The Chair noted that the Board would like to formally pass on their thanks to the staff for their work and it was suggested those staff that have since left be sent those comments too.

11. TEACHING & LEARNING

a) Committee Minutes

The minutes of the committee meeting were noted by the governing board.

b) One Voice

The HT advised that an updated One Voice meeting was taking place next Tuesday morning. Following that meeting there will be a report for governors to consider. Governors were provided with documentation for the One Voice meeting.

CORE OBJECTIVE 3: OVERSEEING THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOL AND MAKING SURE ITS MONEY IS WELL SPENT

12. RESOURCES & BUDGET

a) Committee Minutes

The minutes of the committee meeting held on 28th September, were noted by the governing board.

b) Budget Update

Governors were advised that the budget update remained as set out in the resources committee minutes. There were no questions.

c) SFVS Preparations

Governors were advised that once prepared, a draft copy would be presented at committee level.

d) School Fund Audit; Audit Arrangements

The School Fund Audit certificate was circulated prior to the meeting and duly APPROVED by the governing board.

e) Report on the Spending and Impact of Pupil Premium Grant, Sports Grant, Tutor-Led Programme

The Tutor-led programme documentation was submitted yesterday; the website went down so the deadline was extended. The report on the Sports Grant spending is available online; Tom has shown how well the money is spent and has broken the spending down. The amount of sport the children have access to is immense; Tom constantly pushes for more. The school recently hosted a cross country event against 4 other schools and the school did well. Charlotte Gillis and Jen Sherstone go to the park most weekends and the children go with them to run and run in events. That is going over and above.

13. PREMISES, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

Provide a report on building; to include any building and maintenance plans.

The board has discussed at committee level about the unspent budget this year being allocated to extending the solar panel offer. Initially, the panels were provided through the LA but if the school goes it alone, they could extend those panels already in place, which would be far cheaper than going through the LA. If the money is there, it will be cost-effective in the long run. It was agreed it would be costed and the bills checked to see the impact of those panels already in place. **ACTION**

Are the inspections finished for RAAC?

The HT advised that the building is not of an age that would be affected. Indeed, no school in Stockport is affected.

14. DATES

a) Full Governing Board

- 1st February 2024
- 11th July 2024

b) Committee Meetings

As set out in the agenda.

c) Date for Pay Committee

Tuesday 5th December.

d) Date for Headteacher Performance Management

Tuesday 5th December.

15. A.O.B.

With regards to the information Sarah Thomas has requested, how is that being fed back?

The HT clarified that Sarah Thomas has requested information from governors to update the website. Sarah has audited the website and the information missing is what has been requested.

With no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 5:21pm.

**WESTMORLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
 AUTUMN TERM 2023 GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES
 MEETING ACTION POINTS**

| MINUTE POINT | ACTION REQUIRED | ACTION FOR | DATE ACTION TO BE COMPLETED |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 8f. | 18 th May agreed as provisional date for training day. To be confirmed. | FGB | Spring Term |
| 10. | Attendance Policy to be reviewed by governors and ratified at next FGB | FGB | Spring FGB |
| 10. | GSO to pass on feedback with respect to usability of GovernorHub | GSO | Post-meeting |
| 10. | HT to chase Beacon with regards to input of mental health worker | HT | Post-meeting |
| 13. | School to cost extending solar panels and consider savings from those already in place | HT/SBM | Post-meeting |