

GRANTA SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

THURSDAY 12th December 2024
6.00pm
at Granta School and online (hybrid)



MINUTES

Present:

Governors:

Liz Hunt (LH) Co Chair,
 Laura Jeffs (LJ) Co Chair – chairing this meeting
 Sarah Crouch (Headteacher),
 Hilary Crooks (HC),
 Paul Illott (PI)
 Kim Pilsbury (KP),
 Gill Taylor (GT).
 Chris Clarke (CC)

Remote attendance:

Governor: Jill Broadley (JB)
 Associate Member: Lucie Calow (LC)
 Locum Clerk to Governors: Anna Caroe

Associate Members present:

Emma Stubbings (ES)
 Richard McEwan (RM)
 Amy Killa (AK)

The meeting was quorate and opened at 18:05

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| 1. | Welcome and Apologies for absence received and accepted: Tony Orgee David Jones Ian Wilson Linda Alefounder (associate) Jeff Andrews Mary Abeyasekera (MA) Not present: | Actions/ Notes |
| 2. | Approval of Minutes of FGB : Thursday 12.9.24 No queries raised – these were approved Actions arising Actions were all complete. Updates were given regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Order review – AA to support with follow up • Solar Panel update – they have not been working for a number of years but something ins now being done about it by the company. A governor asked whether a rebate would be forthcoming. It was agreed this would be requested but may not appear. A gov asked | |

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| | <p>about the time they have not worked for – they had worked originally, but it is not known when they stopped.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance policy overtook the home visit policy as there have been changes this year. The Home Visit Policy will come in future • Asbestos report to come to a committee meeting • Continuity plan – work has been undertaken and is awaiting a response. • Finance audit – a letter is being written • Teacher absence insurance – will be kept under review • Skills analysis is still awaiting responses from some governors <p>A Governor mentioned a letter written to Suffolk re: poor service received over exclusion last term. A reply was received after a long wait. This letter asked for the details of the pupil concerned and did not reference the issues raised by the school. A response has been returned outlining that an amicable arrangement has been made with the family but the process has been frustrating.</p> | <p>Action – Skills audit needs completing by all governors</p> |
| 3. | <p>Governing Body Membership Discussed: Re-election of Co-opted Governors Jeff Andrews and Ian Wilson whose term of office comes to an end 8th Feb 2025.</p> <p>JA has confirmed he would like to stand for re-election, but it has not been possible to contact IW.</p> <p>Governors voted to re-elect Jeff Andrews (in his absence).</p> <p>Discussed: Reappointment of Associate Member Linda Alefounder whose term of office ended 2nd December 2024.</p> <p>Governors voted to re-appoint Linda.</p> <p>A Governor mentioned that there were 3 candidates for the 2 parent governor seats. Governors discussed how to involve the third candidate as they would be a strong addition to the Board. She could be added as an associate, or perhaps consider taking a seat that would be vacated at the end of the year. Governors noted that succession planning would be supported by an arrangement such as Associate membership. Governors noted how positive it was to have needed an election as parents were keen to stand.</p> | <p>Confirm with Ian whether he wishes to stand again for a further term</p> <p>Contact the third candidate to find a way forward to involve them.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Committees</p> <p>Curric committee – The Committee chair gave an update from the meeting on Tuesday 8th October (unapproved minutes had been circulated on Gov Hub). The main discussion was over the timing of monitoring and ensuring that this is effective. The conversation will be picked up in item 8.</p> <p>HR meeting – PI gave an update from the meeting on Tuesday 8th October (unapproved minutes had been circulated on Gov Hub). Staff had fed back that some visits had been causing stress so they had been reduced and will be re-considered in future. Recruitment was discussed and the costs of covering gaps with agency staff.</p> | |

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| <p>The Head updated on staffing – one full time teacher is starting (non-agency). 2 FTE teacher vacancies remain.</p> <p>H & S meeting – An update was given on the meeting from Wednesday 4th December (unapproved minutes had been circulated on Gov Hub). The meeting had focussed on policies and a further meeting was arranged to cover work that had not been included in the first one.</p> <p>Finance meeting - An update was given on the meeting from Thursday 20th November.</p> <p>School food tender was discussed – the tender has gone out and a company has applied. The Board are bring asked to decide on the tender that has been submitted. Governors felt there were questions that needed to be answered before agreeing to a contract.</p> <p>The 3 year contract was discussed.</p> <p>There was concern about TUPE-ing staff – no staff want to be TUPE'd. They would like to remain in Granta employment and new costs have been calculated – this will be shared on GovHub after the meeting.</p> <p>Price per meal is £2.50, based on 105 meals and uptake of 58%.</p> <p>Meals will cost £3 in the second year and £3.50 in the third year.</p> <p>A governor asked how the projected cost of keeping catering in house compares with this, as that is quite a big price increase over the 3 years.</p> <p>Answer: The contract will still save the school money. There is currently reduced pupil take up as the current feedback is not good.</p> <p>The quote includes the Hive and would release the TA from cooking these meals.</p> <p>Kitchen staff illness has affected the school as there is no immediate cover. The cover provided by the prospective company would be helpful.</p> <p>A governor asked whether LVC's catering company were interested – No. It was noted that the current arrangement is not sustainable. A solution needs to be found and the Head cannot keep closing the kitchen due to illness.</p> <p>A governor asked about some of the provision in the contract and whether it meets the needs of the school. A discussion needs to be had with them to tailor the offer.</p> <p>It was noted that the tender submission may not have been tailored to the school and governors wanted to meet with the company for negotiation.</p> <p>The Head shared that they had been in already and discussed allergies and range of meals needed. The provision of things like a salad bar are needed to ensure the school is offering a healthy selection of meals. Pupil voice has been gathered, eg: pupils requesting salad, jacket potatoes, stews, chilli, a range of puddings. School council responses were offered from every class.</p> <p>A governor asked whether these views had been fed back to current kitchen. Yes but there is no capacity.</p> <p>A governor asked what a current client thought about the service. Answer – this was positive.</p> <p>A governor asked about staff take up of meals – this was high previously until it was stopped due to capacity. This could be an option with the new company.</p> <p>A governor asked about if there was an increase in PAN – it was thought this would be ok with the company.</p> <p>In principle, governors agreed this is a positive option.</p> <p>The timeline is an Easter start at the earliest – half term is not possible.</p> | |
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| <p>A governor asked about a probation period. Governors discussed that there is no other choice, but perhaps the terms need discussion.</p> <p>A governor suggested that an EFGB may be needed to ratify the decision so as not to delay the process. Or governors felt they could ratify in principle today with assurances that the contract is tailored and the Head is happy with the answers to the governors' questions.</p> <p>The chair summarised that this is the choice available to the school and progress must be made swiftly to secure provision.</p> <p>A governor asked about the deadline for appointing the company to ensure Easter start. This was not known within the meeting, but it was agreed this was important to know and meet.</p> <p>It was noted that governors were disappointed that only one company quoted and this left the school with only one option.</p> <p>The governors agreed to proceed with the company who had tendered, subject to certain changes.</p> <p>A governor spoke about a letter to the LA.</p> <p>A governor raised a query about delegation of financial responsibility and decision-making. They were keen to ensure that governors are monitoring spends.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the delegation doc had been circulated.</p> <p>A governor asked for further changes to the document and it was agreed that this should go to the Finance Committee in an emergency meeting.</p> <p>The letter has not been sent yet and governors were asked to agree the letter.</p> <p>Governors were frustrated that a meeting between the 3 special schools has not occurred, and that very little support has been forthcoming from the LA.</p> <p>A governor wants to arrange a face-to-face meeting. They would like guidance on tackling the deficit.</p> <p>An email has been received by school in response to the initial (June/July) email – a cashflow document has been received and an apology for the issues with SBS. It was noted that any response from the Finance dept is slow and staff are hard to get hold of.</p> <p>A governor asked about the new Director for Education and their view on the SBS issues and issues that Special Schools are facing. It was not known what their view is.</p> <p>A governor suggested going to the press.</p> <p>The Head answered that the Special Heads group have discussed this and agreed not to get involved in press, as the main concerns are the pupils, schools, staff.</p> <p>Governors outlined that they feel they are unable to oversee the school finances, which is part of their key role.</p> | <p>Arrange an extra finance committee meeting.</p> |
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| | The letter will be sent to Sarah Callaghan, Martin Wade, Tom Kelly and others who may have influence within Finance dept. | |
| 5. | <p>Visit and monitoring reports</p> <p>Phonics/ reading – the report had been circulated. This was a very useful visit and the report aimed to link to School Action Plan items. It was noted that there was no money for resources and that audio books and story sacks need some refreshing. It was noted that literature doesn't represent the school community very well and that new texts could look to address this.</p> <p>The Head is compiling an order from a small donation received and will create an Amazon wish list over the holidays.</p> <p>A governor noted this was an Ofsted recommendation and that this needs to be undertaken.</p> <p>The Head shared that a lot of money was spent on the room 3 years ago from a donation, but what is now needed is resources/texts for reading for pleasure.</p> <p>A governor asked about grant funding and whether anything has come through in newsletter. Governors suggested they could look for grants/sponsors themselves.</p> <p>The Head shared that Salford reading test data has been considered and shows that the number of pupils who have reading and comprehension age 2+ years above chronological age, and there are no texts for them in the library.</p> <p>A governor asked how much money the target would be. Answer: A bundle of diverse books for one key stage is £105. A target of £1000+ would be required to resource all cohorts with accessible texts.</p> <p>PI shared that Hannah's Fun Fund may be able to help and he would take the proposal to the trustees. Other sources of funding were also discussed.</p> <p>Hive</p> <p>A report was circulated before the meeting. A governor reported on their visit where they had observed a PE lesson. A return visit is planned. A governor noted that the report outlined the challenges of work experience placements. The Head commended the TA who leads on this, who is doing a fantastic job. The Head has secured a longstanding relationship with a local proposed farm/lodge who are keen to work with the school on developing an inclusive eco environment. Work experience would be offered through the café, shop etc. The Head has laid out a clear expectation of the work experience offer in exchange for her help with the project.</p> <p>Cyber security</p> <p>A report was circulated before the meeting. JA was not present to speak on the report but questions were invited on the report</p> | |
| 6. | <p>Confidential item</p> <p>A confidential item was discussed and is noted separately.</p> <p>The discussion moved on to budget.</p> | |

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| <p>A governor asked whether the school can carry on as they are, or whether the school will struggle to pay the staff. The Head shared that this is the stage the school is at now, but governors agreed that wages would always be paid as it is the LA bank account. Cashflow is the issue.</p> <p>228k in bank account</p> <p>320k payroll monthly</p> <p>DfE promised 106k for schools due to pay award</p> <p>So wages will be 400k with new NI adjustments</p> <p>A couple of out-of-county payments are still owing (income).</p> <p>Next Tuesday there is a meeting with the school's financial advisor – projected figures sent through today show that by year-end there will be a £66k deficit. The Head doesn't think this can be accurate so needs to find out how this has been calculated.</p> <p>DfE have devised new benchmarking toolkit to compare with similar size/buildings/pupil numbers/running costs – breakdown into high/med/low priorities for spending. – catering is red (high), non-education tech is medium, teaching and support staff and educational resources are significantly less than other schools. These two areas are still being reduced but they affect the students most directly.</p> <p>Swimming pool pumps no longer work (power cuts at weekend). £25k quote. Lead time means pool is shut. No money coming in from rentals and stat duty is being not met for pupils with swimming on EHCP. Governors were asked to approve the spend to fix the pool.</p> <p>A governor asked what the alternative is. The provision for pupils would cease and the children with swimming on EHCP would need to be transported to another suitable pool, which would be very expensive. An insurance claim will be submitted but may not be successful and does take a long time. It was noted that other pools may not be available for rent (waiting list), or (accessible). Governors agreed that this kind of ongoing cost would not be sustainable.</p> <p>Governors discussed some of the implications of the decision.</p> <p>A governor asked how many children swimming is statutory for? – Answer, not sure but will find out.</p> <p>A governor asked about risk of legionnaires in the standing water. The Head said yes she will get the pool emptied if needed.</p> <p>A governor asked whether property team / health and safety team could advise.</p> <p>A governor asked about decommissioning a pool and the costs for that as this would also have a cost attached.</p> <p>A governor asked about lead time on pumps – Answer, don't know until an order is placed.</p> <p>A governor challenged on ensuring that the environment in the pool area remains safe during the time the pumps are out of action.</p> <p>A governor asked what can be done to protect the school's property from power cuts and surges.</p> | <p>Head to report back</p> |
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| | <p>A governor asked how old the pumps were and whether they have been good value for money.</p> <p>The Head will find answers to these questions and report back to governors.</p> <p>Governors agreed to the spend.</p> | on details around the pump replacement |
| 7. | <p>Governor Skills and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pathway information session · Safeguarding training – proposed dates · Skills analysis · Website profile update <p>This item was condensed due to time constraints.</p> <p>Safeguarding training is online and in the evening.</p> | |
| 8. | <p>Governors Strategic Monitoring document.</p> <p>It was agreed that this could be an email and would come back to March FGB</p> | To be brought to next FGB |
| 9. | <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Nothing to note</p> | |
| 10. | <p>Update on the Hive</p> <p>Postponed due to time constraints</p> | |
| 11. | <p>Policies Review</p> <p>Attendance policy – a summary of changes was offered by the Head – register codes, school processes (because of changes at LA level), children with medical needs. This policy now reflects national changes, LA guidance and Granta processes and needs to be sent to parents. No objections were raised. Governors approved the policy subject to typo correction.</p> <p>Other policies were postponed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Equality and diversity policies (staff and pupils) · First Aid policy · Financial delegation · Financing for Maintained schools | |
| 12. | <p>Friends of Granta School (FOGS)</p> <p>A brief update was shared.</p> <p>It was decided that the group would not fold and an interim arrangement was put in place. It cannot run events, and is just surviving. It was acknowledged that a lot of work has been done to try to get people involved, but there has not been much response.</p> <p>Governors expressed thanks to the founders and governors who have worked hard on FOGs over the years</p> | |
| 13. | <p>School Council/Pupil's Voice</p> <p>Reported earlier within the catering item.</p> | Pathways item to be put on the next FGB |

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| | Governors agreed to read the Head's Pathways powerpoint and raise any queries at the committee meeting. A governor asked to meet the Head outside of the meeting as well. This item be put on the next FGB agenda. | agenda. |
| 14. | <p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>A governor asked about the safeguarding audit – how often should governors do safeguarding training? They shared that it is hard to know whether the Baord are compliant without a specification. The Head shared that staff need to be updated every 2 years, but ideally annually. The clerk advised that this is the recommendation for governors as well, and that there are a range of resources to select from so it can be different training on different years (eg: Learning Link, Head/school-based update, KCSiE updates)</p> <p>Governors wished staff and pupils a Happy Christmas.</p> | |
| 15. | Date of Next Meeting: 6pm Thursday March 27th 2025 | |

Meeting closed 20.13