

# Thomas Russell Junior School

## Minutes of a Full Governing Board Meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 at 6pm

**Present** – Mrs J Hill (Chair), Mrs E Watling, Mrs S Sharpe (Headteacher), Miss C Branson, Mrs L Vardy, Mr P Johnson, Mrs H Gobran, Mr T Clamp, Mrs H Whitby, Mrs M Keasley, Mrs R Bennett, Mrs K Robbins, Mrs C Mallett and Mr P Evans and Mr J Singh (arrived at 6:20pm)

**In Attendance:** Carole Jones, Clerk to Governors

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially newly appointed Governors; also thanking everyone for attending the Emergency FGB and the shortlisting last week.

The Chair reminded FGB of their strategic role and their part in strategic planning and questioning to move the school forward and still be ready for Ofsted.

**567 Apologies** – All Governors were present.

### **568 Election of Vice Chair**

Following on from the advice that Mrs Watling can't hold the position of Vice Chair whilst employed by the school an election is required to fill the vacancy.

Miss Branson nominated Mrs Keasley; seconded by Mrs Vardy – all in favour.

**Resolved** that Mrs Keasley be appointed as Vice Chair for a one-year term.

### **569 Governing Body Matters**

- a) **Membership** – The FGB is now at full complement. New Governors have been provided with log in details for the Governor area on the website – all have accessed the area. Enhanced DBS checks are being carried out for new Governors and their details have been added to the SCR.
- b) **Confidentiality** – Governors were reminded that discussion at meetings is confidential and minutes/documents remain confidential until agreed at the following meeting.
- c) **Register of Business Interests** – HT will ensure that all Governors have completed a Register of Business Interests.
- d) **Code of Conduct** – HT will ensure that all Governors have signed the Code of Conduct.
- e) **Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests for this meeting**

**570 Minutes of FGB Meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and EFGB held 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023** were agreed and signed as an accurate record of the meetings.

**Resolved** that the minutes be accepted as a true record and signed.

### **571 Matters Arising**

- a) **Recruitment Campaign** - successfully actioned. There will be a vacancy in September – FGB will recruit someone with an interest in either premises, finance, HR or safeguarding.
- b) **Finance Officer meeting** – The meeting didn't take place as the Finance Officer's time was taken up with school tasks; as an alternative online training was provided, which might have been useful, but as it was scheduled for during the working day Governors had been unable to attend. Perhaps this could be scheduled for outside of the working day? HT to liaise to ascertain if this is possible.
- c) **Catering** – HT reported that there had been no comments or any negative affect on numbers, as a result of the increase in the cost of school dinners. The increased revenue between

February and April will be used to reduce the deficit. HT advised that from April next year catering will be much more viable and the deficit will be cleared.

- d) **Governor Allowance Policy** – The Chair will review the policy over the Easter holidays. HT recommended no changes to the current Policy. HT made new Governors aware of being able to use Early Birds and Night Owls, free of charge, while they are undertaking Governor duties.
- e) **Governor Information Pack - Safeguarding** – New Governors were encouraged to read the Governor Information Packs, in particular the section regarding safeguarding, to keep themselves up to date. Miss Branson will recirculate the online safeguarding training for Governors and Trustees (examples Safer Recruitment, Prevent, KCSIE update for Governors). If safeguarding training has been completed elsewhere please send copies of certificates to Miss Branson for school records.
- f) **Terry Wells** – HT and Chair to liaise to make arrangements for an appropriate gift for Terry.
- g) **HT Recruitment** – Visits have been made to the applicants' schools – very positive visits and there is a sense of confidence going in to Monday's interviews. The Chair will share feedback to the panel as part of the interview process. The Chair confirmed the arrangements for Monday's interviews and the timetable for the day. The Chair reassured everyone that as soon as the panel have made a decision she will inform all Governors that evening, confidentially, if an appointment has been made.
- h) **Parental and Staff Communication** – The Chair has written to parents and staff about the changes and the plans going forward.
- i) **Governor E-mail Addresses** have been changed over.

## **572 Review of Committees and Nominated/Link Governors**

- a) **Link Governor for Sports Premium** – Mrs Mallet was appointed as Link Governor for Sports Premium.
- b) **Chair of Pool Committee** – historically the Pool Committee has been kept separate due to National Lottery requirements. However, over the past 12-13 years everything has been ironed out and the Pool runs at a profit. Discussion took place about linking the Pool Committee to the Premises Committee – agreed. Therefore, a Chair of Pool Committee is no longer a requirement. Discussion followed about separating out the Premises and Finance Committees to make meetings more manageable. This was agreed.
- c) **Curriculum Committee** – Mrs Robbins was appointed to the Curriculum Committee.
- d) **Finance Committee** – Mr Evans was appointed to the Finance Committee (next meeting 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8am)
- e) **Premises/Pool Committee** – Mrs Mallet was appointed to the Premises Committee (next meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8am)

**Resolved** that Mrs Mallet be appointed as Link Governor for Sports Premium.

**Resolved** that the Premises Committee incorporates the Pool Committee.

**Resolved** that the Premises and Finance Committees be separated.

**Resolved** that Mrs Robbins be appointed to the Curriculum Committee.

**Resolved** that Mrs Mallet be appointed to the Premises/Pool Committee.

**Resolved** that Mr Evans be appointed to the Finance Committee.

- f) **H&S Link Governor Visit** – Mrs Keasley visited on the 14<sup>th</sup> February. Also attended some SCC training which was really useful – the training raised some questions which she will raise at a future meeting.

Mrs Hill and Mrs Sharpe will liaise to provide an updated meeting timetable for next term.

The Chair indicated that she is keen for Governors to attend as much training as possible and to visit school to become familiar with education in general and in particular what is happening in school.

Perhaps next term we can arrange a Governor Open Morning so that staff can meet Governors.

## **573 Chair's Actions**

The Chair updated FGB on the recent parental complaint, which Mr Wells had dealt with initially, and the subsequent Complaint Review Panel and meeting with the parents involved. A plan is in hand to move this forward but as yet a further meeting has not been possible with the parents. FGB have offered four dates and the parents have cancelled; **agreed that three more dates will be offered for after Easter**. If nothing is heard or the meetings aren't attended an email will outline that school will assume that the issues have been resolved.

#### **574 Headteacher's Report**

The HT report had been circulated with the agenda. HT highlighted the following:

Numbers on roll remain consistent; higher than previous EHCP/SEN/disadvantage pupil numbers.

All staff have completed Level 1 safeguarding training.

Policies have been circulated and read by staff.

Curriculum content continues to be covered in assemblies.

Securus is working well – one flag for two children together who had written something inappropriate.

School Improvement Plan – SLT are working through the Plan, as well as a review of the SEF, to be complete ready for the new HT. **Documents will be shared with Governors at the next FGB.**

KS2 SATS moved back a day due to the Public Holiday on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, for the King's Coronation.

SATS will now be held Tuesday to Friday that week. Results have been moved back to the 11<sup>th</sup> July.

Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check in hand.

The average attendance in most classes is around 97% - unfortunately attendance levels haven't picked up since Covid. Every child's attendance record will be sent home with their report, highlighting the number of learning hours lost even at 97%. School is sending less children home ill during the day; with more parents working from home it is easier to keep children at home if they aren't very well. **Governors asked why Y3K's attendance is much lower than the other classes?** HT reported that the whole class was virtually wiped out with a covid-like bug just before Christmas and then more recently a sickness bug. Governors asked about the level of requests for term time holidays? Following covid there were a lot of requests due to cancelled and re-booked holidays, then it quietened down, however, apathy is back with people thinking what difference does a week or two make after everything we have been through. HT reported that there is actually more impact when a child has an odd day one week and then another day the following week, as they miss the input and the work being done in class. **Governors asked if there has been an increase in mental health or anxiety-related absences?** Yes, there is definitely one persistent absence case and another with medical issues linked to mental health. Governors asked if work is sent home to those who are absent? Yes access to TT Rockstars, Reading Plus is provided. Governors asked if there is anything done to maintain their relationship with peers or to be part of the class? We aren't offering Zoom into lessons but are doing what we can to include these pupils in what is happening in school. Work continues in relation to behaviour in school – school is continuing to work with outside agencies to ensure the right level of support for the more complex cases.

**Resolved** that the Headteacher's Report be accepted with thanks.

#### **575 Religious Education (RE Agreed Syllabus)/United Against Bullying Scheme**

RE Agreed Syllabus - Miss Branson updated FGB on the launch of the new RE agreed syllabus, which is similar to the previous version. Main difference in "world view" – the syllabus states Christianity, and suggests Islam and one other faith. The syllabus is more secular in a way – we have listed objectives and where changes are needed.

United Against Bullying Scheme - Miss Branson informed Governors that school is taking part in the United Against Bullying Scheme. We have listed what we have done so far including a survey for the

children. 211 completed the survey – headline comments: 92% said they get on with the teachers always/a lot of the time. The survey has identified key areas to explore further eg specific year groups and specific gender groups. In this way we can narrow the comments down to small groups. **Governors asked what the issues are across year groups?** There are issues with WhatsApp groups regularly, more in Y5/6. Children are late to sleep/waking up early – there is a culture of quickest to reply, last/first to reply etc. A WhatsApp guide for parents has been circulated. Staff talk to the children about the ratings on games but their answer is generally, “my parents let me”. School to continue with its e-safety and online safety education, and endeavour to challenge inappropriate use where identified.

## **576 Committee Reports**

a) **Curriculum Committee** – The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated with the agenda. **Governors asked about the dips in progress?** There are generally dips after the Summer holidays, especially with the Y3s, with children doing less reading at home. Reading Plus is good – AI taking over but it is a really useful tool. **Governors asked if there is any monitoring of Reading Plus?** Yes, there are lots of reporting tools which show that there was an initial flurry of its use and then the usual dip in effort. Reminders are being sent – we will continue to look at usage and progress. Competitions are a good way to ensure greater usage, including leader boards in classrooms. HT assured Governors that staff are still reading with the children in school as much as we can. **Governors challenged what is being done about Y6 Maths?** We have been doing lots of arithmetic work and more tests/assessments to be able to target the weaker areas. Information regarding the importance of times tables has been separated out on the reports to highlight to parents how important times tables are going forward.

b) **Finance Committee** – There were no questions in relation to the minutes of the last Premises and Finance Meeting.

The HT presented the Budget monitoring report -21<sup>st</sup> March 23.

**The Chair sought approval for a change to the Pay Policy, which currently states that approval can be given for the HT pay to go above pay scale. The change being to remove that part prior to recruiting a new HT. The Chair also sought permission to be able to negotiate pay scales with the successful candidate starting at the lowest possible spine point to be able to appoint the best candidate on the day. Mr Johnson proposed that the Chair be given delegated powers to negotiate the most appropriate pay scale to the successful candidate (if required going to the higher point not the starting point); seconded by Mrs Gobran. All in favour.** HT confirmed that the draft budget has been set for a full-time HT as the top of the scale.

The Draft Budget for 2023 - 2024 was presented. Grounds services will return to Bloomin Gardens after poor service from the cheaper contractor. **The Draft Budget was accepted by Governors.**

c) **Premises Committee** – Highlighted £15k for a new server, which will be installed over the Summer holidays. The Wi-Fi signal will be checked after the new server has been fitted. For consideration at the next meeting – use of School Fund/Enterprise money to buy a new set of iPads as 16 are now extinct and can only be used to browse but cannot be updated. They can still be used but not as efficiently so it worth considering, at this stage, the purchase of another set.

d) **Pool Committee** – The Chlorine dosing system has broken and needs to be replaced. Funding is available to do this. Governors asked if Pool money stays as pool money? Yes, the money is separate on the budget sheets. Profits can be used for improvements in school. Agreed that the hire cost will be increased from £48 to £50 per hour with effect from April.

**Resolved** that Committee reports be received with thanks.

## **577 Academy Consideration Review**

The Chair highlighted that FGB had previously made a commitment that if there was a change in leadership or at the five-year marker, whichever came first, Governors would reconsider whether academisation was right for TRJS. FGB will allow time for the new HT to settle into post and will then begin the process of looking at the benefits at the time. This review would commence in January 2024. Governors agreed it may not be in the form of inviting academies in to present again, but may be an internal review of the decision and current position. HT advised that previous discussions/exploration meeting minutes are available in the Governor portal.

#### **578 Training**

HT signposted Governors to the Governor Information Pack as a useful resource for keeping up to date.

If Governors are asked how they access information about school there is the Information Pack (previous copies are in the Governor area on the website). Governors should also refer to ASP (Analyse School Performance), especially the second page – this document compares our performance against other schools. There is also the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) which Governors need to be familiar with. Both documents are available to view in the Governor's area. The Chair is keen that Governors do their duty and are supportive of school. We need to be a good team to support the school. Mrs Watling has a document which was prepared for the last Ofsted, which she will update and share with FGB – this provides useful headlines/important information to remember.

#### **579 Any Other Business**

a) The SFVS has been completed, ready for signing by the Chair. This is a checklist which is completed annually to show school is meeting its obligations for financial management. The Finance Committee has updated and reviewed the SFVS; presented to FGB with a recommendation to accept. All in favour for the Chair to sign off the SFVS. HT will submit as required.

#### **580 Confidential Items**

Safeguarding and behaviour information within the Headteacher's Report was identified as confidential to FGB.

#### **581 Dates of Future Meetings**

Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023, arrival at 8.30am – Headteacher Interview Day  
(Governors will use the Mobile classroom as their base)

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 6pm - FGB

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

Signed..... Date.....  
Chair of Governors

**ACTION LOG**

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
571b	Finance Officer meeting/online training information to be circulated	SS
571e	New Governors read GIP – safeguarding Safeguarding training link to be recirculated Complete safeguarding training / provide copies of any external training completed	New Governors CB Governors
571f	Liaise to make arrangements for a gift for Mr Wells	SS/JH
572	Update meeting timetable and circulate	SS/JH
572	Arrange a Governor Open Morning – Summer Term	SS/JH
573	Parental complaint – email dates	JH
574	School Improvement Plan and SEF to be shared at next FGB	SS
578	Circulate to all Governors the Ofsted prep document	EW