



# St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Isleworth Governing Body Meeting

At a meeting held at the School on  
Wednesday 9 May 2018 at 6.00 pm

- Present:** Mrs J Corley (Chair)  
Dr J Park (Vice Chair)
- Mrs T East, Mr F Marsh (Headteacher), Miss M Martin,  
Mrs A Mason, Ms M O'Donaghue and Mrs J Williams (left early)
- In Attendance:** Ms S Corry (Associate Member)
- Clerk:** Mrs I Bowles

- 1. Opening Prayer / Welcome to new Parent Governor**  
The Headteacher opened the meeting with prayer.  
The Chair welcomed Mrs East to her first meeting as a Parent Governor.  
Introductions were made; Mrs East confirmed that she had children in Y3 and Y1, and hoped that her youngest child would start Nursery in September 2018.
- 2. Apologies**  
Apologies had been received from Ms C Giglio and Mrs M Hooper.
- 3. Declaration of Personal Interests**  
There were no declarations of personal interests, relating to the agenda.
- 4. Changes to the School Day: update and discussion**
  - a) Communication with Parents**  
The Headteacher reminded Governors that there had been many meetings and discussions since the last Governing Body meeting. A significant event had been the appointment of Anna Trethewey of LKMCo as the facilitator for the two meetings with parents on 28 March 2018. LKMCo were also managing the online Parent survey, which had gone live on Friday 4 May 2018 and would close on Friday 25 May 2018. LKMCo would analyse the responses and provide a report to Governors by 6 June 2018. This would be discussed in depth at the Governing Body meeting on 21 June 2018.

The survey focused on three main areas of concern that had been raised by parents:

- Time and talents that could be offered by parents to the school, that were regular and sustainable
- Financial support that could be given by parents to the school, that was regular and sustainable
- Whether parents would need a place for their child and how parents thought that places on Friday afternoon provision should be allocated.

The Headteacher had been advised that, since the survey had gone live, 99 people had logged onto it. Of these, 2 had not said whether they had children in the school or not. 52 had completed the survey and 47 had partially completed the survey. 51 people had answered the funding questions, which Governors agreed was the crux of the crisis. Governors noted that approximately one third of families in the school had at least partially completed the survey in less than a week.

Governors had commissioned this survey in order to build parent views into their decision making. There would therefore be no decision made at this meeting.

**Q:** What would Governors do with the results of the survey?

**A:** The results would be used to inform and guide the Governing Body. Whilst the external support was expensive, Governors had thought it best to obtain external guidance. The process would be totally transparent, with the results being shared with parents as well as Governors. Parents would be reminded about the survey at regular intervals to encourage participation.

**Q:** Could any provision be made for non-English speaking families? Some of these had felt that they had not been able to fully participate in the original consultation. Interpretation of the questions could be difficult.....could there be a translated version? If not, the results could be skewed.

**A:** It would be difficult to choose languages. As the survey was online, it might be possible to use Google Translate.

**Q:** Was there someone in the Polish (or other) community who would be willing to attend a drop in session to give support to parents who found it easier to communicate in other languages?

**A:** Mrs Mason agreed to help any Polish parents (to interpret, not influence), and would send available dates to the Headteacher, for two sessions – perhaps at the start and end of the school day.

Mrs Williams suggested that this might also be useful to Portuguese parents, as well as to English speaking families without access to IT. The Headteacher would build in this support as well. Governors agreed that this was an important aspect of communicating with the school community.

#### **b) Communication with the Diocese**

The Headteacher, Chair and Vice Chair had met with Bishop John and JP Morrison (Director of Education) on 23 March 2018. Letters had been exchanged between JP and the Chair/Headteacher following that meeting

and in the last few days. It was apparent from the content of the letters from JP that the Diocese did not understand the current position of the Governing Body. The Diocese were questioning the financial position of the school, not realising that the figures submitted to them took account of savings that would be made if the proposal to have PPA on Friday afternoons.

JP had also written to Foundation Governors on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018, although not all Foundation Governors had received it. The letter mentioned that Bishop John was directing Foundation Governors not to support the proposal to changes on Friday afternoon at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> May. No Governor had received anything from Bishop John.

**Q:** When was the Diocese first informed of the proposal?

**A:** Not before the first consultation. Legislation made it very clear that the decision on the school day was in the remit of the Governing Body.

Whilst Governors could see that the Diocese may have anticipated some earlier dialogue, that should not have prevented them from understanding the clear information they had been given by the Chair, the Vice Chair and Headteacher.

Parents had written to the Diocese to raise their concerns; these concerns were not passed on to the Governing Body, nor was there an opportunity to respond. The Diocese had requested a meeting with the Chair and Headteacher, but the contents of any letters was not shared. The meeting had been requested in January/February 2018, but this had been delayed by the Diocese until 23 March 2018. The Governing Body were given no opportunity to correct any misunderstandings.

Governors reiterated that this was a proposal, not a decision. They had needed to test the waters to prepare a substantive proposal, and gain a bigger picture.

**Q:** Was the Diocese shocked at the radical proposal being made?

**A:** Some other Catholic schools in Westminster are looking to change to the school week. Governors noted that there had been a factually inaccurate report in the Sunday Times, which appeared to have taken as fact.

Foundation Governors acknowledged that they were representatives for the Diocese. If there had been any cause for concern that Foundation Governors had believed should be raised with the Diocese, they would have done so. This had not been the case: nothing seemed alarming, even if it involved change. Governors were considering models, then would have approached the Diocese. That process had still been in progress. The contact with the Diocese from a group of parents, and then the Press, had been negative, which may have coloured the view of the Diocese.

Recent letters from the Diocese contained factual inaccuracies, which the Headteacher kept trying to correct.

An e-mail had been received by the Headteacher by JP forty minutes before the start of the meeting. Although JP would be replying to points raised by the Headteacher during the day, he stated that Bishop Wilson did not want the proposal to go ahead, and that the Diocese had concerns on the way in which the whole situation had been handled, and wanted the proposal put on hold until there had been dialogue on other opportunities. Governors looked forward to receiving his longer reply.

### **c) Communication with the Local Authority (LA)**

The Chair, Vice chair and the Headteacher had met with the LA, who had confirmed that the legal position was that this was a matter for the Governing Body to decide what was best for their school. Michael Marks (Assistant Director of Education) had asked Sheena Poley (Head of Admissions and Place Planning) to scrutinise the legislation surrounding this area; The Chair, Vice Chair and Headteacher would meet with Mr Marks and Ms Poley on 7 June 2018 to update them.

### **d) Questions from Parent Governor**

Governors then answered questions from the new Parent Governor, to explain how they had come to the current position.

**Q:** In the earlier consultation, it had appeared to parents that there was only one model being presented, which had caused their consternation. Parents had followed what they believed to be the Diocese complaints procedure, writing to the Diocese at an early stage, as their complaint was about the Governing Body (including the Headteacher).

**A:** The Headteacher explained that Governors had been party to a pattern of cuts, employing NQTs and other savings over a number of years. The savings of £100K over the last two years had been shared with parents. The school's finances had reached a point where a line had to be drawn in the sand – with ongoing increases in on-costs (NI, pensions, etc), substantial savings could only be made in staffing; Governors had needed to look at radical scenarios.

**Q:** It had not come across to parents in that way; it had looked like the decision had already been made. Parents did not feel there were any options in the consultation,

**A:** The Chair explained that Governors had worked through several models before arriving at the proposal to close on Friday afternoons. The Governing Body made decisions continuously about the school: eg expansion, staff restructures; they are the appropriate decision-making body. In the course of their research, Governors had found that many schools had moved to this model, so it had not seemed vastly radical.

**Q:** What did Governors anticipate that parental reaction would be?

**A:** Governors did not know what to expect; however, they wanted the best for the pupils in the school, and this appeared to be the only viable option. Some Governors had thought that parents might have suggestions for what could take place on Friday afternoons, others were relieved that they had found a manageable solution, in which pupils would not miss out on opportunities in school. Governors had carefully considered options for pupils.

Governors had spent the last two years in the Finance Committee making very difficult decisions to cut budgets. This proposal was not a fait accompli, although Governors had felt that it was a probable solution. Governors had thought that parents would be relieved that the most valuable resource – staff – would be maintained. They had thought that parents might be able to get together and share childcare, in the same way that happened through the week.

The Headteacher confirmed that Governors recognised that parents had not been happy with the initial consultation, and were now working in a very transparent way moving forwards.

### **e) Summary Finance Chart**

The Headteacher tabled a chart that had been prepared by a parent with an understanding of Finance; this had been helpful, and had been circulated in the Newsletter. The Headteacher gave Governors some examples of how a change in one member of staff could make a huge difference in the budget: eg costs of experienced teachers against NQTs; agency “finders fees” for staff recruitment. The school tried to retain staff where possible. The current budget projection included all changes to staffing of which the Headteacher was aware. An advert was about to be placed for an NQT, although the budget included costs for an experienced teacher. Governors acknowledged that the resignation date for teachers was 31 May 2018; staffing would not be finalised for September 2018 until that date.

The summary finance chart also included the proposed one-off provision of pupil activities for Friday afternoons, but the summer term costs would be in the 2019/20 financial year so would be adjusted. There was a saving of £68K which was due to the savings of the PPA cover roles – there would be no redundancies, as staff were to be redeployed through the expansion. There were some Job Share posts, Pupil Premium support. The PPA roles had been deleted in the staff organisation chart.

**Q:** Were these figures actual, not projections?

**A:** The figures are accurate at this moment in time. However, if an NQT is not appointed or there were other staff changes, there would be a significant increase in cost for a teacher.

**Q:** Many parents were concerned about the savings, but did not understand the size of the sums: how could cutting PPA cover singlehandedly get the school out of debt?

**A:** Figures were large. The Headteacher reminded Governors that despite a projected saving of £99K in 2020/21, there was a projected surplus at the end of 2020/21 of only £129. Projections include performance related pay, national pay increases, and employer contributions for National Insurance and pension costs.

Governors concurred that school budgets were difficult to understand and explain. Budgets were aspirational, as there was so much change in funding, and it was unknown if increases would be funded. Governors were grateful to John Bowden of LMS Ltd for his expertise.

The Headteacher advised Governors not to be concerned about the end of year projected balance of £129 in 2020/21, as the third year of budget planning always looked worse.

The Headteacher shared a draft staffing structure for September 2018 with Governors, reminding them that this was a confidential document.

**Q:** Were pupils moved around between classes?

**A:** This happened at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 4. Mrs Williams confirmed that teachers were considering this at the present time for September 2018.

The Headteacher tabled a plan to deliver PPA in 2018/19 (Option C), if the proposal to close on Friday afternoons did not proceed, in light of the lack of money to employ additional staff. The plan had some serious flaws: some year groups timetabling of PPA would be very fragmented, which would affect the quality of time available and potentially the quality of teaching. The plan relies heavily on TA cover, which was not well-received by some teaching assistants as they had not been employed for this and it was not in their job descriptions. Neither were they paid to undertake regular cover.

It would be necessary for swimming to take place every week of the term, not just for ten weeks; and this would rely on parental commitment to accompany classes to the pool. Governors noted that this linked back to their concerns about reliability and sustainability.

The plan would require TAs to provide regular cover of classes, for which most of them were not paid at present. The Headteacher advised Governors that they would need to consider a higher scale payment to TAs for the periods of PPA cover under this plan this would effect the funding figures which had been given to Governors at this meeting. Mrs Williams asked Governors to consider the knock-on effect of this plan:

- It would take TAs away from working with children in their usual role, changing books, etc.
- It would add to teachers' workloads, as they would lose their TA time.
- It would stop teachers working together for planning (as would be the case with the Friday afternoon closure)
- It would not be good for teacher retention.

**Q:** If an additional teacher resigned, and was replaced by an NQT, could the additional savings be used to employ a part-time PE specialist to take Year group PE?

**A:** The Headteacher reminded Governors that the school had received the Platinum Sports Mark because all class teachers were competent teachers of PE. Teachers taught all lessons, with the exception of MFL. Governors agreed that it was important for teachers to be with their class. The Headteacher advised that other local schools had used sports coaches to cover their PE lessons; however, teachers had been frequently disturbed as "naughty" children were sent to them by the PE coach – this was a problem when it was their dedicated release time. The school was really good at delivering PE, and participating in the Daily Mile. Mrs Williams added that it

was very limiting on timetabling if external coaches were employed, as well as de-skilling teachers.

Governors were reminded that the school bought into the basic package with Sport Impact, to enable them access to the Youth Sport Trust, and to enter competitions organised by Sport Impact. Entering into a deeper partnership with them would cost far more.

#### **f) Moving forward**

Governors agreed that they were not making a decision on the proposal today; they were still gaining information. The budget was subject to change, especially if there were any resignations before 31st May 2018.

Governors want to get a clear message from parents as they move forward. Some parents wanted the provision on Friday afternoons and some wanted to make contributions.

**Q:** Some parents were still not enamoured of the proposal; a core group could not accept it.

**A:** Governors felt that parents were a lot more positive than they had been two months ago.

**Q:** Parents had recognised that the Governing Body had genuinely changed their strategic position, and that all had to move on to the next phase.

**A:** Governors hoped that a larger group of parents now better understood the proposal, who would perhaps feel able to write to Bishop John expressing this. The Headteacher reported that the Diocese appeared to have shaped their view from the parental letters sent early in the process, and might reconsider their stand if parents were more supportive of the school. There had been so many inaccuracies in the position held by the Diocese. It would be good for the Governing Body to meet with Bishop John and JP to obtain details of their concerns.

**Foundation Governors** were shocked and offended by the directives in the letter to them from JP, particularly in light of the uninformed and un-researched views on which the position of the Diocese was based. Foundation Governors stated that their role had been questioned. They wanted the school to be the best that it could be. They did nothing lightly, and always obtained as much information as possible before making any decision.

The Headteacher advised that he had contacted the NAHT for advice and a legal view: the DfE documents on the subject are guidance, not law, as shown by the use of the words “should”, not “must”. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher had scrutinised Directed Time, and had planned to lose some meetings as well as stopping evening performances. This would maintain Directed Time for staff under 1265 hours. All timings contained in the proposal are within statutory limits.

**Q:** Was the 30 minute lunch break for staff proposed for Fridays a reasonable break?

**A:** Yes; it was only for one day per week, and teachers were not going back into class.

In respect of 380 school sessions per year, it was required to have 10 sessions per week, but the length of those sessions was not specified – that was up to Governors. A half day could be divided into two sessions, with a break in the middle of those sessions.

**Q:** Are teachers aware of the 30 minute lunch break on Fridays?

**A:** Yes, this was advised in a meeting. Although it is far from ideal, it is beneficial to their ability to work with year group colleagues and TAs.

#### **g) Other sources of revenue**

**Q:** Were there any other options, or alternative sources of revenue?

**A:** There were not enough savings from any other option.

Mrs East informed Governors that she had undertaken a great deal of basic research on self-generating sources of income – long-term partnerships and lettings.

The Headteacher advised Governors that he would meet with School Space Ltd on 10 May 2018. They were a company who would arrange and manage lettings on the school site with a 60/40 split (in favour of the school). They already worked with a Catholic Secondary School in London; other Catholic Headteachers had been invited to the meeting. There could be a possible hub.

School Space could tap into unexplored lettings, such as renting the playground for rugby parking, summer schools, etc.

Mrs East also had details of an Independent School Partnership programme in the local area. The school had charitable status, and were non-profit making. There were clear guidelines for the programme. In order for the Independent school to maintain their charitable status, they had to be seen to work in partnership with local state schools. Mrs East would upload her research to date on Dropbox.

Mrs East was asked to obtain as much information on this as possible in advance of the next Governing Body meeting on 21 June 2018, including identifying income, and any covenants and SLAs.

#### **ACTION: MRS EAST**

**Q:** Had the school explored local companies for donations, etc, as part of their corporate social responsibility?

**A:** The Headteacher advised that the school often did not meet company criteria, due to the low level of deprivation.

#### **h) Conclusion of discussion**

The Chair thanked all Governors for their contribution to the discussion, and reiterated future actions:

- Parent survey, run by LKMCo, would continue until 25 May 2018.
- The Headteacher would put reminder to parents to complete the survey in the Newsletter.

- LKMCo would analyse the responses and send a report to Governors by 6 June 2018.
- Governors would review the report at the FGB on 21 June 2018.
- Foundation Governors would discuss the letters sent to them by JP, and decide if a collective response was appropriate.
- The Chair, Vice Chair and Headteacher would meet with the LA on 7 June 2018.
- Mrs East would continue to investigate a possible partnership with independent school as a source of income.
- The Headteacher would meet with School Space Ltd on 10 May 2018 to discuss managed lettings.

*[Mrs Williams left the meeting at 8pm]*

**5. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record, with the following amendment, and signed by the Chair:  
**Item 6, bullet point 4 – remove “(take out not)” in line one.**

**6. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018**

**a) Item 4(d) Foundation Governor vacancies**

The Headteacher had met with Fr Nico and Fr Kieran to discuss the Foundation Governor role. Fr Nico hoped to take up the post in September 2018. Fr Mark Lenane would support the class masses.

**ACTION: CHAIR**

**b) Item 10(b) Single Central Record**

The Chair confirmed that she had recently checked and signed the Single Central record.

**c) Item 12(a) Admission Appeals Training**

Training had been arranged for Governors of the local Catholic Primary Schools on Tuesday 26 June 2018 at 4pm. This would take place at the school. All Governors were urged to attend this training, as the Local Authority would not support admission appeals for Academies and VA schools with effect from 1 September 2018.

**ACTION: ALL GOVERNORS**

**d) Item 13(a) Hounslow Education Partnership**

The Chair confirmed that the Deed of Adherence had been signed and submitted before the deadline.

**7. Any Other Urgent Business to be considered**

**a) Outgoing PTA**

Mrs East reminded Governors that the outgoing PTA had played an exceptional role at the school, and asked whether a gift could be given to them in appreciation of their work. Governors advised that it was usual practice to send a letter of

thanks, and to put a note in the Newsletter. They recognised that members of the PTA always worked hard for the school, giving generously of their time.

It was agreed that Mrs East should draft a notice inviting parents to make any donations for a gift for the PTA members, which would be included in the Newsletter. Mrs East would coordinate any collection.

**ACTION: MRS EAST**

**8. Dates of meetings in the Summer Term 2018**

- 21 June 2018 - Full Governing Body
- 26 June 2018 - Training on Admissions Appeals – with other Catholic Primary School Governors

**9. Closing Prayer**

The meeting was closed in prayer by the Headteacher at 8.15pm

**These minutes were signed by the Chair at the meeting on 21 June 2018, following agreement by Governors that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.**