St Thomas Primary School Local Governing Board

Minutes of the Local Governing Board meeting for St Thomas Primary School held at the school (with a virtual joining option) on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 6pm.

Present:	*Jackie Evans (JE)	Dan Jenkins (DJ) **Headteacher**
	Martin Bell (MB)	
	Chris Edwards (CE) **Chair**	
In Attendance:	*Anna Cooksey (Clk) Governance Professional	
	Rachel Shaw (RS) Chief Executive	
	Kathy Skinner (KS) Deputy Headteacher	

*Indicates remote attendance via Microsoft Teams

Item	Details of Discussion	Decision or Action
1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Consent** CE welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Totty Brobyn, Jill Noakes, Georgia Martin, Tamara Al-Khalili, Alice Evans, Evonne Pavey and Sarah Sukkum. Governors consented to these absences.	
2.	**Declarations of Interest** There were no declarations of interest pertaining to any items on the agenda.	
3.	**Local Governing Board Matters** **Chair Succession Planning –** CE raised with the Governors the need to agree an action plan for the appointment of a successor to the role of chair of governors. To date there have been no Governors raising their interest in the role. The importance of deciding at this meeting was reiterated and the next steps, CE outlined the possible options to the Governors: • To appoint a Governor on the current local governing body as Chair of the board • To appoint an external person to the role of Chair of the board • To have all the current governors on a rotation in the Chair of board role Q CE asked again if there were any governors in attendance at the meeting that wished to stand in the role? No Governors declared. CE shared the principles of a rotating chair, to at least satisfy the preparation for meetings, run the meetings and attend the chairs forum. CE stated that the rotating chair option applies the principle of 'if no-one steps forward, then everyone has to step forward'. CE offered for consistency to fulfil the Vice Chair role and be a mentor to any person in the role of chair.	**Action:** Agreed next step actions.

The rotation could be:

- Meeting by meeting
- Half term by half term
- Term by term

A timetable can be prepared to confirm who is in the role at any time, giving each Governor a chance to prepare.

PW asked if any new governors had shown interest in the role?

CE confirmed not yet.

JE asked if there were any vacancies on the local governing board?

CE confirmed one community vacancy.

JE asked if it was possible for any existing governors within the trust that have an interest in becoming a Chair that could transfer?

Governors agreed this was a good CPD opportunity and DJ was in favour of proposing it to the schools in the Trust.

CE proposed after discussion three options:

Option A – Current governors take turns on rotation as Chair of the board.
Option B – Secondment from other boards in the Trust
Option C – Current Governor to step up and be elected.

Governors agreed in principle to fill the role with an internal person only, most likely via the rotating chair approach of Option A, if a single governor does not step forward as per Option C. Governors agreed next steps – before June to decide September's Chair for the Autumn Term, either via someone volunteering or all eligible governors drawing lots.

Decision: COG Succession Planning next steps.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting Wednesday 24th January 2024**

The minutes of 24.01.2024 were **approved** as a true record of the meeting.

Decision: Minutes 24.01.2024 **approved**

Matters Arising:

Agenda item	Action	By Whom	When
3	Circulate training for pupil disciplinary panels	COG	Complete
3	Governors to raise any interest in Chair of Governors role succession planning	Governors	Complete
5	Governors to include safeguarding on visit reports and to visual assessments on each visit	Governors	Complete
11	March 20th Safeguarding visit to include filtering and monitoring	COG/TB	Complete
13	Review how many parents are reading the newsletter on a Monday and compare to the numbers that opened it on a Friday	DJ	Complete
13	Update the newsletter with the number of governor visits and school visits to observe Opal	DJ	Complete

	14	Governors to confirm their attendance for April 22nd away day to the Clerk	Govs / Clerk	Complete
	KS confirmed newsletter statistics were very similar on review – 180 Monday vs 210 Friday. DJ confirmed SDP posters including the year's priorities for the year will be circulated to September 2024.			

5. Headteacher's Report

DJ presented a PowerPoint to Governors detailing:

- SDP Priorities: 1) Quality of teaching – Phonics is challenging.
  2) Opal Play
  3) Subject Leadership
  4) RWM Combined – 64% last year currently at 51% but very positive strides are being taken to close the gap. High levels of transient children at St Thomas, as the catchment has a high proportion of rental properties. The results are expected to be in line with last year.
- Attendance figures – showing consistently at national and higher than last year. The Headteacher away day has attendance as a focus.
- Detailed breakdown of staff training undertaken - high levels of training taken place. The Trust model to free up TAs for training is very successful.
- Staffing updates – leavers, joiners and staff wellbeing. One leaver that was soon to be advertised. Previous appointments have been ECTs. DJ confirmed it would be beneficial to the school to appoint a KS2 specialist to strengthen the team. Two teachers have requested a change – this is positive that there is scope to facilitate these. Two members of staff were on absence 1, one on absence 3 meetings. Natalie Wilson has provided a Friday well-being art club for staff.
- Start small, dream big initiative details - DJ signed the school up to a project in Plymouth – fits into school values, aspirations.
- Clubs and extra-curricular activities provided this term.
- New lettings revenue in the next year is expected to be £3000. This has allowed school to organise some free spaces, to be more inclusive – allowing children that would benefit to go free of charge (HAF hot meal for PP children and attend the club).
- Book club had been very successful, as part of the school's drive to instill a love of reading.

Governors thanked DJ for the extensive report.

DJ asked for Governors to consider the new school logo – the old version is outdated and doesn't represent the school in the same way.

DJ – asked if the new logo should be proposed to parents to be fully embedded on all templates?
All the feedback had been positive to date.

CE commented that the logo appeared to be fully embedded already as it was included on all paperwork.

Governors formally adopted the logo and agreed to let the parents know in the Newsletter, including reminding parents that they do not need to buy new uniform.

Decision: New logo adoption **approved**

6.	**Attendance** See section 5.	
7.	**Safeguarding Update** DJ presented a safeguarding update – 2 child protection 4 children in need 2 families are receiving early help. 45 children are high needs. DJ shared highlights from a safeguarding audit questionnaire issued to the children's results: • 94% children said they were happy and safe. • 88% children felt safe in the playground. CE asked if there were any underlying comments? • DJ stated the answers varied significantly but can be drilled down for each child. CE agreed that all children see risk very differently to adults and each other and often their decision can be influenced by things that occur during the school day. • DJ shared that the toilet measured as the highest area for children not feeling safe – but the questions meant they had to select one area. • Some children stated boredom at lunchtimes – DJ felt this was an immediate reaction to the football had been taken away from KS2 to allow a wider variety of OPAL play activities. It is now managed very well Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on rotation. Significant equipment had been provided to eliminate 'boredom'. Younger children were not so focussed on football. • Dinner hall – reflects the high level of noise in the hall. DJ would like to fix this – two quotes have been sought for sound proofing. The only companies that would quote were very high cost as they were high-end solutions. • JE – confirmed the cloud examples were being used in another school. Have now changed the ceiling boards with a false ceiling. The clouds were not successful. • DJ asked for the priority of this to be escalated, some children are struggling in the hall and will not eat in there at all.	
8.	**Pupil and Staff wellbeing.** See section 5.	
9.	**Financial Reports and Budget Planning** **PW gave highlights on current budget year:** • Teacher Pension employers increase 5% from 1st April 2024, but it is not confirmed as yet how much will be funded. • Support Staff pay award April 2024 is still unknown – 5% has been estimated and included in the plans. • Current forecast shows an overspend in year of £15,000 against budget of £17,000.	

	• January to March supply and energy costs have been higher. • Forecasts show energy bills are decreasing. • There are no current significant concerns or variances. CE asked how the school is feeling about the increase in overspend? PW confirmed Trust always expected a variance due to staff pay awards and potentially this can happen again next year. **PW gave highlights on next year's budget:** • 3-year balanced budget is expected – but may well need to dip into reserves, depending on pay rises again • GAG forecast 8% up from last year. • Costs have increased – staffing, pensions etc. • Estimating currently £1925 per point this year for support staff • Unions are currently aiming for £3000 per point, but it is not clear if this is achievable. • Teachers pay award – it is a challenge to know the increase. Currently plotted 5% with part funding in the budget plans • There are many uncertainties for this budget that make forecasting more challenging. • There is a national low birth rate this year – many schools in the trust have falling pupil numbers. • 29 children confirmed here for September 2024 which is very positive. 1 EHCP with significant high needs is a part of the 29. • Reviewing contracts and other costs in an effort to achieve best value wherever is possible. • Pauline confirmed Sansum won the 10-year cleaning contract – however they have not been meeting their contract obligations and have been told if they do not perform in the next half term the school will move to inhouse. They are struggling to recruit cleaners. We have asked for transparency. They have agreed to be reviewed again in May half term. DJ raised the benefits of using a more local company next time for covering absences. MB asked what the recommended reserves level is for the Trust and schools? PW confirmed the DfE recommended level is between 5% and 20%. The current level is 10% and this is dependent on current projects and other factors.	
10.	**Premises Report** DJ confirmed the school had worked on a 'ready for anything' procedure: • Internal blinds are needed for this to allow children and staff to hide. • School evacuation plans are being prepared. • Practices are to begin being mindful of the balance to minimise alarm and worry for the children. • Staff have been reminded of the importance of safety and balancing the unnecessary fear. PW presented the 5-year plan of works to the board: • Decorate 1 to 2 classrooms per year. • Clear the guttering. • Implement a new signing in system.	

	• Toilets refurbishment • Play equipment repairs. • Roof repairs or replace (CIF bid in place for this) PW confirmed the plan is dependent on finances available. Governors thanked PW for the report.	
11.	**Policy Review** • Charging and Remissions Policy – **Approved** and Governors agreed to upload to the school website. • Website audit update – AE has been auditing the school website and KS has been updating. CE raised concern that there may be a duplication of tasks.	**Decision:** Policy **Approved** **Action:** To check the website tasks are not duplicated
12.	**Governor Monitoring** Reports previously shared on Governor Hub: • OPAL report • EYFS report Governors highlighted the report's focus on the positive impact that OPAL has had on 'holistic student development' and commended the school for achieving this. CE asked for a budget allocation for the mention of play based items. DJ confirmed there was budget allocated for this. The budget holder has been made aware that the area can be refreshed and will act as an advert to potential parents of the school. DJ reiterated the focus was on outdoor resources. Wellbeing Update – MB asked if it would be useful for Governors to come into school and meet staff in afternoons? DJ confirmed that it could work to be available for a drop in at the end of the day in staff meetings or open staff meetings – this would be a good introduction to the governors. CE asked to attend an English visit as soon as possible. The visit would include the Reading club lead to understand the successes, the Maths and STEM visits are also due.	**Action:** CE to ask JN if a shadow on visits would be helpful?
13.	**Governor Training** The new Governors have attended many courses, but were not in attendance today, to be moved to the next meeting. MB volunteered to attend the upcoming Pupil Discipline Committee training, in response to the gap of skills on the recent skills audit.	**Action:** New Governors to feedback any courses attended
14.	**Communication with Trust Board and Community** Community communication identified as in point 5, plus the visits and trustees' tours that have taken place.	

	CE reiterated the successful meeting outcome of establishing a plan for Chair Succession Planning.	
15.	**Any Other Business** It was discussed that some governors had the next meeting as being scheduled for 15th May and some for 24th April, but that in fact neither date was ideal in part due to budget availability, and so it was proposed to move the next meeting to a new date of 1st May. CE asked Clk to circulate a meeting invitation for 1st May as soon as possible so that we could get a sense of how many governors to make the new date. *JE left the meeting at 7.35pm* **Please see confidential minutes.**	**Action:** Circulate 1st May invitation
16.	**Dates of Next Meetings** 1st May 2024 at 6pm 19th June 2024 at 6pm	

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Agenda item	Action	By Whom	When
3	Decide rotation Chair for Autumn Term	FGB	Summer term
11	Check website tasks are not being duplicated	AE/KS	ASAP
12	Ask if JN would appreciate shadowed visits	CE	ASAP
13	New governors to give feedback on the training attended	FGB	Next Meeting