



The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

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MINUTES of a meeting of the Full Governing Board held on Thursday 10 March 2022, from 5.00pm, Virtual meeting

Present: Wendy Batchelor (LEA governor), Nicola Markham (co-opted governor), Helen Cabell (co-opted governor), Roses Parfitt (staff governor), Giles Francis (co-opted governor), Charlie Kowalski (co-opted governor), Philip Jackson (Co-opted governor), Jon Hewitt (Headteacher) and Jane Gray (clerk).

Apologies: Luke Adams (parent governor)

In attendance: Atul Attra (School Business Manager), Caroline Whitlock (Deputy Headteacher)

1. Apologies (JG)

Luke Adams (LA) sent his apologies. WB informed the Board that due to circumstances Marie Verney has resigned her position on the Board. WB to ensure that a gift and card is sent to thank her for her time as a Governor over the years.

2. Any other business (AOB) items for the agenda (Chair)

Governor Communications (WB)
Responsibilities going forwards (WB)

3. Declarations of interest for this meeting (Chair)

None declared.

4. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising (Chair)

The minutes from the last meeting, 19 November 2021, were agreed. WB proposed for their ratification, NM 2nd that motion.

Outstanding actions from 18th November 2021

Training for Governors on Pupil Assessment. These will be set up to take place during the summer 2022 term. There are loads of exciting changes/projects to come, including a strategy day/event. For example EWIG. A new system for Pupil Progress. JH to arrange a presentation, perhaps at the next FGB.

Health and Safety walk around both school sites. HC informed that due to the ongoing situation with Covid it's still not been possible to action this. When circumstances allow this will be completed.

Castle@Theale update, including subgroup visit to the site. Ongoing. More details on how things are progressing will be covered in more digital later in the meeting.

Recruitment: Update on the Deputy Head vacancy. This has now been finalised and full details can be found in the Headteacher's report.

5. Committee reports (please only cover the main points from the meetings)

- a. *Curriculum (WB)*. With the PHSE topics this is ongoing with CW. Due to time constraints JH has been unable to finalise the wording on the exclusions letters to parents. JG (Clerk) to keep an eye on Exclusion Process course, held by WBC, for Governors to attend. JH has also offered to do tailored training on EHCPs, Behaviour plans, etc. Four policies were approved and signed off for ratification at this meeting.
- b. *Staffing (WB)* it has been busy on the staffing front, with a number of roles still to be filled. JH's Headteacher's report details this. Castle@Theal is still processing and CW will provide an update in today's meeting. Two policies were approved following their review and signed off for ratification at this meeting.
- c. *Finance and Pay Panel (HC)* With the Main Fund were looking at a 16/17% carry forward. This is due to back dated funding and additional grants. Without this extra income the school would have closed around 11%. However the Governors were warned that there are still difficult times ahead, for example the increase in costs of energy. PPG funding has been less than originally planned as Year 7 funding was removed due to Covid. Primary Sports Fund, again due to Covid, the school has been struggling to spend it. Therefore the funding had been moved to School Equipment & KS2 Playground upgrade. However if it's not spent by July 2022 the Government have indicated that it will be taken back. Transfer to the Capital Fund has been completed so this can be used to fund IT equipment over 5 years, new site van, resurfacing works, Hydrotherapy improvement and additional swipe cards for the main Post-16 site.

6. Headteacher's report (JH)

The Headteacher's report was emailed to all Governors prior to the meeting.

JH advised that pupil attendance has been lower than expected, in part due to Covid. GF asked how it compared to attendance at other schools in the area. JH advised that it is a similar picture across all settings as the infection rate is still high, especially since restrictions have been eased. JH is still committed to provide a safe environment for both pupils and staff. As such will continually monitor the situation.

All zones that were put in place to reduce the risk of Covid have now been removed. JH will be meeting with Team Leaders for ideas to bring back the school community. For example staff only events and events which involves Castle School as a whole. However they will be introduced gradually.

For the first time in two years staff training is back to being held in the school hall. No concerns have been raised.

There are still a few cases of Covid in the school but not at concerning levels. JH has revised the schools Covid policy and has been emailed to staff and parents.

With the lifting of Covid restrictions some of the programs that had to be put on hold are now being reinstated, for example the Boost Nurture Program.

The past two years has been challenging in so many ways and has had an impact on every aspect of the school. JH reported that Friends of Castle have found it difficult to raise funds during this time but will be regrouping to support the school. However due the current climate fund raising will continue to be a challenge.

Staffing is challenging as always, but it is paramount to make sure that the school has the right team members in the relevant role. Unfortunately recruitment for TA's is becoming more difficult as salaries in the private sector is increasing, especially for jobs in the hotel and retail industries. To ensure that those who are employed as a TA/support staff, Kate has been using their probation period to ensure that they are a good fit. The school is also recruiting for lunchtime controllers.

NM asked about unauthorised absences and how the school ensures that these cases are addressed. CW advised that these come under Safe Guarding and any concerns are reported to her. The first step is normally a “light” letter to the parents to see if there are any issues and how the school can help. This step normally resolves the issue however there have been rare occasions where the school has passed the case to the EWO. The key to reducing unauthorised absences is early intervention.

7. Policies for ratification

The following policies were agreed and ratified.

Policy Document	Proposed	Second
SEND	WB	NM
Admissions	JH	CK
Curriculum	RR	NM
Intimate Care	WB	HC
Capability	RR	NM
Safer Recruitment	WB	PJ
Non-smoking	HC	CK
Governor Visits	HC	CK
Health and Safety (revised and agreed document to circulated following a minor correction)	HC	CK
Financial Management	HC	CK
Charging and Remissions	NM	PJ

WB suggested and JH agreed to look at Rights Respecting School certification and inclusion on all policies with a view to evaluating it.

8. Safeguarding update and signing of central register (CW / WB)

CW reported back positive peer review with 2 other schools (mainstream) of our Safeguarding Policy. It was also good to have insight of how others run their Safeguarding.

As we’re now getting back to normal, digital signing in for visitors is being investigated.

The next staff training on Safeguarding will be held on 25th March. Most Governors have completed their Safeguarding training as part of their Governance Training (NSPCC). PJ has only completed the 2nd part of the two part Governance Course.

There is currently no change in number of reported concerns, likewise with care packages for children. There is also no change in the types of concerns being reported but with the increase in cost of living this may affect some families over the coming months.

CK asked if the free school meal vouchers will continue through the school holidays to help those families who are in need. AA reported that it continued during February Half Term and hopefully for the Easter Break. However it is very doubtful that it will continue after that. WB asked to be kept informed in the event there is a need to lobby the relevant departs.

9 AOB items

Castle@Theale Update

CW reported that the demo work has begun as part of the first phase. This phase will see the installation of temporary class rooms which are due to open September 2022 for the first pupils. NM and PJ have been to visit the new site.

There are plans to hold a virtual reality open day on 1st April 2022, primarily for parents of the new pupils who will be attending the school. There will be digital graphics from the architects for the new parents, staff members and other relevant parties to view. They will also be able to view what the curriculum, support and philosophy will be.

CW and the Castle@Theale Team will be going out and doing home visits to aid a smooth transition for all the pupils who will be starting in September.

Recruitment is ongoing with a view for all staff members to start in September. If they can start before that would be even better.

General Communications

WB asked if all the Governors received email communications from GovHub of useful information and course details. Everyone confirmed they did. WB asked if everyone could make sure that they check their @castle email accounts at least once a week.

Future Governor Meetings

WB inform everyone that with the "Living with Covid" future, after Easter all Board meetings will be conducted in person. However it was acknowledged that it may not be possible for all governors to attend all meetings in person. Therefore PJ has agreed to set up, and install, relevant technology to enable hybrid meetings FoC. PJ to liaise with JH.

Recruiting Board Members

WB and JH to look at additional ways to increase Parent and Community Governors.

Additional Governor Training

JH is happy to set up some additional training sessions to cover any Governor interests. Please forward any thoughts you have to either JH directly or JG who will collate the requests.

Date of the next meeting

Full Governing Board, Thursday 16th June 2022 at 5:pm. Location to be confirmed.

Meeting closed 6.30pm