

LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

Minutes of the

GOVERNING BOARD OF AVENUE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Virtual meeting held on Thursday, 24 March 2022 at 6pm

Present:	Abu Abdullah	Co-opted
	Benedicta Asare	Co-opted (<i>left 7.05pm</i>)
	Iqbal Hussain	Parent
	Sayesta Miah	Parent
	Hafise Nazif	Headteacher
	Soyeb Patel	Parent (vice-chair)
	Nisha Ramanathan	Co-opted
	Denis Shea	Local Authority (chair)
	Iqbal Singh	Co-opted
In attendance:	Julie Ammi	Clerk
	Lee Franklin-Lewis	Deputy Headteacher
	Manpreet Chhabra	Deputy Headteacher
	Sara Shamas	School Business Manager

The meeting commenced at 6pm.

340. Welcome and apologies for absence

Geetha Unnithan had sent apologies which were condoned. Benedicta Asare needed to leave the meeting at 7pm.

Sara Wilson and Neha Shivhare were absent.

The meeting was quorate.

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Sarah Beaumont, head of governance at The Education Space. Ms Beaumont introduced herself as an observer and had been commissioned to carry out a review of governance. Governance related documents would be reviewed and Ms Beaumont would also be facilitating a self-evaluation exercise to support governors' judgement on their current effectiveness as a board. The principles underpinning the review would be in line with the core functions of the governing board:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- overseeing financial performance
- holding leaders to account

After discussions and input from governors there would be a report along with an action plan for the board.

341. Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest on any item of the agenda.

342. Membership of governing board

- a. Governors noted there were no changes to the board membership
- b. Governors noted that there was 1 vacancy for a staff governor

There would be a staff ballot count taking place on 28 March 2022 at 2.30pm. Sayesta Miah had volunteered to preside over the count.

6.10 Iqbal Hussain joined the meeting.

343. Minutes of the last governing board meeting

a. Governors approved the minutes of the last board meeting held on 3-February 2022

b. Matters arising

The action register was reviewed. All actions had been completed.

The away day had been arranged for 14 May 2022. An ex-Ofsted inspector would join, along with Sarah Beaumont, head of governance. The headteacher would also provide training to the governing board.

Governors were reminded to use their governor email address to join virtual meetings. Some of the governors were unable to join the meeting using their school email. This would be followed up by the school business manager (SBM).

344. Governing Board committees

a Finance and resources 13 January 2022

The minutes were approved.

b Quality of education 20 January 2022

The minutes were approved.

Action: Actions to be recorded in the minutes of committees preceded by the word 'action' so they can be easily found.

c Human resources 22 February 2022

The minutes were approved.

Governor's question: Did we recruit an ICT person?

This was covered in the headteacher's report. The current provider which supports software maintenance was an IT technician through an SLA. From March the software maintenance has been withdrawn from the SLA. The person had the opportunity to be TUPEd over. A job description of what the school required was written and the person was given the opportunity to be an Avenue employee or to decline. If declined the school would advertise the role. He wanted to stay at Avenue so would be TUPEd over.

Governor's question: Is the data manager a separate role?

We adapted the role to suit our school. We have renamed the role as data and IT manager. The fact that he was doing more than 60% of that role gave him the right to be TUPEd over.

Governors were also pleased to hear that after interviews the substantive position of finance officer had been filled.

345. School budget monitoring

a. Governors received the school budget monitoring report.

The headteacher reported that the 2022 – 23 budget had been set and adjustments were currently being made. The school's contingency was heavily relied upon and this would have significant implications for staffing. The time had come to review staffing. There would be a budget ratification meeting on 27 April and that budget would be further discussed. The chair and headteacher had discussed this prior to this meeting. The chair suggested and it was agreed that a working party would be set up comprising of the headteacher, SBM, chair of governors and chairs of all 3 committees to discuss restructuring at a strategic level. If other governors wished to attend, they would be welcome to do so. The first item would be to ascertain what the risks are.

Governor's question: What are the time frames that we have to work with?

The proposed budget for next year ending March 2023 sees the 1 million surplus reduced to somewhere much, much, less. There is a year in total. This implicates a lot of people and will require a restructure of staff. There may be implications for redundancies. It requires a strategic considered plan with actions.

Governor's question: With the finances and the council what kind of support are they giving, considering it is a borough wide and national issue?

The messages from the authority and the meeting attended last year which was called by the Manor Park heads did not produce any response of support. Anita Stewart, Director of Education has been invited into school to meet on 26 April to alert her to the situation at the school. It can then be reported to the committee. Aside from the LA conversations with Tom Alexander, Head of ER, from NPW, regarding the process will happen, along with the finance team about the process of going into a deficit budget. Peoples views are starting to be gathered. It will be reported back to the relevant committees.

Governor's question: Can we do budget forecasting for different scenarios?

We do forecast a 3-year plan. However, pupil numbers can never be accurately predicted. The school has a capacity of 944. To base projections on that number would leave the school financially in a very poor situation as it would not receive that money. The climate of a year has to be tested to see what is happening to rolls. Nursery numbers have been decreasing for the last 8 years. Mobility is also very unpredictable.

Governor's question: Have you started to think about going forward with any ideas on paper? There are quite a few primary schools around us.

The school knows the reasons for the falling roll. Covid has not helped. A lot of Eastern European children have left. Manor Park is a very built up area already so there are no new housing or new families coming in. Families are being housed elsewhere and it is cheaper elsewhere. Brexit did not help either. There is no control over external factors. Internal factors can be controlled, for example; new teachers are being given one year contracts as opposed to permanent although this in itself means that we will not attract a wide field of applicants. That is always a risk because teachers do not want 1 year. In the next 3 years or so will probably become 3-form entry. This is still a very big school and will need a substantial leadership team and support staff. We cannot lose the provision, standards and care children get whilst being careful that we balance the budget.

Decision: Governors approved the school budget monitoring report.

- b. Governors received the schools financial value standard checklist (SFVS)

The completed SFVS was on GovernorHub. The SFM gave an overview of SFVS for new governors. The governing board were requested to approve this before submission to the local authority by the end of 31st March 2022.

Governor's question: For point 30 adequate audit of voluntary fund - what does that mean?

We do not have a voluntary fund account so that does not apply to us.

Governor's question: Once we complete and submit the form what happens? Do they then come back and test us on any of this?

They changed this last year and created a rag-rated table for us to compare ourselves to other schools. It comes back as an area of concern, average area or concern or doing very well.

They did not come back and check anything but we were not a school of concern. We are audited every 3-4 years. Our last audit was in May 2019.

Decision: Governors were happy to approve the SFVS in principle.

Action: Governors to email any questions about the SFVS to the SBM before 31 March 2022, when the form would be submitted to the local authority.

346. Headteacher's report

Governors had received the headteacher's report and questions were submitted to the headteacher in advance of the meeting. The away day and staffing had been covered earlier in the meeting. The headteacher's report was incredibly comprehensive and covered the whole-school under the Ofsted headings. There were 9 appendices accompanying the report.

Governor's question: Will there be any changes in the SLT structure? Are there plans to recruit a 4th assistant headteacher (AHT) on the back of an underspend in teaching staff?

Earlier in the year when the AHT left it was mentioned that the school would be more creative and appoint the role of pastoral manager, and this would be a support staff role. It is with all the duties of an AHT, minus the teaching aspect and performance management duties. Someone has been recruited to the pastoral manager role, so this has been achieved.

Governor's question: Are persistent absence (PA) children penalised in any way by the school? Is Newham attendance service a last resort?

There are a number of actions taken. If they are PA the human touch is looking at the causes, for example, we recently had a child coming from Harrow that left because it was not viable. There might be mobility problems. It is taken on a needs basis. The attendance officer and Lee Franklin-Lewis deal with PA.

Governor's question: The number of safeguarding incidents seems high - do we have data?

Safeguarding and physical incidences are all logged onto Safeguard but they are a little different. Not all incidents are of a safeguarding nature that we need to be extremely concerned about and follow the social services pathway. Some are incidents we keep in school for monitoring and to show Ofsted. They all come under the remit of safeguarding pupils. Physical could be incidents in the playground.

Governor's question: In terms of extra-curricular activities how is that going now in filling the gaps over the last couple of years? How are we making use of those?

There are extra-curricular as in enrichment activities 'clubs,' and extra tuition such as, covid catch up interventions. Clubs/activities, we are getting back on board, the children missed out. They are not yet back to pre-pandemic levels. There are less people willing to run them. We do not have many teachers volunteering. We have some support staff running clubs, for which they are paid . Externally led clubs are full and work well but there are less. This will be reviewed next year and we will try and entice more teaching staff.

The interventions with tutoring and covid catch-up funding happen on the back of pupil progress meetings (PPM). Assessments take place and then PPMs where teachers have a meeting with the DHT and the YGL take place. The headteacher also monitors the PPMs. The individual needs of the children are discussed. If it is considered a child needs an intervention or a lack of progress for what could be pastoral and academic needs, then this will be decided at the end of the meeting. For example, Year 2 handwriting was coming up a lot with fine and gross motor skills so we had an intervention for that.

Tutoring has happened in Years 3 and 4. Years 1 and 2 have smaller classes. Years 5 and 6 have an extra teacher so tutoring was not needed. One of the tutors left at the end of last half-term. Children in year 4 will finish at the end of this half-term then tutoring will move into Year 3.

Year 6 is a race to SATS. Assessment week was quite successful. Some children were highlighted who might need extra support and a Year 6 teacher returning from maternity will support these. It is constantly reviewed and changed if needed.

Governor's question: Are there any school holiday interventions?

We have always had Easter school and we do have after school boosters. We had HAF last year which was a project, but this is not available this year.

Governor's question: For Years 3, 4, 5 the report mentioned writing being a weaker point. Are there going to be any interventions?

Writing in the report includes handwriting and also the journey of writing. We have children that do not have many experiences of the outside world due to their circumstances. We talked about the writing journey in detail. We moderated the books, then called in Andy Griffiths a consultant and his speciality is writing. He spent half a day with those year groups. The teachers did very well in the CPD session. They have homework and will bring back writing in the next session in June. We are also talking about moderating with other schools too.

The chair thanked the headteacher for her report.

347. School improvement plan

This was covered in the headteacher's report and appendices. Governors are part of the plan as they are leadership and management.

348. School self-evaluation update

This item was shared in the February meeting. It will be updated when end of year summative data is available and is reviewed.

349. Safeguarding

This item was covered in the headteacher's report supported by a pastoral provision report in appendix 5.

350. Compliance calendar items (RAG rated)

a. Skills audit of governing board membership

This was ongoing and also part of today with Sarah Beaumont observing.

b. Review of governor code of conduct

The proposed code of conduct was issued by the headteacher's PA in advance of the meeting.

Governor's question: If there is an investigation who does it?

Anybody that we decide. It could be a governor or a panel of governors. It could be The Education Space, or an outsider.

Decision: The governors approved the governing board code of conduct.

351. Risk register

Governors noted the schools risk register. It is something that academies do, and not necessarily maintained schools. The governor's newsletter provided an informative section on risk management and governors responsibility within that. There are lots of areas of risks in school, financial, health and safety and safeguarding. The risk register was something schools are being invited to consider but it is not compulsory.

Sarah Beaumont advised that a populated template was in the process of being drafted for schools to consider.

Decision: Governors agreed to await the populated register from the education space and agreed to continue to consider.

352. School policies for review

a. Review examination contingency plan and non-examination assessment policies

This policy was not on the original agenda that was drafted and is for secondary schools. It was unknown why this had been added.

b. Review exclusion policy

The school follows the local authority exclusion policy.

c. Review policy for children with health needs who cannot attend school

The school has a medication policy and a first aid policy. Those children with health needs who cannot attend school are addressed within those policies.

353. Mental health and well-being

This is a big area of school life and has always been spoken about. The well-being working party continues. The biggest step taken this term is that Mr Franklin-Lewis has taken the senior mental health practitioner course which all schools have to complete by 2024. The school continues to look at reduction of workload and provides mindfulness sessions and coaching style lesson observations (which have been renamed). It will be an item on the quality of education committee and an action plan will be created once everything is in place.

Governor's question: Has there been any recent mental health or wellbeing issues at school or that you are anticipating? Have you seen an increase in covid cases at school?

We have had a massive increase of staff with covid. We have had up to 21 members of staff out each day. All 3 of SLT have been in class at some point. Staff absence has been massive; to the point it has been quite concerning. Agency staff have been used to cover too. There are staff with long covid and illnesses, and symptoms relating to covid. The

school's procedure is to stay off from school until 2 negative tests after day 7, and if unwell for 10 days. The LA's view is sickness absence starts after day 10.

Governor's question: Is there an impact in relation to children catching covid?

We have not seen a large amount of children off school with covid. They are off with general illness including covid symptoms. We have had the usual amount of mental health raised through school. A couple of recent ones have been quite concerning which resulted in CAMHS and support for low level cases. We continue to use our learning mentors, assistant psychologists, and our mental health support works with parents one day a week in school.

354. Governor education and training

a. Governors to report on any training attended

Sayesta Miah, Benedicta Asare and Nisha Ramanathan attended the introduction to governance training.

Nisha Ramanathan attended children in safeguarding.

b. Governors to report on any training required

The away day had been set for 14 May 2022 and this would be a training session.

Action: Once the governance review is received, the governing board to review training needs.

c. Governors to feedback regarding any link governors reports

The link governors reports are uploaded to Google Drive.

355. Future meeting arrangements

Summer term

19 May 2022

14 July 2022

All meetings commence at 18:00 unless otherwise stated.

Action: Future meeting start times, and face to face or online meetings, to be discussed at the away day on 14 May.

356. Any other business

a. Russia and Ukraine situation

Governor's question: With the situation with Russia and Ukraine are we seeing any issues in school?

We are really aware that children are talking about it as they often talk about what is in the news. Some raised it in the classroom, and some in the playground. We have talked to staff about how to react, particularly validating the way that children feel. Staff can come to senior leaders for support if needed. We have put things on parent boards for parents. We have touched base with a few families from Russia and Ukraine.

357. Agenda items for the next meeting

There were no further items.

The chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.

Action register:

Minute	Action	Action allocated to	Update	Action completed / date
344 b	Actions to be recorded in the minutes of committees preceded by the word 'action' so they can be easily found.			
345 b	Governors to email any questions about the SFVS to the SBM before 31 March 2022, when the form will be submitted to the local authority.			
354 b	Once the governance review is received, the governing board to review training needs.			
355	Future meeting start times, and face to face or online meetings, to be discussed at the AwayDay on 14 May.			