

BEAM COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting Held on Thursday, 23rd January 2025 at 4.30pm via Teams

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| <p>Governors:</p> <p>Angela Allen Clare Cantle Simon Cole Sevim Ekmekci Amandeep Kaur Pearl Kowlessar Melanie Kyreziu Donna Lumsden Rashid Nix Lando du Plooy Farharna Rahman Philip Waker Sharon White Paul Willis Tracey Whittington</p> | <p>Parent – resigned on the 14th November 2024 Associate Co-opted Co-opted - Chair Parent Associate Staff Co-opted – Vice Chair Co-opted Co-opted Parent LA Co-opted Governor Co-opted Head Teacher</p> |
| <p>In attendance:</p> <p>Dawn Buchanan Karen Gregory Taiwo Judah-Ajayi Deon McKenzie Kelly Mooney Kerry Taylor Gary Anderson Dan Knight Marian Hawkins</p> | <p>School Business Manager Finance Manager HR Manager Assistant Headteacher – Personal Development lead Assistant Headteacher – SENDCo Assistant Headteacher – EYFS and KS1 Lead Assistant Headteacher – Designated Safeguarding Lead Caretaker Governance Professional, Juniper Education</p> |

| | | ACTION |
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| 1 | <p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received and accepted from Simon Cole, Deon McKenzie and Rashid Nix.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>Welcome The Chair welcomed Governors to the meeting.</p> | |

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| <p>3.</p> | <p>Notification of any other business</p> <p>It was noted that Angela Allen has resigned from the Governing Body. LduP will write to parents advising of her resignation. Following this resignation, an election will be held for a Parent Governor.</p> <p>Governors thanked Ms Allen for her services to Beam and sent their best wishes for the future.</p> <p>Ms Ekmekci said that she will be standing down as Chair of the Governing Body and explained the reasons. However, she would like to contribute to the school when she can.</p> <p>Governors thanked the Chair for her hard work on the Governing Board and congratulated her on her career break. She explained that she would write a letter to parents.</p> <p>Mr du Plooy has volunteered to act as Interim Chair until the end of this Academic Year. His appointment was agreed.</p> <p>It was agreed to change the date of the Summer 1 FGB meeting to Monday, 19th May at 4.30pm. Working parties will not meet before this meeting.</p> | <p>LduP HT</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>NB - Governors</p> |
| <p>4</p> | <p>Declaration of Business Interests/Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>It was noted that Rashid Nix has not completed the annual declaration of business interests.</p> <p>The Interim Chair declared a conflict of interest due to work with a charity he runs – Educate for Change – and his role as an Ofsted Inspector.</p> <p>No gifts or hospitality had been received or given since the last meeting.</p> | <p>RN</p> |
| <p>5</p> | <p>Minutes of the previous meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th November 2024, were agreed as an accurate record of that meeting.</p> <p>They were signed by the Chair.</p> | |
| <p>6</p> | <p>Matters arising from the minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Skills Audit will be circulated again. The HT will update and re-send the grid which was sent originally. Governors were asked to complete the Skills Audit as soon as possible and return by email to FR. • Governors who had not completed the paperwork to apply for a DBS check, were reminded to do so as soon as possible. • The remaining matters arising noted on the agenda, have been completed. | <p>HT</p> <p>Governors</p> <p>Governors</p> |

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Financial Report

Dawn Buchanan, School Business Manager, reported on the financial situation.

Total Budget year to date.

There is an expected surplus of £200,000 but a current deficit of £844,000. This is not good news as we are in the middle of a deficit recovery. We anticipated receiving income of £3.7m, but have only received £3m due to the timing for funding such as High Needs, PPG (Pupil Premium Grant), etc.

Expenditure:

A spend of £3.5m was expected but we have spent £3.8m. This is due to recruitment for vacancies and other staffing. The number of pupils with complex needs has increased and the type of support required is very different. There have been some savings in staffing by reducing contracts or recruiting part-time staff later in the year.

There has been less spend in catering by only replacing obsolete equipment with new items.

Savings have been made through the disposal of IT equipment.

The school will try to carry out as much maintenance as possible in-house.

Complex needs and SEND expenditure continues to cause problems with budgeting.

Question:

Could we consider an Extraordinary meeting to ensure that everyone has the deficit recovery plan, as lack of funding is having an effect on the Budget? The deficit has to be addressed as the school cannot set a deficit Budget.

It was suggested that the following could be considered:

- a) How we can terminate all temporary contracts by the 31st August 2025, which will give two terms to help people find new work. Can the HT let us know how many temporary contracts there are in school?
- b) As a Governing Body we should institute a recruitment freeze.
- c) All non-class based teachers in September should go back into class so that no additional teachers are needed.
- d) We need to look at the DSG capital grant for maintenance so that we can draw down from our Formula Capital Grant with the LA (Local Authority). The HT commented that most of it has been used.
- e) The HT and the SBM to look at all SLAs (Service Level Agreements) to see how we could make savings on things such as subscriptions, apps., etc.

Governors acknowledged that the school has to demonstrate that steps are being taken to keep the Budget under control.

It was agreed that a special meeting would be sensible. The LA can remove the Governing Board if there is a serious overspend in the Budget.

Question:

Why has there been an unexpected spent on recruitment for vacancies?

Several factors have impacted the recruitment costs. Firstly, an increased number of pupils with high needs has led to more specialised recruitment of SEN qualified personnel. There has also been a significant amount of turnover due to resignations, retirements, contract changes, maternity, long-term sickness and dismissals. Additionally, some fixed term contracts have come to an end. The market conditions means that it has become harder to recruit quality staff, this is reflected in the costs. There are also retention challenges – some staff that are in high demand have left for opportunities that offer more benefits.

Question:

There is a time lag for income but where would we be if the expected income came in on time. Governors need to know the position once expected income has been received.

The SBM replied that if we had additional income we would be £0.5m better off.

The HT commented that if Governors look at information circulated, Beam does not have a problem with long term sickness compared to other schools nationally.

Leave for one person was due to a disciplinary matter where we were making payments and we had to adhere to Barking & Dagenham policy. We generally receive money from insurance, but one member of staff was not covered by the insurance. If a member of staff has certain ailments it increases the premia.

Beams is on the edge of Havering and we have pupils with special needs coming into school from that area, due to the reputation of the school. We shall receive money from two pupils with very complex needs.

Referring to a recruitment freeze, this is not prudent when the HT knows staff are leaving and we need to recruit early to appoint high quality staff. Some staff have worked in the school for a long time and are paid at the high end of the scale. The HT does not have a Deputy, but she has Assistants and leaders within the school which is why we are in the top five schools for attainment in Barking & Dagenham.

In terms of SEND and complex needs, there was a permanent exclusion meeting which involved many personnel and we have also cut back on supply. Some staff are on contract only until April this year. However, we could look at temporary contracts and we have started to action this. We already have five fewer supply teachers.

HT/SBM

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| | <p>The SBM said that there will be a bespoke session to discuss the above.</p> <p>Governors thanked the SBM for her report.</p> | |
| 8 | <p>Membership/Governance Matters of the Governing Body.</p> <p><u>Skills Audit:</u></p> <p>Agenda item 6 refers.</p> <p><u>Governing Body Self-Evaluation - Questions 7 and 8.:</u></p> <p><u>Board Structure:</u></p> <p>Size. The Governing Board is the right size. Rated Green.</p> <p>Delegation: Committee terms of reference are up to date, are comprehensive and the work undertaken is not duplicated. Rated Green.</p> | |
| 9 | <p>Head Teacher's Report</p> <p>Governors receive the HT's written report.</p> <p>The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that social justice is included.</p> <p><u>Safeguarding:</u></p> <p>Gary Anderson, Asst. Head Teacher and DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead, reported on safeguarding and related issues which affect school attendance.</p> <p>Safeguarding procedures in school are very robust.</p> <p>Staff receive regular training, and procedures and risk assessment are thorough and followed through.</p> <p>The school has completed the LA Safeguarding Audit and is undertaking its own annual audit with support from Donna Lumsden and Claire Cantle. Everything is evidenced and shows the impact of what is being done.</p> <p>The biggest update is that on the previous audit GA was not satisfied that we could show online safety as we would wish, but there are new applications in place and we are filtering and monitoring it. This does not hinder the use of Apps we need to use for Curriculum, but it teaches pupils how to be safe online.</p> <p>We have upgraded the offer and need to talk about monitoring, i.e. looking at how our systems are being used. GA receives weekly reports on what has been blocked so that we know where support is needed.</p> <p><u>Attendance:</u></p> <p>Attendance is very good,. We have 95% - 96% attendance which compares well with national. Our attendance is much higher than that for schools in the Borough in the same context.</p> <p>Staff talk to parents/carers of anyone with low attendance and organise 1:1 support teams for parents where there is a concern.</p> <p>We are compliant, effective and follow up robustly with other agencies to ensure that children are safe at school and in other parts of their life.</p> <p>Our numbers for pupils with persistent absence are low, compare well with national, and are significantly below LA average.</p> | |

When looking at the breakdown of inclusion groups such as SEND, attendance is as high as the rest of the school. Those on PPG or disadvantaged are not regularly absent from school. If they are not in school they do not learn and there is a problem with safeguarding.

Governors thanked Mr Anderson for his report.

A Governor commented that in the HT's report, Period 1 this year and Period 2 year last year seem to have worse absences without authorisation. All numbers are increasing compared to last year. Also, late arrivals have increased.

The HT explained that the LA has changed some of its codes on MIS, and some are no longer there. There are new codes which explain the increases.

The HT cannot agree to family holidays in term time. Previously, some could be authorised under certain circumstances, but there are now no options. As a school with high EAL, this has impacted us, as family members live abroad. If a family takes a leave request in term time, it is an unauthorised absence. Some children have families who live abroad, and in the event of a family bereavement, this is difficult.

GA updated contextually on what is happening to some families and the impact on the school. Some families are travelling further to school as they have been made homeless. Twenty families have become homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. The Courts are inundated with applications for evictions and families are living in hostels which are so full that they may be moved further away. Others are in accommodation such as hotels and because of the impact of such disruption on their children, parents do not want to remove them from our school.

There is an increase in mobility for families who are in such accommodation out of the area. We talk to the families about the importance of children getting to school on time, but it is a very difficult situation for some. It is also challenging for children to do their homework, or for someone to listen to them reading, when the family is living in one room with a shared kitchen and bathroom.

As well as supporting parents' applications, we try to support with food banks, money hub and run coffee mornings where families can get advice from advisors. We meet with Charities as sometimes people have had to move quickly and cannot access their belongings.

Question:

To a member of staff. As a teacher, what is the impact of these problems on staff?

We have to work so hard to make progress with attendance for some children and families. Some inevitably get lost in the

system when they are moved. As a teacher it is difficult but as part of the safeguarding team we liaise with outside provision. Nationally there is a focus on attendance, but also on families who live in temporary accommodation. One of the strengths of this school is forward thinking. There are many small actions taken every day which add up to what this school is.

Question:

Has the school had to consider reporting attendance and children being at risk due to housing? In terms of the welfare of children who may live in hotels, are the leaders checking the safeguarding of these pupils and the risks to their safety?. Is the school taking reasonable steps to ensure pupils in these accommodations are safeguarded?

The HT replied that the school has implemented a lunchtime club with indoor activities to ensure that pupils who live in temporary accommodation can be inside using computers, playing games and talking. We try to provide a safe place in which pupils can play games. We also use this opportunity to informally check their wellbeing and any potential safeguarding concerns.

Is there a formal way in which pupils can share concerns? For example 1:1 sessions once a week which are noted on CPOMS?

This is done informally, but we could do this formally.

Referring to her report, the HT commented that the curriculum is fluid. In years 3 and 4 there are more pupils with SEND and at the beginning of the term there was an emphasis on oracy so that children can retain the knowledge needed. There is an emphasis on handwriting and transcribing. The HT advised that she has a post Covid plan, which was updated and it shows nationally that years 3 and 4 have further issues.

Asbestos has been found in the staff room and the staff are now using the wellbeing room. This has impacted some of the cohesiveness and wellbeing for staff.

It is noted on page 6 of the report that the Governor skills audit has not been completed. Governors are part of leadership within the school and have been asked to complete and return the audit.

Page 7 refers to the School Development Plan (SDP) update. The school has an updated SEF which is used internally, as it is a live document. It is reviewed half termly.

The Staffing Update on pages 9 /10 shows that the average teacher salaries in school are not particularly high compared to others in the LA. There are a number of schools in the LA with high SEND, also experiencing deficit. In comparison, our deficit is lower than these schools.

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| | <p>Personal Development is a strength of the school.</p> <p>Question: <i>Referring to page 13, is there any update on exclusions?</i> The HT replied that exclusions are unusual, and due to confidentiality, the HT was unable to go into detail, but to assure Governors that the legal procedures had been adhered to.</p> <p>In reply to questions about the Quality of Education, the HT commented that many of the topics lead to social justice and creating good citizens in the future. There are questions from the children, who give their views, and they listen and challenge. Everything is based on British values. She explained how this is addressed in many subjects.</p> <p>There is rapid catch up for some pupils in year groups which is 20 minutes to help them become fluent readers.</p> <p>We assess new children when they are admitted into school. There is 'breakfast' intervention daily which is done by invitation for PPG pupils, those living in hostels and hotels, and those who have not passed the phonics check. The school has started a reading mentor programme for those who have graduated from these sessions. Older pupils work in a mentorship role as well. The report from Mrs McKenzie explains that the school has achieved 'Bronze' status for the Rights Respecting School award in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> | |
| <p>10</p> | <p>Working Groups <u>Curriculum:</u> Updates in the HT's report refer.</p> <p><u>Finance:</u> Agenda item 7 refers. The working group had received the SBM's report and reviewed the Budget. Catering will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Health & Safety:</u> Building work and safety were discussed, together with asbestos removal.</p> <p>Fire warden training is to be completed.</p> <p>All testing such as fire, legionnaire's in water, lighting etc., has been completed. At the first drill last term it took 3 minutes and 32 seconds for everyone to exit the school.</p> <p>The group discussed playground equipment. We pay Universal for an annual check. One item has been removed due to problems.</p> <p>Governors discussed training for new staff.</p> <p>Policies will be reviewed at the next meeting.</p> | <p>C/f</p> <p>C/f</p> |
| <p>11</p> | <p>School Improvement/Operating Plan Head Teacher's written report refers.</p> | |

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| 12 | Director of Children's Services Report No report had been received. Cllr Waker will see if it is available. | PW |
| 13 | Governor Training Training will be discussed when Skills Audits have been received. | |
| 14 | Monitoring Reports There will be some visits next term for quality assurance. Paul Willis' report will be reviewed at the next meeting. | C/f |
| 15 | Chair's Actions The Chair had not taken any urgent actions since the last meeting. | |
| 16 | Data Protection There had been no breaches or incidents since the last meeting. Just a few subject access requests. | |
| 17 | Any Other Business There were no urgent business items to discuss. | |
| 18 | Reflection on Governor Impact/Meeting Reflections There were good practical actions resulting from the finance report. Some Governors' suggestions were very helpful. The item on data was interesting, especially the way in which it was presented. The HT has put together an action plan for Governors which can be updated as and when necessary. It will be brought to the next meeting for review. The Chair was thanked for her work with the Governing Body. The HT thanked her for her support, and acting as a good critical friend. Her experience and support of the HT and Governors has been invaluable. | C/f/HT |
| 19 | Confidential Matters There were no confidential matters to discuss. | |
| 20 | Meeting dates 2024-2025 Wednesday, 19th March 2025: <i>Working Parties – 15.30</i> <i>Pay Committee</i> <i>Health & Safety Committee</i> <i>Finance & Pay Committee</i> <i>FGB – 16.30 – 18.00</i> Monday, 19th May 2025: <i>FGB only – 16.30 – 18.00 via Teams</i> | |

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| | <p>Wednesday, 25th June 2025: <i>Working Parties 15.30</i> <i>Pay Committee (Forecast & Budget Focus Group)</i> <i>Health & Safety Committee</i> <i>Finance & Pay Committee</i> <i>FGB – 16.30 – 18.00</i></p> | |
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Minutes agreed and signed by the Interim Chair on the 19th March 2025 Chair.....

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