

LITTLE COMMON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the meeting on 19 May 2011

PRESENT: Mr M Amess, Mrs L Appleby, Mr R Cochrane, Mrs M Golding, Mrs W Gorham, Mr T Graham (Chairman), Mrs L Hammond, Mr K Higginson, Mrs N Parker, Mrs M Quinn, Mrs A Scales, Mrs I Smith, Mrs N Willard.

ALSO ATTENDED: Miss L Clarke, Mrs G Whitehouse (Clerk).

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| 1 | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Mrs S Barnett, Mrs A Burton, Mrs K McDonald, and Mr N Wilkinson. | |
| 2 | DECLARATIONS OF BUSINESS INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS – there were none. | |
| 3 | MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING were signed as an accurate record. | |
| 4 | MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES | |
| 4.1 | Traffic walkabout (4.1) This had not yet taken place, but would be arranged in the near future. Parking around the school was as bad as ever. The Chairman asked whether the contact information had been provided to the school. The Head replied in the negative. | NW |
| 4.2 | Year 6 residential visit (4.3) The difference in price between going to the Isle of Wight and going to Windmill Hill would be about £30 per child. Mrs Scales would ask the school council for their views on the matter. | AS |
| 4.3 | Walking bus (4.5.3) The head had drafted a letter and needed to work out the costs to be included in it. The letter would be sent to the parents concerned after the mid-term break. | LA |
| 4.4 | Governors' subject reports (5.9) The Chairman asked governors to send reports to the Clerk by 30 June. These could include comments on governors' visits and general impressions of the particular area for which each governor was responsible. Governors were also asked to state whether they wished to take on a different area of responsibility for the next year or remain with the same one. | All |
| 4.5 | Application for child with special needs (13) Mrs Golding and the Head had discussed the case of the pre-school child who had been allocated a place at Little Common. They had agreed that this was not the right school to provide for his needs. If he did come to Little Common there would be funding to support him, but an alternative provision would be preferable. | |
| 5 | SCHOOL REPORTS Mrs Masters, the Assessment Co-ordinator, attended the meeting to explain the new system to governors. | |
| 5.1.1 | The school had reverted to the use of Report Assist software, which had been used previously. It had not been considered to be ideal, so a different system using Word had been tried last year. | |

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| | Teachers had found this very difficult to use, and there had been a lot of compatibility issues between computers with different versions of the software. | |
| 5.1.2 | The statement banks on Report Assist had not produced the type of report that was required, so these had been deleted this time. However, teachers would be able to store comments that they would like to use a number of times. The software was very user-friendly and the teachers had been trained to use it on the INSET day. Each teacher had a memory stick on which to store reports, and these would be returned to the Network Manager after the process to be re-used next year. | |
| 5.1.3 | The software allowed for reports to be merged, and this would be very useful in job-share situations. The Network Manager would support any technical queries and Mrs Masters would help staff with any other questions. | |
| 5.1.4 | Mrs Masters had created a dummy report and copies were circulated to governors. The general comments box would be at the beginning of the report this time. This would contain details of the child's attitude, behaviour, attendance and general information. The remainder of the first page would contain comments on literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. | |
| 5.1.5 | The second page would contain reports on the foundation subjects, targets for the future and a comment from the Head. Each child would draw a self-portrait on the cover of his/her report: where parents lived separately, the child would do one drawing for each report. Children's comments on what they felt they had achieved would also be included in the report. | |
| 5.1.6 | Teachers would ensure that each report was unique and that as little jargon as possible was used. The main purpose of the report was to celebrate the child's achievements throughout the year. Levels would be recorded for core subjects only. Effort grades would be given, with A for outstanding, B for good, C for satisfactory, D for inconsistent and E for a need to make more effort. These would not be linked to performance. | |
| 5.1.7 | Reports would be sent home on 15 July and SATs results would be included with the year 6 ones. Mrs Gorham asked whether the new format would be explained to pupils. Mrs Masters said that there would be a letter from the Head to do this. The Chairman thanked Mrs Masters for attending the meeting. | |
| 6 | HEAD'S REPORT | |
| 6.1 | Mrs Appleby told governors that she did not intend to re-mix any classes this year and there were no issues that would necessitate this. She would write to parents to explain her reasons for the decision. She realised that some parents may be unhappy about this decision, but she would speak to them individually if necessary. Mr Amess felt that there would always be some parents who were not satisfied with decisions. | |
| 6.2 | The meeting for staff following the staff restructuring consultation period had taken place. Mrs Appleby announced that, since that meeting, Mrs Scales and Mrs Beckett had obtained a job-share | |

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| | position at Herstmonceux primary school and would be leaving in July. They had been very valued members of staff and she had no doubt that they would succeed in their future careers. | |
| 6.3 | The Head reported to governors that a parent had written to Ofsted, without asking for an appointment with her first, to say that Little Common allowed bullying to happen and took no action to stop it. The Head had been summoned to a meeting to defend the school against this accusation. The panel had been very impressed with the school's systems when she explained them to them, and had taken away some of Little Common's paperwork to use as examples of good practice. | |
| 6.4 | The school had been represented in the Brighton Children's Parade for the first time and this had been a very enjoyable occasion for all who took part. The children had paraded around Little Common with the jack-in-the-box and hobby horses that they had made. Mrs Smith thought that this had had a great impact and suggested that it should be done more often to raise community awareness of what the school was like. Mrs Parker agreed that it would be good for the school to become more involved in the community. The Head now attended meetings of the Little Common Business Association with a view to improving links. | |
| 6.5 | Year 6 SATs tests had gone very smoothly, with all of the children present for every test. The governors thanked everyone involved. | |
| 6.6 | The playground equipment had all been condemned and had been removed from the playground. Three suppliers had submitted quotes for replacement equipment, and these ranged from £3,000 to £40,000 depending upon the quality and quantity of pieces. A lot of fund raising was going on and the school was looking for sponsorship and grants. A group of governors would be set up to look at proposals and quotes in due course. | |
| 7 | BUDGET | |
| 7.1 | The final figures for the 2010-11 budget were now available and showed an under spend of just less than £150,000. However, approximately £60,000 of this was the remaining Access to Activities funding carried forward on behalf of the Bexhill Consortium, as this fund would continue to be administered by Little Common until it ended in August 2011. A further sum of approximately £17,000 was Achievement for All funding carried forward to be spent by the end of the summer term. | |
| 7.2.1 | The Business Manager presented the proposed budget for 2011-12. Governors had discussed the budgetary situation at length during the meetings about possible restructuring, so they had already seen the 5-year plan showing where savings would need to be made. The Business Manager explained that a budget had been constructed that would work for the current year, but this was only because of the afore-mentioned carry-forward of approximately £73,000 from the previous year. Even so, spending would need to be curtailed wherever possible in order to break even at the end of the year. | |

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| 7.2.2 | The Chairman said that he was minded that a finance group should be set up from the beginning of the new school year. The governors who attended would look at the budget in great detail, and report their findings back at each full governing body meeting. This was agreed by the full governing body. | |
| 7.2.3 | Staff from Children's Services Finance had seen the 5-year plan, which was based on the restructuring proposals. Although it still showed a deficit in future years, this was much smaller than it would have been if the staffing level had remained as at present. More work would still be needed to avoid a deficit budget in the future. As previously discussed, this was due to a reducing budget share because of a falling roll, plus the reduction in capital funding, the increased cost of centrally provided services, the ceasing of A2A and AfA funding and the increased cost of staffing as staff moved up the pay scales. | |
| 7.2.4 | Mrs Scales asked whether ESCC had made any suggestions as to how schools could cope with their rolls falling because of the County policy on limiting KS2 class sizes. The Head said that schools were expected to adjust their budgets accordingly. Mrs Scales felt that staff did not fully understand the budgetary issues. The Head explained that the budget share was largely made up of a per pupil allocation. With year groups of about 105 leaving and only 90 children being admitted each year, this would result in a large reduction in the amount of the budget share. Capital funding had been reduced this year from about £60,000 to £11,500 and A2A and AfA funding had ceased. The cost of central services had increased and a number of services previously provided free now had to be paid for. All of these, plus annual increases in individual staff salaries, were contributory factors to a difficult future budgetary situation. Mr Amess said that it was unfortunate that all of these things had happened at the same time, making a huge impact on the budget. Mrs Scales felt that a statement from the governors might be helpful. | |
| 7.2.5 | The Head pointed out that a high percentage of the staffing budget was spent on leadership and overstaffing. Most schools covered PPA time with Teaching Assistants and sports coaches and the like. Little Common's expenditure on supply teachers was unusually high also. Mrs Scales suggested that one teacher might be employed permanently to do all the supply cover that was needed. The Head said that this would not work in practice as several supply teachers would be needed on the same day and there would be days when none was needed. The Chairman had suggested in the past that the Consortium might be able to make an arrangement to share supply teachers paid for from the common budget, but nothing had come of this. | |
| 7.2.6 | Mr Amess proposed that the budget be agreed in the sum of £2,028,141. Mr Cochrane seconded and all were in favour. | |
| 7.3.1 | Governors looked at the figures for the school meals service. The result for the year showed a healthy profit, but the Head pointed out that a good proportion of the money was made from mid- | LA |

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| | <p>morning snacks. These would have to change in content, as they did not meet with Ofsted healthy eating expectations at present. Slow and gentle changes were being made to abide by the food standards. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to parent telling them what children were allowed to bring to school for snacks.</p> | |
| 7.3.2 | <p>The figures for the extended schools services showed that breakfast club and holiday club more or less broke even, but after school care had run at a small loss. Overall, the extended schools had broken even, but no premises costs had been included in the expenditure figures. The governors agreed to discuss changing the price for after school care at the next meeting.</p> | |
| 8 | <p>GOVERNORS' VISITS Mrs Hammond had completed a science visit and written a report. Mrs Smith had visited for literacy and written a report. Mr Higginson had done a maths visit during maths week. Mr Amess was arranging an ICT visit. Mrs Barnett had a provisional date for a music visit.</p> | |
| 9 | <p>PUPIL MIGRATION FIGURES During the academic year, 11 pupils had left the school and 30 had joined. The Head was still in discussions about the KS1 year groups of over 90 as discussed at the previous governors' meeting. She had asked for additional funding to enable her to comply with the law, but had not received a decision as yet.</p> | |
| 10 | <p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> | |
| 10.1 | <p>The last governors' meeting for the academic year would take place on 13 July. One of the items on the agenda would be a review of the remit for the governing body. The Clerk would email the present remit to governors to read before the meeting. The Chairman suggested that each governor should bring some food to the meeting for a shared buffet to finish the year.</p> | All |