

# CROSBY RAVENSWORTH C of E (Aided) SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Crosby Ravensworth, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 3JJ

School telephone: 01931 715265

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## FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING 10 May 2017, Crosby Ravensworth School

### MINUTES

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Rev Stewart Fyfe	Foundation Governor, ex officio (Vice Chair)	SF
	Duncan Priestley	Staff Governor, ex officio (Headteacher)	DP
	Sarah Rogers	Foundation Governor	SR
	Becky Day	Foundation Governor	BD
	Susan Pattinson	Staff Governor	SP
	John Paul Turnbull	Parent Governor	JPT
	Liz Lindwall	Foundation Governor	LL
	Debbie McCall	Foundation Governor	DMcC
	Alan Woodward	Foundation Governor	AW

#### OTHERS ATTENDING:

Karen Winder	Chair, Lyvennet Nursery	(part of meeting)	KW
Claire Kerr	Secretary, Lyvennet Nursery	(part of meeting)	CK
Linda White	Observer – prospective Governor		LW
Chloe Randall	Clerk to the Governors		CR

#### 1 PRAYERS

SF thanked the Heavenly Father for bringing the board together on this lovely day. On behalf of all present, he asked for God's blessing on the school; on DP and all the staff, and above all, the children and their families. He prayed that this evening the board might have clear heads to make wise decisions for the sake of the children and their futures.

#### 2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- 2.1 **APOLOGIES, RESIGNATIONS, INTRODUCTIONS:** SF was very pleased to note that all board members were present; that two members of the Nursery were attending part of the meeting, and that a further potential recruit to the board was present as an observer. For the sake of the newcomers and guests, all present briefly introduced themselves.

SF noted that Marion Rucker had had to resign from her Parent Governorship on the 1 May 2017 due to the need to care for her very unwell father. Both SF and DP had written to thank her for her work on behalf of the board, most particularly with regard to Health and Safety, and the board formally recorded their gratitude to MR and offered their prayers for her father.

#### **SPECIAL ITEM: FUTURE OF THE LYVENNET NURSERY**

KW thanked the board for letting the Nursery come to the meeting to explain their predicament in person. She explained that the Nursery Committee was looking ahead to September, when four children from the Nursery would be starting at the school, leaving only two children, both two-year-olds, to start at the Nursery. Unless numbers pick up, the Nursery will only be able to stay open until

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Easter, assuming the present level of fund-raising continues. Although there has been regular advertising, displaying of posters, and the offer of “pop in and play” sessions, the Committee feel that they need support in making the Nursery more visible.

CK explained that although she had asked the Nursery Manager to follow up two more possible two-year-olds, she was not overly hopeful that numbers would increase, and other potential candidates had dropped by the wayside for various reasons. CK felt that it was possibly over-optimistic to expect to remain open until Easter, and that there could be real problems operating with only two children – who might not even attend on the same day. She said that members of staff were willing to reduce their hours if need be, just to keep things going.

A further and even more pressing problem is that four people will be leaving the Nursery Committee at the end of the academic year, including the Chair and the Secretary. Under Charity Commission regulations, the Nursery has to have a committee with a quorum of five members, including Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. There is also a ruling that 60% of the Committee should be family members of children in the nursery, but the Committee has established that in the circumstances (only two children!) they can co-opt wider community members if necessary. It was also noted that ‘family members’ may include grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Without a Committee, the Nursery cannot legally continue to operate, and for this reason, the Annual General Meeting has been brought forward to the 8 June 2017 to try to recruit new members.

A discussion followed with Governors recognising that the Nursery’s recruitment problems were very similar to those of the school, and re-affirming that the Nursery was recognised as a very important source of pupils for the school. Ideas for increasing the visibility of the Nursery were put forward, including a regular entry in the school’s Friday bulletin; use of Facebook; Nursery presence at school events such as the May Fair, and active encouragement to people to put themselves forward as committee members.

SF summed up by saying that he felt that the Nursery were doing all the right things, and that the recruitment issue was fully shared by the school – and to a large extent, efforts to address the school’s problem could also benefit the Nursery. He said that the Board were very worried about the position the Nursery found itself in, and would do all they could to support them. He said there is no disgrace in doing everything you can and failing, but it is incumbent upon everyone to do everything they can. He thanked KW and CK for sharing the Nursery’s concerns with the Board.

- 2.2 **THE ROLE OF CHAIR:** this item was deferred to the end of the meeting, to give new Governors more opportunity to experience the workings of the Board.
- 2.3 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 25 JANUARY 2017:** the minutes had been circulated by e-mail; several comments had been incorporated, and the minutes were ratified by the meeting as a true record.
- 2.4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** governors were invited to declare any new interests or interests pertinent to the matters on the agenda, but had nothing to declare. (New governors had completed declarations of interest prior to the meeting.)
- 2.5 **MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE:** none.

## **2.6 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- 2.6.1 RESOURCES COMMITTEE 8 MAY 2017:** JPT reported that at the end of the financial year, the school was on target with the budgeted surplus of £15,000 after taking into account various timing issues. The committee was now looking ahead to the next three years which were taking the school closer to the 'crunch period' when restructuring might have to be looked at. The commitment from Friends for funding to be called in in blocks (if available) will materially help the budget. DP commented that this had been a crucial development, which SF noted had arisen from the meetings with parents and reflected their very positive feelings for the school.

Other matters discussed included the updating and approval of the list of school keyholders; successful bids for various maintenance funds which had benefited the school; the overall positive financial impact of wrap-around care; updates on staffing, and concerns over pupil numbers.

JPT also reported on the investigation into the possibilities of bringing school dinner provision in-house, which was fully documented in the committee minutes. The overall conclusion based on evidence drawn from elsewhere was that it would not be financially beneficial to bring the service in-house, and crucially, it would place an additional area of responsibility on the Headteacher. Given the level of interest parents had expressed, JPT undertook to include the committee's conclusions in the next Governor's newsletter.

SF thanked JPT for his skilful work with the budget and congratulated him and his committee on their achievements.

<b>ACTION:</b>	JPT to include details from the Resources Committee on the next Governors' newsletter	<b>JPT</b>
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- 2.6.2 PUPIL PROGRESS COMMITTEE 9 MAY 2017:** BD reported that the Committee had scrutinised the school results in quite some detail and made **challenges** to the Headteacher regarding the lack of data around EYFS progress towards early learning goals – which was provided at the meeting. As governors, they felt that there had been a lot of positive progress, and were very satisfied with the results of their challenges. The school's overall results were very good, and bode well for SATS.

Various policies were in the process of being updated: Safeguarding was nearly complete; the Sex and Relationships Education Policy was found to need updating, and DP was reviewing this in conjunction with the MESS group of schools, would be discussing it at the staff meeting next week, and would also check that it is appropriate for a Church school.

A further item of a sensitive nature has been removed to the confidential section of the minutes:

### **3      MAIN BUSINESS**

- 3.1      HEADTEACHER'S REPORT:** DP said that he had written his introduction with particular passion, trying to achieve a balance between optimism, positivity and honesty over the implications of the falling school roll. He feels that the Parish Council has little idea how 'close to the edge' the school has become, and it is high time that CRPS presents itself at one of their meetings to encourage them to lobby for more affordable housing for the area. BD commented that the new National Park status was not currently a bar to further housing development, and that a new community-led housing fund had recently been launched, which she thought might be accessed via Local Area Partnership meetings. DP felt that the school should make its situation known to the Parish Council, walking a careful line between sending out panic messages and complacency. SF felt that the board should send a deputation to the next meeting, 1930 hours on 22 May 2017.

DP and BD also both mentioned Crosthwaite School, which had reversed its own falling-roll problem and was now turning pupils away. DP felt he should speak to the Headteacher there to see if there was anything to be learnt which might help attract pupils from out of the catchment area. SR felt that geography played a large part, and BD mentioned other community initiatives which might be relevant to the success at Crosthwaite.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	DP, SF and as many Governors as possible to attend the next Parish Council meeting	<b>DP, SF</b>
	DP to contact Crosthwaite School to see what can be learnt from them	<b>DP</b>
	BD to find out if Eden has Local Area Partnership meetings which might help Parish Council with affordable housing projects	<b>BD</b>

Turning to the main body of the report, the board **challenged** DP over the falling attendance numbers and asked why it was below the target? DP explained that parents were increasingly keen to take children on recreational experiences, but that this did fly in the face of the school attendance policy. He felt that the time was right to remind parents of this policy and to emphasise that there is a positive correlation between attendance and academic performance. SR felt that this could also be endorsed in the Governors' Newsletter. DP mentioned that one pupil had a medical condition which will keep him out of school for three weeks, which would skew the figures considerably. DMCC asked what the school's stance is if a child is taken out to go to Disney World? DP confirmed that he would advise the parent by way of a standard letter that he could not support this. If this was not effective, and if there was evidence of a correlation between poor performance and poor attendance, he would refer the pupil to the Local Authority, although the Local Authority is not very strict in this regard. DP said that there were many grey areas in the guidelines, and that at a recent Headteachers discussion, he had found himself to be less supportive of absences than his colleagues.

BD said that pupil progress had been **challenged** in detail at the Committee meeting, and that the members of that committee had been fully satisfied with the responses received.

LW asked DP if facilities and services procurement for the school was done jointly with the Church of England or other local schools. DP confirmed that it was done jointly with local schools (the School Business Manager working in a total of three primary schools aided this considerably) and that some bench-marking took place between Headteachers in the cluster.

- 3.2 SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** SR **challenged** DP to explain why the SDP had not been presented with the meeting papers. DP responded that although he had spent considerable time updating the plan earlier in the week, he had decided to hold a session with the staff next Wednesday (17 May, from 1300 hours) to review the whole SDP and bring it fully up to date. He invited Governors to attend if they possibly could, and promised to circulate the revised plan to all. DMcC and LL both said they were available and would attend.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	DMcC and LL to attend staff meeting to review SDP	<b>DMcC LL</b>
	DP to circulate updated plan to all Governors	<b>DP</b>

- 3.3 HEADTEACHER'S APPRAISAL:** JPT said that he and SR had conducted the review as long-standing governors, in the absence of a Chair. SF noted that the absence of a Chair was beginning to have a significant impact on the Headteacher, but that great progress had been made towards the objectives. DP asked if the same Governors would be part of the review at the end of this cycle, and SR said that it would hopefully be a new Chair and JPT. JPT said that he would also like someone from the educational side to be part of the next meeting, and DP suggested that his peer-to-peer partner, the Headteacher at Patterdale, might be the right person for that.

- 3.4 GOVERNORS' OBJECTIVES AND VISITS:** SF reminded Governors that the planned visits needed to take place and be reported upon. JPT confirmed that his Art visit was pending, and BD said that she had completed a brief Drama visit. AW volunteered to undertake a Music visit, and LW offered to take on PE. SF advised the newcomers to speak to DP to arrange a suitable time, and to be briefed on what was involved.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	Governors to undertake and report on visits as planned	<b>JPT, BD, AW, LW</b>
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- 3.5 POLICY REVIEWS/CREATION:** the following revised policies had been circulated prior to the meeting and were accepted:

.1 Data Protection Policy

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- .2 School Admissions Policy 2017/2018
- .3 Policy to Support Children with Separated Parents
- .4 Out of School Club Policies and Procedures

A recent letter from the Local Authority had suggested that the Complaints Procedure might need updating and SR undertook to review this policy.

<b>ACTION:</b>	SR to review the Complaints Procedure in the light of the letter from LA	<b>SR</b>
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## **4 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND GOVERNING BODY MATTERS**

- 4.1 **STATUS OF GOVERNING BODY:** SF said that he was very pleased that Governor recruitment was being achieved, and lost no time in allocating the new members (DMcC, AW, LW) to the Resources Committee, for which JPT expressed grateful thanks.

It was noted that the resignation of Marion Rucker would require another Parent Governor election, and that her position as Link Governor for Health and Safety would need to be filled. There being no immediate volunteers, this matter was left to the next meeting. It was felt that as MR had brought H&S fully up to date, and her resignation had only been received on 1 May 2017, the absence of a Link Governor could be carried for a short period.

BD took the opportunity to advise the board that she would be leaving the village within the next six to eight weeks, and LW offered to join the Pupil Progress Committee when BD had to step down. BD was asked to please defer her resignation until she was on the point of leaving the village!

- 2.2 **THE ROLE OF CHAIR** (deferred from the beginning of the meeting): SF pointed out that the Board needed to do something about this role, and that the absence of a Chair was leaving the Headteacher in a difficult position. He explained that it was unusual for the Board to be caught out without planned succession in place, and that Helen Gill had only stepped down because of ill health after a short period of chairship. He himself had only take on the role of Vice Chair on the understanding that he would not be able to step into the role of Chair, due to his extensive commitments, and none of the other long-standing Governors were any better placed. SF said it was embarrassing to have to say to new Governors "one of you really needs to be the Chair"! On the positive side, he pointed out that there is pretty good training for the Chair role, and whoever takes on the role is inheriting a very good school in a very good place, without an Ofsted inspection in sight. The person who takes on the role needs to be able to chair meetings, and to support DP in informal decision-making and by acting as a sounding-board, preferably during the daytime but not essentially. Most of the other tasks are shared by the Governing Body, and he would continue to act as Vice Chair in support of whoever takes on the role. BD said there was also a lot of support to be had from the Chairs of Governors forum.

LL asked if somebody took on the role, but later decided after a month or so that it was not for them, would they be able to step down? SF confirmed that this was absolutely the case, and on this basis, LL agreed to give it a go. This offer was proposed, seconded and unanimously accepted.

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<b>ACTION:</b>	LL to assume role of Chair immediately after the meeting	<b>LL</b>
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4.2 **GOVERNORS' RAPID ACTION PLAN:** to be brought forward by the new Chair in due course.

4.3 **LINK GOVERNOR UPDATES:**

- .1 **Church:** SF reported that Christine had taken the end of term Easter assembly in the church, and it had been much appreciated by all. Thoughts were now turning to the end of year assembly on 11 June, which he unfortunately would be unable to attend due to being at the General Synod in York
- .2 **Governor training and induction:** SR reported that two of the three new Governors had been on an induction course, with LL and LW needing to attend. Internet safety training was available at Long Marton for anyone interested, and DP said that although not many parents had taken up the offer, feedback was extremely good. SR said she would also look for a course(s) for new Chairs
- .3 **Special Educational Needs and Disability:** LL explained that she had a meeting scheduled with the SENCO shortly.
- .4 **Nursery:** there had been a full update from the Nursery Committee at the beginning of the meeting, and the urgent need for nominations for the Committee was again noted
- .5 **Health and Safety:** this role needs to be filled following MR's resignation on 1 May 2017
- .6 **Safeguarding:** SR said there had been no issues, and the policy was currently being updated

4.4 **GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER:** JPT undertook to produce a newsletter during the following week, having had insufficient time to complete it in the Spring term. This Newsletter would announce LL's appointment as Chair, and would also give details of the discussions over school dinner provision.

4.5 **BRAINSTORMING:** it was felt that a considerable amount of brain-storming had already taken place during the meeting, and that this may no longer be appropriate as a standing agenda item. LW commented that it might be more useful if a brainstorming session took place outside the school.

## 5 **REVIEW OF MEETING**

5.1 **MEETING REVIEW:** LW commented that if reports were circulated before the meeting and read by Governors, the meeting would be able to concentrate on decision-making.

5.2 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS / ITEMS FOR AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:** CR mentioned that the Department for Education had circulated a "Clerk's Competency Framework" which had been discussed within the Clerks' cluster. It was generally felt that given the minimal hours and level of remuneration, some aspects of the framework were unrealistic, specifically those relating to "advice and guidance" to the Chair and Board. CR pointed out that although she had been acting as Clerk for nearly two years, this only equated to 5.5 weeks FTE, and without having a background in education, detailed knowledge of the academic world was difficult to acquire in the time available. The board made some very nice

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remarks, which the Clerk would blush to record, and was glad that the point had been noted.

### 5.3 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:

Pupil Progress Committee	1830, Wednesday, 13 September 2017
Resources Committee	1730, Wednesday, 20 September 2017
<b>FULL BOARD</b>	<b>1830, Wednesday, 27 September 2017 (SF absent)</b>
Pupil Progress Committee	1830, Wednesday, 17 January 2018
Resources Committee	1730, Wednesday, 24 January 2018
<b>FULL BOARD</b>	<b>1830, Wednesday, 31 January 2018</b>
Pupil Progress Committee	1830, Wednesday, 9 May 2018
Resources Committee	1730, Wednesday, 16 May 2018
<b>FULL BOARD</b>	<b>1830, Wednesday, 23 May 2018</b>

### SUBSEQUENT TO THE MEETING:

The three year budget plan 2017 to 2020 was approved by the Governors, having being circulated by e-mail on 23 May 2017, and subsequently signed by the Headteacher and the Chair.

### Ratified by:

- SF: Thank you Chloe. Admittedly I've only had a chance for a fairly quick look at these, but they look very good to me. Well done. 15 May 2017
- DP: Thanks Chloe, fabulous record as ever. Amendments implemented with regard to Confidential section; 2.6.2; 2.7 paragraphs 3 and 4; and the Action Point; 3.1 17 May 2017
- SR: I have read through the minutes and read well and true record of what was said. 17 May 2017
- JPT: amendment to action point at 2.6.1 19 May 2017
- KW: Sorry for my late response. Those look very accurate to me. Thank you. 19 May 2017
- CK: I have read through the minutes and read well and true record of what was said. Thank you. 17 May 2017
- AW: Hi, these seem fine, thanks. 25 May 2017

Budget approval note added, as best place to record Governors' agreement.