

The Viridis Federation of Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden Schools Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 25th January 2018

Governors present	James	Gowland	Co-opted Governor –Chair of Governors
	Stephen	Hall	Executive Headteacher
	Richard	Allen	Co-opted Governor – Vice Chair of Governors
	Sara	Fox	Co-opted Governor
	Lenna	Marsen	Parent Governor
	Claudia	Moreira	Staff Governor
	Ian	Rathbone	Local Authority
	Kay	Richardson	Parent Governor
	Alberta	Senya	Co-opted Governor
	Sara	Walsingham	Co-opted Governor
	Laura	Theobald	Co-opted Governor
	Andrea	Klettner	Co-opted Governor
	Hannah	Lownsbrough	Co-opted Governor

- Others Present:
- Rachel Davie, Headteacher, Orchard School
 - Stephen O'Brien, Headteacher, Southwold School
 - Rachel Adams, Headteacher, Hoxton School

Clerk: Samuel Franklin – samuel@gideonfranklin.com

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 None.

2. Governing Body Organisation

Membership of governing body

2.1 No changes.

2.2 A candidate for a position as associate governor with no voting rights was discussed. Her CV was distributed and it was noted that she had highly relevant education expertise and experience, having previously worked at the Dfe under Justine Greening. The Terms of Reference allow for seven governors on each subcommittee. It was agreed that she should join the subcommittee structure. SH advised that he would discuss with her which of the schools subcommittees committee to join with her skill set suiting both Hoxton Garden and Southwold school subcommittees.

Declaration of interest in items on the agenda

2.3 None.

Governing Body Annual Calendar

2.4 The Annual Calendar was noted. The resources committee has been rescheduled to March and the next governors' visit to Hoxton will be on the 7th February with the theme of science.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of the 20th September 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.2 Action 1 was not completed as the context for Schools Futures has changed. It was understood a decision was unlikely to be reached at the meeting so 15 minutes would be sufficient for this discussion.

3.3 Action 2 continues as further terms are added to the glossary.

3.4 Actions 3 and 4 were completed.

- 3.5 Sara Fox further briefed governors on fundraising initiatives. An excel sheet with existing initiatives and costs was noted.
- 3.6 It was suggested that several companies should be targeted and storyboards presented for each school and initiative. A governor with PowerPoint skills volunteered to assist with the storyboards. Governors were further encouraged to make suggestions and present any private links.
- 3.7 It was agreed that the initiatives should be presented on behalf of each school, rather than the Federation.

ACTION 1 (Sarah Fox)

Circulate details of existing initiatives.

4. Discussion re schools futures

- 4.1 Anna Canning's letter to the governing body and Headteacher was noted. Some governors expressed frustration over the lack of clarity in the letter regarding the proposed structure.
- 4.2 The letter broadly presented the possibility of forming a collective trust of schools with an overarching board that would set the strategic direction. This board would be separate from the Council. Schools' existing levels of autonomy and governing boards would be maintained.
- 4.3 It was queried whom this board would consist of, how they would be elected and what powers they would have. It is as yet unclear who will lead the proposal, as the Hackney Learning Trust are yet to appoint a permanent Director of Education. Interviews for the position take place in early March.
- 4.4 It was noted that the Federation currently works well with Hackney but is aware the present circumstances are likely to change and there is a risk of funding links being broken. Although this would be controlled to a large extent by the National Funding Formula.
- 4.5 It was suggested that the benefits of forming a MAT were still a grey area, while the process of forming one would take up management time and could pose a significant burden, for example, through organising admissions and infrastructure.
- 4.6 A meeting will take place between a Hackney representative, the Chair of Governors and the Headteachers regarding this new proposal. It was agreed that it would be worth waiting to hear what they suggest. It was also noted that this new proposal will entail a two-way dialogue and that schools will need to take a leading role too.
- 4.7 It was considered that given few schools in Hackney have academised, there has been an incentive to look at an alternative.
- 4.8 It was pointed out that questions of leadership and governance remain two of the most significant unanswered points in this new proposal.
- 4.9 The provisional deadline for the formation of this new proposal is April 2019, which requires a quick decision making process.
- 4.10 It was asked how parents feel about these possibilities. It was answered that most are unaware and not overly concerned, though some parents at Orchard had expressed concerns previously. There is currently a greater focus on the Hackney SEN funding proposals.
- 4.11 It was acknowledged that the Federation is relatively far ahead in its awareness and understanding of these issues.

ACTION 2 (Executive Headteacher)

Circulate any relevant information of the upcoming meeting with the Hackney representative.

5. Executive Headteacher's Report (Incorporating School Subcommittee Reports)

- 5.1 The Executive Headteacher presented his report.

- 5.2 Additions to the leadership team were reported, including a new Headteacher at Hoxton who took up her post in November. Staff moves between the schools were also noted, further highlighting the mutually beneficial relationship between them.
- 5.3 Recruitment for September has been challenging, with fewer applications than hoped. However, one teacher has already been signed. Agency fees will likely have to be paid to assist with recruitment, while social media initiatives are also being explored.
- 5.4 Teachers who require some training are also being to be recruited which requires the schools to invest in their development. This has worked well so far, as most teachers quickly improve.
- 5.5 Challenges in recruiting had been anticipated. There has been a link with London Metropolitan University where teachers are trained and recruited and it was anticipated that there would be a number of School Direct Students, however applications to London Metropolitan have significantly decreased and no School Direct students have been placed with our schools. However, two LMU applicants who were pre-interviewed have agreed to apply for the coming year, and it is possible further may be coming through in a similar way.
- 5.6 Eight places have also been gained from the Government's Teacher Apprenticeship Program, so these eight shall be training with the Federation during 2018/19. This is a salaried programme.
- 5.7 It was emphasised that the quality of teaching is still strong across the schools and that there is a very robust CPD program for teacher development.
- 5.8 A governor asked about using LinkedIn as part of the social media initiatives, for example, by accessing LinkedIn teaching networks, such as Teach First. The suggestion was acknowledged, although in regard to Teach First, it was given that recruitment would be difficult as the scheme targets areas that perform less well than Hackney.
- 5.9 The changing recruitment landscape was also explained. Recruitment is now more privatised and fragmented which makes the process more challenging.
- 5.10A governor asked about teachers who leave and for what reasons they tend to leave for. It was answered that they leave for a range of reasons. Some struggle with the cost of living in London, others may leave for private schools. Some also find the environment difficult with high deprivation rates and challenging intakes.
- 5.11It was asked whether some secondary school teachers might like to second. It was suggested that this would be difficult, as secondary recruitment also faces challenges, while the nature of work between primary and secondary is rather different. For example, there is a clear pastoral element in primary teaching. However there have been several examples of secondary colleagues moving to work in the three schools.
- 5.12It was noted that Twitter feedback continues to be positive and that this assists with the school image.
- 5.13Websites for the schools are being reviewed and updated. There is also work being done on a separate website for the Federation, which would also include information on teacher training and recruitment.
- 5.14There are plans to build a controlled parking zone around Southwold School.
- 5.15A self-published book of the action research undertaken by phase leaders and their teams on each school site has been a success and is an example of the innovation and self evaluation that marks the federations work.
- 5.16A music festival will be run for the first time this year at the Round Chapel.
- 5.17Nursery places have been mostly filled though there are still vacancies due to the changes to full time place entitlement initiated by the Government.
- 5.18Sub-committee meeting reports were noted. It was noted that the Orchard fire drill took longer due to provision for a disabled pupil.

5.19 Regarding OFSTED, Southwold are due an inspection by the end of the next school year. It was explained that there will be a first inspection and if the school is rated more than good, then another inspection will take place within two years to verify if it is outstanding. Similarly, if the school is rated less than good a further inspection will be due within two years. Otherwise, if the school is deemed good still, then the next inspection will be in three years. Governors expressed frustration at the inefficiency of the process given a lot can change even in a year with a school.

ACTION 3 (Executive Headteacher)

Further update the glossary, including the terms 'Section 5' and 'NEO'.

5.20 The recent local authority review was successful and is supporting ongoing work at the school. Outcomes from this will be shared when received.

5.21 It was explained that 'disapplied' in the data set means the pupil was not in the data set, for example, where the pupil joined late.

6. Feedback from school subcommittees

6.1 At Southwold, there have been two fixed term exclusions (one for swearing at a teacher; the other for disruptive behaviour), but exclusions have dropped significantly overall.

6.2 A governor asked how best to prepare for OFSTED visits. It was answered that firstly the process should be familiar to governors. A lead inspector will say what the visit is for and when it will happen. The inspector will meet with some of the governors. These governors will meet with the Headteacher beforehand to be briefed on the latest issues. There is a governor pack for this purpose.

ACTION 4 (Executive Headteacher)

Executive Headteacher to circulate a date for Governors to attend a session to prepare for an Ofsted inspection.

6.3 It was asked what happens with the Year 6 leaver destination data. OFSTED takes some interest in this, but as all leavers have to go to a secondary school anyway, it is unlikely to be the focus at a Primary level. It is a safeguarding requirement to know the Year 6 leavers' destinations and the schools pursue this information if it is not forthcoming. Beyond anecdotes and dialogue with families there is presently no system for checking how leavers get on after they start at secondary.

6.4 At the November Hoxton meeting, a new way of reporting results was introduced and the new Headteacher was welcomed.

6.5 At Orchard, recruitment challenges were noted. There are now more children with the additional form entry – the school is now up to Year 3 with 607 children on the roll. Resources spending is in order, although a doors recently fell from its hinges. Fortunately no one was injured. An urgent audit of all external doors and maintenance work has been organised to remedy the issue.

ACTION 5 (Executive Headteacher)

Add subcommittee minutes to future packs.

7. Feedback from link governors

7.1 These were mainly discussed elsewhere in the meeting.

7.2 Nine governors have completed safeguarding training and others are encouraged to complete further training courses, as there is good content.

7.3 Health and safety: the doors were the main issue. There is also a basement clear-out taking place which will be progressed in half term. There are continuing concerns over the roof at Southwold which is crumbling. The school is in discussion with HLT regarding this.

8. Consideration of SIP 1 reports for Hoxton Garden & Southwold Schools

8.1 It was noted that Orchard only has two per year due to its outstanding status.

8.2 Both reports show consistent evaluations with Headteacher reports.

8.3 It was reported that the Hoxton budget is no longer in deficit.

9. Consideration of Sports Premium funding statements

9.1 The report was noted. The quality of PE has clearly improved. Cycling is now offered with the cycles provided for the pupils. There has been a Tour de Hackney event.

9.2 Parent responses to school surveys will be shared at subcommittee meetings. It was suggested they could be done digitally by SMS, for example, to increase participation.

9.3 A governor mentioned that a free yoga workshop could be contributed to the next sports day in June.

10. Governor communication and funding bids

10.1 This was discussed earlier.

11. Consideration of key policies to be updated.

11.1 The school is now taking responsibility for updates. The policies are looked at 2-3 times per year due to government updates. It was noted that there has been an update on the Behaviour and Bullying policy related to searching pupils, including mobile devices and that the incoming GDPR regulations will also have to be incorporated. The Safeguarding policy has also been updated and includes up to date staffing information. All up to date policies are on the school websites.

12. Any other business

12.1 SEND funding cuts were discussed. Hackney has plans to reorganise its funding as it is currently in deficit and being cut. Hackney is not unique in this. Some funding is received from the government, but it is not sufficient to meet all needs.

12.2 There has been a vociferous parent initiative and consultations are ongoing, both of which are expected to have an impact on SEND funding for the Federation.

12.3 The schools are presently looking to apply for more sources of funding to future-proof its needs. This may increase staff's time spent and paper load.

12.4 SEND is becoming a bigger issue on the one hand as a greater number of children are identified as SEND and on the other hand as parents are more aware of their rights.

12.5 It was asked whether it could be added to the governors' funding initiatives. It was answered that it would be difficult to attract funding for the performance of statutory duties.

12.6 It was noted that the next HASGA meeting would be addressing this topic.

12.7 A governor noted that some computers at Southwold were running Windows 7, when Windows 10 is available, and suggested that the school might benefit from a technological upgrade. It was answered that the pupils use more up to date hardware than that in the school halls and that the newest technology is in classrooms. Further investigation into the current windows software was to be undertaken.

13. Confidential Business

13.1 There was no confidential business.

Meeting closed at 20:00.