



Charing School is an inclusive family, proud of our faith in God and our friendship with our community.

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Confidence – Determination – Faith – Friendship – Respect.

Non-Confidential Minutes of the Governing Body Monday 25th January 2021 at 5pm.

Governors Present: Mr. David Milham (DM): Chair,
Mr. Tom Bird (HoS): Head of School,
Ms. Angela Matthews (AM): Consultant Head Teacher,
Mr. Dan Freedman (DF),
Mr. Charles Low (CL),
Mrs. Sarah Siddiqui (SS) *joined the meeting at 17:25*,
Mr. Simon Molony (SM) *joined the meeting at 18:00*,
Ms. Susan Ashford-Smith (SAS),
Mx. Ana Olea Fernandez (AOF),
Mr. Daniel Sutch (DS).

Clerk: Mrs Lorraine Bondzie-Mensah

PROCEDURAL MATTERS			ACTIONS
1	Welcome and Prayer	The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and AM led the Governing Body in prayer.	
2	Apologies	Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. Nick Morgan.	
3	Declarations of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TB: Mrs L. Bird is volunteering in Year 6. DM: Daughter is employed by the school (Mrs. Horsford). 	
4	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	The minutes from the previous Governing Body Meeting held on 30 th November 2020 were approved as a true and accurate reflection of proceedings.	
5	Matters Arising	Interregnum update: the candidate who was due to meet with the HoS in September has withdrawn from the process. However, a new candidate has stepped forward and recently spoke to the HoS. They were very engaged with the activities in school and would be pleased to join the Governing Body. If successful, they will be in post from May 21 and will be a welcome addition to the LGB.	
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT			ACTIONS
6	Head of School Report	<p>The school is slowly growing and the reputation of the school is improving. Whilst we are not yet the school of choice for the village, the growing roll is evidence that the community's view of the school is moving in the right direction. The preferences for Reception 2021 intake has been received and there are more choosing us last year. 7 families have made Charing their first choice, with 22 families in total choosing us in their overall selection. There are still some applications coming in and the HoS is expecting the final number in Year R to be 14 or 15 children by September.</p> <p>COVID is a barrier to improving the school that no one could have predicted. For the 2nd year in a row there will be no published SATS to evidence the tremendous move forward in standards across the school. COVID has also led to the restriction of visitors on site which means prospective parents can't get a feel for</p>	



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		<p>the school because they can't come in and see teaching and learning in action. In addition to the missing bank of evidence from the SATs, recruiting more pupils is particularly difficult. However, we are continuing to take on more children in year. There were 87 children in October but the roll is now just over 100.</p> <p>In Term 1, pupils were keen to be back in school and were making excellent progress; whilst Term 2 progress was good, it was hindered by bubble closures. We managed to keep the school safe by all staff, children and parents sticking to the restrictions in place and coping very well with the changes to school life. The HoS expressed his sincere thanks to the whole school community for working together to keep the school as safe as possible. Microsoft Teams is up and running, and forms our remote learning platform. There is not yet 100% engagement with the platform and so the school has been dropping work round to those who are not engaging online. SLT are working to secure more laptops and internet access to facilitate better access to online learning.</p> <p>Free School Meals: During the first few weeks of January, children eligible for FSM received e-vouchers for Sainsburys. This week the government scheme, Edenred, went live and we have moved over to this system. There were some issues with the activation codes but the HoS contacted our local MP, Damien Green, who helped resolve the problem. Currently, around a 3rd of the pupils on roll are eligible.</p> <p>Q1: Is the curriculum being compromised by limiting it to work that can be shared via Teams?</p> <p>R1: In some ways, yes. But the team are working hard to limit the impact that Teams has on delivery. There were far greater compromises being made during the first lockdown and the staff are really trying to move learning forward and not just working on revision / consolidating learning as per last lockdown. There are around 30% of the children who are a cause for concern in terms of engagement levels and these are closely being monitored by the class teachers and SLT.</p> <p>Q2: Are we likely to see the socio-economic gaps widening as a result of another lockdown?</p> <p>R2: Possibly. The school is trying to limit the impact on pupil premium children by supplying them with laptops. However, 6 of those children do not seem to be using them and if that continues then we may have to take them back and give them to children who will really benefit from them. Engaging these children has been a challenge with some of them not answering the phone but 3 children are now engaging better with home learning.</p>	
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		<p>Q3: Governors noted there has been 17 safeguarding incidents relating to 7 children. Is this a high level of safeguarding issues? R3: The school use a system called MyConcern to log every and any time of safeguarding concern. Each entry into the log is an ‘incident’ but is not necessarily an issue in itself. For example, it could be logging that a pupil was late for school that day. If there are concerns relating to a child, entries for part of the case file being created to evidence an overall picture. Therefore, very few matters logged on to MyConcern will be serious. This is a medium level of safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Q4: What is the target for the level of engagement of children on Teams? What level would you be comfortable with? R4: The school are aiming for 100% engagement in some type of learning, it doesn’t have to be on Teams. If the technology is a barrier, families can email examples of the work being carried out or can request paper copies. Some families will always be reticent to engage with a new piece of software. However, the benefit of using Teams during this lockdown is the positive impact on the mental health of children. They can interact with other adults and children in their class, plays games, talk through their week and so on.</p> <p>Q5: The report suggests that the FLO has been in weekly contact with families? R5: Weekly contact with those <u>not</u> in school.</p> <p>Q6: Of the 30% not engaging in learning, how many of those are in school? R6: All school attendees are included in the 70% who are engaging.</p> <p>ACTION: Virtual meeting to be arranged before the next LGB meeting for DM and AOF to discuss and explain the requirements of monitoring safeguarding. This will include how MyConcern works and a handover of monitoring responsibilities.</p> <p>Q7: Governors noted the excellent impact of the protocols put in place to protect families and staff from COVID. The LGB recognise the reasons why new parents visiting school cannot observe teaching and learning in bubbles. But is there a way we can talk about the standards and would-be SATs results to parents? R7: The school has been utilising the high level of Kent Test results to evidence the high level of standards in school.</p> <p><i>SS joined the meeting at 17:25.</i></p>	DM / AOF / IH
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		<p>ACTION: Kent test results to be published on the website and in the local magazine.</p> <p>Q8: How many staff and children are in school at the moment? R8: The HoS and 2 TAs are in every day that the school needs to be open. There is also someone in the office every day and the site manager is in 3 days a week. Originally, there was 5-6 children but this has grown to 10. There is also a 1-2-1 TA providing support for a looked after child. Most Ashford schools have an average of 19% of pupils in school during lockdown, compared to our school looking after approximately 10% of children.</p> <p>Q9: Why haven't the school continued to issue Sainsburys vouchers? R9: It provides more flexibility for our families as we can more easily issue vouchers for supermarkets which are closely geographically. It is also more cost effective to both the families and the school: the government covers the cost of the voucher and the value of each voucher is more than the FSM funds provided to the school so the families receive more. There has been no indication that a covid claim window will open this year so there is also a risk that we would not be able to reclaim any vouchers that we issued.</p> <p>Q10: There is a high level of unauthorised attendance in rabbits and squirrels class? R10: These absences relate to a family issue involving siblings in 2 families. 1 family is relocating.</p> <p>Q11: Is it possible to manage assessments and 1-2-1 time / personal interactions on Teams? R11: This is happening but it is not as good as being in class. Year R find it far harder to focus on Teams than the older children. It is therefore much more difficult for their parents as there is only 1x 45-minute slot for them per day. The staff set the work for the day and the children show their work in the next day's 45-minute session. Year R will be a priority when planning who will come back when the school starts to re-open. Squirrels (Y1/2) have 2 lessons a day for half an hour each and they are encouraged to submit photos on Teams of the work they have completed. Teams provides teachers with the possibility to give feedback directly on individual work too.</p> <p>Q12: How does the 22 preferences for next year's intake compare to last year? R12: Last year there were 9 first choices but only 19 overall. There are a lot more 2nd choices this time. Ros Golden was graded as outstanding during a recent review by our School Improvement Partner and it is frustrating that we are unable to showcase this to new parents.</p>	HoS
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6.1	School Improvement Plan	<p>Q13: How are the staff finding the use of Teams?</p> <p>R13: [Staff Governor] The staff had only just returned to school and then had a very steep learning curve to upskill in time to launch it for home learning when lockdown was announced a few days later. When staff left in December, they had no idea they would go into virtual in January. Training took place on the Monday and then went live 2 days later. There was a lot of troubleshooting at first and IH has been sorting all the IT issues for everyone. The parents have responded fantastically well. The team did not expect it to be this successful so quickly. Both staff and parents feel it is going very well. There was a feedback session in week 2. Parents have also supported staff in navigating round and getting the best of Teams and by quickly fixing issues their end. It has been a fantastic partnership and a lot less worrying this lockdown. This has been an excellent opportunity to build parent engagement with their children’s learning.</p> <p>The LGB expressed their since thanks to all the staff. IH deserves a special mention for the amount of effort she has been putting into helping get Teams up and running, even on her non-working days.</p> <p>The updated SIP was circulated in advance of the meeting and includes the RAG rating. ACTION: HoS to make the changes / additions more easily identifiable in future drafts.</p>	HoS
7	Data	<p>Term 2 data was circulated in advance of the meeting. Further gap analysis will be needed when the school fully re-opens. The catch up funding provided in September is unlikely to go far enough and many schools are lobbying the government for an extension of these funds into next year. An unsalaried school direct candidate has been appointed and volunteers in Year 5 and 6 means each class will have additional adults next year.</p>	
8	School Improvement Reports	<p>Governors noted how positive all of the School Improvement Partner notes of visit are. The staff should be very pleased with the judgements in those reports. The HoS noted the 8th December visit as particularly useful in planning out the actions for the next steps in the school’s development. WS carried out a due diligence visit 3 years ago and graded teaching and learning as inadequate. It is important to note her comment relating to the quality of education that not only is it good but it “has pockets of impressive outcomes”.</p> <p>OfSTED: there are some virtual inspections taking place for schools who are inadequate or requires improvement but as soon as the normal cycle resumes, the school will be due for a section 8 inspection known as a “monitoring visit”. It is hoped that the inspector will see the outstanding elements of the school and will come back for a full visit 18 months later. The HoS will be told of the inspection the morning before they arrive.</p>	



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9	Finance	<p><i>SM joined the meeting at 18:00.</i></p> <p>The month end monitoring report and cash flow was circulated to the LGB in advance of the meeting. The school is focusing on strategies which maximise the impact of lockdown to the benefit of the school. For example, the grounds maintenance contract will expire in February and the introduction of the new contract could be delayed until the school fully re-opens. This would generate a saving of around £500- £1000 depending on the final adjustment invoice from Countrywide next month. The school is also seeking to renew First Aid and DSL training during lockdown to avoid the cost of classroom cover later in the year.</p> <p>Q14: Are the projections for a surplus of £30k realistic? R14: There are so many things which could change between now and the end of the year, it is very difficult to estimate the year end position at this stage. However, the year-end estimate presents the worst case scenario and is therefore realistic as at today's date. This year is as equally unpredictable as 2020 and so the surplus position should be viewed with caution. Ideally, our aim is to double the reserves position from £13k to £26k by the end of the year but ultimately as long as we are not operating with an in-year or cumulative deficit then the school is in a good position.</p> <p>Q15: If the surplus target is not achieved, will this mean a reduction in the number of classes? R15: The current financial strategy is to operate without the need to reduce classes. The year-end forecast currently evidences that we can operate with 5 classes without an in-year deficit. Whilst there might be reductions in the in-year surplus, there is nothing to yet suggest that those changes would be so significant it would jeopardise the plan to run 5 classes next year. There will be a review of the recovery plan at Easter and we will review the costing of 5 classes across the 5-year plan but as at today, there is no financial reason to reduce from 5 classes to 4.</p> <p>Q16: Will the toilets still be refurbished? R16: We aim to refurbish the toilets before the end of the year and have made a provisional application for SCA funds for this project which will not have an impact on the school's revenue budget. The caretaker is drawing together the 3 quotes which are required for the Board to approve the SCA application.</p> <p>The LGB noted that the proposed donation from the parish council was not received but were hugely grateful to a generous grandfather who donated £1000 to fund new laptops for the staff. This funding was matched by the school and 5 laptops were purchased just as the school moved to remote learning. The Chair of the LGB wrote to the benefactor to thank him for his generous donation.</p>	
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		<p>The funds for the mosaic project are still outstanding but should be received by the end of term.</p> <p>The LGB are supportive of the strategies to maximise opportunities presented by the lockdown, as long as the break in grounds maintenance does not present any health and safety risks. SLT will need to ensure there are no fallen branches from the recent storm and the main reception area should be kept tidy. Moving forward the school should consider working with other local schools or the parish council to explore sharing the cost / contract of grounds maintenance to achieve economies of scale. Part of the school field could be left to develop as a wild meadow as long as the overall image and presentation of the school is a positive one.</p>	
10	Risk Management	<p>The risk register was reviewed in advance of the meeting and the LGB noted there had been a reduction in some risks, such as the financial risk to the school has improved as a result of an in-year surplus prediction and the Trust providing additional funds for winter emergency repairs such as the £13k for the replacement of the boiler system in the old building in term 2. The risk relating to behaviour and safety has also improved because the threat relating to attendance has decreased. Finance and attendance continue to be very fragile and this could change quickly in a small school.</p> <p>Risks remaining a concern relate to COVID and in particular the risks associated with infectious diseases. As lateral flow testing is introduced, the possibility of identify asymptomatic cases increases and this is a risk to staffing and our ability to provide cover to all the bubbles in the school. Testing takes 10 minutes and is on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>Threat 754, Leadership and Management: failure to deliver focused professional development. This threat has increased and relates to concerns regarding the amount of staff development budget that will be available after DSL refresher and First Aid training has been actioned during lockdown. However, SLT have reviewed all appraisals again this term to ensure there are no outstanding training needs and the NQT will be supported by Aquila and at no cost to the school. The risks associated to insufficient resources remain high as there are concern relating to staffing when the school re-opens. One member of staff has received a 12 week shielding letter and so will be unable to return if the school reopens in March.</p> <p>Q17: Are there any risks not highlighted as red which the LGB feels should be? R17: The GRC-1 is a very good system and really allows Governors to view the risks to the school and helps in their discussions in the meeting. Online learning is a potential risk to education if some children are not engaging. Every week a register is submitted to SLT to review the levels of engagement. ACTION: Register information to be provided in the next HoS report.</p>	HoS



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11	Safeguarding	There were no referrals to social services and no safeguarding concerns to report to the LGB. The school has identified some children as potentially vulnerable and have invited them in to school even though they do not fit with the government's description of a vulnerable child.	
12	Buildings + Health & Safety	There is a small number of staff whose First Aid certificates are still in date. Rather than waiting for the inset days in September, the HoS would like to arrange first aid training on the last day of term as there are no children in school on a Friday. Part of the course will be virtual but there is 1 day of face to face training required. This training will also include paediatric first aid. The staff will be encouraged to use the lateral flow tests the night before they come on site. There will be 1 CPR doll per person to ensure resources are not being shared and the training will take place in the hall to facilitate social distancing. A risk assessment will be completed before the training is booked. If staff feel uncomfortable then they will not have to do the training. APPROVED	
13	Term Dates	Term dates for 2021/22 were circulated in advance of the meeting and approved by the Governing Body.	
14	Policies	The following policies were approved by the Governing Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EYFS Policy – APPROVED • LAC Policy – APPROVED 	
ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS			ACTIONS
15	Any Other Business	Q18: Will the fencing still be going ahead? R18: Yes. NM is in the process of organising the work. There was an issue with the quote from the preferred contractor which has now been resolved but delayed the start of the works. ACTION: New governors were reminded to return the procedural documents circulated by the Clerk.	DS, AOF, SAS
16	Confidentiality	No items were deemed confidential.	
17	Date of Next Meeting	15 th March 2021	
18	Closing Reflections	Governors are encouraged by the reports on progress from the HoS and the Staff Governor and congratulate them on the success of Teams. The school has reacted very well to the new lockdown and the school community as whole is working together very well. SLT are very proud of the staff, they are a credit to our school.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 18:56.



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Signed:
Chairman of the Governing Body

Dated: