

Cantell School
Minutes of the Reconvened Whole Governing Body Meeting
held on Monday 26th February 2024

Present:

Glynis Alexander (Chair)
Harry Kutty (Head)
Emma Bradshaw
Julian Bryant
Matt Bunday
John Draper
John Groves
Peter Hilditch
Nicola Hunt

In Attendance:

Sarah Bradshaw (School Business Manager) – Item 1
Kat Cox (Pupil Premium Lead) – Item 2
Michelle Burt (Clerk to Governors)

Apologies:

Ben Hiatt

34/24 Declaration Pecuniary or Business Interests**Action**

There were no declarations of Pecuniary or Business Interests.

35/24 PFI Update

The Head introduced Sarah Bradshaw, the School Business Manager, who had taken on the role in September. Sarah explained that she will provide a brief explanation of what a PFI (Private Finance Initiative) is and some information around the issues with the utility charges.

Sarah outlined the background of the PFI contract and what a PFI arrangement is and she explained the structure and what and who is involved.

Sarah explained that the utility charges and how they are costed are paid at an agreed flat rate in November and are for the contractual period November to October each year, although the school's financial year is April – March. Sarah added that utilities are not indexed and are charged 5/12ths for the prior year, 7/12ths for the following year.

Other unitary fees such as facilities management are indexed and charged April – August 5/12ths at the old RPI rate and 7/12th at the new RPI rate in any financial year. Sarah commented that they will know in the next couple of weeks what the RPI will be.

Sarah informed Governors that the utility data for 2020-21 was not submitted at the correct time to SCC and wasn't identified as missing until December 2022, more than a year after the year had ended. This meant that two years' worth of payments had to be made in one year. Sarah added that the good news is that some omitted data was also found which identified an issue over how the contract mechanism was applied over a couple of years, and as a result, we are expecting a rebate – amount to be confirmed.

Sarah informed Governors that SCC have carried out an investigation and have re-examined all previous and present utility data to ensure it has been correctly calculated. They will also be carrying out 6 monthly reviews and will be regularly updating schools and will make sure that future timeframes are met by the SPV, which they should be doing across the while contract.

Sarah added, as she is new, she is able to ask questions and challenging data to understand how areas are measured and costed and she has regular contact with the other PFI schools to make sure everyone is involved and that they are doing what they should be.

Sarah explained that she is also looking at other things to consider such as starting a discussion with SCC regarding a PFI health check and exit strategy for when the contract expires and what this will mean for the school. She is also exploring renewable energy sources and making sure that they are putting sustainability in place, which students should be seeing first hand. Sarah added that she also wants to ensure that Mitie are doing the same.

A Governor asked about SCC and Sarah's comment that they will be keeping her up to date and informed as this hasn't always been the case. Sarah said that since she has arrived, there have been regular meetings with the SPV and a really big push because of the issues identified. The Head added that it hasn't always been the case until we have started to push things.

A Governor commented that there is an issue around how energy costs very priced and because the tariff was fixed, it didn't encourage savings. With renewable energy there is a way we can get rewarded for saving money and turning lights off. Is there anything we can do to get a reduced bill? Sarah responded yes, this is what she wants to look at, reducing the costs – there is a liaison meeting coming up and she will put this in the agenda.

A Governor said that there was a time when it didn't matter what you did, as there was no reward given, so from a historic place of mistrust, it would be nice if there was a mechanism to measure for this. Sarah responded that the attitude is different now from all parties involved and they are interested and want to make the contract work.

Another Governor asked whether any savings in energy would go to their bottom line. Sarah confirmed that this the case.

A Governor asked about the year the school wasn't charged, and whether this is now resolved. The Head said it is resolved, it was taken out of the school's budget share, before Sarah Bradshaw started at Cantell, and there were some serious discussions held about the situation. **Another Governor asked whether SCC had made provision in their accounts for this.** The Head responded no; it came from the school.

A Governor asked how much influence the school has on what happens next when the contract ends. Sarah responded that there is a person who is working with a school that this is happening to and he will be able to provide us with a case study to work from. **Another Governor said, when it gets closer, possibly Mitie will get better with their services.** Sarah agreed, adding that there are quite a few things that they should have done a few years ago in the life cycle, that need to be done now before the contract ends.

The Chair asked whether the school has any solar panels. Sarah said that all schools receive an energy efficiency grant which can be used to buy solar panels.

A Governor asked whether Sarah feels that she has the information she needs to ensure that Cantell is getting the best deal it can. Sarah responded that it's like trying to work out a puzzle – the contract is 400 pages long, but it is about asking the right questions. Sarah added that she also has an opportunity to see another PFI

school out of the city will be interesting because Cantell didn't get the best deal and she wants to compare us to what they are getting.

Action

The Chair commented that with all the recent publicity, it makes you wonder why they did these contracts in the first place, or why they continue with them in the future. Sarah commented that a change in Government might make a difference.

The Chair of the Finance Committee informed the meeting that Cantell's PFI contract was one of the earliest and they have got a lot better with better terms, so there have been some big changes. The Chair of the Finance Committee added that because his knowledge is historic and because things are changing, Sarah is good because she doesn't know the history and is aware of what is happening and of any changes – if Sarah is able to get it cheaper, then this is positive.

36/24 Pupil Premium Strategy

Kat presented the Pupil Premium Strategy to Governors, which is always published before Christmas and must be displayed on the school website. Kat commented that on their website, the Department for Education now say that Governors must hold the strategy to account and must be given an opportunity to ask questions around the strategy.

Kat commented that she had wanted to bring the strategy to Governors to see if they thought we need to do any more than what's included in the strategy. Kat said she has looked where we are looking to be and the target – she pointed Governors to the intended outcome on page 2 of the report.

1. *Reducing the gap between PP and non-PP.* Kat commented that the plan is to reduce this by 10% and the gap is currently at 10.35%, across the whole school, so nearly at target.
2. *Attainment 8* – the prediction is 9.35, which is an average of the last two years.
3. *Reduce the 5+ English and Maths gap.* Kat reported that this is a long way off although there have been a lot of interventions.

A Governor asked about the targets, and whether they are based on any outside advice – how did they get to the 10%. Kat responded that they had gone for a 10% target because it meant a significant improvement. Kat added that as they go forward, they would like this to go down even more. It is achievable, but challenging.

Kat explained that they are coming to the end of the 3-year plan and when you look at last years change to actual exams, it is looking good for P8 and a little way off for A8 – English and Maths are still a long way off target.

Kat said, if you look at students who have above 90% attendance, you can see that the students who are attending are doing well, no matter what their background is. If we manage to get students to attend early, it makes such a difference and this is why we have been having a big attendance drive.

The Head said that the point is, if young people have 90% or above attendance, there are very few gaps between advantages and non-advantaged students – attendance is the drive. Cantell's attendance is 92.7% and is higher than national, but we need to get it up to 93% to make a big difference. When Governors ask about Pupil Premium, it is not just about the classroom, it is about getting students into school, which is the main thing for us.

A Governor asked whether the pandemic has affected attendance. The Head responded that it is still ongoing. Pre-pandemic the gap existed, and unless something massive happens, it will always be there. Kat commented that we should be proud that we have this achievement for our students.

A Governor commented that the FSM rate has been at 35% forever, but what this looks like is highly different today in the local areas and they need to be comparing like to like as there is a high level of disadvantage.

A Governor asked about the figure for NEETs for 2022 as it says to be confirmed. The Head responded that Andy Paterson has presented this information to Governors previously. The Head added that most of our cohort go to Barton Peveril and 80% of those went to university – we are up there with St Georges against the schools in Hampshire. **A Governor asked what is the overall average.** The Head responded 78%, but the DfE information doesn't always show this.

The Chair commented that it's interesting to look at these pupils, to see how they have got on after leaving school and whether we could learn anything. Kat responded that she will be starting to work with Andy to look at this type of information.

The Head said that now Kat is part of the Raising Standards team, how confident is she about positive discrimination towards Pupil Premium students and how confident is she that it will be the right students in school and the right number of Pupil Premium students? Kat said that they have to be really careful to check this and that the right students are on the list – they go back to the departments to confirm that they have the right students and she is confident that they will get them when they carry out these checks.

The Chair asked about Year 7. Kat said that Year 7 already have interventions in place, such as reading buddies and phonics, but this is one area they will be looking at. There is a commitment to close the gap and hopefully they will get it right early on. The Head agreed that this will be down to attendance and quality first teaching.

Kat said that Lesson A Tutors and Year Leaders are working with students on attendance. The Head added that the money for tutoring is coming to an end, and they will need to look at this carefully to make sure we look after our staff who go the extra mile.

A Governor said, in the past, one of the areas for focus was higher achievement – can Governors be reassured that this groups will be maintained as a focus. Kat confirmed that this group is still a focus, and Veronica Hein is leading on HPPA and working with the students regularly, along with other teachers who organise a whole regime of activities. The aim is to make sure that we push everybody up.

A Governor asked whether any work had taken place, such as going into primary schools before the students come to Cantell in Year 7. The Head said that writing has been the big focus for the Trust as it continues to be an issue. The outcomes in English that lag behind is down to three particular reasons, including stamina, but we are throwing everything at those young people that have gaps.

A Governor referred to the list of targeted support, adding that it might be good to include the library to this list. Kat responded that they have been doing quite a lot of work on this in the library. Kat added that she has carried out a lot of work on the list with the School Business Manager to show what they are using the Pupil Premium funding on – lots of things are happening anyway, so it might be worth looking at this in more depth to see what they want to spend the funding on.

The Head reported that the SEF is set out in the same way under the different headings, such as 'what we do well' and 'what we need to develop.' The Head added that we are now in the Ofsted window again, which will be a Section 5 and it could happen anytime between now and a years' time, which Governors need to be aware of.

The Head said that the SEF is currently a draft and the final version will be issued after key stakeholders have checked it. The Head read from the different sections, with Governors discussing the contents and making comments around possible amendments to the SEF.

Overall Effectiveness

Governors NOTED the reference to vexatious and unreasonable expectations from parents and the need to support school staff. It was AGREED to add this as an item for the next Staffing Committee agenda.

Staffing
Com
agenda
1.5.24

Quality of Education

Governors NOTED that the Head will add something to the section about the QA at Cantell being exceptional and that the understanding of what is happening is highly intelligent and highly supportive and provides the next steps for colleagues.

A Governor suggested adding something to acknowledge the work of the SEND department, which the Head agreed to do.

Governors also mentioned interventions and the Ebacc and whether they should be highlighted in the SEF.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Governors discussed permanent exclusions and whether it was worth addressing that there has been a small spate of exclusions recently. The Head said that this isn't something that he would want to be a 'thing', but he stands by his statement in the SEF.

Personal Development

The Head mentioned that school values are included in the SEF, rather than British values. He also explained that they have now got a mentor for boys as well as girls, so they have a strong role model.

Leadership and Management

The Head explained the three key issues in Leadership and Management, which includes being a part of the Co-operative Trust, the vision for the school and its values.

The Staff Governor said that the leadership of the school is outstanding and the SLT is visible and the school is really well lead.

38/24 Professional Development Cycle Policy

The Chair of the Staffing Committee explained that he is very impressed by the Professional Development cycle – it is forward thinking and has enable a move away from appraisals.

The Head said that the School Business Manager is looking at a similar process for support staff and would be happy to talk about this at the Staffing Committee.

Governors APPROVED the Professional Development Cycle.

Governors NOTED that the most significant change in the policy is to the senior leadership team pay – they have been on the same pay scale for a long time, which doesn't reflect the position now.

Governors APPROVED the Pay Policy

40/24 **Careers Guidance Provider Access Policy Statement**

The Head said that the fact that 85% of our young people go on to university is really good and it shows that the work we do is paying off. **The Chair said it would be interesting to see what information comes from the other colleges in this respect.**

A Governor said that she was thinking about Parents evenings and whether they would be returning to in person. The Head said they always have Options Evenings for Year 9 in person. Parents evenings are online because weighing up work life balance, this is better for staff.

A Governor asked if they had much blow back from parents about not being able to get online. The Head responded that they still get a lot of people from the corporate world working with the school, providing laptops. **The Chair added that a lot of parents like the fact that they don't have to come into school.**

Governors APPROVED the Careers Guidance Provide Access Policy Statement.

41/24 **Feedback from Governor Visits**SEND

Peter Hilditch reported that he had visited the Hub, which was very impressive. The way they handle all the challenges they have with the kids is just amazing. The Governor said that he visited during a subject development week and they were following a students progress throughout the day in all their different classes to look at consistency.

Peter said that they had gone up to the Hub and he was able to see a teacher with two students going through their work and the amount of time he spent with them was brilliant. Peter added that he has agreed with Rachel Bridges to visit again before the end of the school year.

The Head said it would be great to invite Rachel to a future WGB to talk about the changes that they have agreed for the Hub for students from Great Oaks, which they feel will enhance our facility even more. These are students who can't access the full curriculum and we feel they will enhance the Cantell family.

Agenda
Item –
future
meeting

Peter said that there seems to be a reputation for the SEND provision a Cantell from the wider community. The Head agreed that this is the case.

Creative Arts

Matt Bunday reported that he had come into school and looked at the Creative Arts Department. It was all very good and there isn't much to report. Rhi and Lou are very professional and have lots of energy. Matt added that there were no real concerns and it was all very positive.

Safeguarding

The Chair reported that she has been in school for the Safeguarding Audit with Mark Bagust the Trust School Improvement Officer. The Chair said it was very good and

she was able to ask questions and she spoke to the two Designated Safeguarding Leads. They also had a tour of the school and looked at the Single Central Register. **Action**

The Chair informed Governors that there weren't any issues that came out of the audit and she is more than happy with what is going on. The Chair added that the two DSLs are worth their weight in gold.

32/24 **Any Other Business**

There was no Other Business.

33/24 **Date of Next Meeting**

Next meeting – Wednesday 27th March 2024, 5.30 p.m. in the CTC.

That concluded the business of the Meeting. The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

| Page No | Minute Number | Item | By Whom | By When |
|---------|---------------|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. | 37/24 | Supporting school staff – agenda item for next Staffing Committee meeting. | Staffing Agenda/ Clerk | 1 st May 2024 |
| 6. | 41/24 | Rachel Bridges, SENCo to be invited to talk about the changes to the Support | Agenda/ Clerk | Future Meeting |

Ongoing Matters Arising

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| 2 | 04/24 | Head to look for a replacement for Finance/Staffing Committee | Head | Asap |
| 6. | 08/24 | Governors to arrange visits with their Link Faculties | All | Ongoing |