

FEDERATION OF STOKE HILL SCHOOLS

MINUTES of the EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of the FULL GOVERNING BODY

Held at Stoke Hill Junior School on Thursday 22nd January 2015 at 6.15 p.m.

PRESENT: Jamie Sullivan (Headteacher SHJS), Sarah Mackay (Headteacher SHINS), Claire McKimm, Vanessa Newcombe, Carol Finning, Kristine Vaaler, Greg Richmond, John Turnbull, Peter Holland, Andrew Page, Maria Escribano, Dianne Goodwin (Clerk)

Roy Souter (Acting HT Ladysmith Junior School), Mark Wilkinson (Deputy HT Ladysmith Junior School), Alan Betts (School Improvement Officer) joined the meeting after Item 2

1 To receive apologies

Apologies were accepted from Liz Hill, Bex Ryan and Maes Attia

2 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

DG explained that as the Governors were now meeting for the first time under the new constitution there would need to be an election for the Chair and Vice Chair

- Vanessa Newcombe was proposed by Kristine Vaaler

Peter Holland was proposed by Andrew Page

A secret ballot was held and Vanessa Newcombe duly elected.

- Vanessa proposed Kristine Vaaler as Vice Chair. This was accepted

3 Welcome

Vanessa welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that Kristine and Liz were Parent Governors at present, and proposed that they resign and be co-opted at a future meeting so that new Parent Governors could be elected.

(ACTION) DG to arrange elections for Parent Governors

4 School Crossing Patrol

VN explained that DCC were looking to save £100,000 from their budget by reducing School Crossing Patrol coverage. Stoke Hill currently had 3 crossing patrol points; one outside school and two on the roundabout at bottom of Stoke Hill. She said that the junctions on the roundabout of Stoke Hill Rd and Union Rd did not meet the new criteria for a crossing patrol. She said that there was to be a meeting on 3rd February to discuss this and urged Governors to canvass support from parents. She asked for any opinions to be passed to Sarah before this meeting.

PH said he had circulated a paper on this issue to other governors. He said he felt that DCC were not fully aware of all the issues and that he would be working to try and resolve the issue.

5 Letter form Ladysmith School Governors

VN explained that a letter had been received from the Chair of Governors at Ladysmith Junior School containing a proposal for a possible management partnership with Stoke Hill Junior School for 2015-16. VN explained that the purpose of this meeting was to find out more about the proposal and to ask questions. A vote on the proposal would be taken at the next FGB meeting on 29th January.

Rationale

Management partnership for one year 2015-16

Separate Governing Bodies to be retained

RS to be Executive HT for both Junior Schools

Ladysmith School currently looking at long term options. Federation of Ladysmith Junior and Infant Schools set up Jan 14 but still developing. HT of Junior School retired July 14. RS appointed as HT of Junior School on secondment from SHJS for one year. One option is to appoint Executive HT to have responsibility for both Ladysmith schools but not an option at present

Proposal under consideration is to have partnership between Ladysmith Junior School and SH Junior School with one HT.

- Short term arrangement for one year

- Still to retain separate Governing Bodies but would need a joint committee to monitor and review partnership on regular basis.
- Both schools very similar
- RS does not want to apply for permanent headship of Ladysmith
- RS to work as HT in each school for 2 days per week and 5th days in alternate schools
- Both Junior schools to have non teaching deputy headteacher for duration of partnership. (already one in place at Ladysmith)

Advantages for SHJS

- Appointment of DH would enlarge and strengthen leadership team of school on a longer term basis. This has already been under consideration for some time. This would be a permanent post, advertised nationally and hopefully attract a wide field of high quality applicants
- Formal opportunities for teachers to work across both schools and learn from each other
- Both schools currently have different approaches to teaching English, Maths and topic work. School leaders would be able to make sure best approaches used in each school
- Some policies, procedures and working practices are different, aligning them would enable best approaches to be used in each school
- Standards at SH have risen incrementally over last 15 years and are now consistently very good. In order to improve further there needs to be transformational change which more of the same is less likely to provide.
- OFSTED Framework now looks for Senior leaders in school to promote improvement across wider system. This is done within Stoke Hill Federation but proposed partnership would develop this further

Advantages for SH Federation

- Able to work and learn from larger group of colleagues
- Both SM and RS currently work with large core of teachers who have worked at SH for long period of time. This would be maintained whilst getting the benefits of new thinking and different ways of working, giving people opportunities to reflect and refresh their practice without moving school

- Opportunities for joint working across both Infant Schools

Questions

KV asked about appointment of Deputy HT. What would happen at end of partnership when RS returned to SHJS as full-time HT. Would there still be a need for full-time Deputy. How would extra costs be paid for?

RS said that Financial modelling would need to take place to look at projected costs. This has already happened at Ladysmith.

VN expressed concerns over extra staff costs, especially as uncertainty over Education Budget post election. No guarantee that current ring fencing of education budgets to remain in place. Also needed to remember that staff costs would increase because of future increase to NI contributions and pension contributions.

RS said Governors needed to consider if Deputy HT for SHJS was required in long term

PH asked if the proposal would add value to what was already on offer

- Would reputation of SH suffer. Parents might express concern over sharing HT with another school
- Staff welfare. How would RS deal with possible conflict of having responsibility for two schools. If one was placing more pressure on his time would other school suffer as result?

JT asked about attainment at Ladysmith. RS said it was not as good as at SHJS. SM said that the aim of partnership is to help share ideas and thus help improve standards

JT asked if it was common practice for teachers to work in different schools. VN said that the proposal would provide this opportunity. SM said it provide the potential for networking and sharing across both schools. She reminded governors that this had been one of the initial aims for the Federation of Stoke Hill. She said there were lots of unknowns at first but now there are lots of opportunities which are used by staff at both schools

AP said that there were 3 options to consider

- Partnership as proposed
- New HT for Ladysmith Junior
- RS stay at LS

RS said that he would not pursue option 3

RS said he had already considered the work life balance and possible conflict of time issues. He said that in larger schools management did not rest solely with the HT but with the management team. He said that if the HT was not available parents should have confidence in any other member of the senior management team and should be able to approach any one of them for help when needed.

PH said he was aware of a number of partnerships in place across Devon, example included schools which were some distance apart and others which included different types of schools such as infant and secondary schools. He said he was concerned about the costs of a Deputy HT after the 12 month period

JT asked what benefits partnership would bring to pupils at SH. He expressed concern that the proposal might have adverse effects on SH.

Alan Betts gave an example of the partnership between Shaldon Primary School and Wynstream School. This linked a school with Outstanding Ofsted ratings with one which required improvement. He said that results at Wynstream improved significantly whilst those at Shaldon were maintained.

He added that new standards for HT performance management required them to be outward looking in order to achieve excellent standards of achievement

KV expressed concerns over the amount of work that might be needed as Ladysmith schools had only just federated. RS said that when the Stoke Hill schools had federated they were in a similar situation whereas at Ladysmith the Infant School has been rated as Outstanding but the Junior school has been rated as requiring improvement.

JT said that Ladysmith has approached Stoke Hill to consider partnership; would Stoke Hill have approached Ladysmith in a similar way? RS said that one of the long term aims in SH SIP is to look for opportunities to advance

GR asked what would happen in 18months time when the arrangement came to an end. RS said the proposal was time limited. GR asked how Governors could be sure that the arrangement would only be for one more year. RS said that both sets of Governors would have to agree any changes.

KV expressed concern that the proposal would cause an increased workload for SM. SM said that was one of the reasons for the proposal for a non teaching deputy head. She added that potential difficulties should be identified and tackled before they became problems. She said that the possibility of new ideas about ways of working provided lots of opportunities and would prevent SH from become too entrenched in current practices

PH said he had worked with partnerships in the past. He said the school was already in an informal partnership through membership of the Local Learning Community. RS said that there were changes planned to Learning Communities as funding was no longer available. He added that one of the original reasons behind the Federation of SH schools was to make the relationship between them more formal.

JT asked if one school was outstanding and the other failing what benefits would bringing a poorer school into a partnership provide. SM said that a school judged as failing may still possess good parts in its work which could be used as examples of best practice.

KV asked why only the Junior schools were being considered for partnership. RS said that all teachers across both federations would benefit for the proposal. SM added that the process of Federation has helped bring closer working between SHINS and SHJS which has brought lots of benefits to both schools. The proposed partnership would be a great opportunity

KV queried whether the upheaval and extra spending on a Deputy HT would bring any positive benefits for her children and other children within SH Federation.

Alan Betts said there was lots of research material available to show the benefits of partnership arrangements between schools. He cited the London Challenge which had helped to drive up standards in schools in London. VN countered this by stating that recent research had shown that improvements in London schools had been driven by the work ethic of immigrant children.

CF asked if the Deputy HT role would be a permanent appointment. RS said it would

GR asked if the benefits of the proposal would continue after 12 months. RS said that it would.

VN asked how the arrangement would be monitored. RS said that there would be a joint committee of Governors from both schools to monitor it.

AP asked JS how he felt about the proposal. JS said he could not answer that as it there was a conflict of interest. He added that Governors needed to consider the proposed structure and not people involved.

RC asked if a long term Deputy HT across both schools in SH had been considered. RS said it could be considered. SM said that at present Alison Kenney is working as Deputy Head across both schools with responsibility for Inclusion. CF added that all new staff are appointed to the Federation and not a specific school.

AP asked about the visibility of the HT at SHJS if he was only in school 2 and ½ days per week. RS said it did not matter as long as a member of the Senior Management team was in attendance. CM added that at present there might be days when the HT was not in school but there was always someone else from the Senior Management team available.

VN asked Governors to consider what had been said and asked for any further questions to be sent to DG who would collate answers and distribute to all Governors.