**Present**

CHAIR: Martin Pfutzner (MP)

Headteacher: Paul Lufkin (PL)

Katy Gandon (KG)

Lisa Gardiner (LG)

Will Mellor (WM)

Sam Rickman (SR)

Milly Williams (MW)

**In attendance**

Steve Cleary, Clerk (SAC)

Lisa Kingsbury (LK) (Deputy Head)

June Crame (Head of Governor Services, LB Merton)

*The features of effective governance from the competency framework: -*

*Strategic Leadership, Accountability, People, Structures, Compliance, Evaluation*

*All original papers are available on the LGFL MyUSO drive.*

1. **GOVERNANCE**

The meeting began at 6.30pm and was deemed to be quorate. Governors confirmed that they had received and read papers in advance. Apologies were received and consented to from Joseph Brasse (JB), Tash Gourlay (TG) and Georgia Harris (GH).

In accordance with the Education (School Government) Regulations, governors were invited to declare any interest they might have in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

Governors **RESOLVED** to provisionally approve the minutes of the full governing board of the Wimbledon Primary Federation held on 10 October 2023 pending any comments or questions regarding their accuracy or content.

Governors noted that the board was currently a temporary arrangement arising from the dissolution of the Wimbledon Primary Federation at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. There is a strong desire to move to a full governing board by the end of March 2024. It was **RESOLVED** to elect Martin Pfutzner as Chair and Lisa Gardiner as Vice-Chair of the temporary board until the end of the current academic year.

JC advised that the current board could appoint the new board in principle so that there is continuity.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Lisa Gardiner as the local authority governor.

Governance Structure: Governors **RESOLVED** to approve a new instrument of government allowing for 11 governors[[1]](#footnote-1) to be fully established by the next meeting. The discussion emphasized the need for impartial and independent governors[[2]](#footnote-2), potentially from the business sector, to ensure a balanced and unbiased governance model. However, efforts to recruit such governors have been challenging, with limited success through channels like the NGA website. A skills audit revealed that there is a lack of representation in finance, HR, and legal areas. Finding volunteers with expertise in these fields is seen as crucial. There have been multiple rounds of outreach to fill governance positions, with recent efforts including reaching out to potential candidates again.

Evaluation of Governance Model: The board plans to run with the current governance model for a year to evaluate its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

The following overview of the new governing board was outlined and approved by governors:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TYPE | NAME | NOTES |
| HEADTEACHER (ex officio) | Paul Lufkin |  |
| STAFF | Georgia Harris | Leave of absence |
| PARENTS | Martin Pfutzner[[3]](#footnote-3), Milly Williams | Subject to nomination and election |
| CO-OPTED | Natasha Gourlay, Joseph Brasse, Katherine Gandon, Will Mellor, Sam Rickman |  |
| LOCAL AUTHORITY | Lisa Gardiner |  |
| ASSOCIATE MEMBER | Lisa Kingsbury |  |

Parent Governors: the meeting reflected on the election of parent governors. There was a suggestion to streamline the election process by presenting preferred candidates to the parent body for endorsement, rather than conducting a fully open election. This approach seemed aimed at minimizing disruption and expediting governance stabilization. There was an acknowledgment of the need for the election process to be open and fair, as per regulations, though there was a practical lean towards pragmatism given the circumstances. PL agreed to circulate a communication to parents around the nomination process. **ACTION: PL**

Staff Governors: Similar to parent governors, there was a mention of having staff governors, with specific individuals recently appointed. The approach here also seemed geared towards stabilizing the governance structure quickly.

Governance Transition: The discussion reflected a broader strategy to transition from a temporary to a permanent governance structure efficiently, with attempts to avoid prolonged elections or nominations unless necessary. It was **RESOLVED** that the immediate goal is to finalize the appointments of parent and staff governors by a set date, with a fallback plan if unexpected nominations arise. Should there be more nominations than anticipated, governors planned to reconvene and address the situation on 12 March.

The role of link governors was explained and the following were appointed[[4]](#footnote-4):

* Finance: Martin Pfutzner
* Governor recruitment and training – Katherine Gandon
* Staff & pupil well-being / attendance: Will Mellor
* Curriculum / outcomes - Joseph Brasse
* Safeguarding, temp cover for inclusion, EDI. SEND, EAL, PP – Milly Williams,
* Health & Safety – Sam Rickman

The Headteacher stressed that governors are welcome to visit the school at any arranged time regardless of link role to better understand different aspects of its operations. Governors acknowledged the time and effort required to effectively oversee their areas, especially given their other personal and professional commitments.

Governors reflected on the importance of specific training for new governors and the distinction between general and specific training modules. It is planned to update a training matrix to keep a record of all completed training sessions. This includes a self-assessment form post-training to evaluate the usefulness and application of the training.

1. **PUPILS AND COMMUNITY**

**Safeguarding**

MW reported on a recent visit regarding safeguarding within the school which had focused on the safeguarding audit and single central register. The following key points were noted:

* The CSR has no gaps in records - DBS paperwork is in place for all staff/ adults working onsite and in contact with pupils.
* There is a strong DSL team. It was confirmed that all safeguarding training requirements have been successfully completed by both the staff and members of the governing body, ensuring compliance with mandatory training protocols. The school is considering training all Phase leaders as DSLs and specific governors are to undertake safer recruitment training.
* Communications on safeguarding are strong. The MyConcern platform for recording all welfare concerns is new within the last 5 years and effective[[5]](#footnote-5). A structured approach to managing safeguarding concerns was discussed, detailing how cases are prioritized, monitored, and de-prioritized based on the level of concern and necessary interventions.
* PSHE is well embedded and online safety as well as filtering and monitoring are effectively implemented. The school has a strong anti-bullying ethos and there was very positive feedback from student council members.

Caseload and Culture of Vigilance: Currently, the school experiences a notably light caseload concerning safeguarding issues, which is lighter than usual. This reduction in cases is indicative of a vigilant culture within the school, where safeguarding remains a priority despite fewer incidents. Regular meetings and monitoring involve a broad number of children, though actual welfare concerns remain low.

Governors were apprised of a significant incident involving an external visitor which resulted in a referral and subsequent actions including a review of the code of conduct and procedures to ensure robustness. This incident highlighted the effectiveness of current safeguarding procedures which helped in promptly addressing and resolving the issue. Lessons learnt are being integrated into the lettings policy, alongside new Department for Education (DFE) guidance. This revised policy will be presented at the March governing body meeting.

The Headteacher commented that it is proposed to run a governor safeguarding induction for new governors before the meeting on 12 March.

Governors **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the findings of the safeguarding audit.

The governing body expressed satisfaction with the current safeguarding measures.

**Looked after children**

* LK is responsible for overseeing the support provided to looked after and previously looked after children at the school.
* The school currently has no children in local authority care. There are 10 previously looked after children at the school, two of whom were designated as such within the past year due to delays in court orders despite earlier adoptions.
* Staff are undergoing training in trauma-informed practice to better understand and address the complexities associated with the behavioural challenges of these children. The training has led to modifications in the school’s behaviour policy, now renamed the "Behaviour and Relationships Policy".
* Individual Support Initiatives: Certain children require one-to-one support, although funding for these positions is not readily available. The school is exploring alternative funding avenues and potential designations for additional needs (e.g., EHCPs).
* Social and emotional support is emphasized for all children, ensuring a consistent and safe environment.
* Increased efforts to engage with families have resulted in more open communication. Teachers are encouraged to learn as much as possible about the children’s backgrounds to better understand potential triggers and adapt the curriculum accordingly.
* High-profile cases involving looked after children are notably time-consuming due to the children’s complex needs and their impact on peers.
* Information about a child’s background is shared on a need-to-know basis, with careful consideration of family privacy, especially in cases where children are unaware of their adoption status.
* From May each year, the school begins planning for transitions to new year groups, particularly focusing on children with special educational needs or emotional needs. This includes multiple classroom visits and creating informational booklets for incoming teachers.
* In response to significant life events like bereavement, the school employs external counselling services (e.g., Jigsaw) and provides a comprehensive support system to handle emotional challenges. Special care is taken during occasions like Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, recognizing the potential emotional impact on children who have experienced significant family loss.

Governors concluded that the school is actively engaged in supporting the emotional and educational needs of looked after and previously looked after children through comprehensive policies, dedicated staffing, and close collaboration with families. This holistic approach is tailored to manage both everyday challenges and exceptional circumstances, ensuring all children receive the support they need to succeed in their educational environment.

**Vision and Values Update**

The vision and values update has been discussed extensively with staff, leading to a significant amount of feedback. A lengthy session was scheduled to rewrite the document, incorporating staff feedback while staying true to the original intentions. The implementation of the project is delayed until after the upcoming half-term due to scheduling of the senior leadership team meeting, with expectations to catch up during the summer term. The process was valued by staff, who appreciated being consulted and having the opportunity to contribute.

**Attendance Update**

Attendance overall this year is above 96%, and has consistently tracked week on week about 2% above national benchmark for primary schools (part from the last week of Autumn term and the first week of Spring term). No focus groups are falling below the national average, but SEN and P attendance is at 94.7% for the year to date. The educational welfare officer and school reviewed cases of persistent absence (more than 10% absence). The number of students who were persistently absent (in year groups Rec to Year 6) was 46 or 7.6% of the student population, which is lower than the persistent absence level for last year (9.3%) and the national average of 14%. . There has been a higher-than-usual level of sickness absence recently, slightly reducing the attendance percentage compared to previous terms.

**SEN Update**

SEND is a particular focus this term for Inset training and weekly professional development sharing the ‘Ordinarily Available’ guidance from Merton, as well as supporting staff knowledge around dyscalculia and ADHD

SEN Identification and Monitoring Process: The process includes initial monitoring, followed by increased assessment and interventions if initial adjustments fail. For some children, a statutory assessment may lead to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) if long-term needs are identified. The pandemic has led to an increase in the number of students on the SEN register, often conflating true special educational needs with general underperformance due to the pandemic.

The school is attempting to rigorously identify and classify SEN students, aiming for accuracy over broad categorization.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The number of SEN students has risen slightly, but this varies year by year.

Detailed data analysis (including breakdowns by gender, Pupil Premium status, and SEN status) is available, though limited by resource constraints. There is also a lack of sufficient resources to address all additional learning or catch-up needs.

1. **CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS FOCUS**

**Networking and Collaboration**

The school is committed to building relationships with other schools for mutual benefit and responsibility in support and sharing. A showcase event is planned focused on mathematics.

**School development plan update**

Focus Areas: whilst there has been an excellence in last year’s phonics outcome, early reading has been a priority area, with targeted actions to address specific needs.

Outcomes and Validation: Recent feedback and results validate the effectiveness of strategies implemented, particularly around improvements seen from the year two group moving into year three.

**Curriculum and standards**

Focus on Writing: writing remains the weakest subject. Members of the SLT have conducted classroom visits focusing on writing, identifying a link between oracy (speaking and listening) and writing. There has been a continued emphasis on professional development in writing.

Observations from Classroom Visits: Positive outcomes were noted from classroom visits, with adjustments in planning and implementations reflecting positively in student work.

Assessment and Tracking: early continuous assessment strategies are in place in maths and phonics, emphasizing book banding and progress through the phonics program. From years one to six, standard tests are administered each term in reading and maths, with a standard score of 100 being the average. This helps in tracking progress and setting targets. Each child has a target set for the year, aiming for progress beyond last year’s achievements.

Performance and Challenges: Reading and maths scores have improved compared to last year, but challenges persist with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and disadvantaged groups. Reduced resources are affecting support interventions, requiring teachers to adapt their planning and teaching strategies. The autumn term is particularly challenging for SEN and disadvantaged students, but there is optimism for improvement as the year progresses.

Key Themes and Insights: Positive feedback from parents about phonics outcomes boosts the school’s profile and confirms its educational strategies. An emphasis on continuous professional development and adaptability in teaching strategies highlights the school's commitment to improving educational outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups. Regular assessments and error corrections in data reporting underline the importance of accurate and timely information in educational planning and interventions.

Academic Performance in Reading and Math: Adjustments in reading practices were made in Year 3 to enhance fluency. Despite improvements, there's a lag in the expected outcomes due to historical performance deficits, particularly highlighted by SATs results.

A focus on math shows a gender gap, with girls generally outperforming boys, although both groups benefit from strong math teaching.

The Headteacher reported that JB had visited the school to understand the progression of reading from early years up to year six. Other areas of the curriculum will be addressed in subsequent visits. A "learning walk" was conducted from reception to year three to observe the teaching of phonics and whole-class reading and children’s workbooks were reviewed to assess the progression and quality of reading instruction. Facilitated discussions had been held between JB and the leads for early reading and English, focusing on planning, curriculum implementation, and data analysis.

**Early years**

Reading: There has been a significant focus on improving reading skills in the early years. This initiative benefits all students but is particularly crucial for those who have greater difficulties.

Writing: The breakdown of the writing process in Year 1 and Year 2 has been designed to benefit all children, with a particular focus on those for whom each step is more complex or challenging to grasp.

Academic Targets and Performance: Governors discussed the persistence of academic challenges and the setting of ambitious targets, particularly in Year 6 where 21% of students are not on track for higher-level reading goals, though they are expected to meet age-appropriate expectations. The school sets a very high target of 60% for students achieving greater depth in reading by Year 6, acknowledging this as an exceptionally ambitious goal. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted learning, particularly for the cohort that was in early years during its onset as key foundations were not laid at the time. This group is currently in Year 3 and shows gaps that the school is actively trying to address.

In Year 1, setting targets for greater depth in reading is challenging due to the primary focus on phonics and basic sentence reading. By the end of Year 1, the reading targets become more complex, and it is difficult to predict early in the year which students will reach greater depth by year-end.

1. **FINANCE UPDATE**

MP reported that he had visited the school and discussed a number of areas with the Headteacher including the following areas: the impact of proposed changes to local and national funding formulae, the school budgeting processes, financial position, the in-year deficit and the available reserve, and strategies for dealing with the in-year deficit over the coming months and years. The school’s financial position is on a deteriorating trend; however, there are significant reserves that could fund the current in-year deficit for a number of years. WPPS is the school with the lowest level of funding in Merton and is not an outlier relative to peers in terms of its financial position. Staff pay is the critical item of expenditure and pay restraint is key to the long-term financial future of the school. The in-year deficit and level of reserves will require ongoing monitoring this year.

1. **FEASIBILITY OF FULL TIME NURSERY PROVISION**

Governors discussed current nursery operations and past experiences and noted that the nursery previously offered 50 places but saw limited demand for full-time slots, with only about 8 parents consistently using or paying for extended hours. This led to the decision to primarily offer morning sessions due to both demand and operational simplicity, as maintaining a full-day curriculum proved complex. There is a difficulty in accurately gauging sustainable demand for a full-time nursery. Recent data suggested fluctuating daily attendance, which does not strongly indicate a demand for full-time care. Governors were apprised of a range of operational challenges with full time care. For example, if the nursery were to operate for 6.25 hours daily with integrated lunch supervision, staffing and curriculum delivery would need to be adjusted. The split between full-time and part-time attendees complicates both curriculum delivery and staff scheduling, especially during lunch periods. In the context of a falling birth rate which might reduce the long-term demand for nursery places, there are further concerns raised about the sustainability of expanding to full-time offerings. The nursery currently operates at a loss, subsidized by the broader school budget and any expansion would need careful financial consideration to avoid worsening this situation. Additionally, staffing adjustments would be necessary, as some nursery staff currently support other school functions in the afternoons. Various approaches could be followed such as reassessing the staffing model and operational logistics to determine if a sustainable, efficient full-time operation is feasible without compromising other school functions. In addition, a financial analysis could be conducted to understand the implications of expanding nursery operations on the school's overall budget. Governors concluded that any decision to expand the nursery to full-time operations hinges on a clearer understanding of actual parent demand and the ability to implement a sustainable operational model. The school is committed to further discussions and analyses to ensure any changes align with long-term viability and community needs. It was **RESOLVED** to discuss the issue further at the next meeting.

1. **POLICIES**

Governors received a schedule showing current policies, categorized by urgency and timeline (red for immediate, purple for 12 March). Inputs from various contributors (LG, MW, KG and JB) have been incorporated or are pending incorporation into the policies. Governors expressed a degree of concern over the version control of documents as new comments and edits are integrated and discussed shifts to substantive elements of key policies, especially those related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and behaviour policies. A significant portion of the meeting focused on the policy regarding how staff should react if a child leaves school premises unaccompanied. The current policy advises against pursuing the child to avoid potential accidents being caused by the chase. It was recognised that there is a clear tension between following legal advice to limit liability and the moral and instinctive reactions to protect the child. Governors concluded that policies need to be adaptable to specific circumstances, such as the age of the child and the specific situation leading to an incident. The view was also expressed that comprehensive engagement with parents is crucial, especially for children who are known to be at risk of fleeing due to distress or agitation. In response to a previous incident, a proposal was considered to relocate the school entrance closer to the school houses to facilitate easier and safer access. Concerns were raised about the practicality of this change, particularly the difficulty of managing large volumes of traffic (students and parents) in the mornings. Various strategies have been tried, including adjusting gate timings and considering a redesign to incorporate a two-entrance system. Governors agreed that any changes to the entrance must ensure compliance with accessibility standards, complicating the redesign process.

Inclusion of AI in Online Safety Policies: Concerns were raised about the absence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the current online safety policy, especially regarding the manipulation of images. It was noted that AI elements are not yet included in the model policy from the London Grid for Learning but are expected to be incorporated in future updates. Governors expressed satisfaction with the current revisions in the online safeguarding policy which now includes mentions of AI, considering it a positive development. A suggestion was made to make online safety, specifically filtering and monitoring, a regular agenda item in future meetings to ensure it is being adequately covered and audited although it was noted that this is covered in annual training.

Usage of School Devices and Email Policies: Questions were raised about the governance and policy adherence regarding the use of school devices and school email addresses by the board members. Concerns about the use of personal email addresses for school governance matters were discussed, highlighting a need for more stringent adherence to data protection policies and possibly revising the acceptable use policies related to technology and communication tools.

It was **RESOLVED** that governors shouldn't be able to access papers with personal email.

Governors further **RESOLVED** to approve the following policies as circulated subject to the amendments suggested:

* Behaviour and Relationships Policy
* Positive Behaviour Support/Physical Intervention
* Anti bullying Policy
* Feedback and Marking Policy
* Data Protection Policy
* Online Safety Policy
* Charging Policy
* SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
* Bad Debt Policy

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Wimbledon Park[[7]](#footnote-7)** – 12 Mar, 21 May, 2 July

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Print Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. The governing body shall consist of: two parent governors, one local authority governor, one staff governor, one headteacher, six co-opted governors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Discussion underscored past issues where lack of impartial governors affected the functioning of disciplinary and grievance panels, stressing the importance of having governors not directly connected to the school community. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Chair, link role in finance [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It was suggested that governors would leverage their experience and take on roles that align with their professional skills or interests and those present emphasised the importance of matching governor skills with school needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "My Concern" is a valuable online tool for managing case chronologies and recording actions. However, due to the infrequent necessity of its use (often several years apart), regular usage among staff is low. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Variability in how schools identify and classify SEN students can affect the accuracy and usefulness of SEN data. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. All meetings at 6.30pm [↑](#footnote-ref-7)