

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ELIOT BANK AND GORDONBROCK PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of the Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock Primary Schools Federation held on Monday, 15 March 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place remotely via Zoom.

PRESENT

Mr T. Bremner
Ms B. Eady
Mr P. Fidel Chair
Ms M. Gilmore Executive Headteacher
Mr C. Hale Vice Chair
Mr T. Hardy Hall
Mr P. Jenkins
Ms H. Keyte
Ms K. Knowles
Ms M. Quinn

Also present:

Ms M. Barry Deputy Headteacher, Gordonbrock
Ms L. McGuire Deputy Headteacher, Eliot Bank
Mrs A. Osmond Deputy Headteacher, Eliot Bank
Mr M. Ridler-Mayor Acting Deputy Headteacher, Gordonbrock
Mrs K. Walsh Head of School, Eliot Bank
Ms J. Wright Head of School, Gordonbrock
Mrs J. Woods Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Apologies for absence were received with consent from Mr Stephen and Ms Worthington. Apologies for lateness were received from Mr Hardy Hall.

2. TO AGREE THE BUSINESS FOR THE MEETING

The order in which items were to be discussed and those items which would be considered as urgent business was agreed upon.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING

(a) To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 be approved as a correct record. In view of the ongoing pandemic, the Clerk was requested to sign the minutes of behalf of the Chair.

(b) Matters arising

(i) Page 1, Minute 2(b) – Register of Interests

The Clerk informed governors that Register of Interests forms were still outstanding from Mr Fidel, Ms Stickland, and Mr Hardy Hall. She undertook to chase Ms Stickland and Mr Hardy Hall again, and Mr Fidel said that he would leave his completed form with Ms McAllister at Eliot Bank as soon as possible.

(ii) Page 2, Minute 5(b)(ii) – Governing Body self review

At the last meeting, Ms Gilmore had agreed to discuss the possibility of carrying out a self review with Ms Worthington and a governor from Kelvin Grove. It had not yet been possible to do this, **but Ms Worthington was still keen to move this forward, and Ms Gilmore said that she would liaise with her and the Headteacher at Kelvin Grove.**

(iii) Page 4, Minute 6(c) – Governing Body Code of Conduct

The updated Code of Conduct had been circulated with the agenda. *All governors were requested to provide written confirmation that they were happy with the Code, and were asked to email the Clerk to this effect as soon as possible.*

(iv) Page 4, Minute 6(d) – Governors’ monitoring and evaluation schedule

The revised monitoring and evaluation schedule had been reviewed by the Strategic Group at their meeting on 22 January and had been circulated with the agenda. The schedule included proposed monitoring roles, and any governor who was unhappy with the role allocated to them was asked to contact the Chair as soon as possible. Subject to this, it was **RESOLVED** that the monitoring and evaluation schedule be approved.

(c) To approve the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 22 February 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 22 February 2021 be approved as a correct record. In view of the ongoing pandemic, the Clerk was asked to sign the minutes of behalf of the Chair.

(d) Matters arising

It was noted that interviews for the Deputy Headteacher post at Gordonbrock were due to take place on 23 March 2021.

5. GOVERNING BODY

(a) Changes to the Governing Body

End of term of office

Name	Category	With effect from
Mr P. Fidel	Local authority	11/9/21
Mr T. Bremner	Co-opted	11/9/21
Mr T. Hardy Hall	Co-opted	11/9/21

It was noted that the terms of office of the above governors was due to end early in the summer term, and there was discussion about their reappointment. *Mr Fidel and Mr Bremner both indicated that they would like to continue in office, and it was agreed that their skills and experience continued to be of great value to the Governing Body.* Mr Hardy Hall was not present for this part of the meeting, and Ms Gilmore agreed to discuss his reappointment with him.

It was **RESOLVED** that (1) Mr Bremner be re-appointed as a co-opted governor for a further four years with effect from 11 September 2021; and

- (2) the Clerk would arrange for Mr Fidel to be considered by Mayor and Cabinet for nomination as the local authority governor for a further four years with effect from 11 September 2021.

It was noted that the Clerk was currently in discussion with Governors for Schools to identify potential suitable candidates to fill the remaining vacancies for co-opted governors, and arrangements would be put in place to fill the parent governor vacancies as soon as possible.

(b) DBS checks

Governors were reminded that all governors must have a valid DBS check in place, and it was confirmed that all checks were up to date.

5. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS, VISITS TO THE SCHOOL, AND TRAINING

(a) Reports from committees

(i) Strategic Group

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2021 were received. The Strategic Group had discussed the catering contract, the School Streets Scheme, the school closure and provision for critical workers and vulnerable pupils, remote learning provision, staffing and recruitment, and the governors' monitoring and evaluation schedule and governor recruitment. There had also been discussion about the recruitment process for the Deputy Headteacher at Gordonbrock.

Mr Fidel gave an update on developments with the catering contract, and said that it was now moving towards the final stages. The local authority had given information on the contract, and Mr Fidel asked for a governor with relevant experience to volunteer to look at the proposals in more detail. It was RESOLVED that Mr Fidel would provide information on the contract to Ms Keyte, and a report would be made to the Governing Body at the summer term meeting.

(ii) Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 February 2021 were received. The main discussion had been around the budget updates for both schools and the three year budget plans, together with the Schools Financial Value Standard report and financial benchmarking information. The Committee had also discussed staffing issues, and had considered a range of health and safety and premises issues.

(b) Review of committee membership and link governor responsibilities

The membership of committees was reviewed, and it was agreed that Ms Keyte would join the Resources Committee. The Clerk was asked to cross reference the list of link governors with the monitoring and evaluation schedule to ensure consistency.

(c) Visits to the school, meetings attended, and other activities

In view of the ongoing pandemic, no routine link governor visits had been made to either school. ***However, Mr Fidel and Mr Hale had carried out health and safety walks at both schools prior to the full reopening.***

(d) Governing Body training

Details of the summer term training programme had been circulated and the Chair urged governors to avail themselves of the range of courses available, and in particular to consider attending for refresher training. All training was currently taking place via Zoom, and the quality was generally good.

Ms Knowles and Mr Fidel were due to attend the unconscious bias training on 29 March.

Ms Gilmore informed governors that she and Ms Worthington had been working with Ms Osmond and Mr Ridler-Mayor on the new Sex and Relationships Education Policy.

(e) Half termly governors' newsletter

It was noted that the second half termly governors' newsletter had now been circulated to all governors.

6. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair had circulated a comprehensive report to the Governing Body on the lockdown provision since January. The report gave details of the number of critical worker and vulnerable children who had been attending Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock since January and how these numbers had increased over time; it was noted that the number of children attending Gordonbrock had increased

to 130 children just before the reopening on 8 March, and at Eliot Bank, the number of pupils had increased from 55 to nearly 90 since January. The report gave details of the remote provision including live feedback sessions, which had been delivered via Google Classroom, together with information on the level of engagement, which had increased during the period. Mr Fidel also made reference in his report to the number of laptops and SIM cards which had been given to pupils to ensure that they were able to access the online learning, many of which had been provided by the Department for Education and donated by EBSA at Eliot Bank. Paper work packs had been provided for families who had difficulties in accessing the online offer, but this had declined during the lockdown as more devices had been given out. The level of engagement with Google Classroom had increased during the period, and successful parents' evenings took place in February. The report also included information on the increase in the number of children entitled to free school meals, and information on COVID infections and children and staff who had needed to self-isolate.

Mr Fidel also gave more information on the health and safety walks he and Mr Hale had carried out at both schools to check on the procedures in place for the full reopening on 8 March.

Mr Fidel ended his report by giving an update on attendance since the full reopening, and the very positive and enthusiastic attitude of the children when they returned. He also thanked all school staff on behalf of the Governing Body for their dedication to teaching and supporting all children and their families during the lockdown, and the new skills they were developing in delivering the remote education offer.

7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

(a) Executive Headteacher's report – on behalf of both schools

The Executive Headteacher's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and included items of leadership and organisation, school closure/national lockdown, vulnerable pupils and families, the full reopening on 8 March, staff wellbeing, federation partnerships, professional development meetings, School Direct programme, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, Pupil Premium Grant, PE / Sports Premium Grant, Catch Up Fund, peer review, school on school support, policies, and the Federation improvement priorities. Ms Gilmore informed governors that, because of the exceptional circumstances, it had been decided that the Head of School reports would be streamlined for this term, and that her Executive Headteacher's report would cover all developments and statutory requirements. The Heads of School would report separately again at the summer term meeting. Ms Gilmore elaborated on areas from her report and answered governors' questions.

Leadership and organisation

The major focus for the spring term had been the Federation's response to COVID-19 and the significant additional challenges facing both schools and the communities, the closure of the schools in January and move to remote learning, and preparations for the reopening in March, whilst ensuring that standards remained high. As the schools eased out of lockdown, Ms Gilmore stressed the commitment to continue with the planned developmental work on the curriculum.

The Senior Leadership Teams from both schools continued to work very closely. More frequent meetings had been held, which had covered a very wide range of issues, examples of which were set out in the report to give a flavour of the work that had been taking place. This included supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, with an ongoing focus on access to remote learning, devices, and free school meal support and vouchers, work on embedding the remote learning offer further, and ongoing recruitment. The Federation remained committed to taking part in a second online peer review this academic year, and Ms Gilmore stressed that it would not be a good time to lose the connection that had been established with the other schools. Although a great deal of logistical planning was needed to ensure the review could take place remotely, she said that all schools involved were keen for this to take place in the summer term. Planning had been taking place on expenditure of the

Pupil Premium Grant and Catch Up Premium, and continuing professional development had continued.

Mr Hardy Hall joined the meeting.

School closure / national lockdown

The report included the detailed information presented to the Strategic Group by Ms Wright in January on the remote learning offer, which had been published online by the statutory deadline of 25 January.

Since January, the remote learning offer had continued to evolve very well, and the live sessions had been extremely successful and well received. Ms Gilmore said that she was very pleased with the feedback received on remote learning from teachers, who felt increasingly competent and confident in delivering the online curriculum.

Vulnerable pupils / families update

The information prepared by Ms Walsh on vulnerable pupils, which had been discussed by the Strategic Group, had been included in the report. This gave details on the ways in which the schools had supported looked after children and vulnerable families, including children on Child Protection and Child in Need Plans, children who needed health assessments, and those with EHCPs. Both schools had maintained very regular contact with these families, with weekly phone calls from the Learning Mentor, Learning Family Support Worker, SENDCO, and Senior Leadership Team; in addition, senior staff had carried out home visits as necessary.

There had been a focus on delivering the remote learning offer for children with SEND at home. As part of their ongoing review of the quality of the remote offer, the Senior Leadership Team had looked closely at the provision for children with SEND, including teachers' responsibility to support children with special needs on the remote learning platform, including help with accessing devices, SIM cards etc. for children and parents. Additional mobile phones had been purchased for staff to use at home, and food vouchers had been provided for vulnerable families.

Ms Gilmore informed governors that both schools had identified many more children who were entitled to free school meals between October to January, but unfortunately the DfE were basing funding on the October figures, which meant that despite encouraging parents to come forward, the schools were not receiving the rewards of the additional funding. The local authority had made representations in the national press about the significant impact on funding across the Borough from this change in the calculations.

Full opening on 8 March

Ms Gilmore said that all staff were delighted to see the children back in school, and they and their parents appeared to be very happy. She said that staff were very pleased to be back to a kind of normality; they felt that both schools were very safe, and everything had been done to make the environments as safe as possible. Attendance so far had been 98-99% in both schools. Ms Gilmore pointed out that there were only 18 teaching days from 8 March until the end of term, and these days were crucial in beginning work on what could be achieved by the end of the year. Open and honest discussions had taken place with teachers, and SLT had been clear that it would not be possible to cover absolutely everything that the children had missed this year. Andrea Osmond and Mark Ridler-Mayor had been prioritising the key areas which staff should focus on and the knowledge and skills which the children needed to take with them into the next academic year. Ms Gilmore said that everyone was mindful that all children had had vastly different experiences of home learning; the gaps had widened with some children, whilst other children had made gains, for example in phonics and aspects of reading because of their parents' focus, but the situation with every child was different.

Staff wellbeing

Because the schools were operating in much the same way as they were in the autumn term, the March reopening had been easier this time, but there were still challenges and anxieties, some of which had emerged over the last week. Ms Gilmore said that there had been open and transparent communication with staff and trades unions, and the transition had been smooth.

For senior leaders, it still felt that there was very little time for strategic development work, but Ms Gilmore said that this was now becoming a little easier and more time was being gained to begin development of the school improvement priorities.

Federation partnerships

Mark Ridler-Mayor had continued to deliver a bespoke training programme for new and existing curriculum middle leaders across both schools, and was also working with Andrea Osmond on curriculum and assessment. Other partnerships were continuing around inclusion, SEND, relationships and sex education, finance, first aid and resources, and music. More joint CPD meetings had taken place, and while these were in some ways harder using Zoom, it was easier to bring people together more efficiently because they did not have to spend time travelling etc.

School Direct programme

Two School Direct candidates had been shortlisted and would be interviewed the following week. Ms Gilmore reminded governors that candidates would usually be observed with a group of children as part of the selection process, so it had been necessary to look at alternative ways of assessing them.

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

It had not been possible to follow the usual monitoring and evaluation schedule again this term, and monitoring had continued to be more informal. Once the teachers had settled back into school, the normal process would resume. Formal monitoring had taken place in the second half of the autumn term, with a whole school book scrutiny, which had been very informative, and it was the intention that a similar exercise would take place in the first half of the summer term.

Pupil Premium Grant / Catch Up Fund

Both schools had published their Catch Up Fund plans on the websites, together with the Pupil Premium Strategy. There had been a great deal of discussion on catch up and recovery, with an emphasis on high quality teaching as being the most effective way to enable catch up. Ms Gilmore referred to the work being done by Sir Kevan Collins, who had formerly worked for the Education Endowment Fund and who was now leading on the catch up programme for the government. Whilst it was important to identify and target children for extra tuition, she emphasised that continued investment in high quality professional development for teachers was crucial.

Peer review

The Heads of School were leading on the peer review, and were planning the second review for the summer term with the partner schools. It had been agreed that the review would again focus on the implementation and impact of the recovery plans, and there would be a focus this term on the transition back to school, particularly for disadvantaged children. Ms Gilmore said that research suggested that all children had been impacted by the lockdown, but the gap had widened for disadvantaged children in particular.

School on school support

Ms Gilmore said that Gordonbrock was continuing to provide teaching and learning support for an 'amber' school, which involved several members of staff and which was being driven by Ms Wright.

The Federation had also been involved in a joint Remote Learning Party, which was evaluating and supporting best remote learning practice across the Borough.

Policies

Ms Gilmore reported on a number of policies which had been reviewed or were under review.

Equalities objectives 2020/21 – It was noted that the equalities objectives would be circulated for approval.

Relationships and Sex Education Policy – The updated Policy, which must be rolled out during the current academic year, was shared with governors at the meeting. Mr Ridler-Mayor explained the process for reviewing the Policy. Sarah Bridgman, the PSHE leader at Eliot Bank had produced the first draft of the Policy, which was based on the template from the Key, and had followed the recommended signposting. She had met Mr Ridler-Mayor and Ms Osmond in the spring term, together with Hannah Lyttle, her counterpart at Gordonbrock to continue to shape the Policy and to ensure that it was adequate for the Federation's needs. Melanie Worthington had attended the recent governor training session in relationships and sex education and had offered some helpful suggestions to modify the Policy before consultation with parents, which had taken place before half term. Mrs Osmond said that there had been an opportunity to carry out a small pupil survey with Year 6 at Eliot Bank at the end of last year, and it was the intention that a further survey would be carried out in both schools before the review of the Policy next year. The main points raised during the consultation process by parents and staff had been discussed, and adjustments had been made to the Policy. Although only a small number of responses had been received, these had been constructive and positive, for example, to give more explicit information about where children could go if they needed help and to provide information about documents on the websites for how parents could support their children. Mrs Osmond said that these adaptations would be shared with parents.

Annual SEND report – The annual report had been sent to the Heads of School for approval, and ***once the final version had been agreed, the report would be sent to Melanie Worthington, as the designated governor, for final approval.***

(b) Catch Up Premium, Pupil Premium and PE/Sports Premium

Copies of the Covid Catch Up plans for both schools had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting, and Ms Gilmore confirmed that the Catch Up Plans, Pupil Premium strategies, and remote learning offers had been uploaded to the websites. Sports Premium to follow.

Mr Fidel recognised that the schools had been given very little time to formulate their remote learning offers and proposals for catch up, and was also mindful that guidance had only been received from the government at a very late stage. He was pleased that the schools had continued to deliver outstanding teaching, and asked for more information about the catch up proposals. Ms Gilmore said that there was a link to the Catch Up plans on the website, and urged all governors to look at the plans for how the funding was being allocated.

Ms McGuire outlined the main aims of the Catch Up Plans, which included reviewing CPD to enhance quality teaching in the schools, children's wellbeing including how best to support the children coming back to school, particularly disadvantaged pupils. She said that she and Ms Barry were looking at the use of the funding in a broad and balanced way. Ms Barry invited governors to submit questions once they had been able to look at the strategies and plans in more detail.

(c) Ofsted monitoring visits

Ms Gilmore informed governors that although Ofsted were planning to resume inspections for schools which were in the inspection window, they would be focusing on schools which required improvement in the first instance. However, she stressed that a visit, to Eliot Bank in particular, must not be ruled out and there was no room for complacency. Ofsted had indicated that inspections would be supportive, with a focus on remote learning, and it was likely that they would also be looking at Catch Up plans as well. It was essential that governors should keep up

to date with developments, read information on the websites on how the schools' funding was being spent and either email questions to senior leaders or bring them to the next meeting for discussion.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

(a) 2021/22 budget and three year projection

Governors considered the timetable for approving the 2021/22 budgets and three year budget plans. It was noted that the deadline for submission of the budgets to Lewisham Finance was 16 June, and the budget plans would therefore be considered at the meeting of the Governing Body on 10 June once the Resources Committee had reviewed the detailed plans.

(b) Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Ms Keyte and Mr Bremner had worked with Ms McAllister and Ms Carter on the SFVS reports for both schools, copies of which had been circulated to governors. The reports had been submitted to the local authority, but it was noted that the Governing Body were now required to give formal approval to the reports. It was **RESOLVED** that the SFVS reports for Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock be approved.

Ms Gilmore was pleased to report that the local authority had finally reimbursed the £24,000 owed in respect of salary costs for a member of the support staff who had been seconded to work for the GMB union after 15 years. *The Chair thanked Ms Carter for chasing this for so long. He stressed that governors must not be complacent about finance, and that the budgets were being managed as well as possible considering the current challenges.* It had been agreed that a working party would be set up to look at the long term financial picture, particularly for Eliot Bank, and it was **RESOLVED** that membership of the working party would comprise Mr Fidel, Mr Jenkins, Mr Bremner, and Ms Gilmore. It was agreed that Ms Gilmore would circulate possible dates for the first meeting.

9. SAFEGUARDING, HEALTH AND SAFETY, AND RISK MANAGEMENT

(a) Safeguarding report

The detailed inclusion reports for both schools had been circulated prior to the meeting. The reports gave details of the current SEND statistics, information on looked after children, children on Child Protection Plans, Child in Need Plans, and other vulnerable children, all of which had been anonymised.

Eliot Bank

Mrs Walsh said that she did not have any more to add to the Eliot Bank report. All safeguarding referrals were continuing as usual, with an increasing level of involvement with families where there had been no previous involvement. Some family circumstances were changing rapidly, and some children were in complex situations. In addition, a number of children had left and joined the school due to families relocating. She pointed out that this work was extremely time consuming.

Gordonbrock

Mrs Wright said that the situation at Gordonbrock was similar, and lessons had been learnt from the last lockdown. It had been possible to target some of the very high quality remote provision to support children where there had been concerns during the previous lockdown, to return to school. The school was learning what worked well with families, and they were being targeted early to provide support and protection.

(b) Health and safety report

The Resources Committee had considered the detailed report on health and safety and premises matters prepared by the Premises Manager at their meeting on 22 February.

(c) Risk management and safeguarding

As noted earlier, Mr Fidel and Mr Hale had carried out a thorough health and safety walk round both schools prior to the full reopening on 8 March to check on the measures and procedures to be followed.

10. INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED ON SCHOOL WEBSITE

Governors were reminded that they should ensure that the information published on the school websites met legal requirements, was up to date, and included key information about governors and their registered interests. *It was noted that Ms Worthington was the link governor for the websites, and would report back on compliance in due course.*

11. URGENT BUSINESS

Mr Fidel said that he thought the schools had done extraordinarily well during the latest lockdown, and had clearly learnt a great deal from the previous closure. The routines which had been followed before had been put in place again for the spring term lockdown, as well as many new elements such as live sessions, which had been extended to all of Key Stage 2 and the parents' evening on Zoom. Even the third party organisation with the free school meals vouchers had been smoother. He felt that the transition to remote learning had been far more seamless. *On behalf of the Governing Body, Mr Fidel wished to record his appreciation to all staff for the effort they had put into both the remote learning and in-school offer.*

12. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Governors were reminded that the following dates and times had been agreed for meetings of the Governing Body and committees for the remainder of the 2019/20 academic year.

Governing Body

Thursday 10 June 2021

Resources Committee

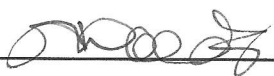
Thursday, 27 May 2021

All meetings to start at 6.00 p.m.

Strategic Group

Friday, 26 March 2021 at 11.30 a.m.

These minutes were agreed at the virtual meeting of the Governing Body on 10 June 2021. In view of the ongoing pandemic, the Clerk was asked to sign the minutes of behalf of the Chair.



Jackie Woods, Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed on behalf of Peter Fidel, Chair 10 June 2021