

# 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 Thursday, 3 December 2020 at 6.00 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place remotely via Zoom.

## PRESENT

Mr T. Bremner  
Ms B. Eadie  
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  
Mr B. Stephen  
Ms T. Stickland  
Ms M. Worthington

## 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

Apologies for absence were received with consent from Ms Quinn.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS

### (a) Declarations of interest

Governors were reminded that they must declare conflicts and pecuniary interest before items were discussed, and must withdraw from the meeting while the item was under discussion. If there is a change to a governor's declarable interests, the governor concerned must complete and return a new Register of Interests form.

### (b) Register of Interests

The Clerk reminded governors that the Governing Body were required to maintain and update annually a register of the pecuniary interests of their members and of members of staff with significant financial responsibilities, which must be published on the school website. All governors were requested to complete the form which had been circulated with the agenda and to return it to the Clerk as soon as possible.

## 3. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Governors were reminded that the following procedures for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair had been agreed at the meeting on 18 June 2020.

- Term of office – one year.
- If the term of office of Chair or Vice Chair is broken, the Governing Body will appoint a successor initially only for the remaining period of office.
- Nomination and self-nomination for appointment to be made at the meeting.

- Election procedure to be by secret ballot, but in the event of a single nomination, the Governing Body will vote on the nomination by a show of hands.

**(a) To elect a Chair to serve from the autumn term 2020**

The Clerk took the chair and invited nominations and self nominations for a governor to serve as Chair for the academic year. Peter Fidel was nominated and left the meeting while his appointment was considered. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Mr Fidel be elected as Chair of the Governing Body until the first meeting in the autumn term 2021.

**(b) To elect a Vice Chair to serve from the autumn term 2020**

Nominations and self nominations were then sought for a governor to serve as Vice Chair of the Governing Body for the current academic year. Christopher Hale was nominated and left the meeting while his appointment was considered. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Mr Hale be elected as Vice Chair until the first meeting in the autumn term 2021.

**(c) Facilitated initial meeting for new headteachers, chairs of governors, and clerks**

Governors noted that the local authority was offering to provide an externally facilitated meeting for schools where there was a new headteacher, chair, or clerk to help them to review and agree how they would engage and work with each other. The Clerk explained that this had been included on the agenda in the event of a new Chair or Vice Chair being elected.

**4. 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.

**5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING**

**(a) To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2020**

Subject to the correction of a typographical error in the final paragraph of page 2, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**(b) Matters arising**

**(i) Page 4, Minute 4(d) – Catering contract**

Ms Gilmore informed governors that no further information on the catering contract was available yet, but Fiona Gavin, the officer at the local authority who was responsible for the contract, had emailed last week to inform her that various notifications had been included in the schools' mailing, which she had not received. ***Mr Fidel said that he would be attending the Chairs' Briefing with the Director of Education the following week and would raise this at the meeting. He was concerned that the local authority had invited schools to be involved in making input to the catering contract but this did not appear to have happened.***

**(ii) Page 5, Minute 6(c) – Governing Body self review**

Ms Gilmore reminded governors that discussions had taken place previously on the review of the Governing Body's performance, and the possibility of pairing with governors from one of the peer review schools, but it had been agreed that this would be delayed until after the first lockdown. Ms Gilmore said that it had still been possible to carry out peer reviews as a Federation, so she thought it may also be possible to link two governors from another Governing Body. It was agreed that this would be a helpful way forward, and governors were invited to put themselves forward if they would be interested in meeting governors from another school. ***A governor asked which schools were included in the peer review group; the other schools concerned were Kelvin Grove, Horniman, Kilmorie, and Dalmain. Ms Worthington said that she had met a governor from Kelvin Grove in a recent training session, and she would be happy to link up informally; Ms Knowles and Mr Hale agreed that they would also***

*like to be involved.* It was **RESOLVED** that Ms Gilmore would try to enable an informal discussion between the above governors and colleagues from one of the other peer review schools.

Discussions had previously taken place on the need to consider the lessons learned from the first lockdown. *The Chair pointed out that feedback was contained in the Head of Schools' reports and the Executive Headteacher's reports. He was concerned that it was apparent from Ms Gilmore's report that senior leaders were spending a huge amount of time ensuring that appropriate COVID-19 procedures were in place and being observed, and he did not want to put any additional pressure on Ms Gilmore by asking for further feedback at meetings. Mr Fidel was also mindful that a presentation on the remote learning offer would be made later in the meeting, and most of the health and safety and safeguarding issues had been covered in other meetings. He suggested that it might be useful for the initial governor peer review to focus on the lessons learned during lockdown, and to then widen this out in future to a more comprehensive review of the Governing Body.*

## 6. GOVERNING BODY

### (a) Changes to the Governing Body

Governors were very sorry to learn that Mr Henry had resigned from the Governing Body with effect from 15 October 2020, and wished to record their appreciation for his hard work and commitment as a governor for many years.

It was noted that Ms Knowles' term of office as a parent governor had ended on 31 August 2020 and Mr Hale's term of office was due to end on 7 December. Governors were mindful that there were currently vacancies for four co-opted governors; two of these places were reserved for members of the Gordonbrock community, one was reserved for an Eliot Bank parent, and the remainder was reserved for a member of the Eliot Bank staff. *Governors agreed that Ms Knowles and Mr Hale both had valuable skill and experience which contributed significantly to effective governance,* and it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that they should be re-appointed as co-opted governors for a four year period of office with effect from 1 September 2020 for Ms Knowles and 8 December 2020 for Mr Hale.

Ms Gilmore said that arrangements would be made for an election to take place to select the two new parent governors in the spring term of 2021. The Clerk reminded governors that the election must take place across both schools, and it was no longer possible to ring fence one vacancy for parents from each school. *Mr Hale expressed concern about diversity within the Governing Body, and asked that this should be considered when making future appointments. Mr Fidel agreed, and suggested that, when inviting nominations for the election, it could be made clear in the covering letter that the Governing Body would particularly like to address the ethnicity imbalance and that specific experience required could also be highlighted. Mr Bremner suggested that the remaining vacancies for co-opted governors should be held to be filled by under represented groups, including representatives from BAME and disabled communities. Ms Stickland said that she had passed on details of a prospective governor,* Ms Gilmore said that she had made contact with the person concerned.

*There was also discussion about the future of the co-opted vacancy which was being held for a member of the Eliot Bank staff.* Ms Gilmore said that no-one had put themselves forward for this vacancy, and it was suggested that this vacancy could be filled by a non-staff candidate. *Ms Eadie asked whether this would be a permanent change, and questioned whether the decision could be reversed if a member of the Eliot Bank staff wished to become involved in the future.* The Clerk explained that the allocation of the co-opted governor places was not included in the Instrument of Government, and it would be possible for governors to reallocate any of the places again in future. It was **RESOLVED** that (1) the

vacancy for a co-opted governor which had previously been allocated for a member of the Eliot Bank staff be used for a person with suitable skills and experience, having regard to the need to improve representation from minority groups on the Governing Body; and

- (2) the Clerk would contact Governors for Schools to try to identify any suitable candidates for consideration for appointment.

**(b) DBS checks**

Governors were reminded that all governors must have a valid DBS check in place, and new governors should make arrangements with the school to start the application process within 21 days of their appointment. ***Ms Stickland informed governors that she had reviewed the Single Central Record with Anne Carter and Simone McAllister, and confirmed that all checks were up to date.***

**(c) Governing Body Code of Conduct**

Governors were recommended to review and re-adopt their Code of Conduct on an annual basis. The existing Code of Conduct and a link to the new model produced by the National Governance Association (NGA) had been circulated with the agenda. The core content of the model Code had not been changed, but the document had been reformatted to allow for easier adaptation, and there was greater clarification of the Nolan principles of public life. After discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the NGA model would be adopted and all governors were asked to sign to confirm that they agreed with the provisions of the Code. It was agreed that the Code would be personalised and circulated for information with the next agenda.

**(d) Agenda plan for 2020/21**

The local authority encouraged Governing Bodies to plan their work for the coming year, including the business to be covered each term at meetings of the Governing Body and committees, reports to be given, and policies to be reviewed. It was **RESOLVED** that review of the governors' monitoring and evaluation schedule be delegated to the Strategic Group for consideration at their next meeting.

**7. UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR ON ANY ACTION TAKEN UNDER THE URGENCY PROCEDURES**

Mr Fidel informed governors that he had not taken any urgent action since the last meeting.

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

**(a) Reports from committees**

**(i) Strategic Group**

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 May, 18 September, and 15 October 2020 were received, together with the terms of reference. ***Mr Fidel explained that the terms of reference had been amended to make the role of the Strategic Group more specific and to make it clear that the main function of the Group was to give support and challenge to the Senior Leadership Team between Governing Body meetings.*** It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference for 2020/21 be approved.

At the meeting on 28 May, the Strategic Group had discussed staffing issues and the results of the parents' survey, and there had also been detailed discussion on the preparations for the wider reopening in June. A full update had been given on the September reopening at the meeting on 18 September and the Strategic Group had discussed the Federation and school improvement priorities, 2019 achievement, staffing and recruitment, safeguarding, and governor recruitment. At the meeting on 15 October, there had been discussion about the quality of teaching and learning, staffing and recruitment, attendance, safeguarding, governor recruitment, the catch up funding received from the Department for Education, and the School Streets Scheme.

**(ii) Pay Committee**

The Pay Committee had met on 19 November 2020 to consider the annual teaching staff pay reviews. The Committee had also reviewed their terms of reference, which had been circulated with the agenda. It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference be approved.

**(iii) Resources Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2020 were received, together with the terms of reference. The Committee had discussed and scrutinised the budget plans in detail and had proposed that a working party should be set up to look at proposals for cost reductions in the third year of the budget plans, and **Mr Bremner and Mr Jenkins had put themselves forward to take part in this group**. Governors had discussed all areas of both budgets, and had noted where savings had been made as well as proposals for future reductions. The Committee had also discussed a range of premises and health and safety issues, staffing issues, and the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) submission for 2021. The Financial Management Policy had been reviewed and had been commended to the Governing Body for ratification. The Committee had also reviewed their terms of reference, and had not recommended any changes for 2020/21. It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference for the Resources Committee be approved for 2020/21.

**(b) Review of committee membership and link governor responsibilities**

The membership of committees and link governor responsibilities were reviewed. **Ms Worthington asked about the relationship between link governor roles and the schools' strategy, and Mr Fidel offered to discuss this with her in more detail outside of the meeting.**

**Mr Bremner suggested that it would be helpful to highlight some of the desirable areas of priorities and how these would tie in with the link governor priorities when recruiting new governors**, and Ms Gilmore agreed to identify the areas where particular skills were needed.

**Ms Eadie asked if she and Ms Worthington could give additional support with remote learning in their role as curriculum link governors, and Mr Jenkins said that he would be happy to take on additional responsibilities.** It was agreed that Mr Jenkins and Mr Bremner would take part in the working party looking at cost reductions. It was also agreed that Mr Jenkins would be appointed as a member of the Resources Committee.

**(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.

**(d) Governing Body training**

**Mr Jenkins had attended the recent new governors' induction training**, which had said had been helpful, particularly the discussion about the school improvement plan. **He had also attended the online training on discipline and grievance; it had been very interesting to see the differences in procedures in the education sector.**

**Ms Worthington had attended the remote training session on sex and relationships education, which had been very good and thought provoking and had looked at why it was important to deliver sex and relationships education in schools. She had also attended the training on mental health, where there had been a particular emphasis on the recovery curriculum, children's experience of COVID-19 and how they were dealing with it, and resilience issues.** The course had recognised the pressure on teaching staff, but had highlighted the need for staff to be able to identify issues and make referrals as necessary. She said that she was very pleased to see that the local authority had organised a virtual training programme.

## 9. MONITORING THE RISK ASSESSMENTS AND PLANS FOR FULL OPENING

### (a) Review of Schools' COVID-19 full opening risk assessment and action planning tool

*Mr Fidel informed governors that he and Mr Hale had walked round both schools just before the start of term to identify any health and safety issues.* As well as ensuring that both schools were COVID-secure, there had been additional challenges at Eliot Bank with the roofing and heating work. *Mr Hale said that he had been extremely impressed to see the extent of the work that had been carried out by the Premises Team.*

### (b) Developing the recovery strategy for the schools' recovery phase – identifying priorities for the academic year

Governors noted that the recovery strategy had been covered in the Head of School reports.

## 10. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### (a) Executive Headteacher's report

The Executive Headteacher's report had been circulated prior to the meeting, and included sections on leadership and organisation, COVID-19 impact and update, staff wellbeing, Federation partnerships, appraisal, School Direct programme, monitoring and evaluation, Pupil Premium Grant, PE and Sports Premium Grant, COVID-19 catch up funding, peer review, school on school support, policies, and the Federation improvement priorities. Ms Gilmore elaborated on areas from her report and answered governors' questions.

Ms Gilmore was aware that a large number of documents had been circulated for this meeting and said that she would work with the Clerk to reduce the amount of documentation for future meetings. She said that her report had followed the usual structure, but was much longer for this meeting, and she had aimed to be honest, open, and transparent about the situation since the last meeting. The children were very happy, and as always, a commitment to their happiness underpinned all of the work carried out in the Federation; both schools continued to run very well.

### Leadership and organisation

Ms Gilmore highlighted her main priorities this term. She emphasised the importance of maintaining high standards to ensure that all children had the best possible opportunities during and after the pandemic. She had been working hard to get teaching and learning at Eliot Bank back to its historical high standard; routine inspections had been expected to resume in January, but had now been put off again, but she was mindful that Eliot Bank had not been inspected for ten years and would be in the window as soon as inspections began again.

The Senior Leadership Teams at both schools continued to work closely together, and the relationship was stronger than it had ever been. Despite the time constraints, Ms Gilmore said that it had been decided to double the number of termly cross-school senior leader meetings because of the increased amount of strategic planning and amplified level of organisation that had been needed. Ms Gilmore drew governors' attention to the list of topics which had been covered in meetings during the term, and said that more than 25 different risk assessments were now in place to cover different aspects of the schools' work, which were different for each school. In addition, individual risk assessments had been agreed for vulnerable staff members, and she stressed that staff wellbeing was always part of any decision that was made.

The remote learning offer was a major area of focus, covering a range of scenarios including closure of a bubble, self-isolating pupils and teachers, and teacher illness. Ms Gilmore said that staffing was a major issue, particularly the ability to provide cover for staff absence because of the COVID measures in place. However, recruitment had continued despite the difficulties, including middle leaders and class teachers.

Ms Gilmore said that she was particularly proud of the developmental work that had taken place on feedback and marking in both schools, which had come out of the pandemic and the priorities. Work was continuing on the development of partnership working and continuing professional development, particularly around the remote learning offer.

### **COVID-19 – update and impact**

Ms Gilmore said that everything possible had been done to enable school life to feel as normal as possible, which had been echoed in the feedback from the parent questionnaires carried out in November. The proportion of parents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statements in the questionnaires was broadly in line with the same time last year and there had been no significant change in the views expressed. Most importantly, the children were happy and thriving overall.

Ms Gilmore informed governors that it had been necessary to close one of the bubbles at Gordonbrock because of a single confirmed case of COVID-19. She was concerned that the advice provided had been extremely unsatisfactory and contradictory. Senior leaders at the school had been given different advice from the Department for Education, Public Health, and parents, which had added significantly to the already stressful situation. Although the local authority had tried to advise, the support received had also not been good enough. **Mr Fidel said that he had been shocked that the COVID line at the Department for Education, which was the first point of contact, had advised that it was not necessary to inform any parents of the positive case, and had felt that this would undermine parental confidence in the school.** Ms Gilmore said that a single case had also been confirmed at Eliot Bank, but it had been possible to keep all classes open following a full risk assessment with the public health authorities. She said that schools had no choice but to follow standard operating procedures when a case was confirmed, but there appeared to be no co-ordination between the Department for Education and Public Health, and this had been a deeply unsatisfactory experience.

**Mr Bremner pointed out that the Director of Public Health had a local remit, and it should be possible to raise concerns.** However, Ms Gilmore said that as educators, it was very challenging for schools, to be feeling responsible for people's health in this way, and it was extremely frustrating to be told initially that it was not necessary to close a bubble and to then be given contradictory advice. In addition, there were a number of parent WhatsApp groups in the school, and she was mindful of the need to write to parents to keep them fully informed with as clear as information as possible.

**Ms Worthington asked whether this experience had helped to formulate plans for a future potential closure.** Ms Gilmore explained that local Public Health could not cope with the volume of calls from schools and their advice was now to contact the DfE helpline. Ms Gilmore said that she had not accepted the initial DfE advice, making further enquiries with various parties involved, and the situation at Gordonbrock had developed quickly within a few hours, resulting in the closure of the bubble later that day. A governor asked if other schools had had similar experiences; Ms Gilmore said that many schools had also received poor advice. She said that a decision had been made to inform the communities of positive cases at both schools; even though it had not been necessary to close the bubble at Eliot Bank following the positive test, she felt that it was important to keep parents fully informed of the situation and the action being taken. It was noted that school leaders must be on call until 21 December to deal with any track and trace issues.

### **Staff wellbeing**

The autumn term had been exceptionally challenging for all staff in the school, all of whom had had to get used to new procedures, as well as the necessary social isolation from their colleagues. The office teams at both schools had also taken on a wide range of extra responsibilities to support the Senior Leadership Teams, particularly in communicating with parents and local residents, many of whom were unhappy about parents standing on the pavement outside their houses, particularly at Eliot Bank. There had also been a great deal of

communication about traffic issues and the School Streets Scheme. Ms Gilmore said that residents had been informed by Lewisham, that the scheme was about to begin but the cameras had not yet been installed and no implementation date had been given. She said that the office teams had worked together extremely well.

The Premises Team was under huge pressure, and were constantly having to adapt both sites to meet the requirements of the risk assessment and government guidance, as well as managing the work at Eliot Bank to replace the roof and overhaul the heating system. The premises staff had worked many extra hours, including over the weekend, to ensure that the school had a working heating system before the winter weather began.

Ms Gilmore said that the role of the Senior Leadership Team had changed beyond recognition, and they had been on call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week since September. The demands of supervising the site and dealing with constant queries during the day had impacted significantly on strategic and developmental work. She stressed the importance of ensuring that staff felt safe and supported, and the feedback received had indicated that this was the case.

### **Federation partnerships**

A number of partnerships had continued, and Ms Gilmore particularly praised the enthusiasm and commitment of middle leaders.

The INSET day in October with internationally renowned expert on formative assessment Shirley Clarke had gone ahead, despite challenges in organisation, and very positive feedback had been received from teachers in both schools.

### **Appraisal**

The appraisal process for 2019/20 had been completed and objectives had been set for this year. Ms Gilmore informed governors that three objectives had been set for teachers this year which focused on pupil progress, School Improvement Plan priorities, and personal development, while recognising the importance of wellbeing for all staff.

### **School Direct programme**

The Federation had not engaged in the School Direct programme for 2020/21 because of issues with Bromley Collegiate. However, the relationship had now been reinstated, and the Federation would be taking part in the recruitment process for September 2021.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Ms Gilmore informed governors that the usual monitoring and evaluation process had not been followed this term. She said that it had been important to allow teachers and children to get accustomed to the new routines and procedures, and the Senior Leadership Team had not wanted to add any extra stress or pressure; in addition, they had not had the capacity to carry out monitoring in the same way. Formal monitoring had begun that half term with a successful and reassuring book scrutiny in each school.

### **Pupil Premium Grant**

Governors noted that the Pupil Premium Grant impact statements for 2019/20 and the strategy for 2020/21 must be published on the websites by the end of the autumn term. Ms Gilmore said that the strategy for 2020/21 had been completed, and this would be circulated to governors by email. It had been more difficult to complete the impact statement for 2019/20 because it had not been possible to implement the strategy fully due to the closure in March. The DfE had suggested that schools could measure the impact of the Grant from September 2019 to April 2020, but Ms Gilmore did not feel that this would give a very helpful benchmark, and it had been decided that impact would be measured from April 2019 to April 2020 instead. In any case, Ms Gilmore assured governors that the Grant was well spent during the first lockdown and until September, in providing intensive support for Pupil Premium and disadvantaged children and their families, including the provision of food vouchers and paper learning packs for children who did not have access to remote learning.



### **PE and Sports Premium Grant**

Governors were reminded that the impact statement and strategy must also be published on the websites. The strategy statement for 2020/21 had been completed and would be circulated to governors by email. The impact statement had been more difficult to complete because it had not been possible to implement the strategy fully because of the lockdown.

### **COVID-19 catch up fund**

It was noted that Eliot Bank would receive £32,400 from the catch up fund, and Gordonbrock would receive £49,000. The funding was being allocated in three tranches; the first two had been received so far. This equated to approximately £80 per child. Very little guidance had been received from the DfE on how to spend the money. Schools must be accountable for how the money was spent, and consideration was currently being given on how to use this funding to the greatest effect.

Schools had also been able to claim for additional costs incurred for extra cleaning, supplies, PPE etc, and both schools had received around £14-15,000 for the summer term. Schools had been advised that they could continue to claim additional costs for the autumn term, and were told to spend what was necessary to ensure that they were COVID-secure. However, Ms Gilmore said that she had been shocked to have been informed by the local authority earlier that day that the autumn term grant had been deleted. It was possible to claim for the cost of supply cover needed as a result of COVID-19 but only if at least 20% of staff were off sick and the school concerned had no reserves to draw on.

### **Peer review**

Ms Gilmore stressed the importance of maintaining relationships between the peer review schools. Eliot Bank had teamed up with Dalmain and Gordonbrock had teamed up with Kelvin Grove, and virtual reviews of the schools' respective Recovery Curriculums had been carried out. The reports from these would be circulated as soon as possible.

### **School on school support – Primary School Improvement Team**

Ms Gilmore said that she had continued to work as part of the Lewisham Learning team, which provided a school improvement service for schools in the Borough. She had carried out seven remote COVID-19 support reviews and had attended two Primary School Improvement Team meetings. Ms Gilmore reminded governors that she had always been clear that her top priority must be the Federation, and while the school improvement work generated a small amount of income and opportunities for other staff, she said that she had decided that she must withdraw from the Team for the time being. However, Gordonbrock would continue to provide support for an 'amber' school as well as another 'green' school.

### **Policies**

A number of policies were in the process of being reviewed. New or revised addenda to the Safeguarding Policy had been produced, including the COVID-19 addendum, Staff Code of Conduct, Visitors to School COVID-19 addendum, and Protocols for Visiting Professionals.

In addition, a COVID-19 addendum had been produced to the Behaviour Policy.

The local authority had promised that the updated model Pay Policy would be made available by half term, but this had only been received the previous day. Ms Gilmore said that she would cross reference the changes and circulate the Policy as soon as possible.

The Appraisal Policy had been reviewed and approved by the Pay Committee and had been circulated for information.

It was noted that the SEND Report was due for review in January 2021 and would be circulated as soon as the review had been carried out. The Feedback and Marking Policy was currently being rewritten and would be circulated to governors in due course.

### **Federation improvement priorities 2020/21**

The report listed the proposed Federation improvement priorities for 2020/21, which had been shared with the Strategic Group. Ms Gilmore explained that the points highlighted in yellow represented new items and those related to the recovery curriculum and catch up premium, which were threaded through all priorities.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Federation priorities for 2020/21 be approved.

***Mr Hale thanked the Senior Leadership Team for the huge amount of work they had undertaking in managing the challenges associated with COVID-19, and said that as a parent, he felt that there was continuity of education, while the day to day management of the schools was ongoing.*** Ms Gilmore said that the best part of the day for all senior leaders was seeing the children, even with the necessary social distancing that was in place.

#### **(b) Presentation on remote learning**

Andrea Osmond and Mark Ridler-Mayor then gave a presentation on the remote learning offer. Work had been ongoing at both schools on the offer, which was constantly evolving and had changed significantly since the first lockdown in March. Ms Osmond said that when the schools had closed on 23 March, there had been no remote provision in place, and there had been heavy reliance on the website while the schools had needed to respond quickly to the unprecedented situation.

Ms Osmond said that whilst extensive provision was put in place at an early stage and work was being celebrated, it had been agreed that a system to provide more effective feedback was needed. A range of different platforms had been considered, and a decision had been made to use Google Classroom. It had been hoped that this would be operational by July, but because of the large number of schools applying to use the platform, this had taken a little longer. Log-ins had been sent home to all children, with a letter for parents to give more information on Google Classroom and how to log in, and preliminary training had been provided for teachers to enable them to set up Classroom and set work. It had been agreed that Google Classroom would be used as a vehicle for introducing the new class teachers, as a way of incentivising parents to use the system. All teachers had prepared short videos to support parents with accessing the platform and a step by step guide had also been available on the website. Ms Osmond hoped that people would now feel more confident in working at home and uploading work. She and Mr Ridler-Mayor had prepared a series of videos to support teachers, and had highlighted a range of different features in the Google suite to support learning at home.

Three aspects of remote learning had been developed – weekly home learning activities, work set for individual children who were self isolating, and provision for a bubble or wider closure. Discussions were ongoing around a Federation approach to blended/hybrid learning to develop a connection between what was going on in school and the remote learning environment to help to support children wherever they were working. Ms Osmond said that work had taken place to integrate Google Classroom into teaching practice to ensure that there was no doubling up. Google Classroom was being used for weekly home learning to ensure that children and parents had constant access to the platform and did not lose their log-ins, and to maintain access and interaction between teachers and pupils.

Ms Osmond said that teachers had started to explore how useful Classroom was as a way of setting homework, for example, spelling and grammar work would have been carried out on paper previously. Videos were being used to support topics, such as work on monarchs in Y6, and this had opened up the approach to learning and homework.

Ms Osmond said that the schools had also been keen to get Classroom running to enable more effective feedback to be provided, and she showed governors an example of Year 6 feedback.

Mr Ridler-Mayor then spoke about the provision for children in self-isolation or quarantine. This had been in place since the beginning of September, and had been refined regularly since that time. All children were given daily maths and English tasks each day, together with two foundation tasks, which provided between three and four hours work each day. The work set was aimed to align closely with lessons in school where possible, and the schools were using a range of web based resources such as Oak Academy and BBC Bitesize. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that it had been necessary to develop a mechanism to take away some of the workload from teachers, which had led to the development of foundation subject resources. The next step would be to manage teachers' feedback and communication with children who were off while they were also managing the rest of their class in school, and more discussion would be taking place on this in January.

Mr Ridler-Mayor showed governors a sample of a foundation subject remote learning sheet and explained the activities that could be chosen for each day, which also had links to website-based resources. The feedback from parents so far had been very positive.

Mr Ridler-Mayor then outlined the provision for a bubble or wider closure, which had now been implemented at Gordonbrock. The plans had started in September, and had been developed as a Federation and shared with staff early in the term. A training session had taken place at the end of the summer term, and three further CPD sessions had been carried out since the start of the academic year to ensure that staff felt confident if their bubble needed to close. A bank of resources had been developed and staff had been asked to plan to ensure that they could move online the following day when a bubble was closed. Pre-recorded input would be made available and a two minute daily recording from the class teacher would start off the day. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that teachers had been asked to record five sessions per week to supplement other web based resources, and the system was intended to give flexibility for pupils about when they accessed their learning. This was particularly important for children who shared a device with parents who needed to use it during the day for work.

Mr Ridler-Mayor informed governors that the schools were fully prepared for bubble closures, and the transition at Gordonbrock had been smooth. He elaborated on the structure of the work, which included daily Maths, English, phonics/spelling, and one foundation subject, which provided three to four hours of work each day. As noted above, there was daily video input and at least five pre-recorded lessons each week. Teachers were making at least one phone call home every two weeks, and telephone protocols had been set up for what teachers should do in certain situations or where there were concerns.

With the recent bubble closure at Gordonbrock, the teacher was using the rest of the day to prepare for the following day, including the daily message and pre recorded lesson. The children were producing fantastic work, and had moved seamlessly to the remote offer. He had spoken to the class teacher concerned throughout the closure, and s/he had been making telephone calls home that week. Parents had been very pleased with the offer, and had been asked to give feedback and examples of what could be done better next time. He felt that the situation had been managed very well overall.

Ms Osmond said that teachers were really starting to embrace the platform and were using it as a way of communicating what was going on in class, and to show videos, for example, sharing a recording of Year 2 children playing glockenspiels. Google Classroom had also been used in Reception to show what the work would be like. She said that teachers felt confident and were finding many different ways of making the platform work for the children.

***Mr Fidel thanked Ms Osmond and Mr Ridler-Mayor for their helpful presentation. He recognised that it had been necessary to introduce the new remote learning platform over the summer, but he was pleased that this would last into the future and not just be for the duration of the pandemic. Although he realised that the bubble closure at Gordonbrock had only been recent, he asked if any feedback was available on the level of interaction and if any children were not accessing the platform as well as others. Mr***

Ridler-Mayor said that the school had been monitoring who had been accessing Google Classroom since the first day of the closure. He realised that parents had been thrown into the situation suddenly, and the office staff had called parents on Monday morning whose children had not accessed the platform. Some had accessed the system online and had completed paperwork, and some had had issues logging on and had been helped with this by the office staff. In addition, one child had not been able to access Classroom because of a broken computer, and had been given paper copies. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that once a bubble closure had taken place, the DfE window for ordering devices was triggered and it had been possible to secure seven devices. By the time they arrived and were made ready for use, it was likely that the bubble would have reopened and returned to school but the devices would be available for the next closure.

**Mr Hale asked if there were any challenges around digital poverty and connectivity.** Mr Ridler-Mayor said that he was not aware of any issues with this class, but was mindful that there could be issues with other classes in the future. If a child without a computer at home needed to borrow a device from the school, there could still be issues about accessing the internet if wifi was not available, and this was being considered in more detail. Ms Barry was looking at different solutions to providing access as part of her work on the Pupil Premium strategy, including the possibility of providing dongles.

**Mr Jenkins asked about the level of engagement with weekly homework.** Mr Ridler-Mayor said that he would be looking at this at Gordonbrock and a whole school audit would be carried out. There had been some initial frustrations about logging in but these had largely now been overcome.

### **(c) Head of School's report – Gordonbrock**

The Head of School's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and included items on attainment, School Improvement Plan priorities, monitoring and evaluation, professional development and INSET, appraisal, inclusion, safeguarding, premises, personnel, school roll, attendance, mobility, free school meals, fire drills, accidents and incidents, and special events, visits and visitors. Ms Wright highlighted areas from her report and answered governors' questions.

#### **Attainment**

Mr Ridler-Mayor explained the data, which had been captured in the spring term, before the first lockdown. The figures highlighted in green denoted areas which were at or above the spring term 2019 data, but he assured governors that there were no significant concerns about the figures which were not green.

The Early Years outcomes for the spring term were very strong, with a high proportion of children who had been on track to achieve greater depth by the end of the summer term; it was noted that these children were now in Year 1.

The Year 1 phonics outcomes had been at 60% for the spring term, and this data was compared with the national and Lewisham outcomes for the summer term of 2019, which had been 83% and 81% respectively. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that in spring last year, 59.8% of children had been on track to pass the test so the current cohort would have been on track to achieve the same, above national outcomes, had the test taken place in summer 2020.

The proportion of children in Year 2 who had been on track to achieve the expected standard was strong in all areas, and had been above the national and Lewisham averages.

The Year 6 data was very high, and Mr Ridler-Mayor pointed out that these were the best results for Year 6 that the school had ever had. There had been real confidence that these figures would have converted into higher outcomes by the end of the year, and that this cohort would have achieved particularly well in the Key Stage 2 SATs in the summer term. The high proportion of children on track to achieve above expectations would have resulted in a predicted

target of 50% in reading and maths, and many of the children would have scored high-scaled scores, which would have impacted on progress outcomes for the school.

Mr Ridler-Mayor said that there were no significant concerns about other year groups. Year 1 had been at 69% overall to achieve the expected standard, which was not unusual for this point in the year. Year 3 (currently Year 4) data showed a strong profile for this stage in the year. Writing in Year 4 (now Year 5) was slightly lower, with 27 children who were not on track overall; 17 of these children had very low baselines, 8 had special needs, 1 had an EHCP, and 10 had English as an additional language. Mr Ridler-Mayor was mindful of the challenges facing this cohort, but staff were working hard to close the gaps.

The data for Year 5 (current Year 6) was strong in reading and writing, with 61% on track to achieve the expected standard overall. Of the children who were not on track, over 50% had been below the baseline at Key Stage 1, and there was a high proportion of Pupil Premium children, as well as children with SEND and EAL, and Mr Ridler-Mayor said that he was keen to see the outcomes from most recent assessments.

### **School Improvement priorities**

Ms Wright said that the priorities were broadly in line with the work that was being carried out for 2019/20, with new priorities shown in purple. The priorities which related to the recovery curriculum and the five levers were embedded throughout. The priorities then fed into the action plan and the subject action plans, and Ms Wright said that a detailed analysis would be given to governors in the spring on how the priorities were being reviewed and evaluated.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Only one new teacher had joined the school this term, and with Mr Ridler-Mayor having returned to the Federation, the profile was very similar to before.

Aspect One had focused on learning environments and behaviour for learning, and had taken the form of environment walks. The staff involved in the monitoring had looked at the new systems in place and whether children were adhering to them. Ms Wright said that it had been clear that high quality environments had been maintained, but it was important to remind staff and pupils regularly about the safety procedures to ensure that they remained robust. She said that an aide memoire would be sent out to staff after Christmas.

Aspect Two had taken the form of book scrutiny the previous week. Ms Wright said that there had been no significant differences in books from the same time last year, but the outcomes would be discussed by the Senior Leadership Team again, to agree how to move forward.

Despite the difficulties this term and not being able to have visitors to the school, there had still been a plethora of different events, such as Black History Month, Jeans for Genes Day, and Walk to School Week, and the report included details of a number of different events.

The report included a range of comments from the parent questionnaire, which were extremely positive and complimentary.

### **Professional development and INSET**

The report gave details of the INSET days, which had taken place during the autumn term, together with professional development meetings. These had included delivery of the School Improvement Plan to all teachers on 18 November.

Professional development for teaching assistants was continuing, and training courses were taking place via Zoom.

### **Personnel**

There had been no resignations since the last meeting. One teacher had returned from maternity leave, and three other teachers were currently on maternity leave. Appointments had continued, and Mr Ridler-Mayor was working with the next generation of middle leaders.

### **Attendance**

Attendance was slightly higher than the same time last year, but did not include figures for children who were self-isolating.

### **Mobility**

Mobility had increased with 15 children leaving during the autumn term and 5 joining. The children who had left were mostly moving out of London. Mr Fidel asked whether any of the children who had left the school were being home educated. Ms Wright said that several families had left because they had siblings at other schools and could not get to different schools in the morning due to staggered start times etc. Ms Gilmore said that there was a lot of concern at a local authority level about the possibility of families opting for home education but no families at Gordonbrock had chosen to do so and only a minimal number were home educating at Eliot Bank.

### **Fire drills**

A number of fire drills had taken place during the term for different areas of the school.

### **Accidents**

There had been a reduction in the number of accidents due to the changes in playtime arrangements. There had been no adult accidents.

Ms Wright was thanked for her report.

### **(d) Head of School's report – Eliot Bank**

The Head of School's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and included items on attainment, School Improvement Plan priorities, monitoring and evaluation, professional development and INSET, appraisal, inclusion, premises, personnel, school roll, attendance, mobility free school meals, fire drills, accidents and incidents, and visits and visitors. The termly safeguarding report and feedback on the parent questionnaire were also circulated. Mrs Walsh highlighted areas from her report and answered governors' questions.

### **Attainment**

Ms Osmond presented the spring term data as set out in the report. She reminded governors that the figures related to the March 2020 assessment, and there had been considerable change since that time. Some families had carried out a great deal of work during the lockdown, others did very little, some children had left the school, and some had joined. She said that the data was useful because it was the last formal assessment that had been carried out, but further formalised assessment was now taking place.

The Early Years outcomes had been lower by around 2% on average, with 68% achieving a good level of development at the end of the spring term. The self confidence and self awareness goals had been particularly impacted because of a small number of children with significant learning needs. Ms Osmond said that a great deal of support had been put in place for these children now that they had moved up to Year 1. She said that 80% of the children had come into school during the wider reopening from June, but there had been high mobility in this cohort.

62% of children had been on track to pass the Year 1 phonics test in March, against 54% at the same point in 2019.

Ms Osmond reminded governors that the aim was for children in Years 1 to 6 to make three points of progress, and it could be seen that the Year 2 cohort had been making really good

progress by the end of the spring term, with an average of 3.2 points progress in reading and 3.1 in maths. Writing was slightly below at 2.8 points. Overall, 68% of the children in Year 2 had been at the expected standard.

Year 6 had been an exciting year group, with 84% of children on track to reach the expected standard at the end of the year, and it had been very disappointing that they had not had the opportunity to take their SATs in the summer term. 93% of children had been on track in reading, 86% in writing, and 91% in maths. 40% of children overall had been expected to achieve greater depth.

Ms Osmond informed governors that some of the current Year 2 would have been expected to make accelerated progress, and there had been an improvement on last year. There were several children with significant special educational needs in this cohort, and there was a group of children working with the speech and language therapist, and others who needed support with their behaviour. Six children had joined the year group and three had left.

The Year 3 cohort (currently Year 4) had been making progress in line with expectations, and 65% had been on track to meet the expected standard in March.

Year 4 progress had been slightly below expectations, with 2.8 points of progress in reading and 2.7 points in writing and maths. This equated to being one term behind expectations, and 52% of children overall had been on track at this stage. Ms Osmond said that there was a high number of children with special needs in this year group, and a child had joined last year with almost no English. As well as quality first teaching, this year group was also being supported by the SEND Team, and members of the Senior Leadership Team were supporting individual children. The group had historically had high mobility which had continued this year, with more children expected to leave before Christmas.

Children in Year 5 (now Year 6) had made 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9 points progress in reading, writing, and maths respectively, and 60% of children overall had been on track to meet expectations. Ms Osmond said that there had been 15 children who had been just below the expected amount of progress in the spring assessment. There was a significant number of children on the Pupil Premium register, and a high number of children with special educational needs; two of these children had EHCPs and two more were pending.

### **School Improvement Plan priorities**

The priorities for Eliot Bank were very similar to Gordonbrock in many areas, with an emphasis on the recovery curriculum. The levers had been used to plan the aims for the year closely, and there was a focus on Assessment for Learning, and the work of Shirley Clarke to improve quality first teaching. Mrs Walsh said that everything possible was being done to embed the recovery curriculum into all of the work at the school and on diversifying the curriculum.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Mrs Walsh informed governors that there had been no new teachers at Eliot Bank this year. Although one teacher had left, s/he had been replaced by another who had returned from maternity leave. Two teachers currently required improvement, and the school was working very closely with them to provide support to make rapid improvements.

Although it was not possible to go into classrooms, Mrs Walsh said that the Senior Leadership Team had looked at classes as much as possible through windows, and had carried out informal walks to look at learning environments, behaviour in the hall at lunchtime, and playgrounds during lunchtimes. They had looked closely at displays, environments, and corridor behaviour in line with the government guidance, and had seen evidence of stimulating learning environments; it had also been apparent that time had been given to the children's mental health and wellbeing.

Book scrutiny was taking place that week, and it had been good to see the work and experiences which the children were having in terms of recovery. Mrs Walsh said that the progress in books was clear and stamina had improved. It could be seen that the gaps were being closed rapidly and the books were not very dissimilar to the same time last year.

The school had continued with a range of other work to ensure that the children were getting as many experiences as possible, including the School Council elections, and anti bullying week. The feedback from the parent questionnaire had been generally positive, and had been very similar to the same time last year.

### **Professional development and INSET**

An INSET session had taken place with Shirley Clarke on 1 October, and Mrs Walsh explained the programme and the positive impact this had had on every member of staff. Follow up professional development meetings had taken place, and staff were really engaging in what Shirley Clarke had taught. The Senior Leadership Team were working to ensure that this work was embedded and was improving both the quality of teaching and learning and pupil outcomes.

### **Safeguarding**

A detailed update was included on the work of the Inclusion Team, whose caseload continued to increase.

### **Personnel**

It was noted that there was currently a vacancy for a teaching assistant. This role had been discussed by the Resources Committee, and was not being advertised at this time.

### **Mobility**

As noted earlier, mobility had increased. A total of 23 children had left Eliot Bank, all of whom had been relocating, mostly outside Lewisham. Mrs Walsh said that mobility had been particularly high in the lower year groups. 4 more children would be leaving at Christmas, and 17 new children had joined.

### **Fire drills**

The report gave details of planned and unplanned fire drills which had taken place since March.

### **Accidents**

There had been no major accidents or incidents, largely due to the way in which the children were behaving in the playground and in their bubbles.

Mrs Walsh was thanked for her report.

### **(e) Ofsted**

Governors had been asked to consider if any action was needed to prepare for Ofsted, but it was agreed that no significant preparation was required in view of the further postponement of graded inspections.

### **Parent Questionnaire Outcomes**

Ms Gilmore shared the outcomes from the recent parent questionnaires, and in response to a question from the Chair, she said that these had been carried out the previous week. Out of 623 children on roll at Gordonbrock, 130 responses had been received, which equated to 20.87%. 95% of parents had said that they were happy with the school, and 98% said that they felt their children were safe. 96% of parents had said that they would recommend Gordonbrock. The outcomes were similar at Eliot Bank, with a response rate of 26%. 96% of parents were happy with the school, 93% felt that their children were safe, and 92% would recommend the school.

Ms Gilmore recognised that there was some work to be done around parents' understanding of the curriculum, because parents were feeling the impact of not being able to come into school to speak to the teachers. A range of comments had been added to the questionnaires, with 55%



of Gordonbrock respondents leaving a comment compared with 44% at Eliot Bank. She said that the feedback was taken very seriously, and the schools would be writing to parents and publishing the feedback. Greater use would also be made of Google Classroom to publicise the curriculum.

## **11. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

### **(a) 2020/21 budget and three year projection**

The Resources Committee had discussed the draft budget plans for both schools in detail at their meeting on 19 November, and had agreed to commend the budgets to the Governing Body for ratification. Copies of the budget plans had been circulated prior to the meeting for governors' scrutiny, and it was **RESOLVED** that the budget plans for 2020/21 and the three year budget plans be approved.

### **(b) Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)**

Governors were informed that the SFVS documents should be submitted to Lewisham Finance by the deadline of 14 February 2021. Although the Resources Committee could be asked to review the documentation in detail, it was now a requirement that the Governing Body should receive a detailed report for formal approval; however, this could take place retrospectively. It was **RESOLVED** that the Resources Committee be requested to consider the SFVS documentation by the deadline of 14 February 2021, and that the detailed report should then be submitted to the next meeting of the Governing Body for formal approval.

## **12. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **(a) Safeguarding report**

The detailed inclusion reports had been included in the Head of School reports. It was agreed that it was not appropriate to discuss the reports via Zoom. Ms Gilmore said that the termly data reports would be circulated to governors by email.

### **(b) Keeping Children Safe in Education**

The agenda had included a link to the updated statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, which included changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, clarity on the importance and management of children's physical and mental health, and reference to a new document on data protection. It was noted that all governors were required to provide written confirmation that they had read and understood at least Part Two of the guidance, and all governors were asked to email the Clerk as soon as possible to confirm that they had done so.

### **(c) Health and safety report**

It was noted that health and safety issues had been covered in the Premises Manager's report to the Resources Committee.

## **13. EQUALITIES DATA AND OBJECTIVES**

Governors were reminded that schools were required to publish equalities data online and set equalities objectives for the next four years. Ms Gilmore said that she was currently in the process of setting the objectives and was scrutinising the data. She said that the objectives would be set around the protected characteristics, focusing on improving outcomes in maths for girls and reading and writing for boys. Ms Gilmore said that the federation would also be looking at how to diversify the curriculum further to ensure that underrepresented groups are visible, with their daily lived experiences reflected in a curriculum that is meaningful, attractive and accessible to them.

## **14. 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. The websites must also include details of the schools' complaints procedures, information on the use and impact of the Pupil Premium, equalities data and objectives, and details of the SEND provision. There was also a new requirement this year to include details of

any employees who had a gross annual salary of more than £100,000, and a link to the benchmarking website. **Ms Worthington had previously carried out an audit of the websites**, and it was **RESOLVED** that Ms Worthington would undertake a further review of the school websites and report back to the Governing Body at the next meeting.

## 15. POLICY REVIEW

### (a) Pay Policy

Further to the discussion earlier in the meeting, it was **RESOLVED** that the updated Pay Policy be approved subject to no adverse comments being received by the end of term.

### (b) Financial Management Policy and Code of Practice

The Financial Management Policy and Code of Practice had been reviewed and agreed by the Resources Committee at the meeting on 19 November, together with the segregation of duties, and it was **RESOLVED** that the Policy and segregation of duties be approved.

### (c) Safeguarding Policy including COVID-19 addendum

Further to the discussion earlier in the meeting, governors were reminded that the Governing Body should give formal approval to any changes to the Safeguarding Policy. It was **RESOLVED** that, subject to there being no adverse comments by the end of term, the COVID-19 addendum, Visitors to School Policy, COVID-19 addendum, Staff Code of Conduct, and Protocols for Visiting Professionals be approved.

## 15. URGENT BUSINESS

No items of urgent business were raised.

## 16. 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

Monday 15 March 2021

Thursday 10 June 2021 at Gordonbrock

### Resources Committee

Monday 22 February 2021

Thursday, 27 May 2021 at Gordonbrock

All meetings to start at 6.00 p.m.

### Strategic Group

Friday, 11 December 2020 at 10.30 a.m.

These minutes were approved at the virtual meeting of the Governing Body held on 15 March 2021. In view of the ongoing pandemic, the Clerk was asked to sign the minutes on behalf of the Chair.



Jackie Woods, Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed on behalf of Peter Fidel, Chair. 15 March 2021