

# 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 at Eliot Bank Primary School on Monday, 13 March 2023 at 6.00 p.m.

## PRESENT

Ms B. Albert	
Ms J. Bishop	
Mr T. Bremner	
Ms B. Eadie	Attended remotely
Mr P. Fidel	Chair
Ms M. Gilmore	Executive Headteacher
Mr P. Jenkins	Vice Chair
Ms K. Knowles	
Ms M. Quinn	
Ms K. Rainer	
Ms F. Scott	

## Also present:

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

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS / WELCOME TO PROSPECTIVE NEW GOVERNOR

Apologies for absence were received with consent from Mr Hardy Hall and Ms Stickland. Ms Eadie attended the meeting remotely via Zoom.

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.

The Chair welcomed Ms Kerry Rainer, an Eliot Bank parent, to the meeting, and everyone present introduced themselves. Governors were reminded that a vacancy had arise for a co-opted governor from the Eliot Bank community following Ms Worthington's departure, and the vacancy had been discussed by the Strategic Group at their last meeting. Ms Rainer had been identified as a potential candidate, and following discussion with the Executive Headteacher and Chair, it had been felt that she had appropriate skills and expertise to enhance the Federation's governance. It was **RESOLVED** that Ms Rainer be appointed as a co-opted governor for a four year period of office with immediate effect.

## 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 MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

### (a) To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

(b) **Matters arising from the minutes**

(i) **Page 2, Minute 4(b)(i) – Governors' information**

Further to previous discussions about the secure circulation and storage of governors' documents, **Mr Fidel said that he was mindful of the pros and cons of using Google Classroom, Google Drive, or LGFL/Governor Hub, and proposed that a decision on which platform should be used should be taken in the summer term, and trialled in the autumn term.** This was agreed.

(ii) **Page 3, Minute 4(b)(iii) – Governing Body self review**

The Strategic Group had discussed the self review, and had felt that because a number of new governors had joined the Governing Body recently and in view of the vacancies still to be filled, it would be more appropriate to delay the self review until the vacancies had been filled and it had been possible to review the skills audits which all governors had been asked to complete.

(iii) **Page 4, minute 5(d) – Governing Body Code of Conduct**

The personalised copy of the Code of Conduct had been circulated with the agenda. It was **RESOLVED** that the Governing Body Code of Conduct be approved for 2022/23.

(iv) **Page 4, Minute 5(e) – Skills audit**

It was noted that several governors had not yet completed their skills audit, and governors were asked to ensure that their completed forms were either handed into the office of either school or sent to the Clerk electronically before the end of term.

(v) **Page 17, Minute 13(b) – Behaviour Policy / Behaviour Principles Statement**

Ms Gilmore circulated the Written Statement of Behaviour Principles at the meeting, and undertook to send a copy to Ms Eadie, who was attending remotely. She reminded governors that all schools were required to have, and regularly review, a Behaviour Principles Statement, which formed the basis for the Behaviour Policy. The Statement and policy had been discussed and agreed by the Strategic Group and now required approval by the Governing Body.

Ms Gilmore explained that the Statement set out a number of principles which the schools would adhere to.

**Ms Bishop referred to an incident which had been mentioned in the last Strategic Group minutes involving a pupil with a hoop and asked if the Behaviour Principles Statement was used to help with serious issues such as this.** Ms Gilmore said that the incident referred to was a very complex case, and it was extremely important to have tight policies in place to support the action taken by the schools. The Policies set out a whole range of procedures which were followed when dealing with a behaviour issue. **Ms Bishop referred to the bullet point which said that suspension and permanent exclusion would only be used as a last resort,** and Ms Gilmore emphasised that all incidents were considered on a case by case basis, bearing in mind the needs of individual children and SEND, as well as the circumstances of the event. However, the Policies gave much more detail and a number of examples, and provided much more guidance. **Ms Bishop questioned whether parents and children would understand the escalation matrix.** Ms Gilmore felt that this should not be an issue if they read the Policy. She said that regular discussions took place in the schools where the consequences of poor behaviour and sanctions were made clear. These discussions with the children were very explicit, and there had been a recent focus in the Federation on this. The Behaviour Policy must always be agreed with staff, and all parents were able to access this and other relevant policies either on the website or via hard copy from the school offices.

**Mr Bremner questioned the reference in the first bullet point of the Behaviour Principles which referred to children being able to learn free from the disruption of others. Ms Albert also expressed concern that this could be difficult when dealing with a particularly disruptive child.** Ms Gilmore pointed out that the bullet point said that the schools would *strive* to ensure that every child understood that they all had the right to feel safe, valued, and respected, and this was also covered by the fifth bullet point.

**Ms Bishop suggested alternative ways of wording this point and that each child had the right to access learning in the way that was accessible for them.** Ms Gilmore said that learning still had to be free of disruption, but it was not possible to state that there would never be any disruption to learning because this could not be guaranteed. However, a commitment to striving to provide a learning environment that was free from disruption, albeit low level, was essential.

**Ms Albert asked whether further information should be added to the point referring to physical intervention,** but it was noted that this detail would be included in the Policies, as well as how this would be communicated to parents. **Ms Albert asked if a link could be included in the Statement to the Behaviour Policies,** and Ms Gilmore said that links between the Behaviour Policy as well as the SEND and other policies are included.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Behaviour Principles Statement be approved, and Ms Bishop and Mr Jenkins would work with Marinda Barry and Lorraine McGuire on the Behaviour SIP priorities, reporting back to the summer term meeting of the Governing Body.

#### **4. GOVERNING BODY**

##### **(a) Changes to the Governing Body**

As agreed at the start of the meeting, Ms Rainer had been appointed to fill the vacancy for a co-opted governor which had been reserved for an Eliot Bank parent. Governors were reminded that there was still a vacancy for a co-opted governor from the Gordonbrock community and for a co-opted governor from the Eliot Bank staff. It was noted that the Clerk had approached Governors for Schools and details of three potential candidates had been passed to the Chair and Vice Chair, who would be speaking to the applicants in due course. It was noted that Mr Stephen's term of office as staff governor had now ended and an election would need to be organised to fill this place, and at the same time it would also be possible to identify a member of staff from Eliot Bank who could be put forward for co-option to fill the other co-opted governor vacancy.

It was noted that Ms Eadie's term of office had expired. Ms Eadie indicated that she would like to continue as a governor, and it was agreed that she brought valuable skills and expertise to the Governing Body. It was **RESOLVED** that Ms Eadie be re-appointed as a co-opted governor for a period of four years with effect from 7 February 2023.

##### **(b) DBS checks**

Governors were reminded that they were legally required to have a valid DBS check in place, and should ensure that their check was renewed every three years. Ms Rainer was advised that she would need to contact Simone McAllister, the Federation Business Manager, within 15 days of appointment to get the process for her DBS check under way.

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

The agenda included information on the circumstances when it was acceptable for the Chair to take action under the urgency procedures in accordance with the School Governance (Roles, Procedures, and Allowances)(England) 2013, and also situations when this would not be permissible. It was noted that Mr Fidel had not taken any urgent action since the last meeting.

## **6. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS, VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS, AND TRAINING**

### **(a) Reports from committees**

#### **(i) Strategic Group**

The minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Group held on 25 November 2022 and 23 January 2023 had been circulated with the agenda; the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March were not yet available. At the November and January meetings, the Strategic Group had discussed the quality of teaching and learning and a range of staffing matters. Governors had also been updated on a number of safeguarding issues relating to individual children and had discussed governor recruitment.

#### **(ii) Resources Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 February 2023 had not yet been cleared for circulation.

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

The latest monitoring and evaluation schedule was circulated, which linked to the agenda planning and link governor roles. The schedule outlined the areas which governors were asked to monitor, as well as the frequency of their visits, and changes to the allocation of link governor responsibilities were agreed. It was agreed that Ms Rainer would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Resources Committee as an observer before deciding whether she would like to join the Committee.

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

***Ms Scott had been into school to meet Lorraine McGuire and Hattie Emirali as part of the SEND audit.*** She had met two groups of children from Years 3 and 4 who had talked about how they accessed additional support; she said that she had been really inspired by her visit.

### **(d) Governing Body training**

***Mr Jenkins had attended the recent Ofsted training session, and had shared the course materials with Ms Gilmore.*** A template had been included in the materials which could be used by governors when they were called in to meet Ofsted, as well as a number of other useful documents. Ms Gilmore said that she would look through these in more detail.

***Ms Scott had attended the training session on climate emergency, which had been extremely interesting, and the Lewisham Climate Emergency Lead had given an inspiring presentation.*** It was noted that Glen Goode had also attended training for premises managers and it was confirmed that all of the recommendations made by Lewisham had been implemented. Ms Scott said that every school had been allocated around £20,000 for use on sustainable capital projects, which was ring fenced for three years. This had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Resources Committee and Mr Goode had mentioned an issue with lighting at one of the schools for which this funding could be used.

Ms Gilmore said that the Federation had a teacher who was the champion for climate change. ***It was agreed that Ms Scott would be added to the monitoring and evaluation schedule as the link governor for climate change, and it was suggested that she should meet Mr Goode to discuss this further.*** Ms Gilmore said that the Federation was looking for every

opportunity to address climate change issues, and arrangements had now been made for kitchen waste to be collected from both schools to be made into fertiliser.

## **7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **(a) Executive Headteacher's report**

Ms Gilmore had not prepared a written report for this meeting, and included a strategic overview as part of her Head of School's report for Eliot Bank.

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

The Head of School's report had been circulated and included items on attainment, progress, School Improvement Plan priorities, quality of education, monitoring and evaluation, professional development and INSET, inclusion, SEND, premises, appointments and resignations, the school roll, attendance, mobility, free school meals, fire drills, accidents and incidents, special events, visits, and visitors, and confidential items, free school meals, fire drills, accidents/incidents, educational visits, special events and visitors.

#### **Attainment and progress**

Ms Osmond gave an update on the autumn term outcomes which were included in the report. She pointed out that this information was already out of date because the children had continued to make progress since the assessments had been carried out; a further assessment was due to take place before the end of term. The report included a detailed breakdown of the Eliot Bank data, with benchmarking information against the 2021/22 national data.

*Reception* – The outcomes were really encouraging, with a higher percentage of children on track to achieve a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the year than last year's cohort. Ms Osmond reminded governors that there had been a group of children in Reception last year who had really struggled with communication, speaking, and writing, which had impacted significantly on the data.

*Year 1 phonics* – There was still a group of children who were struggling with phonics from Reception last year, and who were not yet showing the progress that the school wanted to see. A systematic synthetic phonics programme was in place, with a heavy emphasis on catch up, and the overall prediction of the proportion of children expected to reach 32+ points in the test was similar to last year.

*Year 2 phonics* – Six children had not passed the phonics screening test in Year 1, and were receiving additional support; three of them were now on track to achieve 32 points, and the Year 2 pass rate was comparable with last year.

*Key Stage 1/2* – The current Year 1 cohort was strong and was above the national average in all areas. Attainment in Year 2 was extremely strong, and was in line with the ambitious targets that had been set.

The picture in Key Stage 2 was not quite as consistent, and focused support was in place, particularly in writing.

Ms Osmond said that reading was strong across the school, with a high percentage of children on track to reach the expected standard in all year groups.

There was a particular focus on writing attainment in Years 5 and 6, but she emphasised that the pattern which could be seen in the data was not unusual for this time of year. Ms Osmond reminded governors that they must remember that these were the children who were the most impacted by the lockdowns and school closures, and that writing was especially challenging during this time.

***Ms Bishop was mindful that Year 6 children would be taking their SATs in the summer term, and asked what was being done to help them to recover from the lost learning.***

Ms Osmond said that a great deal of support had been put into Year 6, including small group work. The individual needs of each child were assessed, and they received support in small break out groups.

Maths was a very positive picture. Ms Osmond said that there was a group of Year 5 children who were just a term behind, and with accelerated progress, they should improve significantly.

Ms Gilmore pointed out that both schools had exceeded the national figures, although these had been relatively low. The Key Stage 2 outcomes for 2022 had not been published, so there were no league tables available this year, but attainment at the school was rising and she anticipated that the national averages would be exceeded again this year even if these increased.

Ms Osmond said that teachers were working hard to maintain the proportion of children achieving the higher standard, and the data on reading and maths was encouraging. Writing continued to be a focus, particularly in respect of how to challenge the children and provide opportunities for extended writing.

*Pupil Premium* – Ms Osmond explained that the percentages for the attainment of Pupil Premium children were more varied because of the numbers of children involved. There were only four Pupil Premium children in Year 1, with just one child in each band for the phonics screening. She reminded governors that the data was based on last term's assessment, and in Years 3, 4, and 6, two additional children in each year group were now on track to reach the expected standard in reading. The numbers of Pupil Premium children in each year group were not significant, but there continued to be a focus on children in Years 3 and 6 for reading at the higher standard.

The gap in the proportion of children who were on track to reach expectations in writing in Year 3 was more significant, but Ms Osmond pointed out that this year group had the highest number of Pupil Premium children (16), and there was also a high number of SEND in the Pupil Premium group. Ms McGuire explained that while children with SEND, dyslexia, and comprehensive difficulties may be fluent in reading, this did not necessarily mean that they had strong comprehension skills, and she explained the extra support that was put in place for these children, and how it was built up.

Ms Osmond said that 67% of Pupil Premium children in Year 6 were currently on track to reach expectations in writing. The Pupil Premium children had performed less well than their peers in maths, but the number of children in this group was quite low, and there would be a focus on support particularly for Years 5 and 6.

Ms Osmond reminded governors that the aim was for children to make four points of progress across the year, with two points in the autumn term and one each in spring and summer. She drew governors' attention to the table which showed the progress of all pupils in reading, writing, and maths, as well as progress of Pupil Premium children, and explained the meaning of the colour coded figures. It could be seen that reading was in line with school expectations for all pupils, and writing was at or above the threshold in Years 2, 4, and 6. Year 5 had made an average of 1.4 points progress in the autumn term, and teachers were working with this year group to make accelerated progress. Progress in maths was above 1.3 points in all year groups, and significantly higher in others.

The data for the progress of Pupil Premium children was more varied, again because of the small number of children involved in some year groups, and children were receiving individual support as necessary.

### **School Improvement Plan priorities**

The priorities for 2022/23 were included in the report, and the items which were the main focus for this year were highlighted in yellow. The agenda also included an item on the Plan, and showed a list of the type of questions which governors could ask which were considered good practice. Ms Gilmore felt that this gave a sense of what governors should be asking, and highlighted the detailed information which they received on the Federation.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The main focus at Eliot Bank continued to be embedding the use of high quality assessment for learning, with a specific emphasis on the pitch and pace of learning, to ensure that all pupils were supported and challenged. The other priorities continued to be diversification of the curriculum, and the delivery of meaningful and effective feedback, particularly in the moment feedback.

The profile of teaching was based on a best fit triangulation of observations, learning walks, book scrutiny, professional conduct, and relationships. The percentages were very similar to the autumn term, but one of the strongest teachers was leaving, which would affect the figures.

Ms Gilmore said that there was an ongoing focus on embedding previous improvements in the quality of teaching, and the teachers who had recently joined the school were progressing well. She stressed the importance of ensuring that staff were retained and felt valued, and were aware of expectations. Two teachers had needed additional support, and this was evaluated and reshaped on a regular basis. The four ECTs were doing very well, and had given extremely positive feedback about the school. The new Assistant Headteacher had made an excellent start and was a great asset to the school.

The report included details of the monitoring and evaluation aspects which had taken place since the last meeting, and showed the progress that had been made. Ms Gilmore said that the next major benchmark would be the upcoming peer review on 23 March, which would be carried out by leaders from Kelvin Grove, Dalman, and Gordonbrock, and would be led by Gulshan Kayembe, an Ofsted trained consultant.

*Aspect One* reported on the monitoring of English books in all year groups, and highlighted strengths and areas for improvement. A new approach had been adopted in looking at the books which was focused much more on talking to the children about books.

*Aspect Two* had been focused on the teaching of phonics and early reading, and had included input from Mark Ridler-Mayor to provide quality assurance across the schools. A great many strengths had been seen, and clear development points had been identified. Ms Gilmore informed governors that all schools had been required by the government to implement a new phonics scheme, which had proved to be expensive.

*Aspect Three* had looked at SEND pupils in Years 5 and 6. Ms Gilmore said that she had been keen for the SENDCO to take a proactive and strategic approach, as well as working with children at an operational level. Marinda Barry had taken part in the learning walk and had provided feedback to Lorraine McGuire.

*Aspect Four - Ms Scott had been involved in monitoring SEND pupils in Years 3 and 4.* The strengths seen had included that the children enjoyed their learning and were enthusiastic, and able to talk about their needs and barriers to learning. The renewed focus now was on how well the children were doing in the classroom and the evidence to support this. This looked not just at how well supported the children were but at the implementation and impact of the curriculum.

*Aspect Five* – Ms Gilmore informed governors that she had asked for a safeguarding audit to take place to look at the school's safeguarding policy and practice. Lucia Bernardi, the local

authority's Safeguarding in Education Officer, had visited the school and had carried out the audit in association with Ms McGuire, Ms Gilmore, and Simone McAllister. The report made reference to the extremely strong outcomes, and included quotes from Lucia Bernardi and Natasha Orumbie. In particular, governors were delighted to see that Natasha Orumbie had said that the Single Central Record at Eliot Bank was the first that had never needed any amendment, and there had been almost no recommendations across the rest of the school. Ms McGuire said that Ms Bernardi had been very reassured by what she had seen, and she was very aware that when someone from outside visited a school, they often picked up on different things, but very few development points had been identified. The children had been very forthcoming about their feelings and how they felt safe in school. Ms Gilmore said that Ms Bernardi had talked a lot about the curriculum, and how it enabled the children to be robust, resilient, and to make good choices.

*Aspect Six* had been a pupil book study in Years 5 and, with SEND and Pupil Premium children picked at random from the register. Ms Gilmore said that many positive strengths had been seen, and commented in particular about a boy in Year 6 who had spoken with great passion about his experiences. Presentation had been identified as an area for development; the children had spent a great deal of time outside schools during the lockdowns using computers etc, and it was now important to focus on getting presentation back up to the previous high standards.

The report included summaries of a number of additional events, including the Year 1 toy making workshop, World War 2 immersion day, the EBSA Christmas Fair, the Choir at Blackheath Halls, Year 2 bread making, Year 4 Greek mythology workshop, Year 5 Mayan civilisation workshop, Year 3 visit to the Homiman Museum, Buddy Week, Year 3 ancient Egyptian workshop, Reception Astronomy Roadshow, LGBT+ week, Children's Mental Health week, Safety Internet Day, Year 6 Urban Synergy event, BAGS2 school clothing collection, and the Year 5 school journey to Marchant's Hill. It was agreed that it was really nice to be able to celebrate the curriculum and focus on a wide range of initiatives after the restrictions of the pandemic.

#### **Diversifying the curriculum**

Ms Gilmore said that diversification of the curriculum would be an ongoing piece of work with the links generated in the last couple of years becoming more embedded, and the curriculum leads working hard to identify more, authentic, curriculum links. Joint planning meetings would be a key element of this work. Ms Barry said that she wanted to present data to governors on how the work was impacting on pupils, and while this could be done by presentation of data, she said that it would also be helpful to look at books, and would consider the best way of giving a really meaningful presentation to governors at the June meeting.

#### **Inclusion / SEND**

The report included the latest SEND statistics from which it could be seen that there were currently 46 children on the SEND register, 14 (31%) of whom were Pupil Premium children. There were currently five children with EHCPs at Eliot Bank.

It was noted that there were currently no looked after children, and no children on Child Protection or Child in Need Plans, but some of the children at Eliot Bank had quite significant needs; Ms Gilmore stressed that just because children were not on a formal Plan did not mean that they did not have needs for which they needed support. Ms McGuire added that some children had recently come off Child Protection Plans and that these children continued to be extremely vulnerable. The report included anonymised case studies of a number of vulnerable children, which governors agreed were a testament to the detailed record keeping in both schools. This information was presented to the Strategic Group each half term and governors had the opportunity to ask detailed questions about the individual children. In addition, the Senior Leadership Team discussed all the vulnerable children on at least a weekly basis. Ms Gilmore said that the recent safeguarding audit had picked up on the quality and depth of the



information being provided to governors, and she urged all governors to read the case studies in detail. They were asked to dispose of the information securely afterwards.

### **Staffing and recruitment**

Governors were informed that a part time class teacher had just started maternity leave, and her post was being covered by a long term supply teacher and Jenny Klein.

It was noted that there were currently vacancies for two meals supervisors, two nursery meals supervisors, and the Head of School. The Head of School post had been discussed by the Strategic Group and Resources Committee, and Ms Gilmore confirmed that Kate Glasheen's secondment as Head of School had ended. This had been an amicable arrangement and Ms Glasheen had confirmed that she did not wish to pursue the possibility of a permanent appointment. She said that governors had been very supportive in allowing her time to think through the options and to consider the leadership structure across the two schools. Ms Gilmore said that she was mindful that both schools had fantastic deputy heads, assistant heads, middle leaders, and a Head of School at Gordonbrock, and she was looking differently at the leadership structure across the Federation. It had been agreed that she would reflect on this for the remainder of the term, and would make proposals for the September leadership structure.

**Ms Albert said that a small number of parents had expressed concern to her about the lack of updates about the Head of School post.** Ms Gilmore said that she had communicated with parents a couple of weeks earlier and had not been told of any concerns, and **Ms Knowles said that she had also not been approached by any Eliot Bank parents.** Ms Gilmore pointed out that it was sometimes difficult to write to parents when there was nothing new to communicate, and she had already informed them that she was looking at different leadership structures with the Governing Body. **Ms Albert said that parents who had spoken to her thought that the reason why a permanent Head of School had not been appointed was because of cost cutting.** Ms Gilmore stressed that, while there could be a saving if it was decided to move to a different leadership structure, the most important driver was to ensure stability at the school. **Ms Knowles was mindful that there had been a number of changes in the Head of School since her son had been at Eliot Bank for various reasons, and felt that it was more important to ensure that the leadership structure was stable and for parents to see the same people on the gates every day. She felt strongly that there was no point in having a Head of School for the sake of it, or appointing the wrong person.** Ms Gilmore pointed out that Gordonbrock was in a very different position because Mrs Wright had been in post for many years, as she herself had been prior to that, and parents had not known any other Heads of School there.

**Ms Albert had received emails from parents asking whether the school had enough money to meet the cost of a new Head of School.** Ms Gilmore stressed that she was very very happy for parents to raise their concerns directly with the Senior Leadership Team and she asked Ms Albert to advise them to seek reassurance in that way. In any case, she agreed to prepare an update for parents on the current situation. She said that the recent parents' questionnaire showed that 95% of parents felt that their children were happy and felt safe, which were always key questions; however, she would be interested to hear if any parents thought their children were unhappy or if the lack of a Head of School was having a detrimental effect on their children's education. **Mr Jenkins suggested that it might be helpful to set out the timeframe and reference the strong leadership in the schools, as part of a celebratory update from the peer review, rather than sending a standalone letter. Ms Rainer pointed out that it was a strength of the Senior Leadership Team that the departure of the Head of School had not left a void at a senior level.**

Ms Gilmore said that communication from governors could be very reassuring for parents, and **Mr Fidel agreed that it was important to make it clear that the primary focus in the decision on whether or not to recruit a new Head of School would be based on the**

**education and best interests of the children, while recognising that there could be advantages in terms of the budget.**

The resignation of the School Business Manager presented a much more immediate challenge, and this had also been discussed at length with governors. Ms McAllister would be leaving the Federation after Easter, and Ms Gilmore reminded governors that Anne Carter had recently left Gordonbrock. It had been agreed that there was a need to look at long and short term solutions. In the long term, Ms Gilmore was looking at the office teams at both schools with a view to maximising effectiveness. In the short term, she was currently getting a deeper understanding of office staff roles to inform her planning. In addition, Ms McAllister was also covering Ms Carter's role at Gordonbrock. Discussions with staff had started, and they had valued the opportunity to discuss their roles and having been given a voice.

Ms Gilmore had spoken to the Head of Finance at Lewisham, and had been reassured to be told that the team could provide any help needed for strategic management of the budget and the office layer underneath. She would be contacting Finance later that week to give a list of what was needed. **Mr Jenkins was supporting her on this, and with the recruitment process for a new Federation Business Manager.** Lewisham Finance had provided details of the services which the Federation could buy into, and Ms Gilmore had been put in touch with another school whose budget had been managed by Finance for the last two years. In the short term, she was satisfied that the arrangement with Lewisham Finance would bring stability, and the potential reorganisation of the office structure at both schools would bring long term opportunities.

**School roll**

The number of children on roll continued to rise; there had been 407 pupils on roll in September, which had increased to 410 at 3 March, with a further 2 children due to start in the near future.

**Attendance**

Attendance remained steady at 96%. Governors discussed the issue of some parents keeping their children at home on Fridays which had been reported in the media recently, but this was not an issue at Eliot Bank or Gordonbrock.

**Mobility**

During the spring term, 12 children had joined Eliot Bank, and 6 had left. Of the children who had left, three had moved to out Borough state schools, one to an independent out Borough school, one to an independent school in Lewisham, and one to another Lewisham school.

**Diversification of the curriculum**

Mr Stephen said that, as a class teacher, he had been part of the journey of diversification of the curriculum and he had found this a positive experience. This work had changed the way he thought about things, and this had now become second nature. Mr Stephen gave some examples of the work he was doing in the classroom which included reading alternative texts, positive writing with Year 5 on the Mayans, and comparing different creation stories from around the world to make comparisons, which provided opportunities to explain questions raised by the children at a class level.

Ms Gilmore was thanked for her report.

**(c) Head of School's report - Gordonbrock**

The Head of School's report had been circulated and included items on attainment, progress, School Improvement Plan priorities, quality of education, monitoring and evaluation, professional development and INSET, inclusion, SEND, premises, appointments and resignations, the school roll, attendance, mobility, free school meals, fire drills, accidents and incidents, special events, visits, and visitors, and confidential items, free school meals, fire

drills, accidents/incidents, educational visits, special events and visitors. Mrs Wright highlighted items from her report and answered governors' questions.

### **Progress and attainment**

*Reception* - The data for Gordonbrock was very similar to Eliot Bank, with an extremely high proportion of children on track to achieve GLD by the end of the year, and was in line with previous years. Teachers were working hard to develop the children's social and emotional skills, which had been impacted by the pandemic restrictions.

*Year 1 phonics* – Mr Ridler-Mayor said that, based on the experience of previous years and the interventions in place, the proportion of children who would pass the phonics screening test was likely to be around 89% which was broadly in line with last year. Implementation of the new phonics programme was going well, and this had been validated by the recent peer review.

*Key Stage 1/2* – Attainment was good in most year groups compared with last year, and was typical for this point in the academic year. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that writing was lower than in previous years in Key Stage 2, but he reminded governors that these year groups had been in Key Stage 1 during COVID, and improvement was apparent as the pandemic ended. Years 4 and 5 appeared to have been the most affected by the pandemic, and these year groups were in Key Stage 1 during the lockdowns; this demonstrated in particular the importance and impact of Key Stage 1 teaching.

### ***Ms Bishop asked if the rag rated data was likely to translate into the national average.***

Mr Ridler-Mayor said that attainment was increasing over time and improving, and he anticipated that the data would be in line with the typical Gordonbrock outcomes. He said that he thought the national average would gradually increase.

The higher Key Stage 1 outcomes were very strong, and it was important to sustain these throughout the year and maintain challenge. Although Key Stage 2 was more of a mixed picture at the higher level, the picture was good overall.

Mr Ridler-Mayor said that the Key Stage 2 data was in line with the national average overall for the end of Year 6, and discussions about each child continued to take place in pupil progress meetings each term.

### ***Ms Bishop asked whether it was likely that it would be possible to get all children back to where they should be after the pandemic. She also asked for more information on the expectations on progress and whether two points of progress indicated that the children were on track.***

Mr Ridler-Mayor said that the areas which were currently highlighted in red were expected to improve. Mrs Wright explained that the expectations in respect of the points of progress were the Federation's own measures, and were aimed at ensuring that children left with high standards. She explained how gaps would be identified, and how the school would work to increase progress. She pointed out that in house progress may stay red and it may not be possible for all children to make the full amount of expected progress in Years 4 and 5, but the greatest in year jump in progress always took place in Year 6.

Pupil Premium children remained a priority group. It was anticipated that 83% of children would pass the phonics screening test. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that there was a mixed picture with Pupil Premium children, with some good outcomes expected for Years 1, 2, and 6 in reading, writing and maths, but lower outcomes for Years 3 and 4. He stressed that these children were a high priority and were always a focus in pupil progress discussions. Quality first teaching was important, and teaching assistants worked with groups to ensure that the children received the support they needed to progress. In addition, more regular pupil progress meetings were taking place in Year 4.

**Mr Fidel asked if it was likely that there would be significantly more children achieving the higher standard in writing and maths in the summer term with the additional support in place.** Mr Ridler-Mayor reminded governors that it was extremely difficult to get to the higher standard in writing, but Year 6 teachers were constantly working with the children to give them the best possible opportunity to demonstrate greater depth in writing. Ms Osmond added that reaching the higher standard was also related to a child's desire to read, and this was made even harder by the amount of time the children had had out of school. **Mr Fidel commented that, from the media reports he had read, it appeared that an increasing number of children's enjoyment of reading appeared to have waned.**

Ms Gilmore said that the language needed to reach greater depth in writing was incredibly sophisticated, and was also related to the nature of children's life experiences; school worked hard to compensate for gaps that children had in this language, particularly those who were disadvantaged, and knew that it was their responsibility to do this. Mr Ridler-Mayor added that the bar for the higher standard in writing felt very different to maths and reading. It was also not as easy to reach the expected standard in writing as it was for reading and maths. It was noted that Mary Quinn, English Lead, was looking at ways of giving the children more independence when writing, and more freedom. Ms Gilmore said that there was a greater need for this piece of work at Eliot Bank than Gordonbrock. Mrs Wright said that the standard of books which had been reviewed at the peer review suggested the children were being given the best opportunities to achieve greater depth. She stressed that the children who were just below expectations were constantly in the forefront of teacher's planning.

#### **School Improvement Plan priorities**

The 2022/23 priorities were included in the report, and Mrs Wright highlighted the key priorities for the year.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The profile of teaching had improved slightly with a higher percentage of teachers judged as outstanding through triangulation of snapshots of lessons, pupil voice, books etc.

*Aspect One* had looked at whole class reading from Years 3 to 6, and the outcomes had been validated by the peer review. Mrs Wright drew governors' attention to the strengths and areas for development.

*Aspect Two* had been the SEND audit, which had taken place in Years 1 and 2. The report included several extremely positive quotes from the children, and Ms Barry referred in particular to a comment from a child who was able to talk about their progress, and who was very proud of this. She said that verbal feedback continued to be given, and children were given opportunities to self-select resources.

*Aspect Three* was a whole school maths pupil book study which had shown many strengths.

*Aspect Four* had involved monitoring of French, involving all teaching staff.

*Aspect Five* had looked at learning journeys for Years 1 to 6.

*Aspect Six* was a whole school English pupil book study, using evidence from book scrutiny and pupil voice.

*Aspect Seven* had monitored phonics and the implementation of Little Wandle in the Nursery, Reception, and Year 1. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that this had shown the clear impact of systematic synthetic phonics and a very consistent approach of teaching in the Early Years and Year 1, with very good subject knowledge and the children becoming increasingly confident. He said that there had been key developments around challenge and how to make sure that the more able children were challenged, which had been demonstrated in the peer review.

*Aspect Eight* had involved 20 minute English and maths observations in all year groups by Ms Gilmore, Mrs Wright, and both Deputy Headteachers. Many strengths had been observed and areas for development had been identified. Feedback had been shared with phase leaders at the Senior Leadership Team meeting and the SLT had provided verbal and written feedback to class teachers.

#### *Peer review*

The recent peer review had gone very well, and Mrs Wright was extremely pleased with the outcome, and **Mr Jenkins had been present for the feedback session**. The review had followed key lines of enquiry; these had included looking at the curriculum and middle leaders, verbal feedback and in the moment feedback, and how well this worked. The other focus had been an in depth look at phonics, reading, and reading for pleasure. The peer reviewers had looked at the selection of books for children in the library, which had recently been launched.

The peer review had been carried out by senior leaders from Kelvin Grove, Kilmorie, Dalmain, and Eliot Bank, together with Gulshan Kayembe, and had involved lesson observations, book scrutiny, pupil interviews, and teacher interviews. The feedback had been extremely positive, and the main headline comments had been that the learning ethos of the school shone through, that there was a high degree of inclusivity, collaborations in lessons, high quality texts, positive attitudes to learning, and a strong and engaging environment. The high standards and progress had also been noted, and the reviewers had been impressed by the learning that had been showcased and the artwork on display. Some minor development points had been raised, but none of these were unexpected and were all in line with the school's action plan. **Mr Jenkins said that he had found it extremely useful to be there as a governor, noting the significant hard work, on the part of the school, that went into the review.**

**Ms Bishop asked if all schools participated in peer reviews or if this was an additional initiative.** Ms Gilmore said that the schools in their group had chosen to take part in peer reviews at an early stage because of the importance of having validation outside the Federation, and she and Mrs Wright had looked for schools with similar characteristics and the same basic principles. Lewisham Learning had later set up a peer review system based on this model and had invited other schools to take part. A number of Lewisham schools were now taking part in peer reviews. She added that this was an extremely useful system.

The report also included updated on a number of additional events and trips which had taken place since the last meeting, any of which were similar to Eliot Bank because the Deputy Heads worked closely together. These included Inter Faith Week, the Year 5 trip to the British Museum, Children in Need Day, Anti Bullying Week, Pupil Climate Network meet-up, Year 3 World War 2 Day, Turning of the Year concert, visit by Pollocks Toy Museum, the Christmas performances, Save the Children Christmas Jumper day and Christmas lunch, visit by the Mounted Police, Year 2 visit to Sydenham School, Gordonbrock girls' and boys' football matches, migration stories, Children's Mental Health Week. LGTB+ history, and Safer Internet Day.

**Ms Scott said that her daughter had taken part in the Migration Stories performance, which she had found outstanding.** Ms Gilmore said that an application would be made for further funding for this, and it was hoped that it would be possible to invite governors to the next performance.

#### **Inclusion**

Governors considered Ms Barry's inclusion update. It was noted that one of the two families who had been on a Child Protection Plan had now moved to a Child in Need Plan. Details of the more vulnerable children were discussed in detail at meetings of the Strategic Group. Mrs Wright said that the member of staff working with an extremely vulnerable child in Reception

had had a couple of difficult days but recommendations made by Watergate on different ways of supporting the child had been useful.

### **Personnel**

Mrs Wright informed governors that Debbie Sinclair and Fiona Nichols were working in the Gordonbrock office on a supply basis. They were both doing very well, and were extremely friendly and helpful.

### **Relationships and sex education**

Mr Ridler-Mayor gave an update on relationships and sex education (RSE) at Gordonbrock. He explained that the curriculum had been introduced just over two years ago and was based on the Christopher Winter Project, and this had followed a consultation exercise with parents. He outlined the main elements of RSE, and explained that there were elements from which parents could withdraw their children in Years 2, 4, and 6, but the relationships education element was compulsory.

The government guidance around LGBT was quite vague, and it was up to schools to decide what they wanted to teach. However, schools must ensure that the content was age appropriate, and should ensure that LGBT content was fully integrated and not a standalone topic. Schools were free to determine how to do this at an appropriate point. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that the government should be providing schools with guidance, but this had not been received. He said that the school used its own guiding principles around commitment to promoting inclusivity and made it clear to children that other families in the outside world may look different to their own, and they must respect this.

Work took place to ensure that the curriculum was agreed, and drew on leaders' wide ranging experience. Teaching of LGBT content was progressively more explicit in Years 1-4, and in Years 5-6, transgender content was introduced to ensure that the curriculum was diverse. ***Ms Bishop asked how the school would deal with issues which become relevant at an earlier age but which were not due to be covered until a later stage.*** Mr Ridler-Mayor said that collaboration was important in this scenario, and the teacher concerned would discuss the issue with the curriculum Deputy Head to agree on the best approach. Mrs Wright said that advice was also sought from Natasha Orumbie at Lewisham as necessary. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that it was important to make sure that the children did not feel that they had been closed down or had said something wrong in such circumstances, and if necessary, teachers would say that they needed more time to think about a response and would return to the subject at a later stage.

Staff and parents had been consulted on the Relationships and Sex Education Policy, and feedback had been taken on board. Mr Ridler-Mayor said that discussions had taken place with parents who had raised particular questions. Letters had been sent out in advance of lessons advising parents of the content, and parents had been invited to look at the resources used. Although several had asked to see these, far fewer parents had withdrawn their children than in the past. Ms Gilmore added that no parents had asked to see the resources at Eliot Bank.

***Mr Fidel stressed that, if any governors were approached by parents, it was important for them to understand that the Relationships and Sex Education programme was carried out following consultation with parents and was delivered in an age appropriate way, and although parents could withdraw their children from parts of the programme, very few did so.*** Ms Gilmore added that staff knew that they could approach members of the Senior Leadership Teams if they had any concerns.

***Mr Bremner asked about the issue with the company which produced the SRE materials being unwilling to share them because of copyright issues.*** Mr Ridler-Mayor said that the small number of parents who had asked to see the resources had been shown copies. ***Mr Bremner said that he was reassured that there was no hidden agenda, and thought that***

*it was not necessarily a concern that more parents had asked to see the materials.* Mr Ridler-Mayor said that it was often the case that parents wanted to look at the resources so that they could support their children more at home.

***Mr Bremner thanked Mrs Wright and other senior staff for the hard work they had put into preparing the reports, and for the level and depth of the information provided.***

**(d) Peer review / school improvement visit report**

The peer reviews had been discussed under items 7(b) and (c) above.

**(e) Pupil Premium and PE/Sports Premium**

Ms Gilmore confirmed that the required information had been uploaded to the school websites.

**(f) OFSTED**

Ms Gilmore informed governors that only 10% of outstanding schools which had previously been exempt from inspection and which had been inspected under the new framework had retained their grading. Ofsted had only inspected one previously outstanding primary school in Lewisham, which had also not kept their outstanding status. She said that the next inspection at Eliot Bank was imminent, and everyone at the school was ready and waiting for this to take place, although there was no clear timeframe for when this would be. ***As noted earlier, Mr Jenkins had sent her a useful crib sheet***, which she offered to share with key governors who would be likely to come in to meet Ofsted as an aide memoire once she had populated the key data.

**8. REVIEW AND PUBLICATION OF GENDER GAP INFORMATION**

The agenda included information on the requirement for schools with 250 or more employees to report to the government on their gender pay gap, and suggested questions that governors might like to ask. It was noted that the Federation did not have this number of employees and was therefore not required to produce this report.

**9. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Governors noted the requirement for regular budget monitoring reports to be considered, and the deadlines for submission of the budget plan to the local authority. Ms Gilmore said that Ms McAllister would close both budgets for the 2022/23 financial year before she left the Federation and would also prepare the salary estimates, following which the local authority would step in to manage the budget for an interim period.

**(a) 2023/24 budget monitoring and three year projections**

Governors were asked to consider the arrangements for setting and approving the budget for 2022/23, and were reminded that the deadline for submission of the budget plan to Lewisham finance was 16 June 2023, or 30 June if a deficit recovery plan was being submitted. It was **RESOLVED** that the Resources Committee be requested to consider the budget plan in detail at their next meeting, and make recommendations to the Governing Body at the summer term meeting.

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

Copies of the SFVS report and the Financial Management Policy and Code of Practice had been circulated to all governors. ***It was noted that Mr Fidel and Mr Bremner had prepared the report with Ms McAllister, and both documents had been discussed and agreed by the Resources Committee.*** Although the SFVS report had been submitted to Lewisham Finance by the deadline of 14 February, governors were reminded that the documents must now be approved formally by the Governing Body. After consideration, it was **RESOLVED** that the SFVS report and Financial Management Policy and Code of Practice be approved.

**(c) Change of finance systems**

Governors were reminded that if a change to the schools' finance system was proposed, Lewisham Finance must be advised, and any transfers must be undertaken appropriately, avoiding key timelines and ensuring that the migration of information is correct etc.

**(d) Authorised signatories**

Governors were also reminded that as soon as a member of staff with authorisation facilities, such as the Headteacher or School Business Manager, provides notification that they will be leaving the Federation, Lewisham Finance must be notified of this to ensure that the change in signatories is actioned and that the leavers concerned have their authorisation rights terminated in line with the financial regulations.

**10. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**(a) Safeguarding reports**

Governors were reminded that the termly safeguarding reports had been incorporated in the Head of School reports.

**(b) Health and safety report**

A detailed health and safety report had been prepared by the Federation Premises Manager for discussion by the Resources Committee. Reports on accidents to children and staff had been included in the Head of School reports.

**11. SEND INFORMATION REPORT**

Governors were reminded that the SEND information report must be published on the school websites, and the agenda set out further information about the report. Ms Gilmore requested governor involvement to work on reviewing report and it was **RESOLVED** that Ms Knowles and Ms Scott would work on this with Ms McGuire and Ms Barry with a view to submitting the report to the June meeting of the Governing Body for review.

**12. INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE**

Governors were asked to consider delegating responsibility to a governor for checking 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 should also include the schools' complaints procedure, information on the use and impact of the Pupil Premium grant, the equalities data and objectives, and the schools' SEND provision. It was noted that Ms Worthington had previously carried out audits of the websites, and Ms Gilmore asked if another governor would be willing to take this role over. It was **RESOLVED** that Ms Eadie would take over responsibility for ensuring that the school websites were fully compliant.

**13. RECRUITMENT – REMINDER OF DATES**

Governors noted the deadlines for resignation for headteachers and other teachers for the remainder of the academic year.

**14. URGENT BUSINESS**

No items of urgent business were raised.

**15. 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 Resources Committee for the summer term.

**Governing Body**

Monday, 12 June 2023

**Resources Committee**

Monday, 15 May 2023



All meetings to start at 6 p.m.

Chair 

Date 12<sup>th</sup> JUN 2023

