



East Reading Federation

Part 1 Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Board

Tuesday 28th January 2025. 4pm

Present: Dave Dymond (Chair); Robert Howell (EHT); Laura Kerr (HoS); Katherine Fowler; Aaron Hatherley; Francis Jakeman; Kris Jones; Vincent Onuchi; Chris Robinson; Zoe Watling; Andrew Burrell; Steph Mitchell.

Apologies: Adedayo Benson.

In attendance: Rachel Lawson (DHT); Alice de Croos (SBM ASPS); Liz Newton (SBM Redlands).

Clerk: Deborah Savage

Agenda Item	
	This meeting took place in person, at Alfred Sutton Primary School.
1.	Welcome and Apologies. All were welcomed to the meeting, and as there were a few new faces, everyone introduced themselves. Apologies had been received from Adedayo Benson and these were accepted.
2.	Declarations of Interest. A new parent governor declared that she had been involved in the Disability Discrimination Case as a witness. This case is on the agenda at item 14. She was thanked for making this declaration which will probably not impact on the discussion today, but the CoG said he would bear that in mind during the discussion on item 14. Steph also mentioned that she herself has an outstanding complaint from the 2021/22 academic year.
3.	Minutes of the meeting held 7th January 2025. These minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Two new governors, appointed as a result of seeking nominations for two parent governor posts from the parent body, had not had a chance to read any of the documents for today's meeting in advance due to the short timescales. The minutes were accepted as a true record and ACTION: will be signed by the chair. The actions were reviewed and it was noted that upon investigation, it was found that the Governors Allowances in the Policy reviewed at the last meeting are up to date. Some governors have yet to complete all their declarations in Governorhub so ACTION: The Clerk will be touch with those governors individually.
4.	Election of a Vice Chair of Governors until the end of this academic year.

	<p>Discussions had been held with a number of governors and Zoe Watling offered to fill the Vice-Chair post for the remainder of the year. DECISION: a vote was held and Zoe Watling was appointed to the Vice Chair role. She was thanked for taking this on along side a new baby.</p>
5.	<p>EHT/HoS reports.</p> <p>A large number of documents has been circulated in advance of the meeting. These included the last EHT and HoS reports (updated) along with reports from all the phase leads (updated) and the dashboard statistics for both schools which are the Ofsted Data Summary reports. These documents were shared with governors so that governors previously familiar with one school, can familiarise themselves with the other school and to help new governors get to know both schools. The meeting was informed that the school recognised that there was a great deal of information to read and absorb and that the schools are working on developing the software to produce a joint report for future meetings so that governors would have less documentation to read. It was noted that the schools always welcome questions in advance of meetings so that these can be answered by appropriate staff (who may not attend the meetings). Governors were reminded that they can email any questions in future as the schools get ready to welcome Ofsted inspectors to Redlands (which could be any time now.)</p> <p>The EHT noted that both schools were among the top 3 performing schools in Reading, which is pleasing although attainment is never the only criteria for success. It was however pleasing that the federation has started in a strong position. ASPS has a successful model that is working well and much progress has been made to introduce aspects of this at Redlands. It was noted that both schools have similar underlying issues such as high numbers of children with EAL.</p> <p>Governor Comment: It is great to read of all the progress that has been made, but as we prepare for another inspection, it would be good if either the HT report or SEF tracked more closely what has been done to address the comments made by Ofsted at the last inspection and the progress made.</p> <p>The EHT informed the meeting that the information in the phase lead reports and the SEFs show that Redlands is on a journey to “Good” and ASPS is on a journey to “Outstanding” and that the local community has confidence in both schools.</p> <p>Governor Question: Are there any weaknesses or threats you think we should be aware of? It would help any conversations that governors will have with inspectors if they were able to refer to information in the Redlands SEF which places the school in a securely “Good” bracket. Evidence to support this assessment will be found in the SEF and it would be helpful if governors were familiar with this document.</p> <p>Governor Question: Are the schools fully resourced? I read of vacancies. Redlands is fully staffed on the teaching side but has vacancies for a caretaker and a LTC.</p> <p>Governor Question: Redlands lost a year 6 child at the start of this year to home schooling. Do we know why the family made this decision? This particular child had a</p>

	<p>poor record of attendance due to mental health concerns and we were trying to get her access to CAMHS. The school worked hard with the family to increase the amount of time this child was spending in school, with some success at the start of September when she was almost full time into year 6. However, an incident just before Christmas knocked her confidence and she became a school refuser again. The family decided that she would be better at home, with a tutor, whilst her mental health concerns were addressed so that she is in a better position to start her secondary education in September 2025. The school has put the family in touch with CAMHS, Child Protection support, and LA support from the Elective Home Education Team. The family still have a positive relationship with the school.</p> <p>Governor Comment: It sounds as if you have done everything you could possibly do to support this family and this child. Thank you. It is true that there is very limited support for school refusers- especially if the child is under 12. Schools are really expected to handle such issues themselves. Everything we have done is documented on CPOMS so we have a paperwork trail.</p> <p>Governor Comment: Perhaps the family should consider Path Hill? The family were supported to make their decision and this was a decision made by the parents and the Home Education Team.</p> <p>Governor Comment: Since low Nursery numbers saw us combine the nursery and reception into one Early Years class at Redlands, it will be a strategic decision for the future to decide if both schools should have a nursery. Combining these classes was the right decision to make at the moment – school rolls are falling all over Reading (Caversham in particular is suffering low numbers). The school and the local community do not want to see the nursery at Redlands closed so amalgamating the classes was the right decision for now. We need to give 2 years notice if we plan to close the nursery and having a nursery facility is seen as a good way to attract families to the school as a whole. Current numbers on roll are ASPS nursery 57 and Redlands combined EYFS 8. The meeting was informed that the school did research into mixed year groups before making the decision and are following best practise. The unit has skilled practitioners who are personalising the learning for each child, regardless of age. Having an EYFS offer at Redlands is important for the local community and it may affect pupil recruitment if the school does not offer one. We recognise that this will be a continuing area of discussion.</p> <p>Governor Question: Both reports refer to persistent absence – what strategies are in place to try to address this issue? Even a small number of school refusers (there are 3 all in year 5 at ASPS at the moment) has a big impact on attendance data. We also have two more children not in school due to medical conditions which we are supporting with work at home. We are working with families whose children have persistent absence to try to improve attendance rates, but we are able to support these figures with a narrative that explains them.</p> <p>Governor Comment: Thank you - it is reassuring to hear that you are working with families on an individual basis to try to improve school attendance.</p>
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	<p>Governor Question: It is pleasing to see that both schools have successful ARPs up and running – originally the LA said that 10% of ARP spaces would be for the LA to place children into with the other places being taken by “home-grown” children. What are the numbers of LA placed children in each ARP? In Redlands one space has been given to a child previously unplaced by the LA and another is due to join us shortly. ASPS also has 2 children who were placed by the LA. The majority of children in each ARP are home-grown.</p> <p>Governor Comment: That is good for both schools.</p> <p>The meeting was informed that it is understood that the LA’s SEND budget is £25 million in deficit and that the capital grants that had been approved to make changes to the ARP accommodation in both schools are now unlikely to be paid.</p> <p>Governor Question: In the Safeguarding sections, you refer to “low-level” concerns. Can you give an example of what you consider to be a low-level concern? This might be a play ground incident or a name calling incident – usually peer-peer incidents that we are now much better at recording. ASPS has had space constraints on the playgrounds recently so many are “jostling” incidents. This is where the role of the LTCs is so important – they are under paid but do a vital role. Michelle Champion has moved from Redlands to ASPS and is taking on the management of the lunch time team as part of her role.</p>
6.	<p>Standing Orders.</p> <p>It was explained that the Standing Orders set how the Governing Board will operate and these were edited following the last meeting to ensure there was no ambiguity over the terms of office of the COG or Vice-Chairs. DECISION: The Standing Orders were approved.</p>
7.	<p>Decision Planner.</p> <p>A new Decision (or Delegation) planner had been drafted based on the NGA model planner and circulated in advance of the meeting. This document reflects the fact that for this academic year, the federation GB will have no committee structure (outside the statutory committees.) It was explained that this document helps to separate the areas of running the school that are considered “operational” and therefore the responsibility of the staff and those areas that are considered “strategic” and therefore within the remit of the GB. DECISION: The Decision Planner was approved.</p>
8.	<p>Delegation of Policies.</p> <p>This item was not discussed.</p>
9.	<p>Policies for approval or adoption:</p> <p>There were a large number of policies that were circulated in advance of the meeting. The meeting was informed that, wherever possible, policies will become “ERF Policies” that apply to both schools, but that this will take time to achieve. It was also recognised that some policies would have to remain applicable to one school only, for example those that refer to physical aspects to the school and how services are</p>

delivered. Policies will take some time to work through. All HR related policies will, in time, be ERF Policies.

A. Redlands Policies:

- a. Collective Worship Policy – **Governor Question:** This policy acknowledges the many different faiths held by the children and the need to deliver “broadly Christian” worship which you do by discussing areas of common ground held by all the major faiths. When you discuss topics such as caring for others and refer to the Parables – do you say that “Jesus taught us that...”? Yes – we teach values through our assembly structure and in our classroom work – we discuss the value, and how we might demonstrate that value and how we might recognise this value in others. We use stories from a variety of faiths to help us do that and acknowledge where these stories come from. ASPS does the same through its core values. **The policy also mentions the right to withdraw children from assemblies – is this correct and do parents do this?** Parents are allowed to withdraw children yes, but most usually they ask to withdraw children from PHSE and RE lessons. Parents are invited in for a discussion so that they can see the curriculum content and make an informed decision on whether they want their children to take part or not. **DECISION:** **Collective Worship Policy approved.**
- b. Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy. **DECISION:** **Approved.**
- c. Parents Code of Conduct. **Governor Question:** What mechanisms do you use to make parents aware of this Code? Is it different to the Home-School Agreement? Yes – it is different. It is emailed to parents and is on the school website. If required, we draw parents’ attention to it. **DECISION:** **Approved.**
- d. Remote Working Policy. This policy covers delivering education to children not in school – **Governor Question:** Should it also refer to the Curriculum Policy and the Marking and Assessment Policy? The curriculum policy is statutory, but the Marking and Assessment Policy is not. **DECISION:** **Approved.**
- e. EYFS Policy. The meeting was informed that this policy is based on a model policy from the Key. **DECISION:** **Approved**
- f. Wellbeing Policy. It was noted that Wellbeing may well be a part of the forthcoming Ofsted Inspection. **DECISION:** **Approved.**
- g. ICT and Acceptable Use Policy. It was noted that this policy links to Safeguarding and Prevent. Older children who bring mobile phones to school can be a problem – Redlands pupils leave their phones in a box in the school office during the day. **DECISION:** **Approved.**
- h. H&S Policy. Concern was expressed by the H&S link Governor that this policy was too “light” and did not cover all aspects of school and premises H&S – even though it was based on the RBC issued model policy. It was also noted that the Key has a H&S model policy and guidance can also be found on the HSE website. There was also some

	<p>discussion that this Policy might have been approved at the Redlands meeting held in November. DECISION: this policy was not approved.</p> <p>i. Marking & Feedback Policy. This is an operational matter for the school. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>B. Alfred Sutton Policies:</p> <p>a. First Aid Policy. It was noted that the named first aiders needed an update. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>b. EYFS Policy. It was noted that the EYFS policies are slightly different for each school, therefore they do need to remain separate. Whilst Policy aspects are the same, procedures do vary. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>c. SEND Policy. There have been no updates to this policy but named people have changed. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>d. Curriculum Policy. Governors were informed that a principles statement has been added to page one. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>C. ERF Policies:</p> <p>a. Governor Visits Policy. Governors noted that it is good to have expectations but that what constitutes a “learning walk” can be open to interpretation. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>b. ECT Policy. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>c. Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy. This is an RBC policy. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>d. Suspensions & Exclusions Policy. It was noted that the flowchart in this document is procedural. DECISION: Approved.</p> <p>e. AI Policy. This is a new policy (based on a model Policy) and has been carefully put together by staff who have had training in the use of AI. Governors were informed that SLT are considering giving staff an AI package to use from September 2025. Governor Comment: The University of Reading has an AI centre which looks at the ethics, law, technology and connection aspects of the use of AI. They have information that might help a school when they look at the T&C’s of an AI service provider. DECISION: Approved.</p>
10.	<p>Safeguarding Audits for approval.</p> <p>Governors were informed that these audits are done by the schools and sent to the LA. There were no issues found in either school. DECISION: Governors approved both Safeguarding Audits.</p>
11.	<p>Verbal update of staff and parent governor recruitment.</p> <p>The IOG allows for 2 parent governors and 1 staff governor on the ERF GB. Letters were sent out to both parent bodies and to all staff over the federation seeking nominations for these posts. There were only two applicants for the parent governor posts so both candidates were appointed unopposed and both were able to attend this meeting, despite the tight timeframe involved.</p> <p>There were two applications for the one staff governor post, so an election will be held amongst all staff over the federation. The closing date for this election is Friday 7th February.</p>

12.	Meeting schedule addition: Governor Day in school. Proposed dates in March for a governor's day in school had been circulated and there was some discussion over the date to hold this event. It was decided that the event will be held on Tuesday 18 th March 2025. A programme for the day will be put together and circulated nearer the time, but the intention is to spend the morning in one school and the afternoon in the other so that all governors get a chance to learn about the two schools in person and talk to staff and children.
13.	Roles and Responsibilities. There was further discussion to fill the remaining Roles and Responsibilities posts by governors including link governors for subjects and non-statutory roles. ACTION: Clerk to update this chart and circulate it for governors.
14.	Verbal update on Disability Discrimination Case. A letter to the parents involved in this case has been written and is with the RBC legal department for approval. The LA has been approached to plan and deliver to the whole GB suitable bespoke training. It was noted that the legal representative working on behalf of the school could also deliver training which would be free of charge if that was of interest to the GB. An additional FGB meeting would be called to which the parents would be invited.
15.	Governor Training. There is a regular programme of training events offered by Governor Services, including training for new governors and specialist training such as Panels and Appeals. "Buddies" would be asked to support our new governors as they settle into their roles.
16.	Verbal Update on Leadership roles (Interim Posts). It was noted by the GB that many of the posts that work across the federation are interim roles, which now need to be made permanent as soon as possible. RBC HR are assisting with this. There was a further confidential staffing issue that was raised and discussed under Part 2 Confidential minutes.
17.	Issues for Parents/Confidentiality. There were no issues to communicate to parents& carers at the moment and one item discussed was recorded under Part 2 confidential minutes.
18.	Any Other Business. No AOB items were raised.
19.	Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 11th February 4pm (finance focus).

Meeting closed: 17.35pm

Actions:

Action:	Responsibility:	Timescale:
Minutes from 7 th January to be signed by the CoG in Govhub asap	DD	ASAP
Governors yet to complete declaration and confirmation in Govhub to be chased by the Clerk.	Clerk	ASAP

Clerk to circulate updated link roles & Responsibilities chart with those appointments made at this meeting.	Clerk	ASAP
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Attendance at FGB meetings Jan-July 25 (2 meetings to date)

Dave Dymond	2 of 2 meetings
Robert Howell	2 of 2 meetings
Laura Kerr	2 of 2 meetings
Adedayo Benson	1 of 2 meetings
Vincent Onuchi	2 of 2 meetings
David Colwill	1 of 2 meetings
Zoe Watling	1 of 2 meetings
Chris Robinson	2 of 2 meetings
Katherine Fowler	2 of 2 meetings
Francis Jakeman	2 of 2 meetings
Aaron Hatherley	2 of 2 meetings
Kris Jones	1 of 2 meetings
Jonathan Dewsbury	0 of 2 meetings
Andrew Burrell	1 of 1 possible meeting
Stephanie Mitchell	1 of 1 possible meeting