Diptford School – Minutes of School Committee meeting, 18 October 2018 (adopted 4 December 2018)

Present: Roger Knight (chair), Lizzie Lethbridge (Head), Natalie Siddons (alternate to Lizzie Lethbridge), Claire Moorman, Helen Price, Rev’d David Sayle.

1. Apologies were received from Louise Lethbridge and Jo Palmer, both of whom had provided feedback and questions from relevant parent groups in advance, and Laura Bell.

2. Roger welcomed David, Natalie, Helen and, in her absence, Jo to their first meeting. Helen has represented the school on the Village Hall Committee for some time and it was considered that it would be beneficial to both Helen and the Committee for her to join meetings, especially as she lives in the village and the Committee currently is missing a community representative.

3. Roger noted that the role of the Committee is to act as a bridge between the School’s management and its various stakeholders, including the parents, enhancing communication and facilitating feedback. Its remit does not cover matters relating to individual pupils, which should in the first instance be raised with the relevant class teacher or with the Head.

4. The minutes of the previous meeting of 12 June were approved. Matters arising were covered by the agenda of the current meeting.

Head of School Report

5. Lizzie’s Head of School report is attached at the end of these minutes. A number of points were discussed at some length (covering many of the points raised by parents):

a) Lizzie believes that the new school year has started positively, with the new team working well. The Trust is very supportive of the School and the direction it is taking.

b) Current pupil numbers are disappointing. A number of parents have, for perfectly valid individual reasons, decided to move their children elsewhere. A strong theme has been that of friendships, especially affecting the current year 4. A review will be undertaken to see if this has affected children joining the school other than in Reception disproportionately, as there is a view that the children who have come through the Pre-school into Reception have formed strong friendships which others have found difficult to replicate.

Friendship groups are recognised as being key, and the staff have been focussing on a number of initiatives, including ‘Circle of Friends’, ‘Thrive’ training (to understand better a child’s behaviours and what they signal about his or her emotional state and development) and support from the Academy’s inclusion hub. The intention is that there will be an area where any child can go and find company. It is one of the School’s strengths that all staff know all of the pupils and can watch out for them.

Attention is focussed on raising pupil numbers.

c) The SATS results (summarised in Lizzie’s report) are viewed as pleasing. It has to be noted that, with low pupil numbers, fluctuations from year to year must be expected.

d) The wrap-around care provision is viewed as important in attracting new families, although initial numbers are low. The after school offerings will be broadened.

e) Safeguarding and security – the School is attempting to maintain a reasonable balance between the impact of new regulations, requiring extra care over the information held, teachers’ time, and maintaining the former openness of the School. The intention is not complete ‘close-down’.

f) Miss Setter is taking the lead on Collective Worship and with preparation for next year’s SIAMS inspection, working with Harbertonford and Landscove schools (the latter of which underwent successfully an inspection earlier in 2018). Whilst the Christian base cannot be diluted, attention is paid to multi-faith teaching.

g) It is acknowledged that the school, more particularly the grounds, are not looking at their best, despite the recent FODS-led clear-up, which is a concern with the Open Day to be held in mid-November. Preliminary plans, developed with the children, have been prepared. It was suggested that these be finalised and displayed in the school so that visitors, including prospective parents, are aware of them. It was noted that the father of one of the Reception children is a landscaper who may be able to provide some guidance, and Natalie will follow this up.

The compost toilet, the yurt and Paddington’s Patch require some attention, and assistance from suitably informed parents would be welcome, although it was recognised that the School must take the lead.

School Governance Arrangements

6. Lizzie explained that, within the Trust, the Governing Body has been reviewed and are now Local Boards with a focus on school improvement. The three Local Boards continue as before with one each for the Totnes Schools (being Diptford, Harbertonford, Landscove and Stoke Gabriel), Newton and Teign, and Woodleigh. Unlike previously there is no specific requirement for parent governors. Lizzie is a governor and Diptford is additionally represented by Janet Watts. If parents have concerns which cannot be resolved at school level, their point of escalation is the governors, to be contacted via the Trust clerk. Lizzie believes that the Trust CEO, will be updating parents on the governance arrangements in her upcoming newsletter.

Previously two governors, including a parent governor, were also members of the School Committee and there was discussion as to how the Committee might keep in touch with relevant developments now.

The Church and the School

7. Revd Sayle welcomed the opportunity to join the Committee and hoped to become better informed about the School. He said that he would be happy to try to help in whatever way he could. In relation to SIAMS, he considered that some of the activities could usefully be put more clearly into context, eg ‘why are we here?’ at start of a service. He said that he had some ideas as to how the School might mark Remembrance 100, which he will discuss with Lizzie.

FODS Update

8. On behalf of Laura, Roger reported on FODS activities. FODS has funded the provision of three interactive whiteboards and, because of a generous private grant, will be able to fund a ’wish-list’ of items to complete the new Little Dippers learning space. Available funds are now tight and the importance of the 100 Club lottery as a regular source of funds is amplified. A Diptford Arms evening is planned for November and then there will be the usual Christmas activities. FODS would welcome the involvement of more parents, not just financially, eg as members of the 100 Club, but also through assistance with specific activities.

Parish Hall Update

9. Helen reported on the most recent Parish Hall Committee meeting. The School is a major user of the Hall’s facilities. There remains uncertainty concerning a deep clean of the kitchens, and a meeting between Lizzie, Matt Matthews from the Trust, and the Chair and Treasurer of the Hall Committee to discuss both this and the renewal of the School’s agreement is planned for late November. Concern about apparent excessive electricity consumption appears to have been addressed. Regular use of the Hall by other groups means that the Hall’s car-park cannot be part of a solution to the school’s parking problem at drop-off and pick-up times.

Engaging the Community

10. It remains an objective for the School to develop a dedicated craft area which can also be used as a community space to which the wider Diptford Community will be invited (within the constraints of safeguarding considerations) to spend time with the children and share experiences and skills. FODS has grant funds available to support this initiative, and the Committee discussed briefly ways of taking it forward. Lizzie will bring more considered plans to the next meeting, by which time we hope to have a Community representative on the Committee.

Parent representative feedback

11. There was positive feedback concerning the teaching staff at all levels, and re Saints South West.

A number of matters raised by class representatives had been addressed by Lizzie in her report and already discussed. It was decided that some other matters should more properly be discussed by the parents concerned with the appropriate teacher in the first instance and then raised directly with Lizzie if not resolved (although the Committee remains available to assist if matters then remain unresolved).

In the limited time left available, other matters discussed were:

a) The timing of the Christmas concert. It was explained that the proposed morning timing does not suit a number of families and that the usual evening occasion is one of only a few events which many parents can attend. It was agreed that it would be good if an alternative evening time could be found. The Revd Sayle cautioned that this might be difficult now as he has seven parishes and three schools to satisfy but he and Lizzie will review the position. [Post meeting note – the concert has been rescheduled for the early evening of Wednesday 12 December.]

b) This led to a short discussion of Diptford School ‘traditions’, some of which may have been overlooked with the flurry of changes in the School over the past couple of years. Claire undertook to meet separately with Lizzie and review these.

c) It was suggested that the children put together a small ‘eco group’ to review how the School might reduce its waste. It was considered that this could be both a good promotional thing and empowering for the children if they see that a number of small things can collectively make a difference. This will be considered further.

Some other matters were not discussed during the meeting because of time constraints but were discussed subsequently by Roger with Lizzie:

d) The early closing on the last day of term is an Academy-wide decision. If it causes any individual family difficulty they should discuss with Lizzie direct.

e) It is acknowledged that the locked playground gate at pick-up time can be unwelcoming but there are strong safeguarding and security issues particularly when considering also the driving and car parking issues. However, further consideration will be given to alternatives.

f) Possible solutions to the parking and traffic congestion problems are being reviewed. It is hoped that the situation might be improved if use of the early drop-off and the after-school clubs picks up, although it is recognised that a more fundamental solution is desirable.

Next Meeting

It is intended that the Committee’s next meeting will be held during the last week of November or the first week of December.

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**School Committee Meeting – 17.10.18**

**Head teacher report – Lizzie Lethbridge**

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| **Pupil Numbers per year group** | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Autumn Term 2018 | | Nursery | 9 | | Reception | 8 | | Year 1 | 10 | | Year 2 | 13 | | Year 3 | 8 | | Year 4 | 2 | | Year 5 | 9 | | Year 6 | 11 | | Total: | 61+8 = 69 |   We are in a position where we are focusing on raising numbers.  Let’s get the word out about how amazing this school is! |
| **Staffing Update** | We have had a very successful start to the year. The new team is working well together and the picture across school is very positive. |
| **Results** | Results this year:  KS1:  Reading 100%  Writing 78%  Maths 89%  KS2:  Reading 100%  SPAG 75%  Writing 75%  Maths 83% |
| **Saints South West** | M4. Tanner is a fantastic asset and a great replacement for Taylor.  Tri-golf has been the focus, children have loved it! There are more events being held and after-school clubs are developing to ensure the sport focus. |
| **Wrap around care** | New Breakfast club and Early Bird drop off is now being offered.  After school clubs are 4 days a week, with 3 days a week until 5.30. |
| **Events, trips, visits** | * Open the book assemblies and Roots and Fruits Y5/6 * KEVICC – football, tag rugby, basketball league, cycling, athletics… * SSE – rugby festival at Newton Abbot rugby pitch. * 3/4 trip to Dartmoor * Y6 Junior Life Skills |
| **Mental Health and Fitness** | Mrs Siddons is our Mental Health Champion. We are working together and with our Inclusion Hub to ensure that Mental Health is high on our agenda. There will be a focus in school and on the newsletter. |
| **Christian Ethos update** | SIAMS are due next year.  Our next step as a staff is to review our vision and mission statement, based on who we are as a school and community. This is the foundation of the new Self-Evaluation process.  CW is fortnightly in the church with David Sayle.  GS is taking the lead on CW and will form part of the MAT Hub for RE and SIAMS, supported by Landscove |
| **Road and parking** | LL is to contact the diocese re: land.  Breakfast and Early Bird Club may ease the situation – we will assess the impact. |
| **Clear up day** | Thank you to the parents who helped on our clear up day (and during the school day), in the rain!  The children are writing letters to local business (and B&Q!) to develop the spaces outside of their classrooms. |
| **GDPR and safeguarding.** | New regulations. Extra care and sensitivity is being taken over the information we hold, what we do with it and who can access this. This has meant that we need to manage the flow of parents in and around school, particularly during the morning when the office may be unattended and teachers may be having confidential conversations. |
| **Yurt** | The yurt has been damaged in the bad weather. Does anyone know who has previously maintained this? The compost toilet also. |