Diptford School – Minutes of School Ethos Committee meeting, 4 May 2021 (Adopted 12 July 2021)

Present: Roger Knight (chair), Jodie Churchward, Rebecca Filtness, Lucy Carrol, David Sayle

1. Apologies were received from Lizzie Lethbridge, Janet Watts and Helen Price; Rachel Botell has advised that she is unlikely to be able to attend meetings for the foreseeable future because of work pressures and believes she should stand down.

Previous minutes

**2.** The draft minutes of the previous meeting of 15 March 2021 were reviewed and adopted.

Matters arising

a) Terms of reference

3. Subsequent to the meeting, Rev David put forward for consideration, by email, a simpler formulation, based on the terms of reference adopted at Harbertonford School, “to support and provide feedback to the Academy Head in all aspects of school life to help achieve the School’s values and mission.” The members present welcomed this suggestion as better representing their views of the broader role of the Committee and Roger will rework the document provided earlier by Sharon Lord, the Link Academy Trust’s SIAMS lead, to incorporate Rev David’s suggestion for consideration at the committee’s next meeting.

b) SIAMS intention re Holy Communion and the Eucharist

4. Roger had contacted Ed Pawson of the Diocese who had confirmed that staff and pupils should be aware of the central importance of the Eucharist/Communion to Christian worship, but that the practice of Eucharist will be appropriate only in certain settings.

c) Parental feedback on collective worship

5. Roger had circulated questions to parents on their experiences of CW prior to this meeting – see feedback below.

Discussion of the ethos programme

6. Jodie had provided copies of the SEF as it stands prior to the meeting and there was some discussion of this. Jodie noted that the document is continually being revisited, and that what is said can be backed up by evidence, such as diaries and logs. Points to be developed include what does the school get from Link and points from the previous SIAMS inspection. In response to the question as to how this committee can assist, Jodie asked for any overall comments on the document and suggested that members email her individually. It was suggested that a brief summary might be useful to bring out key points, and consideration will be given to this.

6. Lucy asked how the school’s values might be ‘brought to life’. Jodie explained the PEG (Pupil Ethos Group) sessions run by Mrs Gilbey, the CW lead. She suggested that a PEG representative might join a future meeting of this committee.

7. Jodie added that it is the plan that following the full lifting of Covid restrictions planned for 21 June, pupils will get out and about within the community. She has been discussing possible acts of random kindness (ARKs) that the school can bring into the village.

8. Jodie said that she hopes that this committee can observe the children and work with them to see the school’s vision and values in action.

9. Rev David reminded the meeting of our intended focus on Respect and Dignity and that this should be considered in the context of Church schools’ Christian vision. How does this vision have an impact on the approach to respect and dignity? Are we valuing all children regardless of religion? Is this addressed in CW?

10. Respect is one of the school’s key values. Jodie referred to anti-bullying and LGBT messages that are being given, and attempts to inform the children about life outside Diptford, to promote difference and diversity There was some discussion of how the children learn about diversity. There is little diversity within the school itself. Jodie would like to ‘twin’ the school in some way with another school with a different make-up, perhaps even an overseas school. She noted that there are schools within Link that exhibit diverse cultures and are not CoE schools, and considered that, less ambitiously, some interaction might be possible. Additionally the PHSE curriculum is moving towards the relationship and sex education phase.

Head of School Report

11. Jodie has been busy settling into her new role and had been spending a lot of her time with children across the whole school. She explained that the return to school continued to go well and she outlined the various activities planned for the different year groups after half term. There is an emphasis on outdoor activities and fun. Jodie noted that there has been healthy interest in pre-school places.

9. Jodie anticipates that we should expect an early SIAMS inspection for Diptford after the summer break.

Parental feedback and questions

10. Questions had been raised about

a) The possibility of extending after-school hours to 5.30pm on more days of the week: Jodie is aware of the desire from some parents and explained the after-school provision is entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the teaching staff and that, with playground duties at lunchtime and the breaks and early starts, there is no capacity for longer hours. It is essentially a money thing. Subject to funding, and safeguarding considerations (which would exclude parent-led initiatives on the school premises) other activities such as community gardening and lego clubs might be possible, but not now unfortunately. The school has come a long way in terms of breakfast and after-school provision already in the past couple of years.

b) Are/could pupils be involved in the reviews with parents: Jodie replied that this is optional.

c) A music curriculum: Piano and guitar lessons can still be arranged – details from the office. Recorder lessons remain suspended.

d) Use of new playground equipment – is/should there be a rota? Are older children monopolising use? Jodie explained that initially (for the first two weeks) there had been a rota in operation because everybody had been so keen to use the equipment. Now however there is no rota but because KS1 and KS2 groups have breaks at different times there should be no issues. The initial enthusiasm has diminished to manageable demand.

11. Only Becca had received feedback in response to the questions to parents about CW (from two Reception parents).Whilst they questioned the timing of the CW sessions (in the afternoon when the younger children are tired). The content was considered good and appropriate and the children had been engaged. They considered there might be opportunities to develop the sessions into something broader. Roger echoed these comments from his own observations during the lockdown periods. Becca questioned whether ‘collective worship’ is the correct billing for these sessions for the children and suggested ‘assembly’ might be better. Jodie noted that ‘assembly’ is reserved for the Friday afternoon end of week sessions when there are broader messages and, eg, awards.

12. Lucy asked how we provide feedback to parents who provide questions. Usually it is for the appropriate rep to go back to the parent but often the Head will cover relevant points in the newsletter. In addition these minutes are posted on the School’s website.

Community matters and FODS news

13. No significant maters were discussed, further to Jodie’s earlier comments about

Getting the school more involved in the community.