Diptford School – Minutes of School Committee meeting, 15 March 2021 (adopted 4 May 2021)

Present: Roger Knight (chair), Lizzie Lethbridge, Jodie Churchward, Rebecca Filtness, Lucy Carrol, Janet Watts, Helen Price, David Sayle

1. Apologies were received from Rachel Botell. Laura Bell and Jo Palmer have stood down from the committee.

2. Roger introduced Sharon Lord, Link’s lead in the RE/Ethos field, who attended the meeting.

3. Roger expressed huge thanks to Lizzie, Jodie and all of their staff for the efforts made over the past several months in such difficult circumstances, both for the children and for those families requiring wider support.

Previous minutes

**4.** The draft minutes of the previous meeting of 5 March 2020 were reviewed and adopted. The intervening period had been dominated by Covid considerations and Lizzie and Roger had invited Sharon to assist in a ‘re-boot’.

Matters arising - terms of reference and committee membership

5. The meeting reviewed briefly the draft revised terms of reference put forward by Sharon as a model for all relevant Link schools and the suggested format for meetings with the inclusion of a different monitoring focus for each meeting (copy attached), in line with SIAMS expectations. Although they reflect the direction in which the committee has been moving, the suggested terms of reference were not agreed for adoption as some members were nervous as to their detail and formality and it was considered that further discussion was necessary.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Rev David put forward for consideration 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.”]

6. Lizzie expressed her wish that the current members remain in place, certainly for the remainder of the school year and probably through to a SIAMS inspection (see below).

7. Janet asked about Lizzie’s continued involvement with the school’s ethos programme in the light of her recently announced Trust-wide increased responsibilities and Jodie’s new role as acting Head. Lizzie responded that she will be continuing to keep a watching brief on Diptford although Jodie will assume day to day responsibility whilst Lizzie assists another school.

Discussion of the Ethos Programme

8. Earlier in the month, Jodie and Roger had attended a training session presented by the Diocese concerning SIAMS and the SIAMS evaluation schedule. Roger had circulated the training materials prior to this meeting as a basis for discussing the school’s readiness for evaluation, against the background that an inspection is due and had been expected to take place over the Covid lockdown period.

9. Sharon considered it unlikely that a SIAMS inspection programme would start during the Summer term and in any case there would be a backlog of scheduled but cancelled inspections. Nonetheless we should expect an early inspection for Diptford.

10. A self-evaluation based upon the seven strands of the SIAMS framework can be helpful in preparing for the expected inspection. Lizzie noted that Jodie and the staff have been working on a self-evaluation (‘the SEF’), and that Sharon has been assisting, by casting an expert eye over the programme and the self-evaluation. The school’s plan and its SEF should be action led, not lengthy, and deal with action and impact. A short summary (one or two pages) would be helpful, perhaps explaining the School’s Christian ethos and how it is embedded in the life of the school. Sharon explained how monitoring, including the activity of this committee, evidenced through its minutes and reported to the local governing board, is important. She has included with the draft terms of reference a suggested focus and timetable for monitoring by meeting.

12. Lizzie reported that although school life had been disrupted for nearly twelve months, she has continued to liaise with the Diocese, including addressing questions, and thinking has continued. She believes that the School is in a good place with its programme but nonetheless still wonders whether the school needs to work on its Vision (“Let your light shine”) and perhaps make it more bespoke. In discussing the Vision, Sharon referred to the importance of its underpinning by the Church of England strands – Dignity, Community, Character Development (through courageous advocacy), Wisdom). It was asked whether the School might seek parental feedback (as previously with the Values development) and get the Pupil Ethos Group involved (possibly with assistance of this committee).

13. The meeting considered the Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship (CW) strands in more detail.

14. It was noted that parents have perhaps seen more of CW during the lockdown whilst supporting their children through home schooling and blended learning. It might therefore be timely to seek feedback from parents, particularly those with younger children. Sharon has a document including suggested questions to put to parents to seek views on the effectiveness of CW, which she will share with Roger. She noted that SIAMS will expect to speak with parents, as well as with staff, children and governors and will listen to what each group has to say.

15. Helen asked about how to measure the outcomes (generally, not specifically CW) – what is measured and how objectively? Sharon referred to the indicators of excellence (‘better than good’) summarised on slide 56 of the Diocese training presentation.

16. Lucy asked if there is anything that the committee might be able to do to assists Rev David around the School in and around Easter. Jodie noted that the RE learning is already building up to Easter and that the School will be using material from Buckfast Abbey (planned visits having been cancelled)

17. The committee discussed how to broaden out the RE and CW experiences to other faiths and other church leaders. Sharon wondered if somebody at the Abbey might be able to assist, perhaps coming to speak as a Roman Catholic. Rev David questioned whether it has to be leaders of other communities. He noted that there are no Roman Catholic or Methodist places of worship within his area but there are members of those faiths whom he knows and could ask to help. Assessing the effectiveness of this but be answering the questions “how do I respond to other faiths?” and “how do different faith communities relate to each other?” Helen noted that the SIAMS “Community and living well together” strand seemed to offer considerable scope. Discussing how to take this forward, Sharon suggested that Jodie take advice, and seek contacts, from Ed Pawson (who had led the Diocese training).

18. The committee discussed the inclusivity of CW, with the history of some children having been withdrawn. Rev David emphasised the importance of being inclusive in delivery – eg by explaining that the session is going to finish with a prayer and inviting participation rather than assuming it. Lizzie noted that CW within the School is now fully inclusive in that all children are attending including some whose parents had previously withdrawn them. This has been achieved primarily by engaging with those parents.

19. In relation to CW, Rev David referred to slide 60 of the SIAMS training and asked whether it is SIAMS intention that children should be attending Holy Communion rather than learning about the Eucharist. Roger agreed to clarify this with Ed Pawson.

[Ed Pawson 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 may be appropriate only in certain settings.]

Head of School Report

20. The School having only just resumed normal operation there was no formal report. As noted earlier and as advised to parents, Lizzie is increasing her Trust-wide involvement and Jodie is assuming the acting headship of the School.

Parental feedback

21. There was no formal feedback from parent representatives for this meeting. Anecdotally though, parents had been complimentary of the School’s efforts during Covid and pleased to see the new playground equipment.

Community matters

22. Helen reported that applications for assistance with solar panels had been suspended, with applications expected to be invited again in the Autumn. New or updated quotes will be required.

23. Roger reminded Jodie of the Common Flora initiative on the outskirts of the village which Geoffrey Hyde had brought to his attention. He noted that Mr Hyde’s ideas concerning School and FODS involvement in a Village tidy-up might better be taken forward by the sustainability group (led by some School parents).

Roger Knight

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**Suggested revised terms of reference**

**Diptford C of E Primary - School Ethos Group**

**Terms of Reference**

*At Diptford we strive for excellence and enjoyment in learning through aspiration and collaboration. With kind hearts and a community focus, we grow together with a deep respect for each other and thankfulness for our beautiful surroundings.*

*Our small school offers big opportunities that support our pupils to flourish and stand out with courage and conviction, finding joy and fulfilment in the exciting and enriching wider curriculum we offer.*

*Let your light shine!*

***Matthew 5:14-16***

The group supports the Christian distinctiveness of the school, helping to maintain this Christian ethos and identify ways in which we can further develop in sympathy with our Christian character.

**Diptford School Ethos Group aims to:**

**Learn from, Support and Challenge** the school to enable all children to flourish in accordance with our Vision Statement, underpinned by the four basic elements of Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity.

**Learn from, Support and Challenge** the school to nurture the spiritual dimension of children and staff through all aspects of the curriculum.

**Learn from, Support and Challenge** the school when reviewing RE and collective worship policies, practice and outcomes, to ensure these are of high quality and make a major contribution to the school’s Christian ethos.

**Support** the work of the school and be informed about current provision, performance and school improvement plans through Academy Head reports.

**Act as a local voice** and represent the parent body. We will offer a forum for debate and discussion on matters relevant to the future development of the school. In doing so we will strengthen the engagement with the parent and local community.

We will lobby the full governing body, as required.

**Membership:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Current Person** | **Appointment and length of appointment** |
| Academy Head |  | When in post |
| Foundation Governor appointed to the Local Governing Board or Church representative |  | When in post |
| Representative Governor from the Totnes Local Board |  | When in post |
| Staff representative responsible for RE/Collective Worship |  | Elected by all staff for a term of 1 year |
| At least 1 Parent representative\*, with the aim of 1 Class Parent representative from each of the 4 classes |  | Elected by other parents in the relevant class for a term of 1 year. |
| Chair of PTFA |  | When in post |
| Community representative |  | Appointed by the Head / Executive Headteacher for a term of 1 year |

\*The Class Parent Representative must have a child in the class they are elected to represent.

\*There is no limit on the number of terms a member of the School Committee may be re-appointed, re-elected or co-opted for.

As appropriate, the Group may invite Associate Members to join meetings where the agenda is relevant to their interests eg subject coordinators. The group will also consider pupil voice through the School Council/Pupil Ethos Group.

**Meetings:**

Our School Ethos Group meets half-termly.

* Meetings will not be open to the public but minutes will be available.
* The Group Chair should be appointed at the beginning of each school year.
* In the absence of the Chair, the Group shall choose an acting Chair for that meeting from among their number.
* Minutes of the meeting will be taken and draft minutes of each meeting will be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting.
* Once approved, meeting minutes will be available on the school website.

The SEG will have a key communication role to perform in ensuring that information is shared to the governing body, parent community, the church and other interested parties and vice versa.

The governor/chair will provide a report of the meeting and any recommendations to the Full Governing Body.

**SEG school visits**

Personal observations made on school visits are a major source of information and the school welcomes members of the SEG into school for this purpose. Guidelines on and checklists for such visits should be followed.

**SEG Monitoring Focus Across the Year:**

A system of monitoring takes place across each academic year. This is in line with SIAMS expectations. SEG members are encouraged to learn from school, support and question developments in our Christian character, RE and collective worship. The following schedule shows the proposed focus for each ½ termly meeting.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AUTUMN TERM 1** | **AUTUMN TERM 2** | **SPRING TERM 1** | **SPRING TERM 2** | **SUMMER TERM 1** | **SUMMER TERM 2** |
| **Monitored across all meetings: Our School Vision:**  How is the vision lived out in the 6 areas below? (evidence?)  How does the leadership of the school promote our vision?  Review quality of CPD /induction for new staff. | | | | | |
| **WISDOM KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**  (meeting academic and spiritual needs of learners) | **THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP** | **COMMUNITY AND LIVING WELL TOGETHER**  (relationships, behaviour and mental health) | **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RE** | **DIGNITY AND RESPECT**  (valuing all) | **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: HOPE, COURAGEOUS ADVOCACY & ASPIRATION.** (moral development and social action) |
| **What is our school’s provision in this area? How does it make a difference?**  **What is the impact on the pupils? How do we know it’s working?** | | | | | |

**Reviews**

The terms of reference and membership of SEG will be reviewed annually each year at its first meeting. Any recommendations from the governing body will be implemented.

**June 2020**