



PARENT FORUM MEETING NOTES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30th JANUARY 2019 AT 18.30 IN THE LECTURE THEATRE

PRIORY GOVERNORS PRESENT: David Conway (DC), Graham Arr-Jones (GAJ), Joanna Loader (JL), John Griffiths (JG), Ken Caplan (KAC), Liz Webb (LW), Sarah Hinks (SHI), Sarah Roberts (SR), Tony Smith (TS)

APOLOGIES: Peter Colebourn, Susan Carpenter, Gaydree Wrigley, Michael Bull, Radha Stuart

PARENTS: 23

ALSO PRESENT: Emma Brinkhurst (Clerk)

Karen Clinton (KC) - Acting Headteacher

Julian Ashworth (JA) - Deputy Headteacher

SR thanked parents for coming to Parent Forum on what is expected to be the coldest night of the year so far. SR introduced herself as Chair of the Governors.

SR asked if we could go around the room and if parents/Governors could say their name and what year(s) their child(ren) are in at Priory:

SR – Parent Governor and had three children that have come to Priory one child just left at the summer.

GAJ – Foundation/Trust Governor had sons that have come through Priory - one now a teacher himself.

KAC – Local Authority Governor and children have passed through Priory.

One parent had a child in Year 8 and child in Year 6 at Western Road.

DC – Co-opted Governor and has a child in Year 11.

JL – new Parent Governor and has a child in Year 9.

One parent is a teacher locally and has a child in Year 8.

LW – new Parent Governor and has children in Year 8 and 11.

One parent had a child in Year 11.

One parent had children in Year 7, 9 and 11 – first time attending Parents Forum.

One parent had a child in Year 7.

One parent has two nephews and a child at Western Road.

One parent has a child Year 9 and 10.

One parent had a child in Year 8.



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One parent had child in Year 7 and 11.

One parent had a child in Year 7 and 10.

One parent had a child in Year 3 and Year 6.

One parent had a child in Year 9 and another child coming next year.

One parent had a child in Year 7 and Year 5 who will be coming here.

One parent had a child in Year 7.

JA – Deputy Headteacher

TS – Executive Headteacher

KC – Head of school and Teaching School.

SHI – Co-opted Governor and had three children through the school.

One parent had a child in Year 8.

One parent had a child in Year 8.

One parent had a child in Year 8.

One parent had a child in Year 9 and one child that has left.

TS provided the parents with an update following his letter to parents of 23rd January about a possible partnership between many of the Lewes schools.

The Governors of all schools have been working effectively together to look at Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and other models. Some blunt facts are:

1. There is less funding from the Local Authority (LA) and the LA are driving school to school support models.
2. The LA are reducing the number of other services which will affect the most vulnerable significantly but at present we don't know the detail of the core offer. It goes to cabinet on the 22nd and full cabinet on 5th February – then we should know what version of the paper will be adopted. But it was felt the financial situation would not be changing.
3. The LA are encouraging schools to form some sort of partnership – no school can stand alone. Schools can't rely on the LA so we have been exploring formal partnership options. We are in a loose partnership as part of the Lewes Co-operative Learning Partnership (LCLP). We are looking to find a way to provide services as a group. The MAT working group has been dis-banded we should know



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more on the 5th February and would like to engage more openly with the community. A firm has offered to run stakeholder workshops (parents from all schools' /union reps/Governors) at no cost – to be viable the firm has said this would need to be a total of 25 people.

The Headteachers/staff are concerned about all children across all schools. The LA and Diocese have closed Pells and Rodmell – the LCLP was looked at to provide support for Pells to properly educate the remaining children when it was closing. The LCLP was set up about four years ago – with equal respect for individual identities of each school - a loose federation. Western Road and Priory are the two Foundation schools (assets held by LCLP) with Diocese Schools as members (they are already in the Diocese Foundation) – the underlying morale principle was for the best education for all across all schools and mutual support. We are at a significant point where we will need to develop a structure to enable us to deliver greater school to school support.

Q Has the LCLP done any partnership procurement?

No this has not been possible due to the small sums contributed by schools.

The work undertaken researching MATs has been very helpful. It was mentioned that the LA has commenced the support for partnerships, and specifically MATs, over three years ago with a major conference and a roadshow. It is important knowledge that Governors would not be fulfilling one of their core responsibilities (strategic direction) if they did not look at partnerships.

A crucial aspect will be the outcome of the Full Council Meeting on 5th February. Once the LA direction is more concrete schools will then be engaging with the community and exploring a range of options. Schools will also be subject to the new national funding (NFF) which will result in changes as some will be major beneficiaries and others less so! NFF will have a greater proportion of funding determined by pupil numbers so there could be a real risk for rural village primaries.

Parents felt there was a lot of draw backs to MATs – the survey from the review board of East Sussex was mentioned 4.1 - 4.3 outlines a number of perceived benefits but has only one section highlighting the challenges of MATs so seems very unbalanced. It was also mentioned that the government has gone very quiet since 2016 on the significant draw backs of MATS. It was mentioned that many parents are concerned about schools being run as academies and this has raised the level of interest in the issues faced by our schools.

It was felt by Priory the proposed stakeholder workshops will hopefully provide ideas. TS and two Priory governors will be meeting with a member of the Schools Cooperative Society on 7th February to explore more about how to develop LCLP as a more effective co-op partnership.

There still remains a lot of potential to develop common systems such as schools using the same IT systems and sharing data more effectively. Shared staffing is another possibility but this would require a sustainable solution which does not leave the 'risk' with one school. Caretakers could be a pooled resource



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if we became a partnership as other schools have sometimes not been able to recruit or needed support to cover periods of absence.

A parent mentioned the Camden Learning Partnership - the Camden model has been used when creating the East Sussex Secondary School Improvement Board. There is potential to look at models such as these for LCLP. We already have some strengths to help develop our school to school support such as the Teaching School Alliance; Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) have been designated and are already working with a number of schools.

Some parents observed that the Priory Parents Forum is not as well supported as it could be and it was noted Parent Voice Group has collapsed.

It was suggested parents could join Friends of Priory and help with fundraising also supporting students with homework. Parents suggested helping with after school clubs (safeguarding and DBS were raised.)

A parent mentioned there are conversations happening at Wallands with the Chair of Governors, some staff and parents – could this be done at Priory. There were some concerns that the separate strands would then all need to come together to share information.

It was remarked teachers are under huge pressures and an increasing number of teachers are leaving the profession in 2-5 years - there is a retention crisis. Teaching school is retaining some teachers - to date we have done a good job recruiting good staff. For one vacancy five people were expected to attend interview and only one attended. The government need to acknowledge that teachers are not paid enough when compared to their graduate colleagues in other professions. Retention can be challenge in this area due to high cost of living and for some this becomes acute when they have a family and expenditure increases!

Parents mentioned about if they could volunteer for the school as they had not noticed any information about this. One parent said she was already volunteering in the Languages area one day per week and said it was an easy process she just contacted the school herself (safeguarding/DBS checks have to be carried out.) It was mentioned that in some cases a volunteer has left after about a fortnight and it is a lot of work for the school to set up a person as a volunteer only for them to then leave.

Parents can help with supporting careers education - a possibility is creating a café and other events and local businesses could get involved and self-employed/employed members of the community to engage with the students for example how they started their careers. SHI had a form with her that parents could sign if they wanted to be on the list and if available could help at events. SHI would like more parents to get involved with careers.

Parents said there is a lot of will in the town but they felt communication from Priory has been less effective than it could be. It was mentioned that the school lacks capacity to lead the communications.



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The school's Parent Voice Group previously came to the school with an idea of a homework online system which the school IT Manager researched and agreed on 'Show My Homework' as a solution. Some of the parents suggested perhaps it is time for a Parent Voice Group 2.0!

A parent asked if more people are needed in the classroom – it was explained it is not as simple as increasing numbers of adults what we really strive for is quality first teaching.

Parents could help the school with supporting homework, revision, attendance and supporting policies.

TS thanked parents for their support with the #FlatCashEd campaign. TS demonstrated with other Headteachers at Westminster on a Friday about the funding crisis – but this not a good use of Headteachers' time but it was felt an important action to raise awareness about the funding crisis. When time is taken out of school to attend such events it increases workload as there is much to catch up on when back in school. Parents can still support the campaign by contacting their local MP.

The Hamsey/Plumpton federation was mentioned – three schools in a federation with one governing body across the schools but they could be vulnerable to take over if there were issues.

A crucial date for us will be the 5th February when the Full Council meet; after the meeting about which paper - then next steps could be agreed by all the governing bodies then maybe stakeholder group workshops could explore our options.

Parents wondered why their children do not use their lockers (some are in classrooms due to lack of space) – it was felt maybe in some cases it is laziness and some felt they were not big enough.

Q A parent asked about assessments/data collection?

This is part of the new Ofsted framework – collecting data more than three times per year (we currently do 4) being felt as excessive and adding to pressures on teachers.

Meeting ended 19:45

Next Parent Forum: Wednesday 19th June 2019 at 18:00