

**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting of the Wimbledon Primary Federation
5th July 2022 at 7pm**

Present

CHAIR: Eric De Regnaucourt, (EdR)
Executive Headteacher: Paul Lufkin (PL)

Lauren Clogg (LC) Sam Dear (SD) Katy Gandon (KG), Gemma Isaac, (GI). Kate Johnston (KJ) Emeka Okorochoa, (EO)	Heather Ponsford (HP). Raj Sood (RS) Jess Talbot (JT) ¹ Chris Tregilgas (CT) Emma Walshe (EW) Rosie Williamson, (RW)
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In attendance (* denotes Associate Member)

Lisa Kingsbury (LK) (*)
Meghan Peaty (MP)
Steve Cleary, Clerk (SAC)

*The features of effective governance from the competency framework: -
Strategic Leadership, Accountability, People, Structures, Compliance, Evaluation*

All original papers are available on the LGFL MyUSO drive.

1. GOVERNANCE

The meeting began at 7pm and was deemed to be quorate.

Governors confirmed that they had received and read papers received from the Executive Headteacher in advance.

Apologies were received and consented to from Jo Reynolds (JR).

In accordance with the Education (School Government) Regulations, governors were invited to declare any interest they might have in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

The Chair reported that there had been no instances of Chair's Action or activities around governor recruitment.

Governors **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the EGM held on 14 March and full governing body held on 29 March.

CT reported that he had visited West Wimbledon on 10 May to observe the Key Stage 2 SAT Assessments and found the security on these to be compliant. EdR reported that he had attended a breakfast session. KJ stated that she had visited Treetops and Wimbledon Park. Training has been undertaken in safeguarding, data protection and wellbeing.

¹ Via Zoom
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LC, SD, KJ and GI announced that they are to stand down as governors from the end of the academic year. JR is also standing down as an Associate Member. Governors **RESOLVED** to discuss the composition of the governing body at its first meeting in the autumn term. Retiring governors were thanked for their service and the impact that they had had in terms of the lives of children and families in the school community.

2. **STANDARDS, TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Minutes of the meeting on 18 May having been circulated (copy on file), KJ reported that the committee had received a presentation on Treetops and the attention autism approach as well as plans for expansion for up to 8 classes by 2023. The committee had discussed specific year groups at West Wimbledon as well as new school structures.

PL reported that the published Ofsted report for West Wimbledon is expected in the last week of term. Governors expressed the view that a “Good” result from the Ofsted inspection would cap a number of years of really hard effort and a lot of complexity and **RESOLVED** to convey their thanks to staff involved.

3. **PUPILS AND COMMUNITY**

HP reported that the pupil and community committee had met on 15 June (minutes pending) and examined admissions for both schools. Attendance is still weaker than last year although in line with Merton and national data. Safeguarding is compliant in both schools and an impressive 75% of pupils on roll at West Wimbledon attended after school clubs.

4. **RESOURCES**

RS apprised governors of discussions held at the school business committee on 24 May (minutes pending) and it was noted that the restructuring plan at Wimbledon Park was not required in the end and that West Wimbledon could use redeployment.

GI reported on the HR committee held on 29 April which had discussed the reorganization proposals for both schools, the process for exit interviews and staff absence which is decreasing although higher than pre-Covid. The following questions were asked:

- ***What was the feedback received on the ultimate shape of the reorganisation?***
The situation at Wimbledon Park has been very difficult and the support staff team in particular has been significantly affected in a negative way. As a result, there is a need to rebuild good, positive relationships. Whilst it has been a positive outcome that people have not been made compulsorily redundant, some would have wished to take voluntary redundancy although it had not been offered. The West Wimbledon context was not straightforward and there were no volunteers for redeployment. It is believed that the situation will be complicated going into next year as staff consider their career development at West Wimbledon, given the likely circumstances. It is

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acknowledged that this is the start of quite a complicated year on year process that's going to cause anxiety and difficulty among staff.

- *What are the plans around staff in Treetops?* A lot of work is planned next year around Treetops in line with the expansion and having an autism awareness month. A mainstream teacher is interested in moving next year, to Treetops, which is positive, although concern remains over the future and the potential impact of joining the trust over Merton's enhanced package for support staff which would need to be negotiated as part of due diligence.
- *Is there anything in particular that the governing body can do to support productive discussions?* Now that there is a clearer idea of the challenges next year and beyond, the sooner that a decision is made in terms of joining a trust and projecting what this looks like, the firmer level of certainty would arise. Governor presence at staff meetings would also help to make necessary connections and build trust, although there is a need to frontload positive presence rather than be reactive to a problem.

Governors recognised that the transferability or voluntary acceptance of the enhanced package for support staff, if the schools were to enter into the trust needs to be discussed in due diligence and in negotiations. The scope for sessions around change agility, resilience and dealing with change was also recognised as being helpful, particularly in terms of support staff.

5. COMPLIANCE

Governors **RESOLVED** to assent to the adoption of the following policies with minor amendments (noted on file):

- Federation: Allegations of abuse made against school staff

6. ARP BASE EXPANSION UPDATE

RW reported that the practical building works have been placed out to tender although this fell through and the school is working closely with the borough and contractors to get a plan in place. Given the arrival of new children in September, there is a need for a clear timescale and resolution of any issues. Complications remain in recruiting the right candidate as a teacher to a vacancy in the reception class. It is proposed to use a TA who is doing a teaching degree to cover as an unqualified teacher in that classroom four days a week alongside another unqualified teacher and a TA. The base currently has two specialist class teachers who are both CPI trained and have extensive experience teaching in children with autism as well as other experienced staff and there is a need to carefully consider the spread of future roles. A plan is being worked on in terms of space configuration as the base expands. Governors noted the difficulties experienced by the school in terms of Merton's management of capital projects and **RESOLVED** to reflect further on this as part of any due diligence process over joining a MAT.

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7. WANDLE LEARNING TRUST UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

PL invited governors to further consider the position of the federation in terms of joining the trust in the light of the contents of a staff survey at West Wimbledon. The following comments were expressed²:

- Much of the focus to date has been on soft consultation with staff in order to enable issues to be aired.
- An impact on staff thinking around joining the trust has been derived from union views and pressure as well as complications around transition to single form entry, reorganisation, changes to leadership arrangements and the resultant instability caused.
- A number of West Wimbledon staff have indicated that they don't want to join the Wandle Learning Trust. Some of these were opposed to join a multi academy trust from political ideology, irrespective of process. Others are not opposed but wish further information or are not yet ready to make a decision. There is a group of staff who are questioning at every level the process and even seeking to pre-empt going to formal consultation.
- One factor is that West Wimbledon has not been used to the type and level of collaboration which is important for the development of any school. Joining the trust provides rich opportunities from a curriculum and progress point of view.
- It is still the right decision to be looking at wanting to join the trust, but there are complications if staff are opposed.
- Many of the points which are being raised have already been answered.
- Staff have questioned the extent of governor involvement in the process, even though governors unanimously agreed to commence due diligence and had monitored progress as the school's senior leadership had taken time to explore issues. It is acknowledged that support in the wider leadership at West Wimbledon had been less developed than Wimbledon Park;
- To receive visits and be in discussions with the trust before going through due diligence felt backwards, although prior discussions had indicated that staff were in favour of joining the trust.
- The decision to join the trust or not needs to focus on the issues involved and be divorced as far as possible from any personalities involved.
- The survey is neither a formal consultation nor a vote.
- Creating a dissonance in the school as it moves into the next year with a new leadership and changed structures would not be helpful to the efficiency of the school and could undermine the leadership of the school. The potential damage of losing staff focus on teaching and learning and running the school next year has a greater cost in the short term, than the long term potential benefits of joining.
- For some, there is an underlying question – “what do we get out of joining the trust” – rather than viewing this as a collaboration to support learning and professional development. If the school can benefit from Wandle by just buying the professional development from it, and has reached a good Ofsted without Wandle, why does it need to be part of the trust?

² Views represent the breadth and depth of discussion, not the conclusions of the governing body on set areas.

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- It is too early to assume that viewpoints are fixed. It is possible to turn staff around.
- If one compares the process followed when the federation was formed, the joint learning days at the start were helpful.
- It is not proposed to evaluate a number of multi academy trusts nor is it advocated to become an academy trust for the sake of it. The choice is not between joining Wandle or another MAT, but between joining and facing an uncertain future given falling roles and future pressures, despite a likely good Ofsted. It is advocated to work with Wandle because it has a disproportionate significance and opportunity for professional development, centralized resources, a commercial income stream, and a track record of school support and professionalism. There is something unique and sufficiently compelling to move forward to the next stage of the process, although clearly not for staff at West Wimbledon for a whole series of complicating, conflicting and overlapping factors.
- There is a need to take control back in a communication which factually states where governors are united in their approval to proceed with due diligence. Governors need to be clear on what they believe to be best for the school in the long term strategic view and not be diverted by those who would oppose regardless of the benefits. There are times when a cautious approach can make matters worse. In addition, communication and due diligence need to be driven by the working group of governors working closely with the SLT in order to demonstrate the joined up approach. Transparency and clarity of communication from the right people are key as well as making benefits personalised. There is a need for the trust to be part of the communications to staff as an expression of the collaborative process being followed. Governors also need to be more upfront in communication rather than just the school's leadership. It needs to be clearly recognised that there have been vacuums in communication and that what is said might not always be that which is heard or believed.
- The school is in the best shape it has been and has as much to contribute as it has to learn, as well as to safeguard all that has been achieved.
- The local authority may be a pilot for a Local Authority MAT in the next two years, although there are doubts that could be expressed over the leadership, track record of experience in school collaboration or capability for them to do this.
- Support staff feel that they have been treated differently to teachers, particularly since the trust discussions became conflated in some quarters with the restructuring and associated challenges and these have had a significant impact on what staff are listening to. Some instability has been created by the reorganisation process and needs to be dealt with before any progress can be made.
- Governors are not tied to a specific target date of joining the trust should they finally decide to do so and consultation has not commenced.
- A question remains as to what the view of the trust would be in terms of the staff survey response.
- One option might be to develop further collaboration to benefit the schools over the next year whilst undertaking the due diligence over an extended timescale prior to a final decision.

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- If West Wimbledon are opposed to considering joining the trust and Wimbledon Park are in favour, what are the implications for the federation itself given that the paths and challenges of both schools are contextually very different and there is no longer a mechanism through shared leadership to make the federation work. Were a decision be taken to defederate and Wimbledon Park joins the trust on its own, there is a risk that this would undermine the practice of peer support and leave West Wimbledon isolated as a school outside of any future collaborative arrangements at a time when challenges are increased. If there were to be resistance at West Wimbledon and an embracing of joining at Wimbledon Park, would it be right for the education at both schools to be tied together?
- Any similar staff survey at Wimbledon Park would need to be preceded by broader discussions with the staff where it is clear that any proposals are driven by governors and there are non-binary answers involved. The wording of any questions is a key determinant of answers given.
- There is a need for more detail on the Wimbledon Park perspective although there is a view that the SLT there are more closely aligned. Some key staff at Wimbledon Park work alongside the trust although the view of the wider staff needs to be more clearly ascertained.
- A further consideration is that not only does the trust see both schools as a strong match, but also the local authority have expressed an element of support and increasingly relies on the trust for school improvement.
- There is a need for a clear timeline and plan around due diligence, the timing and nature of communications and consultation to be led by a governor's working group. The views of both schools would need to be treated on an equal basis.
- An immediate next step would be for the governor's working party to meet with the SLT members from both schools to look in more detail at work already undertaken and information gathered. There is a need to close the term out with some clear communications over the way forward.
- Time needs to be given for the schools to recommend a way forward as well as consideration of the question as to what the federation looks like from September given the lack of an executive head from that point.
- It is important for staff to know that concerns are being taken seriously and are under active consideration. Any response needs to be proactive rather than simply respond to comments made and stress that updates will continue to be given to staff as anything changes.

Governors **RESOLVED** to convey the following key messages to all stakeholders:

- It has been decided in principle that it would be good to be part of the Wandle Learning Trust.
- The due diligence process is in progress as governors are evaluating available information.
- The views of staff are acknowledged, and governors are grateful for these.
- No formal decision has been made to join the trust as yet.

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A small working group of governors³ is to meet on 12 July to progress discussions on the way forward.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No confidential business was recorded.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meetings are scheduled to last for a maximum of 2 hours. Committee meetings start at 8am⁴ and FGB meetings at 7pm.

Date	Meeting + content	Location
15 Sept	HR committee (Pay and Appraisal policy, review appraisal/performance management outcomes and approve pay recommendations, Executive Headteacher's performance management)	Zoom
20 Sept	Full governing body meeting (Statutory assessment results update, pupil numbers, first weeks of term update, Governor training plan, Link Governor roles and visits)	WPPS
2 November	Standards, Teaching and Learning committee	Zoom
9 November	School Business committee	Zoom
16 November	Pupils and Community Committee	Zoom
6 December	Full governing body meeting (committee business, performance management, school development plan, standards, target setting, policy approvals, schools' report, MEP reports)	WWPS
8 February	Standards, Teaching and Learning committee	Zoom
8 March	School Business committee	Zoom
15 March	Pupils and Community Committee	Zoom
28 March	Full governing body meeting (committee business, policy approvals, schools' report, MEP reports)	WPPS
12 May	HR committee (Pay affordability scenarios, staffing strategy and structure, staffing updates, exit interviews, staff survey, staff well being, staff absence)	Zoom
17 May	Standards, Teaching and Learning committee	Zoom
23 May	School Business committee – Budget special (End of year monitoring/outcome, 12 months budget and 3 year forecast) – open invite to all governors	WWPS
14 June	Pupils and Community Committee	Zoom
4 July	Full governing body meeting (committee business, school development plan, policy approvals, schools' report, next terms chair/vice	WPPS

³ Consisting of GI, KJ, EO and JT

⁴ Except the school business committee on 23 May which is a budget special for all governors at 7pm.

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	chair, membership of committees and link governors)	
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All previous actions were noted as being complete.

The meeting closed at 10pm .

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____
Chair of Governors
Date: _____