

Hazeldown School Governing Body

School Improvement Committee Meeting (Spring Term 1) – Part 1 Minutes					
Date/Time	25 January 2023 at 6:30pm				
Location	Hazeldown Primary School				
Chaired by	Ruth Walters				
Attendees		Role	Attendees	Init	Role
Ruth Walters	RW	Co-opted Vice Chair	Paul Hamilton	PH	Parent
Stuart Ludford	SL	Headteacher	Laura Parfitt	LPar	Parent
Samantha Atkinson	SA	Co-opted	Kirsty Prentice	KP	Parent
Jasmine Banning	JB	Staff Governor	Kelly Harnett	KHtt	Parent

In Attendance	Initials	Role
Lee Goodenough	LG	Associate Member
Kit Hardee	KHee	Associate Member
Tim Synge	TS	Clerk

Minutes to
Attendees
School website

Apologies	Initials	Role	Absent without apology	Initials	Role
Dave Dawson	DD	LA Chair			
Kevin Gough	KG	Parent			

	Agenda	Led by
1	Apologies	Clerk
2	Declarations of Interest	Clerk
3	Minutes of previous meeting: 30 November 2022	Clerk
4	Matters arising from previous meeting: 30 November 2022	Chair
5	Headteacher's Report	SL
6	Data drop (December 2022)	SL
7	Portfolio report: Community and Parent Links	KP
8	Portfolio report: Vulnerable Pupils	-
9	Portfolio report: Curriculum	-
10	SI Committee focus for the next meeting	Chair
11	Next meeting	Chair
12	AOB	

Item	Details of discussion		
1	<p>Apologies</p> <p>There were apologies received from DD and from KG. RW chaired the meeting.</p>		
2	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None declared.</p>		
3	<p>Minutes of previous meeting: 30 November 2022</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2022 were confirmed as a fair record of that meeting. A set was signed by the Chair.</p>		
4	<p>Matters arising from previous minutes: 30 November 2022</p>		
	SI 22/05	DD to circulate written report on governor effectiveness to FGB.	DD circulated the report by email on 4 November 2022
	SI 22/06	DD to consider most effective way of developing an action plan following the review of governor effectiveness, perhaps by forming a subcommittee for this purpose.	A meeting was held for this purpose on 18 January 2023 and the outcomes will be tabled at F&GP on 8 February 2023
	SI 22/07	Governors to draw up a list of suitable prompts to utilise in demonstrating challenge.	This suggestion will be incorporated into the action plan developed under SI 22/06 above.
	SI 22/08	Clerk to ensure all documents (eg agendas) which referred to the policy review schedule are updated to reflect the policy changes.	Clerk has updated the policy review schedule to reflect the developments and changes in the School's GDPR and Data Protection policies and paperwork.
5	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>There were no specific items for report beyond the planned coverage of the December 2022 data drop (see item 6 below). The next Headteacher's Report will be tabled at the forthcoming meeting of FGB on 8 February 2023.</p>		

Data drop

SL referred to his Data Report which had been circulated by means of OneDrive. He summarised the written report by acknowledging that data was not where the School wanted it to be at present. There was work to do in looking at children who had fallen backwards or who were not where they should be.

The report set out the steps already taken by the School to address this situation. SL described some aspects including the “five-a-day” principle and work being carried out to facilitate metacognition in pupils. The approach to the principle “I don’t want you going home today not having learnt what you need to.” and the feedback cycle of Feedback-Response-Replan was being used. There was a lot of work for staff to do and some staff were finding the demands tough. SLT was working on cutting down on the amount of time and effort that staff were spending on planning and on areas such as slide preparation. Although Cornerstones supported staff in moving away from the standard templates that it offered, there were times when utilising these could be beneficial. KHee added that staff were being encouraged to take a flexible approach.

KHtt asked where the perception that staff had to engage in a lot of planning and tailoring had come from. SL responded that in some areas the “Lethal Mutations” concept identified by Dylan William had been allowed to take hold. Information about expectations had been passed round and had evolved to the point where teachers were doing far more preparatory work than they need to do. Some of this arose from the way that feedback was delivered and interpreted. LG added that SLT had done a lot of work to analyse staff perceptions and reactions, listening to feedback and to the staff voice. The Cornerstones curriculum was a broad one and previously the School had sometimes struggled to accommodate the breadth, for example in subjects such as Music and Computing, which are covered by other schemes. Now, the curriculum was being covered well, but with an adverse impact on staff time. It was fair to say that the School was still “on a journey” as far as Cornerstones was concerned. SL illustrated matters by explain how staff were using learning journals, often waiting until a desired outcome was perfect rather than describing the process as a ‘journal of learning’.

SA asked whether teachers were aware of these challenges and the work being undertaken by SLT. LG confirmed that they were and reported on a staff meeting which had taken place earlier in the day at which some examples of recommended practice had been shared. SL added that staff were being encouraged to use their CPD journal and to use To Do lists actively. This should help them to focus on their own active learning. LG summarised this as “trying to get teachers to do less, well”.

KP confirmed that the Cornerstones template slides were in many areas perfectly good and did not need tailoring. LPar expressed her delight that staff were being encouraged to plan lessons without the need for a comprehensive set of Powerpoint slides at every juncture.

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Data drop (continued)

RW thanks SL and his staff for a useful report which was frank in its assessment. SL noted that a lot of the statistical detail in the tabled report was really for school staff and not aimed at Governors.

RW asked about the link between the work described and staff appraisal. SL said that the aim was to return to a “normal” appraisal process in the post-COVID world. This required some tutoring of staff, especially those who had not been in post for long, as they had not experienced any other system of appraisal. LG reported that SLT were working also with a couple of more experienced members of staff to ensure that expectations were clear.

PH asked for clarification of the School’s approach to feedback when things were going well. SL acknowledged the importance of this and said that it was a delicate area as the positive feedback had to be genuine and not constructed to fit a pattern. KHtt described the use of “Thank You Thursdays” in her own workplace and wondered whether Governors might usefully have a role in providing positive feedback or thanks to staff. SL agreed to consider this.

For completeness of the minutes, the following questions and responses are reproduced from the Headteacher’s report.

DD: It is right, and necessary, to put more emphasis on staff meeting appraisal objectives this year. The newer staff for whom this style of working is all they have known in their career could find this (perceived) harder edged approach emotionally challenging. Are there any checks in place to pick up on early signs of this being the case and support in place if so?

DD: Given the deterioration in the data pretty much across the board, are the ‘longer serving’ members of staff remaining positive? Is there opportunity for these (and indeed all) staff members to contribute ideas which may lead to improvement in practices and results?

SL: We are looking at several key areas with these two points.

Whether an individual staff member is remaining positive depends to a great degree on their mindset, attitude and professional approach. Some experienced staff are finding it difficult to remain positive, as are some newer teachers. Conversely, some from each experience group are finding it easier to rationalise, focus and remain positive. The impact of the former on the latter can be difficult to manage specifically. Additionally, blanket “everyone is really struggling” statements which the former can sometimes use are both unhelpful and unfounded. I am hopeful that some of the elements below will address this overall.

One is around attitudes, morale and work ethic, both post covid and across the profession in general. Teaching is at crisis point nationally, hence the impending strikes. Attitudinally, for some individuals, there is also an overinflated negative response to being challenged or receiving feedback at the moment, as well as to low level support and direction sometimes, so we are looking to address this.

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Data drop (continued)

The second is around clarifying expectations, being open and honest about the position with the data and supporting individuals with being clear and precise about the strategies which will help individual children move forwards – and how to implement them. Some of the issues from the first area make this more difficult for some individuals so we are looking to address inaction in this area through clarity, professional reading and support, as well as simplifying and reducing workload to free up time and 'brain space'. (The next area)

The final area is about simplifying and reducing workload. We have allowed Dylan William's 'Lethal Mutations' concept to take hold. (This can be likened to a glorified version of 'Chinese Whispers' where information about expectations is passed around individuals and, in our case, has gradually grown what is being done to the point that teachers are doing far more than they need to.) For example, writing out planning in full English so their partner teacher can understand it because they are planning different subjects each rather than talking together and then writing their own, minimum notes to suit their children and their own needs. Similarly, teachers are putting together lengthy sets of slides, which are not always needed and not teaching straight from the schemes we have but are cutting and pasting numerous individual bits to their slides, which takes up time. I'm aiming to take away a great deal of workload (We're talking about it as a staff team before the SI Committee Meeting) which will free up time to focus on the learning and the individual nature of this as well as make the job more sustainable alongside 'normal life' during term time.

DD: Members of the SLT, and other staff, are involved in projects away from school such as involvement with Exeter Consortium etc. etc. and Governors have long been aware of the benefits coming back to school. With results being significantly poorer than we would like them to be is there any benefit in temporarily suspending some of this off site work in order to support staff in driving the improvements we need to see.

Some elements of this are reducing through the year. On the contrary, the benefits and information gained just from being involved in a meeting as a MAT director yesterday were really valuable. The opportunity to mix with professionals in different roles (including OFSTED Inspectors), tapping in to their wider experience through their activities beyond the MAT and also to view data across a range of schools gives 'benchmarking' opportunities. This gives confidence that we are in the same boat as other schools in many ways - struggling with the same staffing issues and that outcomes are depressed post covid. Additionally though, many other schools are struggling to a much greater degree with falling rolls, poor behaviour, high numbers of suspensions, permanent exclusions and significant mental health issues.

KHtt: How reliable is the data? Is this internal data or is this the first external data drop? Was the data that was recorded at the end of last year accurate? Is there a way of assessing this?

6	<p>Data drop (continued)</p> <p>SL: This data is from the December Data Drop, which is the first from the year. There will always be professional trust and expectation around data drops so we would hope that the figures from the end of last year are an accurate reflection of the position, as we would for these. We have, however, made a note to examine this in more detail with more sampling and moderation, potentially revisiting the 'Using Children as Evidence' materials at the end of the year.</p> <p><i>KHtt: With the community links between other schools locally – are we able to measure against their data, rather than against the nationally available?</i></p> <p>Links aren't really that strong as a result of the academy position the other local schools are in so there isn't an appetite to share ongoing, in year data. Additionally, different schools run internal data in very different ways, using very different materials so comparison is difficult.</p>
7	<p>Portfolio Report: Community and Parent Links</p> <p>KP described the recent course that she had attended on Parent Engagement. Statistics had been shared which demonstrated that where children were behind in English and Maths, this was in no small part attributable to attitudes and behaviours in the home and among parents. Parent engagement with a school was seen as vitally important. Home Learning also required parent engagement if it was to be effective.</p> <p>KP acknowledged that, at present, Hazeldown did not have a formal strategy for parent engagement. SL suggested that such a strategy should really start with a school's Pupil Premium strategy and develop from this. There was mention of the Parent Forum, which was no longer active. SL suggested that parents nowadays tended to go straight to a teacher to discuss an issue rather than use a forum of this type as a channel, however, if carefully defined, such a forum could have some benefits.</p> <p>In the ensuing discussion, it was widely agreed that parental WhatsApp groups, although very much in vogue, could be unhelpful as it was easy for negativity to take over conversations. A forum could be helpful, if sensitively moderated, however less positive views might not be voiced there. KP reminded Governors that a celebration book used to be a positive focus for parental engagement, but that this had inevitably tailed off during lockdown.</p> <p>RW thanked KP for a useful and interesting report.</p>
8	<p>Portfolio Report: Vulnerable pupils</p> <p>No report was due at this meeting and no additional matters were raised.</p>
9	<p>Portfolio Report: Curriculum</p> <p>No report was due at this meeting and no additional matters were raised.</p>

10	<p>SI Committee focus for the next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would consider progress against the School Improvement Plan.</p>
11	<p>Next Meeting(s)</p> <p>Following the FGB meeting on 8 February 2023, the remaining Spring Term meetings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIC – Weds 15 March 2023 • FGB – Weds 29 March 2023
12	<p>AOB</p> <p>Strikes SL drew the attention of FGB to the forthcoming strike days, both national and regional. There was a difficult line to tread in balancing respect for the right of colleagues to strike with the desire that strike action should have as little impact on the children as possible. Some less experienced staff were not fully aware of normal and acceptable behaviours and responses during a strike and briefing and planning was being done in a suitably neutral manner. SLT assessed that some staff would come to work and that some would strike. A certain amount of cover could be provided through redeployment of SLT and of TAs. It was important to ensure that plans for the strike days did not result in children simply coming to school for a non-curricular “fun day” even though it may not be possible to maintain a normal timetabled day with fewer staff present than usual. A risk assessment would be carried out nearer the time so that SLT could satisfy themselves that it was safe for the School to operate on lower staff numbers.</p> <p>Assessment Policy LPar proposed that FGB approve the Assessment Policy and this was done.</p> <p>Decision: the Assessment Policy was approved by SIC on 25 January 2023.</p>
	<p>The meeting ended at 7:50pm.</p>

Summary of decisions and proposed actions		
Actions	None	
Dec'n	The Assessment Policy was approved by SIC on 25 January 2023.	

These minutes are agreed by those present as being a true record.	
<p>Signed (Chair of Committee)</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

