

Hazeldown School Governing Body

School Improvement Committee Meeting (Spring Term 2) – Part 1 Minutes					
Date/Time	15 March 2023 at 6:30pm				
Location	Hazeldown Primary School				
Chaired by	Dave Dawson				
Attendees		Role	Attendees	Init	Role
Dave Dawson	DD	LA Chair	Paul Hamilton	PH	Parent
Stuart Ludford	SL	Headteacher	Kirsty Prentice	KP	Parent
Jasmine Banning	JB	Staff Governor	Kelly Harnett	KHtt	Parent

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

Minutes to
Attendees
School website

Apologies	Initials	Role	Absent without apology	Initials	Role
Samantha Atkinson	SA	Co-opted	Kevin Gough	KG	Parent
Ruth Walters	RW	Co-opted Vice Chair			
Laura Parfitt	LPar	Parent			
Lee Goodenough	LG	Associate Member			

	Agenda	Led by
1	Apologies	Clerk
2	Declarations of Interest	Clerk
3	Minutes of previous meeting: 25 January 2023	Clerk
4	Matters arising from previous meeting: 25 January 2023	Chair
5	Headteacher's Report	SL
6	School Improvement Plan 2022/23	SL
7	Portfolio report: Community and Parent Links	-
8	Portfolio report: Vulnerable Pupils	RW
9	Portfolio report: Curriculum	JB
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 RW, LPar and SA. Apologies were also received from LG. KG was unable to attend. DD chaired the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None declared.</p>
3	<p>Minutes of previous meeting: 25 January 2023</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2023 were confirmed as a fair record of that meeting. A set was signed by the Chair.</p>
4	<p>Matters arising from previous minutes: 25 January 2023</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the last meeting.</p>
5	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>The next Headteacher's Report will be tabled at the forthcoming meeting of FGB on 29 March 2023. SL reported on some specific matters before turning his attention to the School Improvement Plan 2022/23.</p> <p>Work to finalise the 2023/24 budget continued to prove extremely challenging. Lack of clarity and certainty from both the Department for Education ("DfE") and Devon Education Services ("DES") made it difficult to budget accurately and there had been a long wait for the latest release of the financial planning software. SL anticipated that SLT would be able to put finishing touches to the draft budget this week so that the final draft could be approved for submission at FGB in two weeks' time.</p> <p>In summary, indications were that the School would be able to afford the kitchen project and would also be able to support the current level of non-teaching hours planned. There would also be scope for some additional TA hours. SLT would have liked to include an additional half-day per week of non-teaching time, but this did not appear to be affordable within the available funding.</p> <p>SL reported that many Devon schools were likely to submit a budget containing a deficit for year 2 of the budget period. This would be a marginal issue for Hazeldown and SL was not unduly concerned about this prospect. Many schools expected to submit a deficit budget in year 1 as well and would be required to communicate with the Financial Intervention Panel about their plans.</p>

Headteacher's Report (continued)

SL referred to the kitchen project and advised Governors that a number of decisions and approvals would be required in the coming months. A working party should be established to oversee and progress this project on behalf of FGB. This would be concerned with the physical build and would not at this stage be required to consider issues around the choice between contracting out the operation of the kitchen or running it in house, as that was a decision for later.

PH agreed to join the working party to provide financial input.

Action: Given his expertise in project management fabric matters, DD to contact Associate Member JH to establish his availability for the kitchen project working party.

Other members of FGB may also be interested in joining the working party.

Action: Clerk to add formation of the kitchen project working party to the agenda for FGB on 29 March 2023.

Returning to the budget, SL reminded FGB that there were a number of matters which were not in the School's control, for example the impact of the September 2023 teachers' pay review and the likelihood of further inflationary pressures in a number of areas including utility costs.

KHtt asked whether, given Hazeldown's relatively secure financial position when compared with some other schools, there were any areas in which other schools were committing expenditure while Hazeldown was not and, if so, whether Hazeldown was missing out. SL responded that schools with deficits were generally facing falling pupil numbers and he suspected that they had not taken appropriate steps to reduce costs accordingly, for example by reducing headcount or by merging or combining classes. These were never easy decisions to make, but the funding model made it essential for schools to manage costs carefully in response to reduced pupil rolls and some schools appeared not to have done this. Ultimately, schools were funded by reference to pupil numbers and so maintaining a steady roll was vital for financial security.

DD acknowledged the work done by SL and his team in relation to admissions, noting the time and effort spent in meeting prospective parents and giving them tours of the School. He thanked SL on behalf of FGB for his attention to this activity at a time when Senior Leadership resources were being pulled in so many directions.

School Improvement Plan 2022/23

SL referred to the latest annotated version of the School Improvement Plan 2022/23. There had been some areas of good progress against the Plan, but there were also some areas in which the School had not made the desired progress this year. SL explained the approach of SLT to this. They had asked themselves what it was that was holding the School back from better progress this year. Undoubtedly part of the answer lay in the fact that SLT had become drawn in to strengthening the School's response to the regional and national strike days. Delivery of the School Improvement Plan required significant SLT activity. Every time that members of SLT took on direct classroom responsibilities, they were no longer able to advance management activity.

In recognition of this position, SLT had taken the approach of "doing less, well". This entailed a slower and more considered implementation of aspects of the Plan. There was a focus on following up on actions with members of staff, on ensuring staff were appropriately briefed and on keeping the momentum of new actions going by seeking to embed these approaches in subsequent behaviours and processes.

DD asked whether there were challenges in ensuring the members of SLT, including SL, were not subject to undue pressures or to adverse work/life balance. SL replied that the workload of the leadership team was inevitably different from the workload of classroom teachers. It was less time-constrained in that less of the delivery was strictly timetabled. Some areas could be deferred, such as progress on curriculum development or advances in CPD. On occasions, SLT had to give themselves "permission" to postpone an action. The priority was on progressing those activities which could be identified as having a positive impact on the children.

Governors discussed several examples of time spent supporting members of staff which was anticipated to bring benefits to those staff and ultimately to the children over time.

DD reported on progress against Section 5: Governance in the SIP. The first newsletter article about the role of Governors was due to be issued shortly. He had already drafted a second piece. It was apparent that many parents did not really understand the role of Governors and this was intended to throw light on the role of Governors and of FGB.

DD drew attention to the action over Ofsted preparation. SL said that there would be a regular Ofsted agenda item on each forthcoming FGB meeting agenda, starting with the next one. The Clark reported that take-up on the DES course for Governors on Ofsted readiness was good among Governors who did not work in an education setting: KG had attended the last course and both PH and KHT would attend the next one in April.

7	<p>Portfolio Report: Community and Parent Links</p> <p>No report was due at this meeting and no additional matters were raised.</p> <p>DD noted that he had updated the master planner to include a reference to the reporting of the number of complaints received by the School in the reporting period.</p>
8	<p>Portfolio Report: Vulnerable pupils</p> <p>In RW's absence, DD referred to the portfolio report on Vulnerable Pupils which had been uploaded to OneDrive in advance of the meeting. This was an excellent report and he thanked the SENCO on behalf of FGB for all her work in relation to SEND. It was clear that she had taken on the role wholeheartedly and that there was clear direction in relation to SEND in the School.</p> <p>SL advised FGB of the confusing picture relating to SEND and special needs across Devon. DES had announced that there was an intention to further merge SEND provision into the mainstream. This appeared to be largely as a result of financial overruns at county level with the Devon service reported to be £150 million overspent. In contrast to this, DfE had announced a plan to build new special schools, which appeared to contradict Devon's approach. It was hoped that the appointment of a new Chief Executive for Devon County Council in February would bring some clarity to this.</p> <p>DD thanked RW for her report.</p> <p>Action: PH to liaise with RW over Governor review of areas of financial commitment including Pupil Premium and Sports Grant to ensure that Governor focus is not duplicated.</p>
9	<p>Portfolio Report: Curriculum</p> <p>JB referred to the portfolio report on Curriculum which had been uploaded to OneDrive in advance of the meeting. Governors noted the challenge inherent in the subjects for which the School had not adopted Cornerstones; although it was harder to track progress, this was being done.</p> <p>DD thanked JB for her report and in particular for stepping in during LPar's absence.</p>

10	<p>SI Committee focus for the next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will consider the results of the March 2023 data drop and present analysis of this.</p>
11	<p>Next Meeting(s)</p> <p>The final meeting of the Spring Term is the FGB meeting on Weds 29 March 2023.</p> <p>Summer Term meetings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Improvement Committee – Wednesday 10 May 2023 • Full Governing Body – Wednesday 24 May 2023 • School Improvement Committee – Wednesday 5 July 2023 • Full Governing Body – Wednesday 19 July 2023
12	<p>AOB</p> <p>There were two items of correspondence to report.</p> <p>DD referred to a written complaint received from a neighbour regarding various aspects of the School's use of the staff car park. This was the latest in a series of complaints from the same neighbour and it contained a number of detailed observations and concerns. DD had sent a written reply refuting the various allegations.</p> <p><i>KHtt asked whether, in the light of the significant time spent by SL and colleagues proving information in response to these letters, it might be worth considering a different approach in order to protect SL's time. It appeared likely that the neighbour would continue to raise concerns about minute aspects of the School's day-to-day activities in spite of the fact that the car park had received planning consent. Should the School say that it would no longer respond?</i> After some discussion, including acknowledgement that the neighbour in question was also in the habit of submitting complaints to various related parties including local educational and planning bodies, giving rise to the need to deal with communications and follow-up visits from officers of those bodies to clarify the School's position, it was agreed that the School should continue to respond, even though doing so was increasingly a frustrating drain on senior time and resources.</p>

12	<p>AOB (continued)</p> <p>DD referred to a letter from a parent which described an incident involving a pupil in the School who was alleged to have behaved in an unacceptable way towards other children when several families had met informally in a public play area off site in the school holidays. The parent had expressed concern that that matter had not been dealt with swiftly enough by the School and had asked for the matter to be brought to the attention of Governors. SL had responded to say that the School's role was limited in relation to an offsite incident which had taken place in the school holidays. The pupil in question was already subject to specific plans and responses when in school and the School's assessment was that these were proving effective.</p> <p>SL advised Governors that he always had to be mindful of the risk that a child with behavioural or other challenges may become known to parents through WhatsApp groups or similar and find it difficult as a result to be accepted socially by his or her peers. The message from the School was always "come to us" if you have concerns.</p> <p>DD reported further that contact had been received from an individual who had expressed an interest in joining FGB and who had significant professional experience that might be relevant for the School. He had spoken to the individual and would follow this up further. It was pleasing that the individual had reviewed various schools in the area and had contacted Hazeldown as first preference.</p> <p>Finally, DD reported that LPar had asked for and been given leave of absence for the rest of term to deal with various personal issues.</p>
	The meeting ended at 19:40.

Summary of decisions and proposed actions		
SI 22/09	Given his expertise in project management fabric matters, DD to contact Associate Member JH to establish his availability for the kitchen project working party.	
SI 22/10	Clerk to add formation of the kitchen project working party to the agenda for FGB on 29 March 2023.	
SI 22/11	PH to liaise with RW over Governor review of areas of financial commitment including Pupil Premium and Sports Grant to ensure that Governor focus is not duplicated.	

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