



## RAKE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



### Minutes of a meeting of the governing body held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 3:30pm in the school.

**Attending:** David Bertwistle, Sarah O'Malley (chair), Neil Ryder, Paul Brown, Kate O'Kelly, Steve Rea, Trish Bancroft, Mark Poeti, Caroline Bott.

**Also attending:** Pippa Bass (clerk), Graham Olway (WSCC), Sam Hughes (staff), Liz Tinder (staff).

#### 1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were accepted from Nik Taylor, Margaret Farwell.

#### 2. Declarations of interest:

NR is chair of governors at Rogate. TB reported that her son pays for use of the school premises. DB reported that he and PB may have interests in the discussions on finance and future options for the school.

#### 3. Urgent matters not covered by the agenda:

- a) DB reported that a member of the teaching staff had applied for a year's career break, which requires governors' approval. The school has a duty to hold the post open. Governors raised the following questions:
- Q Is the member of staff entitled to a career break?
  - A Yes.
  - Q How are you going to fill the gap?
  - A We will advertise to fill the role from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 to the beginning of June 2019.
  - Q Are there any issues for staffing?
  - A No, apart from the recruitment.

Governors approved the career break and recruiting to fill the role for a year.

- b) DB asked governors to approve the switching of a supply teacher onto a permanent contract. He explained that the teacher is a committed member of the staff team and would be eligible to take on a lead role. The costings are included in the draft budget. Governors asked if the switch would reduce the staff costs. DB confirmed that it is slightly more expensive on contract rather than supply, however, the benefits out-weigh the additional cost. Governors approved the switch to a permanent contract.
- c) DB confirmed that the SVFS had been circulated to NT and SR. SR confirmed that he was happy with the SVFS.
- d) DB explained the budget issue caused by the split of his salary across the two schools not being formalised, which means that instead of each school paying direct, there has to be a re-charge. It also means that the Rake budget cannot be balanced and Easter holiday pay not covered. WSCC has asked for the re-charge to be discontinued. SR was concerned that formalising the arrangement means making a contract change, which should not be done without due consideration of the wider implications for the school. NR agreed

and suggested that formalising the salary split should be part of the decision-making around the MOU. SR pointed out that the current arrangement of re-charging gives a more accurate picture of what is happening at the moment. Governors agreed that whilst finalising the salary split and formalising arrangements is in hand (the MOU needs to be finalised in July 2019), the contract should not be changed at this point. SR agreed to speak with the bursar about continuing with re-charging, pending the outcome of the MOU discussions.

#### 4. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were approved and signed.

#### 5. Actions from the last meeting:

Minute	Person	Agreed action
20190213-3b	SR	Circulate the parent survey report and draft feedback to parents. <b>Done, covered at item 6.</b>
20190213-3b	NR	Share the results of Rogate's parent/staff survey for comparison. <b>Done, covered at item 6.</b>
20190213-3b	Clerk	Add item on further discussion on the survey results at the next meeting. <b>Done, see item 6.</b>
20190213-6c	DB	Invite Graham Olway, WSCC, to discuss future options with governors. <b>Done, see item 7.</b>
20190213-12c	CB	Update the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy. <b>Done, covered at item 8.</b>

[MP joined the meeting]

#### 6. Parent/staff surveys and follow-up actions

SR confirmed that the parent survey report had been sent out to parents last week by email. No comments had been received. The results of the staff survey were discussed with staff last week. Governors thanked SR and commented that the survey reports were very well presented, easy to read documents. NR asked if parents had given permission for their comments to be used in publicity material/website. Governors agreed that if comments were going to be used publicly, specific permission should be requested from parents.

NR presented the Rogate parent and staff survey results, particularly highlighting the lack of 'red' on the Rogate staff survey, and the similar comparison with Rake's surveys.

[GO joined the meeting]

## **7. Strategy discussion with Graham Olway, WSCC**

SOM welcomed GO and everyone introduced themselves. SOM summarised the history of the partnership between Rake and Rogate and that Rake's strategy has been to see how the partnership progresses. However, Rogate is further down the road and is keen to formalise the partnership, so Rake now need to understand the options and best way forward. GO then set out what WSCC is doing and its approach to supporting schools. The discussion is summarised at Annex A. After the Q&A, governors thanked GO for his time and input to the discussions. NR agreed to provide a link to the ESCC guidance leaflets.

[GO, staff members, KO, CB, TB left the meeting]

## **8. Policies review:**

- a) Governors approved the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy. DB informed governors that there is much more monitoring done by the governors at Rogate and that it would be good to replicate this at Rake. SOM agreed to arrange for CB to meet with Rita Harrison-Roach, the safeguarding governor at Rogate.
- b) Governors approved the Accessibility Plan.
- c) Discussion on the website compliance check was deferred.

## **9. Rake/Rogate partnership update:**

Governors confirmed the plan was to set up a joint committee or working group to consider all aspects of the partnership and the MOU. SOM agreed to speak with NT about the way forward.

## **10. Reporting to the governing body:**

Governors noted the HT's report.

Discussion on other committee report backs was deferred.

There is still a vacancy on the Premises committee. SR agreed to ask an external colleague whether he would be willing to join.

[MP left the meeting]

## **11. Safeguarding update:**

Nothing to report.

## **12. Staff Wellbeing:**

DB raised his concerns about the limited amount of time some of the governors are able to commit to the school and contrasted this with the input provided by the Rogate governors. DB would like to link governor roles to teaching subjects and to encourage more monitoring visits to the school, similar to Rogate. SOM asked what had made the difference at Rogate to ensure more governor involvement in monitoring. NR reported that it happened as a result of the Ofsted

review. SOM asked SR to do a quick desktop review using TTG to look at governor attendance and roles.

**13. What difference/impact have we made:**

- Better understanding of available guidance on future options.

**14. Date of next meeting:**

The next FGB will be on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 4:00pm.

**15. Any Other Business:**

None.

Chair signature:..... Date:.....

## **ACTIONS:**

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Agreed action</b>	<b>Target date</b>
20190313-3d	SR	Discuss with the bursar continuing the salary re-charge in the budget, pending the outcome of the MOU discussions.	31.03.2019
20190313-7	NR	Provide a link to the ESCC guidance leaflets.	15.05.2019
20190313-8a	SOM	Arrange for CB to meet with Rita Harrison-Roach, the safeguarding governor at Rogate.	15.05.2019
20190313-9	SOM	Speak with NT about the way forward on the joint committee/working group and MOU.	asap
20190313-12	SR	Conduct a quick desktop review of governor attendance and roles using TTG information.	15.05.2019

## **Annex A: Discussion with Graham Olway, Head of School Organisation, Capital Planning & Transport at West Sussex County Council about future options for the school**

(The discussion formed part of the Full Governing Body meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019)

Graham Olway opened the discussion:

- WSCC wants to keep village schools in their local communities and is looking at ways to address the viability of small schools. The diocese is closely involved in the discussions, not least because church land and buildings are involved.
- The key thing is to get governing bodies talking together, which is exactly what the governing bodies at Rake and Rogate are doing.
- WSCC is not setting out a template for how schools should be organised; there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but it is keen to ensure that there are benefits for all the schools involved in a partnership, federation, or whatever form of grouping is chosen.
- There are no reasons why Rake could not look wider than the current collaboration with Rogate; any partnership or grouping can involve more than just two schools and the schools do not have to lose their identity or become one school across different sites.
- WSCC is not looking to build one large school in an area and bring all the smaller schools together. This approach would not achieve any financial benefits; the land reclaimed from closing schools would go back to the diocese or other landowners, not the council. Having one larger school would also lead to increased transport costs for children, which is a major consideration for the council.
- WSCC is looking to include SEN children in mainstream settings as much as possible and its SEN strategy is being reviewed at the moment.
- The Rake/Rogate partnership is a 'pathfinder', although there are some other examples where schools have worked together, such as Duncton and Graffham. Every case relies heavily on key individuals to make them work.
- WSCC is having conversations across the county. Where a headteacher is about to leave, the school is being asked to work with other local schools for a solution rather than look to replace the headteacher. In these situations, there will be a huge impact on all the staff involved as well as increased pressure on key individuals.
- There is a political aspect; WSCC cannot guarantee that there will not be fewer schools in the future, but this is not on the agenda at the moment. However, funding from central government is reducing, which means that more costs need to come out of the system to be able to sustain the current provision.
- About 100 primary schools across the county are facing financial challenges. One of the funding considerations is pupil numbers and, at the moment, there are quite a few schools that are well below capacity (although this is not the case at Rake, which is over-subscribed).
- WSCC is in discussions with many stakeholders, including the National Governors Association at regional and national level, and is developing guidance intended to help governing bodies.
- WSCC is not imposing a central model for how schools should be organised, but if schools are not seen to be taking steps to address the issues, there will have to be a central solution.
- The biggest cost is staff, which makes up about 80% of a school's budget, but schools cannot achieve the necessary savings by simply trimming TA costs; it is the senior staff costs that need addressing. The question is whether schools are able to cope with different organisational models.

The discussion raised a number of questions from the governors:

- Q** It seems the approaches are all about money and not about the children. Is that the case?
- A** It is about the money, I'm afraid. But from what I am hearing (referring to the results of the recent parent and staff surveys) the early signs are very positive in the work being done here with Rake and Rogate.
- Q** What are the different routes we can take and does 'federation' mean just one school coming together with another?
- A** The draft legal guidance from WSCC, which you have seen, explains some of the terms. We know there are not huge financial benefits from federation, there will be fine levels of detail as to where any financial benefits are. Some Academy trusts have centralised IT, which requires investment but generates savings. However, schools in West Sussex are not using the same provider, which makes centralisation difficult and costly.
- Q** Why do we need federation, we can achieve IT savings without it, and it really should be the case that a teacher can go into any school and switch on their laptop?
- A** People will always find workarounds to IT problems, although I agree that IT can be very frustrating.
- Q** If we are a 'pathfinder', what other examples are there?
- A** The Lavington Park Federation is a federation of Graffham Infant School and Duncton CE Junior School. Amberley School is part of a collaboration with St James School sharing a headteacher.
- Q** What are the pitfalls we should be aware of?
- A** We are in the early stages and WSCC is probably rather late getting to this point – other counties have progressed further. We have very few federations in West Sussex. Schools have sometimes come together because of performance issues, but it should not be about putting a weak school together with a strong school. One example in East Sussex had 5 small schools in close proximity that grouped together, 2 of these have now closed. Our aim is to get the conversations going between schools, but we know that finances will be the driver eventually.
- Q** The feeling at Rake has been that we are working with Rogate to 'help them out', when, in fact, Rake is in the same budget position as most other schools. From what you are saying, is the viability of small schools based on budget pressures?
- A** Yes. Although we would not be looking to merge both schools into one.
- Q** Can you give us more of a 'roadmap'?
- A** We are developing our guidance, as are the diocese and other councils, such as ESCC, and if there is useful information that you come across, please do use it.
- Q** Merging together and sharing resources is what the church has been doing for years, is there a read-across?
- A** Yes, the principles are the same.
- Q** In any other business, merging organisations together would not be done without proper support. Who is monitoring how we are doing?
- A** At the moment, governing bodies need to ask themselves 'is it working for us?' If you reach a point where more money is needed, put a case together and I will present it to councillors.
- Q** So, we could have a better IT system, for example?
- A** Yes, but you would need to show the cost/benefit business case.
- Q** Is it just the education department looking for benefits? There should be a wider perspective, including the impact on our communities, which requires other council departments to get involved.
- A** Yes, it is about the impact on communities, the presumption is against closure and politicians are wary of decisions with long term implications. IT alone may not be enough

to make a robust business case for additional money, but you could also look at how the school is meeting the needs of the locality.

**Q** Coming from the health sector where you have to demonstrate £30k - £40k of collaboration before being eligible for contracted support, is it the same in education?

**A** No.

**Q** We were promised all sorts of support from WSCC when we started the partnership with Rogate. Where is it?

**A** There may have been higher expectations than we are able to provide about what resources are available to help you, but we do have access to HR and legal expertise and our project manager has been working on various projects. What do you need from us?

**Q** One thing that would help is external monitoring to tell us if we are doing the right things. We have not done this before and we are having to make decisions that we do not feel we are fully equipped for. It would also be helpful for WSCC to have sight of what we are doing and to be able to learn from it and share with others.

The discussion concluded with GO agreeing to take away the following actions:

- Provide an update on the IT situation.
- Build on the guidance produced by other organisations, such as ESCC.
- Look at how to assess progress of the Rake/Rogate partnership and set up a model to help others.