



**Governing Body of the Winchcombe School
Minutes of the Governing Board
Monday 24th April 2023 at 5.00pm**

Present: Rachel Redgwell (RR) Chair of Governors; Neil Pilsworth (NP) Head teacher, Liam Anderson (LA) co-opted governor; Derek Peaple (DP) (Vice Chair) co-opted governor), Kathryn Bowers (KB) parent governor; Hannah Peto (HP) (elected staff governor); Regina Kosa (RK) (elected parent governor);

Apologies:

Absent:

In attendance: Sheilagh Peacock (SP), School Business Manager (SBM); Harriet Skinner (HS), Clerk

Key: Strategic direction/Challenge or Question/Answer/Action/Extract

1. Apologies

DP joined the meeting remotely

The meeting was quorate

2. Declaration of any other business

(i) Governor recruitment (HS)

3. Declaration of interests

None

4. Minutes of the meeting of 27th March 2023 Part I and II

It was agreed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting and were signed by RR.

Clerk to upload Part I minutes to the school website: ASAP

5. Matters arising

(i) *Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) update* – A PPG and SEND report was circulated just before the meeting, it was agreed that the reports would be tabled at the next meeting of the GB in order for governors to have enough time to consider the contents. **Add to agenda of next meeting – Clerk.**

6. Head teacher's report

LA had submitted some questions on attendance in advance of the meeting:

Attendance continues to look like a priority area, with both authorised and unauthorised absence continuing to increase and highest it has been at this academic year and last. PA has dropped very, very slightly, but continues to be high in comparison to last academic year – although this is lower in comparison to picture nationally?

What are the national/LA averages currently for authorised and unauthorised absence?

Ours seems to be higher, but how does this compare to local & national picture, as we know attendance is a big issue everywhere.

My two key questions from this –

1. **Is the current attendance system/policy effective and is it working? It does not seem to be bringing absence down – what else can be done to tackle attendance issues more rapidly. We know the importance of school attendance – what analysis has been done for The Winchcombe’s priorities as to why pupils are absent – what are the key barriers? And what does analysis show – is there anything that needs to be reviewed/done differently that will see a greater impact on good attendance? Is lateness still feeding into this?**
2. **Ofsted’s ‘Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence’ (Feb 2022) outlines how schools can promote good attendance and what the most effective schools do. I have copied below some of their recommendations of what best schools do with promoting good attendance... how effectively is the school currently doing these? What else can be done from the below to better be promoting good attendance with the whole school community? See some particular comments in red.**

"In these schools, leaders:

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school
- communicate these expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils
- set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve **How is this done on a regular basis – does this happen through newsletters etc – how is it regularly promoted to parents the importance of good attendance?**
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly **What are The Winchcombe's specific barriers with absence at the moment from analysis? Is what is in place effective for tackling this? If so, why has absence increased...? How do we know current system will be effective for bringing absence down?**
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed **How is this done on a regular basis? Do class teachers do this informally? What the formal procedure/system for attendance concerns on a whole school level?**
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school **Do class teachers do this informally?**
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity

- do not stop pushing for whole-school improvement once attendance reaches the national average **How is attendance and tackling lateness continuing to be a focus area for improvement – how is it being pushed with the whole school community?**
- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'

NP countered that The Winchcombe School's attendance is at 93.24% compared to 92.4% national average; persistent absence 18.5% for The Winchcombe against 22.4% nationally but conceded that attendance figures, although better than the national average are not where he wanted them to be. LA raised a concern that persistent absence has increased and asked if NP was confident these numbers will come down. NP advised that the procedure for managing attendance has been tightened up: pupils with poor attendance are followed up with a 'phone call from HT and escalated to a home visit. HP questioned if there is capacity for this level of intervention in school. It was suggested that the importance of attendance be emphasised during the initial Foundation Stage visits – NP to liaise with FS Phase Leader. KB queried the actual number of families with poor attendance, NP was able to advise that an estimated 10 families are a cause for concern but pointed out that there were medical issues/anxiety for some of these pupils which the school was aware of. RR asked if any of these pupils met the threshold for intervention by the WBC Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and drew attention to "school refusers". NP advised that the Family Support Workers (FSW) liaised with the EWO and worked directly with the families. NP went on to say that holidays during term time were not approved unless for a specific event, however, NP agreed that the next step would be to introduce fines for unauthorised absence and this measure was agreed by the GB. NP pointed out that post-Covid there has been high levels of sickness in school, RR asked if medical evidence is sought and was advised that the school tries to obtain evidence of doctor's/hospital appointments.

It was felt that it was time for parents to be reminded of the impact of poor attendance. NP acknowledged that parental engagement post Covid had declined and steps were being taken to improve school/home communication which was also part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). An action was agreed to review and update the Attendance Policy (NP), update the website and a letter to go out to all families reiterating the importance of school attendance (NP).

RR queried the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) pupil numbers, which have declined. NP advised that this is partly due to leavers and SP advised that families do not always complete the forms for eligibility. A discussion took place about raising awareness of PPG.

7. Approval of 2022-23 budget plan

SP presented an update to the 2022-23 budget plan (following Periods 12 and 13 Agresso reports from WBC) which was approved in draft at the GB meeting of 27.3.23. Governors understood that a revised assumption of 5% had been made for teachers' pay award and utility bill provision increased to £45k for electricity and £27k for gas. The actual carry-forward for 2022-23 is £23,470. DP noted that all funds have a carry-forward although the Speech and Language Resource (SAL) is forecast a deficit of £2,790, however, there will be an increase in High-Needs top-up as well as a promise of top-up funding for Year 6 pupils who will remain at The Winchcombe School. It was noted that the Phoenix Club (out of hours provision) had a healthy carry forward of £25,230, higher than estimated. DP requested it to be recorded that SP be commended in managing the budget during these challenging times.

<p>Lastly the 2023-24 budget plan was approved unanimously by the GB and the budget submission was duly signed by RR and NP.</p>
<p>8. Safeguarding Report RR/NP had no safeguarding issues to report.</p>
<p>9. Health and Safety/Premises update RK and SP completed a H&S inspection since the last GB meeting, no issues to report. Updated H&S checklist was circulated with meeting pack.</p>
<p>10. AOB (i) Governor Recruitment – the clerk has approached WBC Governor Services for interim support following RR and DPs’ decision to step down from the GB at the end of the 2022-23 academic year. A WBC colleague and former HT has agreed to join the GB, the clerk to make contact and arrange meeting ASAP. The clerk advised that listings on Governors for Schools and Inspiring Governance have been updated as well as a local volunteer service in Newbury. RR suggested approaching universities in the area for P.G.C.E students who may wish to volunteer and social media posts. LA agreed to post vacancies on Twitter, clerk to contact universities in area.</p>
<p>14. Date and time of next meeting Monday 10th July 2023 at 5.00pm</p>
<p><i>The meeting closed at 5.45pm</i></p>

	Supporting documents	Agenda item
1.	Agenda for this meeting	1.
2.	Minutes of the meeting of 27 th March 2023 Part I and II	4,5
3.	PPG/SEND report	5.
4.	Budget build report March 2023 Fund 01 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Fund 08 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Fund 13 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Fund 50 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Fund 55 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Fund 99 Draft 23/24 budget plan (inc. historical data) Staffing Structure Notes to budget	7.
5.	H&S Spring checklist	9.