



THE ST JOSEPH AND ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY FEDERATION

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA TEAMS
ON TUESDAY 19 MAY 2020 AT 4.00PM**

Present: Mr L Addison-Smyth, Mr M Blake, Mrs M Clark, Professor S Clark, Mrs P Conway, Mrs L E Donachie, Miss K Haggart, Reverend C Hayden, Mrs H Haywood, Ms C Lawlor, Mr D Murray (Chair), Mr P Norman (Acting Executive Headteacher), Mr C Savage, Mrs J Smith, Mr C Tate, Mrs S Walmsley

Also present:

Mrs J Nicholson, Clerk to the Governing Body

The meeting was opened with a prayer

		Action
1	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Governors to the meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Protocol for Teams Meeting</p> <p>The Chair explained the protocol to be following during the virtual meeting and highlighted the raise hand feature for Governors to use to ask any questions.</p> <p>A PowerPoint presentation was provided by the Chair, copies of which would be circulated to Governors.</p>	
3	<p>Declaration of Interest</p> <p>The Clerk invited Governors to declare any personal interests in agenda items at this or any point during the meeting.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest recorded at this meeting.</p>	
4	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>All Governors were present at the meeting.</p>	
5	<p>COVID-19 Lockdown Update</p> <p>The Headteacher provided an update on the current situation. Both schools were closed to the majority of pupils, with the exception of pupils of Key Workers, on 20 March.</p>	

	<p>Staff were in contact with pupils regularly and reported any concerns to the SLT. Positive Futures were also in contact with families and reported back any concerns.</p> <p>A home learning section, which was frequently updated, had been created on the school websites along with class blogs. Resources on wellbeing to support pupils and families was also available.</p> <p>The Headteacher had met with staff from St Leonards along with other primary school headteachers to discuss Y6 transition should schools remain closed.</p> <p>The number of pupils who were actually attending school was low and this was queried by a Governor. The Headteacher explained that as circumstances had changed for families, they were choosing to keep their children at home. Having spoken to Social Workers of vulnerable pupils, the main issue was attachment issues and the unsettlement the current situation caused making it more beneficial to keep those pupils at home. The Chair suggested that the Headteacher offer the option to attend school, even on a part time basis; this would be followed up during staff calls to parents.</p> <p>A Governor asked how many pupils were accessing information shared on the website and how was feedback shared. Teachers were ringing families on a fortnightly basis to ensure they were accessing the work and to see if they needed any assistance. A Governor questioned if once a fortnight was enough and the Headteacher explained the planning and daily lessons which were uploaded and how schools were trying to make it as easy as possible for parents, especially for those who were trying to juggle home learning with their own work.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Possible Return to School – Distancing Plans</p> <p>The Headteacher provided an overview of plans to accommodate the pupils in Reception, Y1 and Y6 at both schools. Risk assessments were being prepared and would be shared with the Governing Body with a meeting being arranged to discuss in detail along with updates on premises, health and safety, staffing, governance, communication with parents/pupils, the Local Authority, the Diocese and Y6 transition.</p> <p>Pupils would be in groups which they would stay with throughout the day and once plans were formulated parents would be provided with information to enable them to be able to make an informed decision on whether or not to send their children to school. A Governor questioned some of the operational planning and the staggered approach of pupils coming into school was explained by the Headteacher.</p> <p>The suggestion that a questionnaire be sent to parents to ascertain whether or not they intended to send their children to school was to be progressed.</p> <p>Governors formally thanked staff for all the time they had given to the careful planning preparation to ensure both the safety of staff and pupils.</p>	

<p>7</p>	<p>Consultation Update</p> <p>It had previously been agreed that consultation would take place on the closure of St Thomas More Primary School with increased capacity at St Joseph's Primary School. As a result of COVID-19, and work having to be refocused elsewhere, this had not progressed very far.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted the Bishop's vision that every Catholic school become an academy by July 2022 and that both schools would become part of The Bishop Wilkinson Trust at that time.</p> <p>The Chair put to the Governing Body the proposal to pause the consultation and continue to operate as both schools with the aim of moving towards academisation sooner rather than later.</p> <p>The support which would be available from The Trust to smaller schools was outlined, there would be greater job security and having spoken to other schools within The Trust, feedback was extremely positive. It could be however that it only delayed the closure of St Thomas More due to budget implications and falling numbers.</p> <p>Questions were invited and a Governor expressed concern that becoming an academy would not resolve the immediate issues in terms of being able to set a budget. The Chair outlined the greater financial support which would be available within the academy.</p> <p>Clarity was also sought on what would happen if the consultation on the closure was paused in terms of the requirement from the Local Authority to put plans in place to resolve the financial situation. The Chair explained how becoming an academy was a financial resolution to save the school, it would just become an alternative priority.</p> <p>The process to academise was shorter than the closure of a school so the change would happen within this financial year when the budget was in the most favourable position.</p> <p>Questions were raised on what would happen to The Federation. The two schools would be dealt with individually so there would be two Academy Orders with ultimate agreement to the schools academising being with the DfE. It was queried if one school could continue as maintained however this was not an option as the Bishop had advised that all Catholic schools would become academies and join a trust by July 2022.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust</p> <p>The Chair, having outlined details of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, asked Governors to vote on the resolution that the consultation to close St Thomas More Primary School be paused and instead consult on the academisation of both schools.</p> <p>Governors used the 'raise hand' facility to vote and the Clerk asked Governors to confirm by email. Having received all the votes, the Clerk confirmed that the decision was unanimous to consult on the academisation of both schools.</p>	

9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Following a query, Governors would be kept updated on the opening of both schools and Risk Assessments would be shared and discussed at a separate meeting prior to the re-opening.</p> <p>A Governor requested that the homeworking for pupils be revisited, following some of the issues raised by Parent Governors. The Headteacher agreed to explore this further.</p> <p>The Headteacher requested approval to extend the temporary contract for the teacher who was covering maternity cover at St Joseph's Primary School. Having spoken to the Budget Officer there was enough money in the budget for both members of staff and Governors approved the request.</p> <p>The Headteacher informed Governors that he had applied, and been successful, in his application for a permanent headship at a school in Darlington and would be leaving The Federation on 31st August. Governors congratulated and wished him every success for the future. The Chair would liaise with the Diocese regarding future arrangements.</p>	
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There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 17:45pm.

Signed
Chair

Date