

## **Minutes of the Special Governing Body Meeting held at Fairfield Primary School on Wednesday 11th February 2015**

### **Present**

Ms S. Lewis, Ms E. Scourfield, Ms C. Maher, Mr N. Gibbs, Mrs R. Jowett, Cllr R. Cook, Mrs A. James, Mrs E. Streets, Miss B. Hurlstone, Mr A Hanuk, Mr J. Dunlop (via Skype)

### **Apologies for Absence**

Dr R. Smith, Ms Z. Lincoln

### **1. Categorisation of Schools**

#### *Background*

The meeting has been called as many parents had been approaching parent governors with comments, observations and queries regarding the categorisation of schools and the schools' Amber grading and governors felt ill equipped to answer these effectively.

Ms Lewis gave governors an overview of the categorisation process and an explanation of the criteria used, together with an explanation of why we had been graded as Amber.

Ms Lewis then answered questions from governors.

The main points raised during the subsequent discussion were as follows:-

- Many parents were disappointed that a good school with fantastic teachers who were doing a great job supporting children across all ability ranges should be publicly disadvantaged.
- Governors felt that a real issue was that some parents now had the perception that the school is under-performing, the issue here being that all other Penarth schools had been categorised as Green.
- Governors felt that the categorisation process was unfair as it did not compare like for like. For example Fairfield had a higher percentage of children on free school meals and/or children with EAL than other schools in Penarth. Also attendance was a big issue, one of the factors contributing to this being the number of parents who take their children out of school during term time.
- Also, end of KS2 results which are published include children in our Resource Base which, although we only have two children this year, they make up quite a high percentage of the current cohort which is only 27. Therefore, statistically, we look bad compared to other schools in Penarth.
- Two Parents' Forums would be held the next day to give parents information re the process and to try and address parents' concerns and misperceptions and Governors would be provided with feedback.
- It was suggested that the governing body should write to the consortium asking for an explanation to pinpoint reasons why we have been categorised as Amber which we could then use to inform parents.
- Some parents did not appear to know how to contact members of the governing body. Governors' contact information is published in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents.

which is published on the school website. Parents can also contact the school office for contact information.

- Governors felt that we should challenge the WAG in terms of schools not being publicly disadvantaged.
- Governors felt that the issues from both the Parents Forum and the Consortium should be sought and then a decision made as to the way forward.
- The Amber category meant more support for the school but recent support had been in the form of 'excellent teachers' from another school coming into Fairfield to meet with teachers and offer their expertise. Although the support was welcomed, staff were somewhat demoralised by this as in all cases we are doing what we should be doing with perhaps only a little 'tweaking' required.
- There would be a meeting with the Challenge Adviser the next afternoon and there was a possibility that we may be re-categorised as yellow if we can show we have made progress.
- Governors were looking to putting resources in place and supporting the staff and felt that if Fairfield were unable to achieve Green there was something wrong with the system.
- The WAG had been contacted previously regarding the situation with published results and the Resource Base and the school had been informed that, as there were other schools with statemented children in mainstream, there cannot be any disaggregation.
- Governors noted that there was a need for sensitivity towards parents of children in the Resource Base in that they were aware that having a resource base was seen by us as a positive and not a negative.
- The point was made that there had been a significant number of children being admitted to Fairfield further up the school who were working at lower levels which cannot be attributed to Fairfield's teaching and staff.
- Governors felt that during the forthcoming Parents' Forums, the ethos of the school should be emphasized first before following this up with assessment and results.
- It is normal practice to upload presentations given at Parents' Forums to the website but it was felt that the categorisation presentation needs discussion to support the information contained therein. This presentation would not therefore be uploaded.
- Headteachers had requested that the Vale provide a general letter which could be sent out to parents to ensure consistency across all schools. The contents of the letter were discussed and it was felt that there was a need to be more proactive in future. However, it was noted that due to the timing of the publication there had been no time to pre-empt the reaction.

In summary, governors felt very disappointed that the school we all believe in is being disadvantaged by the process of categorisation and requested feedback from the Parents' Forums. They thanked Ms Lewis and stated that having the correct information, they now felt equipped to deal with queries from parents.

Ms Lewis stated that it was good to have the support of governors for which she thanked them. There being no further business the meeting was closed.