



THE GOVERNING BODY OF ST. JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Minutes of a special meeting of the Governing Body held at 6.00 pm at the school on Tuesday 22 November 2011

PRESENT

Rev. Dr. J.D. Cortis (Chair), Fr. M. Hall (Deputy Head) (for Mr. K. Higgins), Mr. R.T. Augustine, Mr. P Booth, Ms A. Clarke, Mr. M. Collins
Mrs. M. Day, Mrs. A. Farrow-Deighton, Fr. P. Mungovin, Mr. B. Poulter,
Mrs. S. Walker and Mrs. F. Wilson

In Attendance

Dr. P.K. Brooke (Minute Clerk)

1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Fr. Mungovin opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C. Anchor, Mr. N. Dalzell, Mgr. P. Fisher, Mr. J. Higgins, Mr. K. Higgins, Mr. T. Hinchcliffe, Mrs. G. Lowe, Fr. P. Smith and Fr. A. Wilson.

Governors noted that the Minute Clerk declared an interest in the subject under discussion as Vice Chair at Mount St. Mary's Catholic High School, Leeds and a governor at St. Francis Primary School, Morley.

3. CATHOLIC ACADEMIES

The Chair outlined the purpose of the meeting and referred governors to five documents that had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Statement from Bishop Arthur dated 4th October and entitled Academy Status
- Diocesan paper – Guidance for Governors on Multi Academy Trusts
- Leeds Diocesan Catholic Schools and Academies – an exploratory paper
- Kirklees Schools Partnership Agreement – the concordat
- Papers from Archbishop Holgate Church of England VA School which became an Academy on 1st April 2011

As background, it was noted that a meeting of Heads and Governor representatives from each of the pyramid schools (including St. Francis, Morley) had taken place on 10 October to discuss Academy status in the VA sector and how it could or would affect them. At that meeting it was agreed that each Governing Body should meet to discuss Diocesan proposals and the schools (Head and two governors from each) should all meet again on 28 November, having established questions that need to be raised for clarification or information. It was hoped that Angela Cox, Principal Education Officer for the Diocese of Leeds would attend this meeting.

The Chair opened the discussion concerning the two important Diocesan papers (the Bishop's note and the Guidance for Governors). The discussion began concerning the benefits or otherwise to the pupils that Academy status would bring. In general, of those present, it appeared that the majority were in favour of pursuing the Academy route further. It was noted that this was an opportunity to look at knitting together catholic education from age 3 to 18. Schools that are not Academies may by achieving a second OFSTED satisfactory (or worse) be linked to another (possibly non catholic) school. Another important benefit in pooling resources and sharing would be to have a central expertise in business issues, thus allowing educators more time to get on educating the children.

Following discussion, a number of questions arose as follows:

- The list of schools for Calderdale and Kirklees includes 2 High schools and 14 primary schools but not St. Francis, Morley – which is a feeder school to St. John Fisher. What is the rationale behind this cluster, how can it be split up and why is St. Francis, Morley excluded?
- If we go to Academy status, must we go with the Multi Academy Trust model or is it possible for one or two schools to go alone? What happens if a school says no to this model? Is the Diocese an “external sponsor” in this model? Who would the partners be for those schools that are graded by OFSTED as “satisfactory”?
- The issues concerning possible loss of autonomy by going with the Diocesan model need to be explored. How will subsidiarity (appropriate authority at relevant levels) be achieved? Which way is the direction of travel in terms of strategy and decision making – upward or downward? What is the key role of the Local Committees?
- What about the land ownership?
- Is the Diocese going to become another LA and if so where is the infrastructure to support this vision and staff?
- The issues of pooling resources and sharing with each other needs to be explored
- How would admissions work? Who would be the Admissions Authority?
- What happens about finance and who manages it within the Multi Academy Trust model? Would we be better or worse off in regards to VAT issues?

11/39 RESOLVED: To submit the questions above to the meeting of the pyramid schools and St Francis (Morley) scheduled for Monday 28th. November 2011.

11/40 RESOLVED: TO appoint Mr. Poulter, in addition to the Head and Chair, to represent the school at the meeting on 28th November

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was conducted at the meeting

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11/41 RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the full Governing Body be held at 6.00 pm at the school on Tuesday 13 December 2011

AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY

11/42 RESOLVED: That no part of these minutes, agenda or related papers be excluded from the copy to be made available at school