Diptford School – Minutes of School Ethos Committee meeting, 12 July 2021 (adopted 13 September 2021)

Present: Roger Knight (chair), Jodie Churchward, Helen Price, Lucy Carrol, David Sayle

Apologies: Janet Watts, Rebecca Filtness

In attendance: Ali Reid (for RE discussion)

1. Following the announcement of Lizzie Lethbridge’s appointment to a full-time role at Trust level and Jodie’s assumption of the Head’s role at Diptford, Lizzie will no longer be attending these meetings. Jodie was congratulated on her appointment. Roger apologised for his postponement of this meeting from its original scheduled date.

Previous minutes

**2.** The draft minutes of the previous meeting of 5 May 2021 were reviewed and adopted.

Matters arising

a) Terms of reference

3. Roger had circulated prior to the meeting a revised document combining the version proposed by Sharon Lord (the Trust’s SIAMS lead) with Rev David’s suggestion. This is to be discussed in conjunction with the arrangements for the next school year (item 7).

b) SEF document

4. Members had provided any comments on the document circulated by Jodie prior to the previous meeting direct to Jodie. Jodie will provide an update under item 3.

c) Interaction with Pupil Ethos Group (PEG)

5. Because of Covid restrictions it has not been possible to arrange any face-to-face interaction; this will have to be left until the new school year now.

Update from Jodie

6. Jodie has been working with Ed Pawson of the diocese and with Sharon Lord (trust SIAMS lead) to complete the SEF. The document will never be finished; updating it is a continuous exercise, providing new and updated records of the School’s activities. Jodie believes it to be good shape. It now includes a page at the back recording the Covid and lockdown response. Jodie expects to complete a further iteration by the end of term; she will provide a copy of this version to the Committee, not specifically for review and comment but so that we can be familiar with its content.

7. Jodie reported that numbers for September have increased to 60 plus 15 for the nursery. The reception cohort is only seven but there have and will be new pupils at all levels as families move into the area and others move schools. The Committee congratulated Jodie (and Lizzie) for the work that has led to this increase.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Nursery  | 15  |
| Reception  | 7  |
| Year 1  | 7  |
| Year 2  | 11  |
| Year 3  | 7  |
| Year 4  | 12  |
| Year 5  | 13  |
| Year 6  | 8  |
|   | 65 (80)  |

8. ‘Top of mind’ for Jodie now, in relation to this committee’s remit, is getting members into the School (when permitted) to observe collective worship sessions and to engage PEG members, and to get children back into the Church. Harvest and Christmas events are provisionally scheduled for 6 October and 9 or 16 December respectively.

Review of RE curriculum

9. Lucy, having attended a local governors’ briefing on RE had suggested that Ali, the school’s RE lead, join the meeting to provide a review of the RE curriculum, as part of the committee’s review of SIAMS activity.

10. Ali explained that RE is required to make up 5% of the overall curriculum which equates to broadly an hour per week. The necessary coverage is achieved with a rolling programme across every year group, taught by the class teachers under Ali’s direction. In addition there are Values days and other special sessions.

11. A number of key documents are referenced in the syllabus, including the CofE Statement of Entitlement to RE, the Devon and Torbay RE Agreed Syllabus, RE Commission report: Religion and Worldviews, and Understanding Christianity resources. RE is about far more than Christianity with consideration of different faiths – listening to everyone and respecting others’ views; this has been the focus of a Pupil Voice session.

12. For example, the question might be who are Muslims and how do they live. Examples would be provided supported by content from, for example, BBC videos.

13. There is a legal requirement for a daily act of worship and reflection time. These are separate from RE sessions and, although some crossover is inevitable, it is important to keep RE and CW separate. Mrs Gilbey is the school’s CW lead.

14. An important next step for Ali is to introduce assessment tools to monitor how the children are doing against their learning objectives. It was suggested in discussion that more RE focus (eg World Views) might usefully be included in the weekly school newsletter to help parents gain familiarity with what their children are learning.

15. Ali was thanked for what everybody agreed had been an interesting and highly informative session, and it was agreed that future meetings should include similar ‘expert’ sessions on relevant topics.

FODS Update and other Community thoughts

16. In relation to the Community, Jodie stressed her ambition to establish closer ties and to place the School at the heart of the broader Diptford community. She is working with those parents championing sustainability within the village with a view to hosting a Sustainability Event at the School. The hope is to encourage other village groups to become involved and thereby develop relationships.

[Whilst originally intended to take place during the autumn term, this event has now been pushed back to 2022 to avoid a resource squeeze with the planned school/FODS led Diptfest, which will also be extended to include the community.]

17. Jodie acknowledged the continued support of FODS, and noted that the new playground equipment is much appreciated by the children. Notwithstanding capital budget limitations her next focus is on enhancing the outdoor areas as places for reflection and outdoor learning. FODS has already commenced fundraising. Specifically Jodie would like to attach a canopy to the nursery classroom to expand the area available for learning and to provide sheltered play space in poor weather and to provide a covered seating area on the field, again to facilitate outdoor learning and to provide space for reflection. The canopy has been costed at approximately GBP5000 and the seating area is likely to be at least as much again. Roger noted that there might be sources of grant funding that could be approached by FODS.

Parental concerns and questions.

18. Following on from discussion at the previous meeting the only question concerned the recommencement of recorder lessons, which had been suspended during 2020 as a Covid related precaution. Jodie noted that the School was still subject to Covid precautions and that the provision of recorder lessons will be a matter for consideration at the beginning of the new school year in September, in conjunction with Angela Wild (who hitherto provided the lessons).

Committee arrangements for 2021/22

19. Roger had circulated some suggestions, compiled with Lucy’s assistance, concerning arrangements for the 2021/22 school year, encompassing membership, class representatives, Chair, frequency and timing of meetings, notice to parents. Little time was left for discussion of these matters. In any case Jodie expressed the wish that the committee and its membership remain as is at least until the expected SIAMS inspection.

20. Rev David suggested and it was agreed that, the latest draft revised Terms of Reference be adopted.

Roger Knight