



**THE ST JOSEPH AND ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY FEDERATION**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD IN THE SCHOOL  
ON WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2020 AT 6.00PM**

**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 D Fox, Director of Education  
Mrs J Nicholson, Clerk to the Governing Body

The meeting was opened with a prayer

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1 Welcome</b>	The Chair welcomed Governors to the meeting.	
<b>2 Apologies for Absence</b>	All Governors were present at the meeting.	
<b>3 Declaration of Interest</b>	The Clerk invited Governors to declare any personal interests in agenda items at this or any point during the meeting.  There were no declarations of interest recorded at this meeting.	
<b>4 Current Update</b>	The Chair presented a PowerPoint presentation to Governors.  At the previous meeting held on 10 September 2019, Governors had voted to consult on Option 4 which was to close both schools and open a new Catholic Primary School on the St Joseph's site with appropriate improvements.  Following meetings with both the Diocese and the Local Authority, this was now not an option as the Local Authority had indicated that they would not support the opening of a new school. The Local Authority was the statutory decision maker, and should Governors decide to consult on the closure of both schools the Local Authority would have to agree to the opening of a new school which they looked unlikely to do.	
<b>5 Finance Update</b>	A finance update had been sent out to all Governors advising that St Joseph's were now able to set a budget however St	

	<p>Thomas More was still unable to set a balanced budget and a potential deficit of £37,000 was projected for the year end rising to £120,000 by the end of the next financial year.</p> <p>Formal notification had been received that under Section 151 of the Local Government Act, 1973 the Local Authority were issuing a formal notice of concern. If Governors were unable to agree a plan with the Local Authority to address the forecast deficit, the Local Authority would suspend the Governing Body's right to a delegated budget and bring the budget into the full control of the Local Authority.</p> <p>Details of pupils, teaching and support staff and class sizes were provided for both schools and also shown as a combined figure. The Chair explained how funding was provided for each pupil with additional money for SEND and disadvantaged pupils or in care. The low numbers, especially at St Thomas More, were noted and with 215 pupils across The Federation this was smaller than the average primary school.</p> <p>The work which needed to be carried out to St Joseph's School was necessary regardless of the consultation and the Diocese had allocated LCVAP funding for this as well as additional funding to provide changes to accommodate all pupils across The Federation.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the additional work which could be carried out at St Joseph's in order to accommodate all pupils, should Governors agree to consult on Option 2 which was to close St Thomas More Primary School and continue to operate at St Joseph's with increased capacity for those pupils at St Thomas More.</p> <p>The carpark would be increased to incorporate the additional staff and changes to classroom space would be undertaken to accommodate all pupils from both schools.</p> <p>Funding had also been offered to improve EYFS and proposals to upgrade the outdoor area to enhance the current outdoor learning provision.</p>	
<p><b>6 Consultation Update</b></p>	<p>Having been advised by the Local Authority that it would be very unlikely that they would support the proposal to close both schools and build a new one a decision needed to be made on which option Governors would consult on.</p> <p>The Chair went through all the options in turn and the issues faced and the most preferred option would be Option 2.</p> <p>A Governor queried what would happen to the outstanding debt at St Thomas More School and the Chair's understanding was that if the school closed the debt moved to the Local Authority.</p>	

	<p>The Chair explained that a strategy exercise would need to be carried out and the Corporate Director of Finance advised of exactly what the Governing Body intended to do in terms of the deficit budget. If this was not done the Local Authority could remove the financial management from the Governing Body and make financial decisions for both schools.</p> <p>It was queried if a decision was made to consult on Option 2, would an interim measure be required to maintain financial control. It was hoped that once the Local Authority knew the Governing Body were consulting, they would be satisfied measures were being put in place to address the situation.</p> <p>Any decisions which needed to be made following further discussion with the Local Authority could take place at the next Governing Body meeting on 6 February.</p> <p>A Governor asked who would be leading on the consultation and Mrs Fox advised it would be the Governing Body. The Local Authority had provided examples and information had also been obtained from the Diocese. The Local Authority had offered to assist with the process however this would incur a charge.</p> <p>Governors questioned whether there was anything which could cause issues outside of the Governing Body's control. The only thing was the need to be able to accommodate all pupils from The Federation into one school.</p> <p>Clarity was sought regarding the changes which would occur to the Governing Body should St Thomas More School close. The Federation would be dissolved, an Instrument of Government created, and a new Governing Body established.</p> <p>Further questions relating to staffing and contracts were put to the Chair and further guidance would need to be sought from Human Resources.</p> <p>Following detailed discussion and an opportunity for questions, the Chair asked Governors to vote on Proposal 2. Two Governors abstained and the remainder voted to consult on Proposal 2.</p> <p>An update on moving forward would be provided at the full Governing Body Meeting which would be held on 6 February 2020 at 6pm.</p> <p>Governors offered their full support throughout the consultation process.</p>	
<p><b>7 Academy Update</b></p>	<p>It was the expectation that all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Hexham and Durham would become academies by July 2022.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8</b></p> <p><b>Dates of Future Meetings</b></p>	<p>The following date for the meeting of the full Governing Body was agreed:</p> <p>Spring Term 2020: Thursday 6 February at 6.00pm</p>	
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There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.15pm.

Signed .....  
Chair

Date .....