

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BUXTON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY  
HELD ON THURSDAY 23 JUNE 2011  
AT THE SCHOOL (SECONDARY PHASE).**

Present: Ms J.Durning (Chair)

**Authority Governors:**

Mr C. Kitson

**Trust Governors:**

Ms.R.Bynon

**Parent Governors:**

Ms S.Talbot

Ms.A Norris

Ms A Ross

**Community Governors:**

Mr M.Dixon

**Staff Governors:**

Mrs C.Dwight(Co HT)

Ms J.Maltwood(Co HT)

Mr.T.Wilkins

Mr.G.Clifford

Clerk to the Governors: Ms A.Money

Also present: Mr C Kiernan, Director Children and Young People Services,  
Ms J Griffin, Officer of the Schools Commissioner-Department for Education.  
Mrs C.Russell, Minute Secretary (LBWF Governor Services)  
Mr Mick Taylor, Deputy Headteacher.  
Mr Moazam Parvez, Deputy Headteacher.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ms H Masterton, Ms K.Munden, Mrs L.Hart and Mrs S. Gill.
2. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY:** Declarations of interest were noted in the item relating to Buxton Leadership restructure (Ms Maltwood, Mr Clifford and Ms Money, Messrs Taylor and Parvez).
3. **BUXTON SCHOOL AND CHOBHAM ACADEMY:** The meeting welcomed Mr C.Kiernan (Director CYPS) and Ms J.Griffin (Office of the Schools Commissioner).  
**(i)Mr C.Kiernan(Director CYPS):**  
a)Outcome of OFSTED Inspection: CK referred to the recent OFSTED pilot inspection conducted within the revised inspection framework. This had been a challenging experience but one which had resulted in a good outcome for the school with a 'satisfactory' judgement for which congratulations. This leaves the school in control of its own destiny but the situation of the school is not straightforward from the LA point of view. Admissions to the school secondary phase are low with between 4

and 5 out of 6 forms of entry filled which created problems in maintaining the curriculum especially at key stage 4 and budgetary difficulties. He also noted concern about retention of pupils in the upper phase of primary. This is of concern to the LA which is asking the DFE for additional resources for the secondary sector as the primary 'bulge' moves up.

b)Challenge Presented by New Chobham Academy: This will open in 2012/13 as a new PFI school in a spectacular building run by the Harris chain. It will recruit to all year groups. Other local popular schools present a further challenge to Buxton School. He referred to a map showing local secondary schools and intakes and stated that Buxton was the most vulnerable to loss to the Chobham Academy.

c)Condition of Buxton School(Secondary Phase): CK referred to the condition of the buildings being unattractive and accepted that a rebuild was needed but had been stopped by the cessation of BSF. Temporary buildings were being used to accommodate the rise in primary numbers and there was no money to address issues of secondary condition. Any funding that is available is likely to be linked to a change of governance status. The LA was neutral regarding academy status and would support any school seeking to become an academy in its own best interest.

d)Consultation with Parents and Pupils re Next Stage: CK advised the school to consult parents in a neutral way and not to discount another possible change of governance. At the end of this Parliament 30-70% of schools may be academies; this option was becoming more mainstream so open-minded debate was needed.

e)Governor Questions/Comments:

**Q. Regarding BSF Wave 5 if the LA received funding what priority would Buxton be given?**

A. CK noted that many LA secondaries are in poor condition but few are as high priority as Buxton. The LA had put the condition and planning case for investment and a response was awaited.

**Q. Regarding any consultation with parents, you accept that this would need to be discussed by the governing body first?**

A. That is accepted. Consultation with parents was my advice to you.

**Q. With regard to the next stage, what were you referring to?**

A. The school will need to revisit the issue of governance. The school is in a new stage of development following the failure of BSF. There is a need to reconsider along with the other schools that were not rebuilt.

**Q. What about the outcome of the judicial review and of the James Review?**

A. The James Review has reported and put the case for more centralised funding and the government is required to review our case re BSF but no indication of timescale has been given. Meetings were delayed followed changes to the political complexion of Councils following the elections in May. You need to decide what is most likely to result in capital investment for the school. Government policy favours academies which you should not discount on ideological grounds.

**C. I am surprised that the Council has a neutral view but have tried to listen to you regarding neutrality.**

A. Sorry you are surprised. This was a decision made by Cabinet last November which I followed as an officer and I have to advise schools of that. It's your decision but don't write off any particular form of governance on grounds of ideology.

**(ii) Ms J. Griffin, (Office of the Schools Commissioner):**

**a) Academy Status with Sponsorship:**

-JG referred to the opportunities available to make schools better places and improve outcomes for young people. There is a route for Buxton in this to become an Academy with a sponsor.

- Schools with outstanding results can opt for Academy status independently. Where outcomes are not so good, the government believes that Academies offer opportunities to raise outcomes and improve schools. Sponsorship offers opportunities for schools to benefit from the support of a sponsor with the expertise, capacity and time to help a school improve.

- The sponsor takes full responsibility for the school and stakes their reputation on improvement-that level of accountability is very important. A sponsor is likely to want change and to do different things but also to develop what is good about a school. Generally, schools needing sponsorship would have GCSE attainment below floor standards and progress below median. A case for sponsorship could be put that ministers would look at.

**b) Funding:**

-Ministers fund sponsored academies with the intention of raising standards. The sums involved are not large but during the process there would be support from the department including a project lead officer to focus on re-energising the school.

-There would also be funding for other changes following a needs assessment based on sources of evidence such as recent OFSTED inspection reports. The financial support envisaged would be of the order of £300-400,000.

-However, the case would have to be made that the school merits investment to support long-term improvement and the choice of sponsor would need to be justified.

-If ministers agree the proposal as supporting the future of the school the process starts. Factors considered would include the size of the school and the adequacy of demand for places. If a good sponsor can be found with a track record that sways ministers. You could make a proposal for independent conversion but that is unlikely to succeed as it would be difficult for this school to prove its capability.

**c) Process:**

-The LA used to lead regardless of the school view but ideally all parties should agree. It is still the case that it is the responsibility of LA's to ensure high standards in schools.

-The Academies Act puts governing bodies in a leading position, hopefully with LA consent. The Governing Body can ask the Secretary of State to issue an academy order with a particular sponsor agreed with departmental officials and the LA.

-You need to consider whether to explore this option and consider the choice of a sponsor. Such a decision would not be binding but would involve commitment of money, energy and time. When it is known what a difference an Academy could make then the final decision regarding Academy status would be made.

**d) Governor Questions/Comments:**

**Q.(JD) If we do want to explore the possibility of becoming a sponsored Academy how do we find a sponsor and who should we ask to sponsor us?**

A. JG referred to FG who works with existing sponsors. We would be happy to listen to LA/school ideas in order to discuss and develop a potential shortlist. We would need to consider if this would be right for this school. Sometimes the shortlist is 1. We would need to find willing sponsors and then work out a process.

**Q. You spoke about changes and improvements made as a result of schools becoming Academies. Can you give examples of this?**

A.(JG) Yes, these have included significant curriculum changes, reorganisation of the way the school operates and the raising of aspirations. It depends on the school. CK referred to the Walthamstow Academy. In 2005 it was down to 105 pupils(capacity 6 forms of entry) but is now full. Then 12% achieved 5+ A\*-C for English and maths. Attainment is now at the Waltham Forest average of 50%. That is a massive difference and it is now recruiting fully. It did have £34 million of investment but other schools have had high investment without that difference being made.

**Q. What did they do?**

A. There was a resolute focus on standards and recruitment increased.

**Q. We need evidence that it is Academy status in itself that brings about change. Other factors including investment or appointment of a new head could be equally powerful in this respect.**

A. Academy status opens doors and offers potential. The Academies making the greatest difference have focussed on standards with a very positive state of mind that examines and challenges decisions for impact on curriculum, inclusion etc. There is not accountability unless these have been thought through. In some Academies the results have been dramatic. Schools converting will do it in the hope of a change of thinking leading to improvement. Not all Academies have been successful. We need to consider what sponsors can contribute. Academy sponsors have to provide good services.

**Q. Is it possible to have access to some evidence?**

A. There are a number of published reports (referred to Price Waterhouse Coopers on DFE website). As Academies go along more evidence is available. Regarding buildings, try to position yourself for capital investment. If you don't get any funding you still need to ask how you can do your best for the young people here given the existing buildings. A strong sponsor could raise aspirations.

**JD:** Will come back to you with questions if necessary. CK and JG left the meeting.

e)Governor Views:

Noted here that chair had been advised that JG interested in Buxton so chair had invited her and CK for the LA.

**MD:** I'm not convinced but know we have to be pragmatic. I remember other government initiatives that were not what was thought. In the longer term proper finance is needed for schools. I'm not convinced, we need more information.

**FA:** CK is saying there is no choice as if there is not an Academy there will be no chance of capital funding. I want to know how Academy status would make a difference? How would it improve us? More information is needed about the operation of it.

**CD:** More information is needed. The context of the government agenda is to push the weakest to the wall. The LA's lack of strategic direction has contributed to our difficulties. With an Academy funding would be at the expense of other local schools. Schools in the south of the borough have been treated badly. We need to be clear about Chobham and wait to find out about investment. We need to talk to other schools about the LA approach. There may be a possibility to work with rather than at the expense of other local schools.

**JM:** We now have 3 Academy primaries at the expense of other local schools. We need a joint response with other heads.

**ST:** Was concerned about information and evidence. Drive and enthusiasm comes from your head not a provider of extra cash. If there is drive at the top, that filters down.

**AN:** We're in the process of recruiting a new head. I don't see the point of pursuing the Academy issue until after that.

**GC:** Agreed. I'm uneasy about sponsorship. With rising predicted outcomes it's a strange time to be going for Academy status.

**CK:** I'm opposed to Academy status and angry that millions have been put into Academy schools leaving out schools like this. Not all Academies are successful. We are currently a Trust school. What would happen to the trustees if we converted?

**JD:** The Trust is not really adding value over and above governance and acquisition of charitable status.

**TW:** No, no, no. TW expressed concern here about the Walthamstow Academy and changes to admission arrangements, accounting for much of the improvement. McEntee was improving despite being a 'dumping ground'.

**AR:** Concern was expressed re attendance of JG as a reflection on the school. The current head(secondary phase) had been of great benefit to the school. A new building would benefit the school. We need to concentrate on the decision about the executive head. I would want to see evidence/information about the results of Academy status.

**RB:** So Academies have a relentless focus on standards-what a good idea!. But there are some brilliant Academies. There is sometimes a capacity for newness to bring about change. I'm instinctively offended by the way the Academy issue has been approached but it does offer the possibility of more capacity. Do we want to find out more?

**TW:** Expressed concern about likely antipathy to trade unions.

**CD:** Expressed concern about the current quality of LA services and an approach that has drained capacity from the school. We are improving and on track for success.

**JD:** Stressed that she wanted what was best for the children and school. It was important that we discussed this before appointing an executive head who will ask us for our views on Academy status. I'm grateful that a constructive approach has been shown. I have seen the school struggle with the LA. A sponsor would be more efficient. There is a clear majority in favour of finding out more, evaluating the evidence, considering possible sponsors and considering the experience of other schools. There is no decision except to find out more.

#### 4. **BUXTON LEADERSHIP RESTRUCTURE:**

**Persons present who had declared an interest in this item left the meeting.**

CD advised here that she had decided not to apply for the executive head post as she was looking forward to retiring at Christmas. Governors extended their best wishes and thanked her for her hard work for the school. Staff were aware but had been asked not to discuss with parents and pupils as yet.

A draft report (confidential) re Buxton Leadership Team restructure was circulated in the meeting (noted) together with proposals from the Governance working group. After discussion it was unanimously **AGREED** to implement the revised proposals of the governance working group(noted) and implementation plan(noted).

Regarding the possibility of redundancies CD reported advice from Strictly Education that legal advice be taken re funding redundancies. It was noted here that the LA have 'topliced' the Aggregate School Budget to pay for redundancies it being **AGREED** to take legal advice if necessary.

#### 5. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2011:** These were received and accepted subject to noting that the school should be referred to as Buxton School.

6. **MATTERS ARISING:**
- (i)**Skateboard Park:** It was noted that this issue had been raised with the Trust as landlord and LA officers. Action is in hand with the school seeking support from the police/LA re anti-social behaviour.
- (ii)**Admission of Year 9 Child:** This has been made, with no issues. Progress has been reviewed with the parents and further siblings may be admitted to the school. Guidance has been drafted for staff, governors are aware and will support the school if necessary.
7. **GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP:** The resignation was noted of Amanda O'Brien and that 2 nominations have been received for the vacancy so an election will be needed if both nominations are current.  
**ACTION:** Chair to explain position to initial applicant; clerk to take forward the election.
8. **HEADTEACHER'S REPORT:** CD reported briefly re SDP priorities for 2011-12 noting that these had been written early in the term following the pre-OFSTED health check and review of the current SDP. They will be used by the Middle Leadership Team to plan priorities. The pilot OFSTED inspection followed, it being noted that the Action Plan priorities are reflected in the OFSTED inspection key issues. Priorities regarding teaching and learning, active teaching, curriculum developments cross phase, care/guidance/support, development of communication centre provision, implementation of new senior staff structure, development of middle leadership team responsibilities, development of a positive public profile for the school and development of the role of the governing body were endorsed unanimously by the governing body.
9. **POLICY RATIFICATION:** The meeting unanimously ratified policies considered by the resources committee re staff pay policy, performance management policy and health and safety policy. The governor expenses policy was accepted in principle subject to discussion at the next resources committee meeting.  
(Proposed by Clyde Kitson and seconded by Mike Dixon).
10. **CONSULTATION WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ON CLOSURE FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:** It was unanimously **AGREED** that the head, in consultation with the Governing Body, adhere to existing Waltham Forest term dates for 2011/12 and inform the LA of this decision.  
**ACTION:** School.
11. **ANNUAL GOVERNOR CONFERENCE:** It was **AGREED** to hold this on 15 October 2011.  
**ACTION:** Chair/AM to organise, offers of help gratefully accepted.
12. **GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEES AND TRUST BOARD UPDATE:**
- (a)**Resources Scrutiny Committee 08-06-2011:** Minutes were received and accepted. The meeting had agreed a revised catering proposal, Statements of Internal Control and Best Value, letter re support staff Terms and Conditions of Service from governing body, staffing update, staff absence trend analysis, financial statements, bank interest proposal, policy review and any other business.
- b) Performance Scrutiny Committee and OFSTED Report:** The recent 'satisfactory' judgement was endorsed by all. A vote of thanks was recorded to the leadership team and staff on an encouraging and positive report.

**c) Transformation Board:** Minutes were noted.

**d) Communications Working Party:** Minutes will be circulated.

**e) Governance Working Party:** This had agreed the text of the letter re support staff terms and conditions of service. Regarding governor support it was proposed to change the provider of governor support due to lack of clarity in advice and support received from LBWF Governor Services; support from Essex County Council to be sought. Governing Body recorded thanks to Caroline Russell for excellent minutes and advice provided during meetings.

**ACTION:** Governor Services to note.

**f) Trust Board Meeting of 11 March 2011:** This was noted.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

**(i) Proposed Industrial Action 30 June 2011 by NUT and ATL:** This was noted and school closure **AGREED** on grounds of health and safety.

**(ii) Educational Visit January 2012 to Disneyland, Paris:** Outline permission was given for this visit cost £179 per pupil.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** A schedule of meetings was **AGREED**.

**The meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.**