

Westgate Primary School

Minutes of a meeting of the governing body with parents held at the school on Tuesday 25th February at 6.00 pm

In attendance: Jackie Warren (Acting Chair of Governors), Daniel Terry (Deputy Headteacher), David Lloyd (Executive Headteacher/Headteacher, The Manor Community Primary School), Sue Tunnicliffe (Senior Improvement Adviser Gravesham and Dartford), Julie Barton (School Improvement Adviser), Karen Fitzpatrick (Kent Clerking Service)

Parents were asked to sign in on arrival.

1.	Welcome
	<p>The meeting opened at 6.05 pm.</p> <p>Jackie Warren, Acting Chair of Governors, took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting on behalf of the staff and governing body. She thanked everyone for coming. Introductions were made around the table. The Chair informed the meeting that senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body were present in the audience.</p>
2.	Introduction
2.1	<p>The Chair opened by saying how very disappointed the governors were with the results of the Ofsted inspection in December and she was sure that parents shared that view. Over the year prior to the inspection school had been given intensive support by the LA (Local Authority) and the school had been engaged with this. In the view of the inspectors, the results of this hard work were not yet showing enough improvement. She was really saddened to read the report, however there was a need to draw a line in the sand and move forward.</p> <p>It had been positive to see that the report recognised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pupils enjoyed being at school.▪ Pupils felt safe.▪ Attendance was above average.▪ Pupils were eager to learn.▪ The school organised many trips and positive activities which have an un-measurable beneficial impact. <p>The Ofsted inspector had not felt that the hard work of the leadership at the time of the inspection would address the failings identified in the report.</p> <p>The purpose of this meeting was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explain the report.▪ Explain what Special Measures meant.▪ Share what was being done to improve. <p>The Chair assured parents that the situation would rapidly improve.</p>

2.2	<p>Sue Tunnicliffe thanked so many parents for coming to the meeting, which showed that they really cared about the school and would be part of the movement to take the school out of Special Measures quickly. She also thanked the staff and governors who were present.</p> <p>Reading the report was not comfortable for anyone. A lot of positive developments had taken place since then and there was forward movement. A lot of these changes had been due to the involvement of EHT and the support from the Manor School.</p> <p>Ofsted gradings were Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement (previously Satisfactory) and Inadequate. Westgate had been judged to be Inadequate because there were not enough children making enough progress. Teachers had not helped children to attain the required levels or to make enough progress in the school. This was a massive failing in the school and there would be a lot of work to do to deal with this.</p> <p>As Westgate was now in a category known as Special Measures the school would have a lot more LA (Local Authority) and additional support. The LA would provide direct support in the form of Julie Barton, the School Improvement Adviser, working in the school on a regular basis. Support would be purchased to address areas of work where additional expertise was needed. Sue Tunnicliffe would visit the school at 6 weekly intervals to look at progress, looking at that 6 weekly period as a measuring point to ensure that nothing went off the boil. The first of these meetings would be soon. It would set a marker in the sand, set out expectations for the coming 6 weeks and identify what actions the school and LA needed to carry out to get there.</p> <p>The LA would produce a Statement of Action - a plan to get Westgate to Good. This would address all of the points raised in the Ofsted report that had identified why the school was not Good and what further work the school needed to do. The plan would be measured and evaluated every 6 weeks in order to be clear that everything was being addressed.</p> <p>A lot of work had taken place already with the support of Manor Primary School, and a lot of this was in place before the inspection. The LA had identified concerns regarding progress in the school and the Deputy Headteacher (DHT) and Manor were working together. It had been known that there were issues, they were being addressed, but there hadn't been time to address them in class.</p> <p>The aim would be for the school to be removed from Special Measures by December 2014. This was a short and ambitious timescale but she felt that with the resources and support being given the school could be out of trouble in that timescale. From tomorrow they needed to ensure that every child in the school would get the best possible education that they could. Daily work would improve different aspects of the issues raised by Ofsted. She was confident that this would work. Parents would have regular reporting so that they were aware of how their children were doing.</p> <p>An HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector) would be attached to the school and visit frequently to see what work was under way and if LA support was in place to get the school to Good as soon as possible. That inspector would stay with the school until it was judged to be Good.</p> <p>One other aspect to be considered in a school in Special Measures was that the DfE</p>
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	<p>expected that it would convert to an academy. She was aware that the governors had started to consider that option before the inspection. The academy issue could not be allowed to de-rail the school improvement agenda. That process would happen in the background and the LA would help the governors to handle it.</p> <p>Academies were funded directly by the government. In the case of LA schools the funding was allocated to Kent and divided among schools. The political agenda was that eventually all schools would become academies. Schools in Special Measures would become sponsored academies. A good school or organisation would submit bids for sponsorship to the LA. The intention was to be up-front with parents about this, there would be no surprises.</p>
<p>2.3</p>	<p>The EHT (Executive Headteacher), David Lloyd, introduced himself as the Headteacher of The Manor Community Primary School in Swanscombe. In a recent Ofsted inspection that school had been judged to be Good with Outstanding Leadership and Management. There was a large team of committed teachers at the school. He was the father of children who were in a school that had gone in to Special Measures and was reminded of sitting in a similar meeting and wondering what it meant for his children. It meant that the school had reached a place and was bouncing back. A lot of help was being provided by committed people who cared deeply about what happened to the children. He would be happy to send his children to Westgate in this situation because he knew that work would be taking place to take the school to Good as soon as possible.</p> <p>Regular meetings were taking place with Manor teachers to work on specific issues. Reviews had taken place of Writing, Maths and Reading and the result would be accelerated progress. That meant better than expected progress, which would be an indication of Good. There was an absolute commitment to getting the best for our children, and this responsibility was taken seriously.</p> <p>He was committed to looking at teaching on a daily basis. The children had not yet been formally introduced to him so he had been trying to visit lessons unobtrusively. He had observed the work taking place and the new systems the pupils were using to be part of their learning journey. He would watch their progress closely. He asked the parents if any of their children had spoken about their targets. The parents indicated that they had not and he encouraged them to ask their children about this. The aim was to set the children on fire with learning so that they wanted to talk about it all the time. He would ask them to show their learning to their parents. If the children were not on fire they would not make progress. Once that was achieved he would feel that the school was on track to a Good judgement.</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p>The DHT (Deputy Headteacher) reinforced that had already been said. He could speak on behalf of the staff; they understood that the school was not out of trouble and knew what they needed to do to get to Good, they would work hard and were committed to that. They understood that every individual child mattered and wanted the school to be Good before December. As a team they were committed to ensuring that the children were well rounded individuals able to access learning, they were ready to transfer to secondary school. He had been able to speak to some parents individually and was confident that parents and the school would work together. He invited parents to talk to himself and the staff about any concerns.</p>

<p>3</p>	<p>Discussion</p> <p>The Chair invited parents to ask questions, asking them to state their name and the year group that their child was in.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Q – What were the improvements, what had been done so far?</p> <p>A – Individual targets had been set for all children; this was the key to excellent progress. Career stage expectations had been set for all teachers so that they knew what was expected in terms of progress for all children, and the strategies needed to attain that. Help had been provided for teachers in planning.</p> <p>Q – Did this mean they were starting from scratch?</p> <p>A – Everyone knew what they needed to do, now there was a need to use expertise to sharpen up practice. There were different issues for everyone and all were being helped.</p> <p>Q – Miss Bell had left at the end of Term 3. Parents needed more information on homework.</p> <p>A – The DHT informed parents that a letter would go out tomorrow explaining that the original teacher appointed had not been able to take up the post. The Phase Leader would oversee teaching in that class and the DHT would monitor the situation to ensure that high standards were maintained. It was agreed that everybody needed to know that Year 2 were getting the best education and the DHT would visit that and every class every day to ensure that things were happening as they needed to.</p> <p>Q – Year 2 was a very important year, the pupils needed to be on the ball in their learning, Reading needed to be to a high standard in order to avail themselves high standard of education. Where was Miss Curtis?</p> <p>A – The Headteacher was not in school.</p> <p>Q – Why had parents not been told? Was she coming back? Parents were not happy that they and the children had not been told about staff changes, they felt this had been kept secret.</p> <p>A – Sue Tunnicliffe explained that, for reasons relating to employment law, it was only possible to say that Miss Curtis would be absent for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>Q – The LA knew the school was in difficulties, why were parents not made aware?</p> <p>A – Sue Tunnicliffe advised that the responsibility for the school sat with the school leadership, with the LA working alongside. It was not the responsibility of the Local Authority to comment in the circumstances.</p> <p>The Chair advised the parents that it was the responsibility of the governing body and leaders in the school to ensure that it was Good or Outstanding. They needed to look at</p>

how children were progressing and achieving and seek external assistance if they felt it was needed. This happened in every school, the job was to unpick what was happening and look at how more effort, resources and LA support would bring about improvement. At the time of the OFSTED visit this process was taking place. Some staff had left but it was not possible to say why due to employment law.

Q – The academy process had already been in progress, so the school had not been working effectively.

A – The Chair and explained that the governors and senior leadership team had been looking at opportunities for collaborative work, not necessarily academy conversion. She loved the ethos and feel of the school and would not want that to be compromised. Collaboration could be one way forward.

Q – It seemed that a lot of things were not actually being addressed. You couldn't compartmentalise schools. How was progress measured in other Kent schools, how did you get accelerated progress? Would it overload the children?

A – The EHT explained that the approach would be different for every child and every teacher. Every teacher was being up-skilled in order to be able to bring about accelerated progress. At the Manor School it had moved from Satisfactory in 2012 to Good and Outstanding in just over 18 months - he had a proven track record. He had been EHT at schools over 15 years and moved them to good through the strategies that he would use at Westgate.

For example in Writing targets had been set related to sub-levels of progress, then the work needed to move forward had been identified with the teachers and pupils planned their learning with the teacher. The focus was on the skills needed as they were taught pupils were being given opportunities to use and apply them.

Q – This was what schools should do anyway.

A – New processes would be used.

Q – What would parents be taught the new processes?

A – Yes, the school would work with parents as the next stage. In his experience at the Manor School it had been necessary to address the needs of the pupils first, which in some cases have been a big change.

Q – The children needed a stable teacher.

A – Agreed.

Q – There been failures in communication. What was being done to support this parent's son who would leave the school in June/July? Good by December would be too late.

A – Julie Barton informed the parents that she had over 35 years experience in teaching as a headteacher or consultant. She had been the headteacher of an Outstanding school

twice and knew what that looked like. She worked in all of the schools in the Dartford area and really understood what strategies worked and the right curriculum. She would visit Westgate every week and monitor children's progress every six weeks. She would look at:

- Where they were now
- Where they need to be
- What was being done to get them there

It was important to ensure that the teachers knew what they needed to do and this would be audited. There was some very good teaching in the school.

Q – In her experience working with all the schools in Dartford she would have a well rounded knowledge. David Lloyd took his school to Outstanding in 18 months, was it realistic to expect that Westgate could improved by two levels in nine months?

A – Julie Barton assured the parents that there was very good teaching and learning and leadership in the school. It would be a challenge but this was possible with the right leadership and ensuring that teaching was consistently good. Career progression was in place for the teachers in terms of appraisal. The EHT will take on the appraisal cycle.

Q – Had she considered the past 12 to 24 months? The school had been aware that an Ofsted visit was coming and looked at Academy opportunities the timing had not been right.

A – Julie Barton explained that progress had already been happening at the time of the Ofsted visit but there would need to be three sustained years of improvement against floor standards. Last year attainment had started to dip, the LA had started to visit more frequently, and she had brokered the collaboration arrangement with the Manor School. This had not been a knee-jerk reaction since the Ofsted visit in December. The LA had monitored the situation but taken a step back because the leadership team were responsible for ensuring quality.

The EHT informed the parents that he had been in the school since 16th January for three days per week and for a couple of days before Christmas. He wanted to say that there was great teaching in the school.

Q – A parent felt that it was too late for Year 6 - they had not seen changes in spite of many past visits and were angry.

Q – Parent of a Year 5 child stated that the previous year had been horrendous. They were not certain that their children would be ready for secondary school, they had lost a lot of teachers and had several different teachers involved in class. There was a lack of confidence that this could be made up.

A – The Chair responded that governors had been involved in pupil progress meetings for the last 18 months and had been very clear about where progress was lacking. Measures to address this had already been put in place and were being monitored.

The DHT stated that he had ensured consistency of teaching this year and made provision for those pupils who were not making progress. It was clear from the Ofsted report that there were pockets of progress and green shoots. Ofsted had recognised that the good

elements were making a difference. He had made sure that children going into Year 5 would have consistent teaching and support.

Q – The parent of a child with additional educational needs expressed concern that they would need a proper introduction to the new teacher. This had been carried out very well last year and her child had trusted Miss Bell.

A – The DHT assured her that the specific needs of children were understood and that the teacher put in place would be of high quality. A proper introduction and transition would be ensured. He invited parents to speak to him if they had any concerns.

A parent who had a child in Reception spoke of the excellent support that her daughter had been given since joining the schools, in particular from the Teaching Assistant.

Q – The parent of a child in Year 2 stated that it would be wrong for the children to face a similar situation with different teachers in the coming year.

A – The DHT agreed that there had been a difficult set of circumstances to deal with this year and assured parents that a different path would be followed to address that.

Q – How would teachers continue to be motivated, and would recruitment be difficult?

A – The DHT assured parents that the staff were committed and keen to improve. Some areas needed to be tweaked to ensure consistent progress. The report had been a big knock for staff but he was confident that they would be able to move forward at the appropriate pace. In this situation they had access to massive support and resources. They did not want to be in this situation, children had one chance and staff were highly motivated to make the changes as soon as possible.

Q – When would parent see the plan with milestone targets? How would progress be recorded so that they could monitor how well their children were doing?

A – The DHT informed parents that a termly report would be sent out giving the attainment level, effort grading and steps to move forward. The Statement of Action would be published on the school website.

Sue Tunnicliffe added that the Statement of Action would be published once it had been confirmed to be fit for purpose at the first HMI visit.

The DHT informed the parents that in the interim he would publish the School Action Plan on the website and send a letter to parents telling them when this was available. It would also be available in hard copy on request from the office. Parents would also be kept informed through the HMI “mini Ofsted report”, which would be published.

Q – Would there be a forum for parents to communicate their views?

A – The DHT informed parents that there would be regular parents meetings; it was important for parents to be informed and able to raise concerns. Part of the improvement process would be to keep them up to date. Parents would also receive termly newsletters

and Parentmail. His door was always open and parents could make an appointment to speak to the class teachers or senior management about concerns or issues.

Q – Milestones would be on the website, what about individual children's targets?

A – These would be sent to parents termly. The school was open from 8.40 am. Monday to Thursday this slot was for marking and feedback. On Fridays from the start of this term this would be an opportunity for parents to come in and see their children's work.

Q – A parent had raised concerns regarding homework and other issues on numerous occasions with the previous headteacher with no results. She felt her child had been failed throughout the school and emphasised the need for the school to stick to what had been promised.

A – The DHT informed parents that clear diary dates would be set in advance. Consideration would be given to the best time of day to engage with parents, as not all would be able to come in on Friday mornings. At this stage that was a new initiative to be trialled.

Q – While appreciating the need for progress to be rapid, would the pressure be too much for the children?

A – The EHT assured the parents that it was the duty of the adults involved to judge what the situation was for each individual child. The staff would help the pupils by giving them strategies to deal with their work; the aim would be give gentle help that would enable them to be happy to work. This was not a unique situation, but one that other children across the country dealt with.

The Chair reminded parents that the Ofsted inspector had found that the children were happy, eager to learn and had extra capacity. The school had not been feeding that.

Q – How could children be supported to be happy and how could that be defined? What were the actual processes? How would children learn and be engaged? What was the failsafe if the school was not Good by December? The solutions were not being shared.

A – The EHT explained that it was hard to share solutions because as adults the staff would identify the needs of each individual child by speaking to them and then identify the best ways to support them.

Q – How would that be dealt with? What would be said?

A – Sue Tunnicliffe acknowledged the real anxiety regarding what the changes would mean for the children on a daily basis. Again this picked up on the need to ensure good communication and to improve on what had happened in the past. This would be addressed at a strategic level by communicating with the parent body about developments, also at an individual level in terms of informing parents about what their children were learning. They would also be aware of changes to teachings styles and approaches to learning.

At the strategic level the Statement of Action would be clear on the approaches to the curriculum and teachers would be supported and coached to be able to deliver it. The school would be responsible for running curriculum evenings for parents. They would need to understand the details about their child and how they would be helped to learn.

The DHT informed the parents that 6 weekly Pupil Progress meetings would be held for discussions about individual children to decide the best approach for them and any support needed. Support would include purchasing in resources to deliver 1-1 support where required and group work would be undertaken.

Q – The school had already been following those processes so surely this was not a change?

A – The DHT responded that there were changes to how lessons would be delivered and children would be more involved.

Q – Year 5 were doing the same homework as lower year groups, this did not make sense.

A – The DHT explained that this was Talking homework, which was designed as a family activity. A letter explaining this had been sent out. It was designed to encourage children and parents to talk as a family about a topic, rather than reflecting developmental stages.

A parent who had two children, one in Year 2 and one in Year 4, stated that one of her children had been talking with the family about Read Write Ink and been able to explain what it meant. Some children would be more eager to talk than others. Both of her children were very happy at the school. Although the Ofsted report had been disappointing if the children were happy they would learn.

Q – The grandparent of a Year 2 child was concerned that over recent days the child had been unhappy. There was a supply teacher in the class and the children were repeating work that they had already done. She was very concerned about how the children would settle with the new teacher over the next 6 months.

A – The DHT agreed that it had been very unfortunate that the teacher who had been appointed for Year 2 had been unable to take up the post. A new teacher would be starting with a proper handover ensured by the Phase Leader and himself.

Q – What had the children been told about the situation regarding the Headteacher? Parents were emphatic that they wanted to have information about the future regarding the Headteacher. They asked if a Headteacher would be appointed.

A – The Chair explained that the governors had been asking what they could say about this. The Headteacher had not left immediately after the inspection as was rumoured, but had returned for a period after that.

Julie Barton informed the parents that there was an EHT in place and that it was common for an EHT to lead more than one school. Due to employment legislation there was information about the situation with the Headteacher that could not be shared.

Q – Who would take responsibility for rolling out the Action Plan and concerns from parents?

A – The EHT and DHT would be responsible for this.

Q – Some parents had never had problems with the quality of teaching. Teachers must feel terrible about the current situation. Would they be supported?

A – The EHT confirmed that this would be the case.

Q – Would extra funding be supplied for Teaching Assistants to support the teachers? That would make it easier for them to teach. There was a need for more support for the children who had been let down.

A – Sue Tunnicliffe informed the parents that support for teachers was being provided in a variety of forms. David Lloyd was providing personal support in his capacity as Executive Headteacher. Good and Outstanding teachers from The Manor School were working with Westgate teachers to share good practice and set expectations. Resources had been provided to allow Westgate teachers to visit other schools to learn from examples of Outstanding teaching. She was confident that all of the teachers wanted to do the best that they could. Some had been let down in the past by a lack of additional support and practise. The coaching model being used was very strong and would be effective with support from The Manor School staff.

Q – A parent suggested that there should be more adults in the classrooms for a period of time.

A – Sue Tunnicliffe confirmed that there would be added capacity to provide more support where appropriate to ensure that the pupils made best progress in the short term.

Q – The school was in Special Measures and yet the quality of teaching was good, this didn't add up, what was the reason?

A – Sue Tunnicliffe informed the parents that the quality of teaching had not been good across the board. There had been some inadequate teaching. In effect the school had reached the bottom and would now rapidly pick up.

Q – What would happen when the EHT left, how would the school have leadership to ensure that it would be kept where it needed to be?

A – The EHT explained that he would develop the leadership capacity in the school in order that the improvement would be sustained when he left. He had moved away from The Manor School and it was still improving.

Q – What then? Would the school have a Headteacher? Could Mrs Curtis come back and the school go down again?

A – Sue Tunnicliffe assured the parents that the school would be left under the leadership of a Headteacher. The Chair confirmed that the school would not be left in a situation

where it would inevitably fail.

Q – What were the consequences if the school was not Good in December?

A – Sue Tunnicliffe informed the parents that the HMI would judge where the school was and it would be their decision regarding whether the school was ready to be judged Good at that time, and whether to call in a full inspection team to confirm that judgement. If the HMI felt that the school was not ready they would state what needed to happen and review the situation in January/February. All feedback from the HMI would be published on the Ofsted website.

Q – How long had it taken York Road School to come out of Special Measures?

A – Julie Barton informed the governors that York Road School had converted to an academy before coming out of Special Measures. She understood that it was very unlikely that Westgate would convert by December. To come out of Special Measures the school needed:

- Good quality teaching
- Good monitoring systems
- Good leadership.

The EHT would aim to build the capacity for the school to drive forward as a team. Communication and engagement with parents would be critical. Parents were entitled to know what was happening and the school needed to get smarter at informing them. Monitoring this was part of her job and that of the governors. Good practice from other schools would be brought into Westgate.

On conversion to academy the LA would continue to be involved with a “light touch” approach. At York Road she thought it took over a year to get to Good, but she felt that there was a better starting point here.

Q – Rather than converting to academy would it be better to stay with the LA?

A – There was no choice in that.

Q – Who monitors academies?

A – Julie Barton advised that the Governing Body and Ofsted, the LA would have some involvement because they had an input into the quality of schools in their area. There were situations when the LA might be asked to step in and mediate, for example in a situation regarding a parent and an academy. The situation regarding responsibility for education was changing. She had recently been asked to stay on as School Improvement Partner in a local academy.

Q – What would the timeline be for academy conversion? This process was starting with the LA and would hopefully be completed by the time they stepped away.

A – The DHT informed the parents that the process was about ensuring a smooth transition for parents and children. It would be managed to make sure that it flowed seamlessly. There were lots of different academy models and there was no need to worry

	<p>about them in detail at this stage. The priority now was to provide quality education for the pupils.</p> <p>Sue Tunnicliffe assured parents that when the LA and governors were in a position to share their thinking on academisation the parents would be involved.</p> <p>Q – Were the rules regarding academies different? A co-operative model seemed to be a better option.</p> <p>A – Sue Tunnicliffe informed the parents that “academy” was an umbrella term. Other options could be considered at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Q – Would the governors have training?</p> <p>A- The Chair informed the parents that the governing body had been in the process of reviewing the structure prior to the Ofsted visit. Subsequently the Chair of Governors had resigned and she (Jackie Warren) was Acting Chair. Historically it had been difficult to recruit governors and so there were not many on the governing body. This made monitoring difficult. The governors were already in discussion with the LA about how they could move governance forward and were looking to form a new, tighter governing body. Existing governors would be asked if they were prepared to stay on in light of the fact that meetings would be held monthly and there would be an expectation that they would be regularly involved in monitoring activities and training. Good governors would be borrowed from elsewhere to complement develop good governance. The Ofsted report had left all with some responsibility for the situation, and governors would address this.</p> <p>The governing body would be meeting during the next week, which would be close to the next HMI visit. By then it would be possible to see that the governing body had restructured and was in a much better place.</p> <p>Julie Barton added that good schools communicated well with parents. This was a two-way process and parents could do a lot to help. The school would look at various ways to do this including, workshops, blogs and good use of the website. The school needed parents to communicate with them, so she encouraged parents to work with the school.</p>
4	<p>Close</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She hoped that they had been given enough opportunity to have their say. If there were any more questions they could be directed to the EHT and DHT and she would leave her contact details.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.</p>
<p>Actions for school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish School Action Plan on website. ▪ Ensure communication by regular parents’ meetings, newsletters, Parentmail etc. ▪ Publish diary dates for parents well in advance. ▪ Keep timing of parents’ meetings and other visits under review to ensure that they are accessible. 	