

GOVERNING BODY OF HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Date of Meeting	11 th June 2020
Venue	Virtually via Zoom
Chair	Martin Young
Clerk & Minutes	Suzette Nicol
Time	5:00 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP

Governor	Category
Martin Young (Chair)*	Co-opted
Andy Smith (Headteacher)*	Staff (Head)
Charlie McKnight*	Co-opted
Robyn Bruce*	Co-opted
Father Tom Pyke*	Co-opted
Ranjani Shrutisagar	Co-opted
Vacancy	Co-opted
John Bradshaw	Local Authority
Susannah Abdelouahed*	Parent Governor
Kiran Rahman*	Parent Governor
Vacancy	Parent Governor
Eddie Miller*	Staff

Also In Attendance	Role/Title
Lawrence Houldsworth	Associate Member
Rebecca Abrahams (Head, St Luke's Primary)	Observer
Nimesha Nagahawatte (Deputy Head, St Luke's Primary)	Observer
Alison Gawthrop (Head of Primary Learning & Achievement)	Observer

***Denotes attendance**

PART 1 – OPEN SECTION

	ITEM
1.	Welcome, Apologies For Absence and Declaration of Pecuniary Interests
	The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
	Apologies for absence were received from John Bradshaw.

	<p>Father Tom Pyke asked whether he should withdraw from the meeting and then re-join the meeting when Rebecca Abrahams joined the meeting as he was Chair of St Luke's and wanted to avoid any conflict of interest. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that Father Tom could stay but that he would not take part in the discussions until Rebecca joined the meeting.</p> <p>There were no other pecuniary interests declared.</p>
2.	<p>Future Plans For The Leadership of Harbinger</p>
	<p>The Chair referred to his report and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which he had circulated prior to the meeting and said that he would be asking Rebecca Abrahams to join the meeting to answer any questions. After this, Rebecca would be asked to leave the meeting so that a decision could be reached by Governors. First and foremost he wanted to know whether Governors had any comments to make on the documents. Two Governors said that they first wanted to see how the discussions would evolve before making their own contribution. A Governor mentioned that having read the documents and given the limited time, the arrangements appeared to be a good situation for Harbinger to be left in. The staff in Harbinger knew of Rebecca Abraham and Harbinger staff got on well with the staff at St. Luke's.</p> <p>Father Tom mentioned that St Luke's was not a school that was ruled by the parish but was a school that was provided for the parish because the church recognised that it was important for people to have education. He said that the proposed arrangement should not be seen as a takeover from his viewpoint or that of St Luke's. It was just an arrangement which was about ensuring the strength of Harbinger and its continued offer to the local community. St Luke's should not be seen as trying to take over.</p> <p>Alison Gawthrop asked the Governors whether they understood the process with St Luke's and how the request to Rebecca came about. Martin said that Governors understood the process as it was in his report. He added that it was not a case of going straight to St Luke's. The idea had been considered by the Isle of Dogs (IoD) Group of Headteachers and that the arrangement was a good example of collaboration between IoD schools.</p> <p>Q&A: Was Matthew Warhurst (Deputy Headteacher) made aware of the structure when it was set up? He was not. The only staff member who is aware is you in your capacity as Staff Governor because we have two sets of staff to inform. Both sets of staff have not yet been informed. We will be informing our staff very soon. Matthew has been on shared parental leave and he will be back next month. As soon as this meeting is over, all staff will be informed if Governors approve the interim arrangements. Rebecca and</p>

	<p>Nimesha will meet with all staff during the course of next week.</p> <p><i>Rebecca Abraham, Nimesha Nagahawatte and Susannah Abdelouahed joined the meeting at this point.</i></p>
3.	<p>Contribution by Rebecca Abraham</p>
	<p>The Chair welcomed Rebecca and asked her to say what she hoped to provide under this arrangement. Rebecca introduced herself and gave a brief summary of her background and work experience. Before joining St Luke's as Head just over 5 years ago, Rebecca said that she had been a Head in Hackney for 9 years. She said that he also had also done work for the Institute of Education in the past looking at supporting their programme to train teachers. Before being a Head at Hackney, she worked for the LA in Hackney where she led a team which was rolling out the national numeracy strategy at the time and the KS3 strategy into secondary schools. As a result, she had a long history of experience to bring to Harbinger. She explained that the reason why she was attending this meeting was because Harbinger was in a position where it was looking for some support as it would not have a Head in September and Alison had approached the Isle of Dog Headteachers to see whether they could provide support. St Luke's was currently in a strong position as it had been working hard in the past 5 years and was able to provide the support. They had experienced staff who had done a lot to develop not only the ethos of the school but also teaching and learning and the curriculum. St Luke's was in a position to provide the support if that was what the Governors at Harbinger wanted and providing support was all that St Luke's would be doing.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Rebecca for her introduction. He then asked Nimesha Nagahawatte, Deputy Head at St Luke's Primary to introduce herself.</p> <p>Nimesha said that she had been in St Luke's for the past 14 years and had worked with all year groups. She had started in the school as an NQT and had had various leadership roles in the school. She was now leading Computing in the school and had spent a year working with the Headteacher in partnership with Tower Hamlets schools which were part of the Diocese. She said she liked collaborating with other schools and liked the opportunity to support schools on the Isle of Dogs. Rebecca said that schools on the IoD liked to support each other and liked collaborative work. This was a strength across the island and that was why they had been approached by Alison.</p> <p>The Chair asked Governors whether they had any questions for Rebecca. Eddi said that he did not have any questions for now as the Chair's report had been self-explanatory in terms of its aims. He said that the school was currently doing collaborative work with St Luke's so knew of Rebecca and having done some work with Nimesha he felt that</p>

the staff would be confident with the proposed arrangement.

The following questions were put to Rebecca:

Q&A: Are there any specific qualities or practices that you would like to bring from St Luke's that you think will be particularly effective and secondly what from your perspective are the potential risks or drawback from the arrangement and how do you envisage trying to combat them? In terms of policies, we will need to know about you before we can answer that question. Until Nimesha and I know first what the strengths of the school are and what you are working on, it will be difficult to say whether there is something that we will be able to share with you. I am aware from conversations that we have had with Andy in the Headteacher group that have been working on Reading as a school. This is one of the things we worked on here when I came. We might be in a position to share the journey with you. There could be opportunities for us to learn from each other in that way. Schools are very different in character. I would want to learn about Harbinger first before seeing how we could support you in furthering the journey that you are already on.

Q&A: St Luke's is a faith school. How will you differentiate between managing a faith school and a community school where predominately the faith is a different faith from your school as parents might ask? I can well understand that. What drives St Luke's are the values and the values we have chosen as a school. That was a process that involved parents, staff and children. The values were specifically chosen by us to appeal to people of no faith and a multitude of faiths. We are just as diverse as Harbinger. No one will impose St Luke's on Harbinger. This is about learning about you and what it is about Harbinger that makes it distinct to the other schools on the island. Nimesha and I need to be able to understand that properly with your help in order to be able to help Harbinger on its journey. On that journey it may become clear we need to do something about an aspect of teaching and learning for example. We are here to support you and the distinctiveness of our schools need to remain.

Susannah said that judging by Rebecca's response, she would be happy to allay any fears that some parents might have with regard to the school being led by someone from a faith school.

Robyn Bruce mentioned that she had been lucky enough to work with Rebecca on the IoD group for a number of years. The IoD Heads had worked together as faith schools and non-faith schools and had the same values across all the schools. As long as they kept that going things would go well. She added that IoD schools worked together with the aim of giving children the best education that they could in order to improve the life chances for the children and give them the best career opportunities in life. Father Tom said that he and Nimesha joined St Luke's roughly at the same time. He said that she was a joy to work

	<p>with in the multi-cultural and multi faith setting. He mentioned that she was very adept in knowing what it was that was important about other people's faith and would be a good choice for Harbinger as an interim Head of school.</p> <p>Governors continued with their questions:</p> <p>Q&A: Harbinger has just had an Ofsted inspection. Will there be another inspection during the partnership and if there is, will that be by Ofsted or are we looking at a Science inspection as well? My understanding is that you are expecting another Ofsted inspection this time next year. Harbinger will not be involved in the science inspection as that is just of Church of England schools.</p> <p>Alison added that the school had no idea when an Ofsted inspection was due and what impact the last 3 to 6 months would have on the Ofsted schedule. THEP was probably looking at an inspection some time before July of next year with Rebecca and Nimesha leading the school and there would not be a separate Science inspection as Harbinger was a community school.</p> <p>Q&A: The document says that the arrangements will start in September, but should we in Harbinger be expecting you sooner? If the governing body agrees to the arrangement, we plan to meet with Andy and some of staff over the next few weeks as we will need as smooth a handover as possible.</p> <p>The Chair thanked both Rebecca and Nimesha for agreeing to take on Harbinger and undertook to call Rebecca to let her know what the Governors had decided. Action: Martin Young</p> <p>Rebecca and Nimesha left the meeting at this point (4:39 p.m.)</p>
4.	<p>Deliberations & Decision Making</p>
	<p>The Chair informed Governors that John Bradshaw was in support of the interim arrangement although he could not attend the meeting. He undertook to contact Ranjani Shrutisagar who was also absent from the meeting seek her views on the proposal. Action: Martin Young</p> <p>Governors continued with their questions.</p> <p>Q&A: What was the decision-making process with regard to the remaining Deputy Headteacher and the idea to place 2 staff members from St Luke's above him? We are looking to replace the Headteacher. It was thought best that Matthew should remain the Deputy Head. Matthew will just be coming back from paternity leave. It would be better if he comes back in that</p>

role. Matthew will be an important link between them and Harbinger. The Executive Head and Head of School model is a model we want to continue. This is a period in which we want the school to stabilise and be on the right path to overcome the 'Requires Improvement' judgement. This is why it is at year period and there will come a time when we will recruit a Headteacher.

Q&A: Will Nimesha's role be Head of School is that Headteacher in all but name or are there various duties that we as staff will then go on to Rebecca?

Rebecca and Nimesha will function as Headteacher together but their responsibilities will be divided into Head of School and Executive Head.

Alison added that Nimesha and Rebecca would work with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to work out what the functions are. Because Rebecca would be Executive Head across 2 schools, there was a need for a Head of School when Rebecca was not there Nimesha would be the Head as far as safeguarding responsibilities were concerned. Even though they were 2 people, they would come as a unit as Headteacher. St Luke's were due an Ofsted inspection imminently and as a result, Rebecca could not be fully head Harbinger at this point as she needed to prepare for Ofsted at St Luke's.

Q&A: What are the financial implications of the arrangement as we have a deficit budget? Does the arrangement take this into account?

When the arrangement was put together, John and I were concerned about how it would be paid for as indeed were St Luke's. However, there is funding from the Local Authority (LA) who are keen for us to do it.

Alison added that she was hoping to bring some more confirmation to Governors from Christine McInnes, Service Head, Education & Partnerships, at this meeting. Unfortunately, Christine was unavailable. Alison however stressed that Christine was committed to the arrangement. There will be some contingency funding and a letter will be coming.

Q&A: Just to clarify Andy, you are not actually in deficit are you?

We have a predicted deficit over 3 years so if we act this year, we can remain stable.

The Chair said that the school had this year to put things right but that it was not an easy process. Andy, Mai-Anh, John and Ranjani had been working on this. He said that having 2 staff joining the leadership team in addition to Matthew and the Phase Leaders would give the school an opportunity to have an objective assessment how the money was being spent to get things under control.

Following the above discussion, Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the Memorandum of Understanding and for Martin Young to sign the

document on behalf of the Governors. Rebecca would liaise with Matthew and the staff in terms of when she would come into school to meet the staff with Nimesha.

Action: Rebecca Abrahams

Q&A: Have you agreed with Rebecca on when to inform the staff?
I will call Matthew and then circulate an email to staff in the morning.

The Headteacher said that phoning staff individually would not be a good idea as the school had a Senior Leadership team of 6. It would be better to send a letter to all of them at the same time. The Chair said that he would send an email to all staff to ensure that they all knew at the same time.

Action: Martin Young

Q&A: When are the staff in St Luke's going to know?
I do not have a clear plan from Rebecca. I will call her after this meeting to ask when she will inform her staff.

Father Tom suggested that the order should be for Harbinger staff to be informed first before the staff at St Luke's. This was agreed by Governors and the Chair said that he would convey that to Rebecca.

Alison suggested that once the information went out to the wider group of people, it would be a good idea to have a communication to go to both Harbinger and St Luke's parents before the weekend. It was suggested that this should be simultaneous. It was agreed that the information should come from Governors in the same form as the Chair had given to Governors but that the Memorandum of Understanding should not be given to staff and parents.

Q&A: Once the staff have been informed, are there any details that I should not tell them after you have sent the letter?
Any information request will go to either Andy or myself directly.

Eddi said that after the staff were informed of Andy's resignation, some staff members had asked him whether he had been aware of this. Andy said that he was happy to help, and he could speak to Phase Leaders. He said that any questions could be directed to him and anything major would be escalated to Martin.

Martin said that he would ask Rebecca to provide a date and time when she would be able to meet with the staff. The meeting could take the form of a townhall meeting. Kiran advised for the Townhall Meeting with parents to be held in the middle of next year after the partnership had been in operation. This was agreed by Governors.

There being nothing further to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 17:00 p.m.

Chair's signature: _____ **Date:** _____