

## LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

### Governing Body of Gilbert Colvin Primary School

#### Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 Held at 6pm by Teleconference

<b>Present:</b>	Fatima Bibi-Mannan	
	James Clements	Chair
	Marianne Agwada	
	Nandia Fytraki	
	Russell Wilson	
	Mark Hemsley	
	Kate Clark	
	Ilyas Natha	
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Anne Fitzpatrick	DHT
	Antonia Vella	RSHE Lead
	Greg Robbins	Clerk

**Apologies:** None

#### **424) Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence as all were present.

The chair explained that governors were largely constrained by local authority and national policy, but this would be an opportunity for governors to fully understand the curriculum the school would offer. If governors sign off the policy then all governors would be expected to support the school in public.

#### **425) Declarations of Interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

#### **426) Appointment of a Co-opted Governor**

Kate Clark had been appointed as a co-opted governor by written resolution with effect from 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

#### **427) RSHE Consultation Process**

The summary and outcomes of the consultation had been shared. There had been 122 responses in total, which was a fair representation of views. This was followed by face to face consultation in November. There were no significant issues raised during the consultation. Most (54%) had no concerns at all. The next largest response (8%) objected to any teaching of RSHE in school at all, with smaller numbers with other views.

Some parents thought that online safety was not taught in schools and a slightly smaller number thought it should not be, which was surprising – maybe there was confusion about how broad an area this was. A large number of people thought reproduction and changes during puberty were not and should not be taught either. Considered in combination with the feedback at the face to face meeting, the school felt the issue was about age appropriateness and parents had thought these discussions would also be with reception students. Parents accepted that years 5 & 6 would be appropriate ages at which to raise these issues.

- i) Governors referred to the questionnaire and asked if that was sent out before the face to face meeting. It was circulated early on to gauge initial thoughts which informed

further information provided by the school.

#### **428) RSHE Scheme of Work**

The scheme of work had been shared. The school reviewed how RSHE is delivered a few years previously. It is important that staff are consistent across the school and stay within the agreed curriculum, so staff and parents know the appropriate parameters. The school uses “Teaching SRE with Confidence”, which is a clearly structured and friendly scheme. The school does not use every unit, but rather selects the appropriate resources for each cohort. Some elements are taught later in the year when staff know the children well, whereas other parts follow naturally elsewhere in the year.

Following this review, much of the previous scheme has been kept, but some sections in years 4, 5 and 6 had been moved around. Puberty had been in year 4 and would now be taught in year 5 – this was in response to parents’ comments about when it would be age appropriate during the consultation. The scheme resources would be revisited to ensure that the school has the best ones for GCPS children. Antonia Vella had already begun work on this. Teachers would be given the specific range of resources selected by the school.

RSHE also includes health education, which takes place throughout the curriculum and the school day. The overview focussed on the sex education and relationships element.

- i) Governors observed that parents had been reassured that RSHE would be taught alongside other subjects, such as science, so there would be appropriate contexts. The key issue was about being sensitive and ensuring there were good relationships with the students first.
- ii) Governors asked why there were single sex groupings for lessons on puberty. There were a number of groups and children who would find it difficult to talk about personal things with a person of the opposite sex present. Some parents also have this concern. The danger would be that one group would dominate or withdraw. Each group would be taught exactly the same things, however. In lesson 3 puberty and hygiene would be taught in mixed groups again. It might not always be possible to have a teacher of the same sex, however. Smaller groups could be more effective too, rather than teaching classes of thirty.
- iii) Governors asked how the school would change the teaching materials. If the school changes the order of the subjects, then it would need to ensure that some materials were used – or not used – to make lessons work and be in accord with school policy. There are also ground rules intended to ensure everybody remains comfortable.
- iv) Governors asked what was indicated by the W in year 6 lesson 3. That was the only part that parents could withdraw a child from as it is not part of the science or statutory RSHE curriculums, though it is heavily recommended to be taught.
- v) Governors asked how clear the comments had been at the face to face consultation. There were lively discussions with useful questions, though numbers were not as high as the school would have liked.
- vi) Governors asked when the consultation began. Consultation took place throughout last year across the authority. The authority consulted with community and faith groups before drawing up the [policy. The school began its own consultation in September and had a face to face meeting on 18/11/21 to share and respond to the outcome of the first period of consultation. 35 parents said they would attend, but in the event only 13 came. There are about 400 children in the school.
- vii) Governors asked what the school would do next following this consultation meeting. The school had to carry on with the consultation – there had been 122 responses to the

survey. The school had published the information on the website and promised to share the policy as soon as possible once it had been approved.

- viii) Other governors reported that there had been a good range of ethnic groups represented and the parents who had not attended felt that the information received had reassured them - it had been their choice that they did not wish to attend. In the event the issues had not been contentious.  
The consultation had gone out and people had had a chance to respond and to attend the meeting. People also had the opportunity to make submissions in advance. When these sex elements of the curriculum are taught there will also be sessions for parents to come in and see the resources specific to their year group., so they will still have some input. The policy would also be reviewed every three years.
- ix) Governors queried whether parents would have been aware that this consultation was different to the one held a few years ago. Once people came it was clear that their perceptions about RSHE had been wrong. The annual sessions had not been held during Covid, but parents would have been aware that what their children would learn about would be different to what they learned in 2020. Nevertheless the school was clear that the meeting would cover the changes brought about by government policy.
- x) Governors questioned whether other local schools had had a similar experience. The responses had been varied across different schools, though this discussion was about GCPS. Danielle Hawley had been appointed two years ago as the LBR RSHE lead so she could work with groups and schools across the authority. She would give guidance if there were any wider issues raised.
- xi) The chair observed that people would only hear about schools where things had gone wrong – elsewhere the process went smoothly without any concerns. GCPS was part of a SPG group within REP (Redbridge Education Partnership) where RSHE would be discussed informally.

#### **429) RSHE Policy**

The appropriate element from the 'rights respecting school' would be added. The policy had been produced borough wide with the intention that schools tailor it to their context. Both faith and community groups had had input into it. It makes clear which elements are statutory, for instance because it is part of the science curriculum. Parents also cannot withdraw their children from health education. The relatively contentious part, which was new, but with no right to withdraw from, was relationships education. This included learning about equalities issues. An aim of RSHE was to make children aware if anything that was happening to them should not be, and to empower them to raise that.

Governors were asked to consider the non-statutory parts, such as how babies are made in year 6. Parents would have the right to withdraw from this section.

- i) Governors asked how parents would exercise the right to withdraw and if they should explain their reasoning. If a parent wishes to withdraw they must express that in writing, but that would be followed by a discussion as all children should have access to this information, especially around safeguarding. Any information from this could be held anonymously and reported on so the school could mitigate these concerns in future.
- ii) Governors asked if there would be a link to safeguarding if children are withdrawn. Following the discussion it would raise the school's awareness if anything untoward came up.
- iii) Governors asked if there would be an agreed approach to responding to parental concerns. This would follow a similar pattern to how the school responds to other

concerns. Initially concerns should go to the classteacher, though the small number of queries about sex education tend to come to the headteacher. Some parents feel pressured as children may hear about subject matter in the playground, despite it being one of the 'ground rules' that it should not be. Nevertheless the concerns would be recorded.

- iv) Governors noted that the Equalities Act was referred to in the relationship education and that this required same-sex relationships to be taught – governors asked if there were same sex parents at the school who would be discriminated against if this was not taught. There is nothing in the scheme of work specifically about same sex relationships, but there were times when it might be raised, in which case it would be discussed. Individual lifestyles would not be promoted. There had been same sex couples in the past. The headteacher was not aware of any at present, though that was unusual.
- v) Governors asked who owned this document. Although it has the headteacher's name alongside LBR on it, it is 'owned' by the GB as a statutory policy, though Antonia Vella would be responsible for leading on it.
- vi) Governors understood that parents would be able to see the curriculum materials before they would need to make any decision to withdraw. This was the case.
- vii) Governors asked what would happen if a large number of children were withdrawn. The school would still teach the remainder of the group.
- viii) Governors enquired what the withdrawn students would do. A teacher would have to provide something different, which might be linked, but not the same content.
- ix) What was the school's rationale for teaching this non-statutory element. It is highly recommended by the DfE and also the authority that it is taught. Personal and physical development is an ongoing continuum and many children will have questions. They should be able to ask about changes that will happen to them at an age appropriate way before they move on to secondary school. It would not be difficult for parents to withdraw from these classes.
- x) Governors asked how withdrawal would work. The non-statutory parts had not been taught yet – it would not do this without consent. Parents would be informed before the lessons were taught and the content shared. It was for parents, not the child, to withdraw, though it would be discussed if a child did not want to participate.
- xi) Governors asked if another meeting would be possible if there was demand from parents. Parents are invited to see the resources already.
- xii) Governors asked if there would be scope for a community group to visit. There had been a consultation process at the school and a borough wide level. This was now for the GCPS community – not external groups. The governing board might revisit this annually, but formal review would not be for three years.
- xiii) Governors asked what rights the parents would have if the child told them that what they had been taught was not what they had agreed to. Parents could withdraw their child from the units at any time, but the school was taking steps to ensure that teachers teach only the approved units.
- xiv) Governors asked if the lessons would be monitored. These lessons would not be observed as it would defeat the intention of creating a safe space. The monitoring would be through planning and reviewing and marking. There has to be trust and professional respect for teachers. This was not a new subject in primary schools and the points about friendships and anti-bullying in relationship education had already been taught.
- xv) Governors asked what all the fuss had been about.

xvi) Governors asked what the structure of the provision would be. Governors agree the policy. The headteacher ensures that the policy and curriculum is embedded, while Antonia Vella leads on it. As a team, teachers are trained and supported to deliver it in class to their children, albeit that if something is taught in single sex groups there could be adjustments.

xvii) Governors asked if the headteacher had a view in the dissent about RSHE in some parts of the policy. This was why the school and the authority had taken this so seriously. The consultation did not demonstrate high level of concern within the community, however. There were groups with some concerns that the authority had spoken to, but they had not been raised at the school.

xviii) Governors queried whether changes to the linked policies might trigger changes to this one. This was why the school intended to review it annually, but this would be common to many policies.

**Agreed: The RSHE Policy was approved unanimously.**

#### **430) Future Meeting Arrangements**

The chair would circulate an updated calendar the following week.

The meeting closed at 7:50pm