The Governing Body of Steeton Primary School

Link Governor meeting with the Headteacher:

**Early Years**

**Minutes of the meeting of 22 February 2023**

**The meeting opened at 2.07pm**

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| **Attendance** | | |
| ***Governors*** |  | ***Others*** |
| Adam O’Neill |  | Charlotte Bingham – Early Years Leader (EYL) – *to Item 09/22* |
| Emma Wainwright |  | Claire Redman - Head of School (HoS) |
|  |  | Helen Osman (Clerk) |
| ***Apologies*** |  |  |
| John Cooper - Executive Headteacher (EHT) |  |  |

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| **Documents** | | |
| 1. Early Years presentation: slides – C Bingham, Ealy Years Leader | Item EY 09/22 | *Slides shown at meeting* |
| 1. Reception Skills Development Progression | Item EY 09/22 | *Tabled at meeting* |
| 1. EYFS overview (half-termly breakdown of learning) | Item EY 09/22 | *Tabled at meeting* |
| 1. EYFS vocabulary intent | Item EY 09/22 | *Tabled at meeting* |
| 1. Our Wonderful World – Spring 1 (long term plan) | Item EY 09/22 | *Tabled at meeting* |

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| Summary of Actions | | | |
| **Action No. EY** | **Action** | **Person** | **Deadline** |
| 14/22 | EHT and Clerk to update the SEF (EY section) to reflect evidence presented to LG/EY meetings. | J Cooper  H Osman | April 2023 |

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| **EY 05/22** | **Apologies for absence and their acceptance** |

1. Apologies had been received, and were accepted, from John Cooper.

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| **EY 06/22** | 1. **Notification of urgent other business** |

1. No other business was notified.

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| **EY 07/22** | 1. **Declarations of interest in items on this agenda** |

1. No interests were declared.

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| **EY 08/22** | **Minutes of the meeting of 02 December 2022 and matters arising** |

1. ***The*** ***minutes were agreed as a true record.***

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| **Update on actions arising from previous meetings** | | |
| **Item** | **Action** | **Status** |

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| 01/21 (ii) | *School to arrange for EY Leader to brief LGs/EY on curriculum planning and sequencing in EY*. [*Amended deadline*]  Completed – see Item EY 09/22 below. | **Closed** |
| 02/22 | *HoS to send Autumn 2 Early Years data to Clerk to attach to the minutes.*  Completed. | **Closed** |

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| **EY 09/22** | **Briefing on Early Years curriculum sequencing and planning** **–** *Document A* |

1. Charlotte Bingham, Early Years Leader (EYL) talked through the slides at *Document A* (*copy at Annex A*). The school had created its own Early Years curriculum rather than buying in a scheme. It had based the development of its curriculum on:
   * 1. a thorough understanding of the background and needs of Steeton’s children; and
     2. the latest research into effective pedagogy in Early Years, which highlighted the importance of providing a learning environment with opportunities for children to be active and take the initiative to learn, with adults creating a simulating physical and intellectual environment and undertaking consistent planning and rigorous assessment. The emphasis of the curriculum was on learning through play, enabling children to develop Communication and Language skills through exploring and asking questions. The aim was to ensure that they developed as proficient leaners by the time they made the transition to Key Stage 1.
2. The Early Years curriculum was based in the Birth to Five Matters guidance[[1]](#footnote-1), and included the following features:

* an emphasis on the unique child
* the positioning of Early Years as a family, reflected in the selection of Reading books
* breaking learning into small steps to be taken in each half term, with the pace of learning driven by the needs of each child: the curriculum was sufficiently flexible to allow this
* use of Read Write Inc[[2]](#footnote-2) and White Rose Maths[[3]](#footnote-3), which were used throughout Key Stage 1 and 2
* the input of the school’s Science Leader to ensure that Early Years Science was linked with Science teaching throughout school
* structured vocabulary for each subject, based on the Early Excellence[[4]](#footnote-4) documents and linked to Key Stage 1 vocabulary
* the Greg Bottrill Drawing Club[[5]](#footnote-5)
* children’s choices – for example, children voted on which books to read, rather than the teacher deciding

1. The curriculum changed om year to year to meet the needs of the individual children in each cohort. The progression document remained the same, because the same skills had to be mastered by the end of the Reception year, but the text and other resources changes as necessary. This was important, but not inexpensive.
2. The EYL showed an example of a long term planning document (Our Wonderful World). Regrettably, the school was not yet able to provide the Pupil Offer section due to budgetary constraints. Governors congratulated her on an excellent document, which clearly showed curriculum linkages and set tasks out week-by-week with pictures to stimulate adults’ ideas. The ETL explained that the week by week tasks were sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the needs of each child, and the HoS said that staff were highly skilled at turning almost anything into a lesson, making for very organic learning.
3. The EYL said that the Daily Drawing Club in Early Years had been so successful that it had been introduced in other year groups, further strengthening the links between Early Years and Key Stages 1 and 2 so that children were well prepared to engage with Reading For Pleasure. The HoS said that other ideas from Ealy Years had been adopted elsewhere in school: for example, the development of PSHRE[[6]](#footnote-6) floorbooks had been [prompted by the EY floorbooks.
4. Governors reviewed samples of Early Years books: the Head of School (HoS) demonstrated how the work in the EY books was built upon in subsequent year groups. Governors were interested to note that Writing learning was referred to as “Adventure Time” and that it was linked to children’s current Phonics learning.
5. Replying to questions, the HoS said that the Buddying system, under which Year 4 and 6 pupils “adopted” Reception children, was proving very positive for all the children concerned. Older and younger children were paired carefully: for example, three younger children had been linked with Year 6 child who shared the same language: the Year 6 buddy translated for them, including in class. **Asked** how this affected the progress of the older pupil, she said that it helped with PSED[[7]](#footnote-7) but that the time involved was not great enough to adversely affect overall learning.
6. The HoS said that there was now a “School Baby” – the younger sibling of an EYFS pupil, who came into school every six to eight weeks, providing a stimulus for Science lessons about the development of a baby and exposing Reception children to concepts such as babies being unable to eat food or go to the toilet.
7. The EYL highlighted work in the books that reflected stories that children had made up based on a comparison they had made between the stories by a visiting author and the Moomins. Governors welcomed the exposure of Reception children to an author in person: it was good to let them know that authors were real people and that being an author was a job that they could consider when they grew up. **Asked** how she had established the link with the author, the EYL said that she had found her through Instagram and invited her to work with the school.
8. Governors were pleased to see the standard of work in the books, demonstrating good pencil skills, scissor control etc. As previously discussed, it was important to ensure that the benefits of using ICT to support learning did not lead to these kinds of skills being overlooked.
9. The EYL said that the floorbooks helped children to learn to talk about the past and the present (eg “Do you remember when we did …?”). They were also useful for talking to visitors (eg parents of potential pupils at Open Days) about what went on in Early Years.
10. Governors saw examples of the folders of children’s individual pieces of work: the EYF said that children used these folders to keep everything of which they were really proud. A governor who was also a parent said that these folders were shared with each child’s parents at Book Look sessions, and the HoS said that they were also shown to parents of potential pupils at Open Days.
11. **Replying to questions**, the EYL said that the reaction of parents to their children’s folders varied: some were uninterested, while others were very enthusiastic. This was important, because 30% of GLD[[8]](#footnote-8) required evidence of parent input: of parents did not engage, it was difficult to assess a child as having reached GLD. **Asked** about the strategies the school used to engage parents, the EYL gave the following examples:
    * Tapestry[[9]](#footnote-9) - the EYL personally uploaded Tapestry to parents’ ‘phones at the start-of-year meeting. The system provided data on the level of parental use. A governor who was also a parent showed on her mobile ‘phone an example of information uploaded by the teacher on Maths. As well as providing information to parents, Tapestry was also useful for teachers: it informed them what children had been doing outside school so that they could ask questions about it, and it helped them to avoid making assumptions.

**Replying to questions**, the HoS said that Tapestry was currently used only for Early Years pupils and the Early Years/Key Stage 1 bridging class: the school hoped in time to extend it to other year groups. Currently other platforms such as Ping and Twitter, were used for those year groups. Governors thought that, if parents were introduced to Tapestry in Early Years, it might help to maintain parent engagement if the same system were used throughout school: **they asked** what barriers existed to doing so. Ping did not provide for two-way communication as Tapestry did, and Twitter was not widely used by parents. The HoS said that there was some concern among staff about the workload implications of being expected to interact with parents via Tapestry during non-working hours. Governors agreed that this was a discussion for another time.

* + Workshops for parents to explain key elements of the curriculum (such as Read Write Inc, Phonics) and how to support the learning of their children at home. the supporting documents were translated into the eight languages most commonly used by the parents and older children who shared these languages were on hand to translate at the meeting.
  + An IT system was being established that would allow Year 4 and 6 buddies to read a story and have it translated int the languages being spoken by all pupils and their families.
  + Videos of children reading, and of parents’ comments. The use of videos or pictures by parents was a good way to address the lack of written English on the part of some.

1. Governors welcomed the efforts of the school to engage with parents: quite aside from the obvious benefits to the education of children, regular contact with families was important for safeguarding.
2. Governors commented on the high quality of the work shown in the books. They considered that the freedom that children were given to exercise their own creativity and powers of interpretation meant that they could all produce work that they felt proud of, rather than all being required to produce the same piece of work which would, inevitably, be done better by some than others. They welcomed the message that this style of learning conveyed to children: that they were allowed to follow what they loved.
3. The EYL showed the spreadsheet used to track the progress and attainment of children in Early Years. The school was not required to submit data until the end of the school year, but collected it throughout the year to enable staff to check whether children were on track, particularly those in vulnerable categories. In-depth assessments would be caried out in the summer term and submitted to the Local Authority.
4. **Asked** whether the collection of progress and attainment tracking data was onerous, the EYL said that only the summer term detailed breakdown for the LA was. **Asked** whether it was useful for teaching, she said that it was essential to enable staff accurately to identify the areas in which each individual child needed more support and to plan lessons accordingly. **Replying to questions**, she confirmed that these assessments could, and did, allow staff to identify previously hidden SEND needs. The HoS added that the rigor of assessment countered any temptation on the part of staff to allow a child to “scrape” an assessment of having reached GLD: this could lead to real difficulties for children as unaddressed issues became more evident as they moved up through school.
5. The HoS said that EY progress and attainment data was also useful for staff in other year groups: **replying to questions**, she explained that they made more use of this data than they had in the past to understand each child’s learning journey so that they could better support future learning. This reflected a change in the attitude of staff in other phases towards EY, which had historically been seen as entirely different from the rest of the school’s teaching and learning. As the EYL had explained, the new EY curriculum was firmly integrated into whole school teaching and learning.
6. Governors strongly endorsed the school’s decision to design its own Early Years curriculum to meet the specific needs of Steeton’s children, and particularly welcomed the focus on the unique child. A governor who worked in education said that a bought-in curriculum did not tend to have the same sense of staff ownership and deep understanding s one developed in-school. However, designing and delivering an in-school curriculum was a continuing journey that required continuing CPD. **Replying to questions**, the HoS and EYL said that the school struggled to find the time and money for as much staff CPD as they would like. Visits to other settings were important in enabling staff to share practice: the EYL referred to a recent visit to a specialist school that where she and a teacher had learned about providing more effectively for Steeton’s SEND children. The HoS said that it was difficult to move the school forward as rapidly as she would like with staffing so tight that staff could not be released from the classroom for CPD: it was essential that they be able to see different settings, refresh their ideas etc.
7. A governor who was a parent of a child in school said that, even allowing for differences in the rate of development of individual children, she had been impressed by the speed with which her child in Reception was learning compared with the rates of older siblings when they had been in Reception.
8. Asked what her top priority would be if the school could afford it, the EYL listed:
   * Resources for areas of the curriculum that lacked them.
   * A decent outdoor area for Early Years: environmental factors meant that wet weather caused wood on the banking area to rot and break, meaning that the area had to be closed until it could be repaired. This would be less of an issue once the school reduced its Published Admission Number (PAN) in 2024.
   * Six to eight bicycle so that children could be taught to ride a bike.
   * The ability to bring in guests: the school had hoped to bring in the Britain’s Got Talent Gospel Choir last half term by splitting the £700 cost with another school. That school had been obliged to drop out due to an Ofsted visit, and Steeton had been unable to afford the full cost. Governors noted that, if he proposal for Steeton to federate with its partners proceeded, one of the benefits would be increased scope to arrange and share the costs of joint events. The EYL said that it would also provide opportunities for the pupils of the three schools to mix which, bearing in mind their different pupil cohorts, would support British Values learning
9. Governors thanked the EYL for an informative and thought-provoking presentation, and congratulated her and her team on the development and delivery of the exciting and well-designed curriculum.

*Charlotte Bingham left the meeting at 3.08pm*

1. Governors commented on the evident passion of both the EYL and the HoS as they spoke of the EY curriculum.

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| **EY 10/22** | **Review autumn term progress and attainment data for Early Years** |

1. Item deferred to the next meeting in the absence of the Executive Headteacher (EHT).

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| **EY 11/22** | **Review summary of Early Years behaviour data from CPOMS** |

1. As the discussion with the EYL had taken longer than expected, governors agreed to defer this item to the next meeting. The HoS would provide a more detailed breakdown of the data that had been included in the EYL presentation.

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| **EY 12/22** | **Review SDP monitoring milestones for Early Years** |

1. Item deferred to the next meeting: a failure of the school internet connection prevented access to the SDP document.

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| **EY 13/22** | **Review Early Years Development Plan** |

1. The HoS would send the Early Years Development Plan to the Clerk to be circulated with the minutes of this meeting (see Annex B) , for discussion at the next meeting.

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| **EY 14/22** | **Mid-year review of Self Evaluation Form (SEF)** |

1. Governors agreed that the EHT and Clerk should update the SEF in light of the evidence presented to the Autumn and Spring term Link Governor meetings in time for the Governing Body meeting on 10 May 2023.

**Action: EHT, Clerk**

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| **EY 16/22** | 1. **Date of the next meeting** |

1. The next meeting will be held at **2.00pm on Friday 09 June 2023**.

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| **EY 17/22** | 1. **Closure of meeting** |

**The meeting closed at 3.24pm**

**Helen Osman Governance Services**

*Supporting excellent governance in Bradford*

1. Birth to 5 Matters - Early Years guidance from the Early Years Coalition [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Read Write Inc – a series of four literacy programmes, developed by Ruth Miskin, for children of various ages from 3-11 covering Phonics, Literacy & Language and Spelling [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. White Rose Maths Hub – Led by Trinity Academy Halifax, supporting schools in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds to promote love of and passion for Maths, focused on a teaching for mastery approach [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Early Excellence - provider of specialist **Early** Years Training, Resources and Furniture across England. Includes Early Excellence Assessment Tracker (EExAT) and Early Excellence Baseline Assessment (EExBA). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ## Drawing Club – an approach to Early Years literacy that draws on the imagination of the child to enrich their language skills and develop their fine motor skills. Developed by Greg Bottrill, a former Early Years Lead and Assistant Headteacher.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. PSHRE – Personal, Social, Health and Relationships Education – a curriculum area [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. PSED – Personal, Social and Emotional Development – a curriculum area [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. GLD - Children are defined as having reached a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tapestry – an online learning journal for Early Years [↑](#footnote-ref-9)