**Liverpool Governors’ Forum**

Minutes of committee meeting held on Tuesday 20th June 2017

at Hope School, 251 Hartsbourne Avenue, Liverpool, L25 2RY

**Present**: Kathy Desmond (Chair), Frank McFarlane (Vice Chair), David Blythe (Hon. Secretary), Cliff Barton, Dave Cadwallader, Cynthia Carmichael, Clive Jervis, Maureen McDaid, Avril O’Brien, Pauline Warrington, Joe Hartley (Clerk), Guest Speakers Han Duijvendak and Jane Duckworth,

**1** **Apologies:** Andy Chadwick, Sharon Cody, Mary Donohue, Mark Rea, Howard Harris (visitor)

 **Absent without apology:** Henry Mooney,

**2 Guest Speakers,** *Rohit Na***i***k Head Teacher and Maxine O’Neill, Assistant Head teacher, Hope School: An awareness of attachment friendly principles.* (Report follows minutes)

**3 Declaration of pecuniary interest**

No change

**4 Minutes of May meeting**

Already approved by email and posted on website.

**5 Matters Arising**

The Clerk asked if anyone had experienced difficulty accessing the site as it had been down for twenty-four hours recently because the domain had failed to auto-renew.

**6 Membership and Finance: Accounts and Expenses**

DB reported that the Forum’s finances were in a healthy position, partly because of receiving two subscriptions in one year. The collection of subscriptions will now be regularised as DB is familiar with the different procedures of the Heads’ Associations and can invoice on their preferred dates. This information will be added to the Finance and Operational Manual.

Ahead of today’s meeting, DB had emailed the committee with the following information:

The bank balance at the month ending 31st May =  £4807.00

Three cheques issued but not yet cashed 137.50

The effective bank balance is therefore £4669.50

During the month we received two payments from LASH (£680:00) and LPHA (£2040:00) covering their contribution for the 2016/17 academic year.

The Finance and Operational Manual, which we recently approved, will be formally issued so it is in place for the 2017/18 academic year as planned.

**7 Governor Representative for LPHA Chair Interview**

It was agreed that KD would be the governor representative on the panel. The interview will take place on 27th June at 9:30 am KD to attend as indicated

 **8 Future events**

The October Conference has now been booked at Partnership for Learning. It will take place on Saturday 14th October from 9:30 to 12:30, with registration and refreshments from 9:00 am Professor Francis and Maxine O’Neill have confirmed their willingness to speak. The subjects will be *Refusing to Touch Children is Abuse* and *Awareness of Attachment-Friendly Principles*.

**9 Liverpool Learning Partnership**

There is an LLP meeting on 21st June. Elaine Rees, CEO, will send her report to be posted on the LGF website.

Academies in the city have confirmed their intention to continue as members of the partnership. DC reported that membership is cost effective for all schools.

MM raised a concern that in the light of the growth of Multi-Academy Trusts, government will deal with schools as though Trusts. FM reported that the Liverpool Diocese had given an assurance that local governors would still have a good deal of influence, though he has a concern that the role of governors could be slowly eroded. There followed some discussion of the continuing importance of governors and whether those who are appointed by academy trustees will have any independence. DC suggested that different trusts will have different approaches to this question.

A city-wide attendance strategy has been launched, but schools have not yet had a copy. KD said it will be included in Elaine Rees’s report. KD to ask about this at LLP meeting

**10 Liverpool Schools Form**

Some primary schools are struggling financially – indeed some are in deficit. It is not clear how schools will be funded in the future as the government’s response to the recent consultation is still awaited.

**11 Twitter account and Website**

AO reported that LGF now has more followers than followed. She still needs to find out how to extract the LGF twitter account from her mitchytitch google account. The Clerk suggested it could be linked to the email address nominally allocated to the clerk which is not currently used. Clerk to contact webmaster to enquire about this.

**12 NGA**

Nothing to report

**13** **Venues and Times of future meetings**

The last meeting of the 2016/17 academic year is to be held at 10am on Tuesday 11th July at the Everton Peoples Lounge, Goodison Park, Liverpool, L4 4EL.

Our first meeting for the 2017/18 academic year, is to be held at 10am on Tuesday 12th September at Mosspits Primary School, Moss Pits Lane, Liverpool L15 6UN

The meeting closed at 11:29

**Report on presentation on Awareness of Attachment-Friendly principles**

**Rohit Naik,** Head Teacher of Hope School, explained that many children at Hope are from traumatised backgrounds and that all have attachment difficulties to a degree. The first three years of a child’s life are crucial both physiologically and psychologically. Behavioural difficulties and antisocial behaviour are often sign of a child crying out for attachment. A school’s sanctions system doesn’t always work, and where it appears to work is only a short-term solution.

Research suggests that attachment problems are widespread: it is not simply a question of deprivation. A loving mother who is under stress unknowingly passes on that stress to the child, creating attachment problems.

Ofsted judged Hope to be outstanding because it saw good behaviour resulting from the rewards and punishments system, but it was not in the best interests of the children. Such a system manages a child’s behaviour but does not teach *him* to manage his behaviour. A new system has been adopted which does not depend on reward and punishment. Staff who could not cope without such sanctions have left: about a third. Rewards and punishments worked only in the short term.

Eighteen months into the new system, behaviour hasn’t dipped. The policy is never to exclude children. All staff have received training in attachment awareness. All children at Hope have specified needs, though not necessarily statements of need. The aim is to interpret a child’s behaviour, to try to unpick it rather than to be reactive. Children adapt fairly quickly, but adaptation comes at a high price both psychologically and physically. We need to be accountable, but don’t need the grading and shaming that is implicit in Ofsted, and which has an impact on attachment.

We don’t accept poor behaviour. We keep them back, but not in isolation. We

spend time with them and talk with them, rather than hand out lines. The emphasis is on inclusion, not exclusion. We don’t have ‘time out’ rooms but ‘time in’ rooms: we go in with the children and talk with them.

KD asked a question concerning a mother with three adopted children all of whom had been excluded from school. It didn’t appear to be an ‘attachment’ problem, as the mother provided a loving and supportive home, but the children needed a high level of ‘buzz’, and if they didn’t get it they created it. Mr Naik replied that such behaviour can be controlled by the use of Ritalin, which is used at Hope. He added a caution that the long-term use can cause depression.

There was a short discussion of the increased incidence of ASHD, the difficulty of measuring emotion, and the impact of Ofsted on schools where parents move house to be in the ‘right’ catchment area.

**Maxine O’Neill**

As Maxine distributed a copy of her PowerPoint presentation, what follows is a very brief note of her introduction.

Attachment is about the bond between mother and child, which ideally begins with breastfeeding. Many of our parents don’t breastfeed and are on their phones while caring for the child. Not having had good attachment themselves, they have no good model. They don’t engage intimately with the baby through smiles, peek-a-boo, and talking. Some five-year-olds come into school never having had that kind of closeness with their mother. When the form teacher greets them, they don’t know what it means. Consistency is very important for a child. This can be a problem where care is shared with grandparents, who may set different boundaries for behaviour from those set by parents, who themselves may respond differently to challenging behaviour at different times. Consistency in school is therefore important, but it takes years to bring results. Children of 7 – 9 who have never had consistent limits exhibit the behaviour of the ‘terrible twos’ – testing the limits. A child of twelve may be working at the correct level academically, but emotionally still be a three-year-old. Our children are not stupid, some are just not ready to learn. Part of the problem is lack of self-esteem. Everyone needs attachment and security.