

Minutes (Main Set) of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 14 September 2023 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Jim Henderson (JH – ‘virtual’), Judith Mackenzie (JMa – ‘virtual’), Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Phil Howard (PH), James Tulley (JT), Tim Shutler (TS) and Mariea Christodoulou (MC).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Brandon Hughes (BH - Deputy Head Teacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE – deputy headteacher) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

Quorum: 8 out of 11 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – DHa noted the nominations of PS as Chair and JT and JH as co-vice chairs; and the unanimous approval of the FBG to these appointments. PS explained his plans to step down as Chair (but not as a governor) before the December meeting, which would allow the FBG to hold another election for this position; and noted that this would include consideration of JT and JH’s joint nomination to become Co-Chairs at this time.
2. **Urgent business**
(**Note** – text covering discussion on this item appears in a confidential annex to these minutes)
3. **Apologies for Absence.**
3.1. James Moncrieff (JMo), Mark Sorrell (MS), and Vernon Bamforth (VB) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
4. **Declarations of interest** – None.
5. **Minutes**
5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 4 July 2023 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters Arising

- Exclusion panel – the Chair thanked JH, JT and PH for participating in this hearing on 20 July 2023.
- Addition of comments on governors' strategy session – done.
- Check of governors' strategy session draft record and production of next steps proposal – to be done.
- Joining of Committees and taking on of special responsibility roles – to be discussed at the present meeting.
- Health & Safety Executive (**Note** – text covering discussion on this point appears in a confidential annex to these minutes)

7. Governing Board Code of Conduct 2023-2024

- 7.1. Governors raised a query with regard to phrasing of the text in point 11 – '*We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice*'; as this raised a question as to the extent of their actual responsibilities with regard to the school's staff and did not make sense in the context of a locally maintained school. Governors suggested an alternative text to replace this point, to include the phrase '*in so far as we have a responsibility*'
- 7.2. The Chair accepted this point raised and welcomed the offer of producing a specific text to replace the existing version; and noted the unanimous approval of the FBG to adopt this document (subject to this change being made).

8. Headteacher report

- 8.1. KC noted the questions made in writing by governors on her report, in the form of separate comments in a table posted on Google Drive and addressed (with the help of BH) specific points below:-
- 8.2. *Messaging* – KC acknowledged that this was an important area which would be addressed in the new academic year, work which had already started by the senior leadership team and would include communication with families and adaptation of the website; and a focus on the key elements of involvement, achievement and care.
- (Note – EE left the meeting at 17.30 hours)
- 8.3. *Safeguarding* – KC confirmed that training was in hand, Google Forms had been used to track compliance and record what had been done. Governors asked if KC would be continuing as Designated Safeguarding lead. KC confirmed that she would be in this role for September and hand over to the new assistant headteacher in October
- 8.4. *SLT development* – KC commented that the SLT was working very well as a team and structure. KC added that, following a recent departure, the SLT would fill this gap by appointment of another assistant headteacher (rather than deputy headteacher, in order to have replaced one deputy headteacher

with two assistant headteachers); a recruitment, interview and appointment process that would involve governors in the same way as before.

- 8.5. *Challenge Partners* – KC stated that work would be done on what focus to present for this process, due to take place in April 2024; which would cover different subjects at different points.
- 8.6. *Summer School* – KC noted that 63% of the Year group had attended; from a marketing perspective, the school booklet had drawn on a number of positive feedback quotes. Governors asked if this event would be returning next year and noted the financial commitment would be lower. KC confirmed this would take place over three days in 2024.
- 8.7. *Open Evening* – KC stated that governors would be very welcome to attend and thanked those (PH, PS and JT) who agreed to participate.
- 8.8. *Staff Voice* – KC confirmed that consideration of a single break would be thought about carefully, during the process of planning next year.

Quality of Education

- 8.9. *GCSE results* – BH acknowledged that a lack of examiners in every subject could have had an impact on results. BH informed governors that he had spoken to KC to consider ways of incentivising staff; e.g. easing the burden of time and the provision of offices. BH stated that, after having discussed this with cluster groups of teachers, some had said this was also a workload issue.
- 8.10. *Sharing target grades* – BH stated the school was planning on having not fixed but a range of target grades; to be released at a special assembly in November.
- 8.11. *Period set up* – BH stated that curriculum times were being changed, in order not to have double periods anymore.
- 8.12. *New staff hires* – BH commented that the school was very happy with the recruitment of new teachers; there was a sense of staff being excited, having purpose and positive at the beginning of the year.
- 8.13. *9 to 7 result* – BH commented that there was no obvious reason for this being below the national figure; analysis on this point would be done by heads of department and shared with governors.
- 8.14. *Performance* – Governors noted that there was a focus on under performance, but not so much emphasis on those who were succeeding and information about what the school was doing in this regard. BH acknowledged this point and suggested further discussion could be held by the Quality of Education Committee. Governors recommended that the FBG be provided with a summary on how the school was recognising and rewarding success, for those pupils who were doing well.
- 8.15. *Mock Examinations* – BH stated that the mocks would be moved to take place before Christmas, acknowledging there would be less time for teaching but emphasising more available for interventions.
- 8.16. *Grade Boundaries* – BH acknowledged that the system in 2022 had led to inaccurate predictions; there was now a need to embed a system using the 2019 results as a benchmark.

- 8.17. *Plan for boys* – BH confirmed that the Year offices, pastoral teams and the SLT would discuss how to address this issue, to include assemblies on how improvements could be made.
- 8.18. *Governor visits* – BH suggested these be done as a morning commitment (to be signed up for by half term), for governors to look at subjects; for the first to take place on 3 November.
- 8.19. KC noted that GCSE results had gone up, on some measures, including mathematics and English on 4+; this showed the school was on the right trajectory.

Behaviour and attendance

- 8.20. *Youth crime* – KC stated that the school, with parental support, maintained close working relationships with local businesses, shops and bus company; and constantly put out positive and constructive messaging about the students. SH added that the LA had pushed out a message about schools' construction sites, from a health & safety perspective; Blatchington Mill had had far fewer intruder incidents during the summer than in previous years.
- 8.21. *Role of form tutors* – KC stated that there were eleven in each Year group; Early Career Teachers (ECTs) would be started with Year 7 in their second year. KC welcomed the suggestion for governors to attend a tutor time visit/walk.
- 8.22. *Alternative provision (AP)* – KC undertook for EE to check the data and make a presentation, noting that AP provision would evolve over time. KC suggested that data could be shared with the (new) Pastoral Committee and include information about the criteria of students that would go into AP, the tracking of those present in AP and monitoring of reductions in suspensions.
- 8.23. Governors asked about other schools' use of AP in Brighton and Hove. KC stated that there was a mix of practices, but a number of schools were introducing AP and would be keen to visit Blatchington Mill for information.
- 8.24. The Chair asked about likely costs for Blatchington Mill to introduce its AP. SH stated that £240K had been committed; with an additional £60K for staffing; £188K for rolling staff costs; £84K for one off facilities; £28K for rolling resources. SH added that a request had been made for a £300K contribution from the LA, awaiting response.

Barriers to Learning

- 8.25. *1:1 Tutors* – KC confirmed that these staff were qualified teachers
- 8.26. *Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)* – KC confirmed that teaching assistants (TAs) appointed to the AP were of a high calibre.
- 8.27. *Admissions* – KC stated that there had been and continued to be a lot of movement in this regard.

Business

- 8.28. *Staffing* – SH stated that, with regard to the appraisal process, there would be more information to report to the next meeting of the FBG on outcomes.

- 8.29. *Well-being* – SH stated that the next meeting of the school's well-being committee was being arranged; which would consider the FBG's kind offer of help.
- 8.30. *Health and Safety* – SH stated that the LA did not produce a First Aid template policy, just a set of standards – all of which were met by the school. SH added that the LA had reviewed the school's policy, had no fundamental disagreements, provided useful input and endorsed it.
- 8.31. *Finance* – SH explained that a consultation on school uniforms had been held with students and families in 2017 using samples; a type of uniform had been decided upon and a procurement process undertaken. SH acknowledged that the option chosen had not been the cheapest, but the jumpers produced had been very hard wearing. SH added that the school regularly held second hand uniform sales; and continued to use the same manufacturing company on a rolling basis which would continue into 2024.
- 8.32. Governors commented that there was an issue of cost of living to consider, which might become more pressing in the near future. KC acknowledged this point and emphasised the school's desire to keep high standards; also if the uniform was changed again, this would make the provision much more costly.
- 8.33. *Facilities* – SH stated that, with regard to the issue of structural movement, this had been identified by the facilities manager over windows – this had been checked by the LA surveyor who had found no danger and declared the situation safe.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. The Chair drew attention to the Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) document and asked governors to sign a paper, confirming they had read it.

10. Committees' membership for 2023-2024 (Finance, Pastoral, Quality of Education and Panels).

- 10.1. The Chair thanked governors for indicating their preferences for Committee membership and taking on of key link roles. The Chair noted that JMo had previously taken the skills/training/continuing professional development role and undertook to check with him that this arrangement would continue.
- 10.2. The Chair thanked JT for taking on the sustainability role and TS for health & safety (to include attending the school H&S committee).

11. School policies

Child protection & safeguarding policy

- 11.1. The Chair noted the revisions made by the LA to its template policy document and the unanimous approval by the FBG.

Anti-Bullying policy

- 11.2. KC stated that this policy had been reworked, drawing on information from

the Key and other schools. Governors asked about restorative justice and trained mediators (section 7), in terms of who were the mediators and their training; also SLT attendance procedures, which did not seem to fit (section 12). KC agreed to check these points.

- 11.3. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy, subject to any changes necessary with regard to the mediators' and SLT attendance points being clarified.

Capability policy

- 11.4. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy. Governors suggested reference being made to their possibly being involved in capability hearings.

Early Career Teacher (ECT) policy

- 11.5. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy. The Chair noted that the FBG should keep in mind issues of progress, previously covered by the former Pay and Personnel Committee, would have to be dealt with elsewhere, i.e. the Finance Committee.
- 11.6. BH added that this replaced the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) policy, itself based on the Key and other schools' practices.

Homework policy

- 11.7. BH informed the FBG that this policy had been shown to governors for their information only, as it did not need to be approved by them.

Data Protection policy

- 11.8. SH informed the FBG that this draft policy was based on the Key and the school had worked with the LA audit on stress testing. Governors asked if there had been any breaches, i.e. attacks on the school system – SH confirmed this was not the case. Governors asked about the retention of CCTV footage – SH stated this was related to size of files and generally only weeks were retained.
- 11.9. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy.

Children with health needs who cannot attend school policy

- 11.10. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy.
- 11.11. SH confirmed this too was based on the Key and had been shared with the LA; it would be taken on in future by the AP director.

First Aid policy

- 11.12. The Chair noted the unanimous approval by the FBG of this policy. SH stated that this set out LA requirements, in terms of what the school should have in place. Governors drew attention to the scrutiny element, to demonstrate their auditing responsibilities.

12. Governor training

- 12.1. The Chair noted that the LA BEEM training spreadsheet record of governors' training courses had been circulated.

13. Governor recruitment and filling vacancies

- 13.1. The Chair noted that there were two parent governor vacancies, one staff governor vacancy and one co-opted governor vacancy; processes were underway to recruit successors. The Chair noted that, in the case of the co-opted governor vacancy, interest had already been expressed by a candidate – this would be taken forward shortly.

- 14. Any Other Business** – KC informed governors of a number of instances of staff affected by illness; with information about diagnoses and support being given.

Actions

- Production of alternative text for point 11 of the draft Code of Conduct 2023-2024 – *'responsibilities as a good employer'* – JT
- Confirmation of skills/training/continuing professional development governor link role – JMo
- Check of trained mediators and SLT attendance procedures points in school antibullying policy - KC

Next meeting – Thursday 7 December 2023 Exam data (full picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...