

Minutes (Main Set) of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 7 July 2022 at 16.30 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair – by video link), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Lee Redmond (LR – acting (and Co-Vice) Chair), Mark Sorrell (MS – arrived 17.15 hours), Jim Henderson (JH), Alex Morrison (AM – by video link), Claire Harrington (CH), Richard Mills (RM), Gareth Chan (GC) and Kate Claydon (KC - Head Teacher).

In attendance: Maisie (student governor), Liv (student governor), Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager – arrived 17.00 hours), Ruth King (RK – deputy Head Teacher), Brandon Hughes (BH – deputy headteacher), Lizzie Edmed (LE - deputy Head Teacher) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

Quorum: 11 out of 14 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Student Governors presentation

The student governors (Maisie and Liv – M&L) presented a number of issues, on the basis of information gathered from several consultations with their peers:-

Toilets – cleaning, faulty locks, litter. Governors noted that there was an issue of encouraging students to behave; also that the same issues came up in other schools.

Canteen – food expensive, lack of hot vegan and vegetarian options, faulty water taps, lack of wheelchair access to food technology room. KC explained that she had discussed these issues with M&L to explain what was being done; SH would have a meeting with M&L to follow up; in particular wheelchair access. Governors suggested carrying out a survey amongst pupils to find out their food preferences; an exercise which should involve the contractor.

Litter – need for larger bins around the school premises, a litter pick during form time, need for more recycling bins and information about them. KC explained that issue was more to do with disposal of plastic bottles; provision was already in place for waste paper.

Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) education – discussion of more serious subjects (including LGBTQ+, sexual assault, consent, abortion, well-being and mental health issues), care with biases (availability of room). RK noted that a number of these subjects were already part of the school curriculum; also there had been a focus over the last two years on mental health.

Week of Action – clarity on structure (activities)

Uniform – polo shirts/shirt & tie, skirts and trainers. M&L asked for consideration of allowing pupils to switch from shirt & tie to polo shirts (this was uniform policy in Cardinal Newman Catholic School); also for all black trainers to be permitted.

Allotment – greenhouse, gardening area. M&L suggested using the overgrown area by the theatre and changing it to a gardening area.

Indoor spaces – seating areas inside during winter.

Wooden science tables – inappropriate comments graffiti. KC stated that this reflected many years of use of these tables; it was an issue that would be addressed.

Assemblies – order of subjects.

Basketball courts – faulty hoops. KC stated that the dangerous ones had been removed.

Trips – subject links. M&L stated that students wanted more trips specifically linked to subjects; also the Resources & Information Centre (RIC) booking system was difficult.

Register & name changing – process of change to new from old names. KC stated that there was a mechanism for collecting pupils' views on student voice. Governors noted that the school could use preferred names and there was an issue about what parents and children wanted in this regard. KC stated that this was a very difficult issue, some students had different views to their parents – and expressed these to the Year offices. RK drew attention to the Year offices document, which had all the relevant (names) details; discussions on issues arising had already been held with the relevant students.

(**Note** – M&L left the meeting at 17.15 hours)

2. Apologies for Absence.

2.1. Apologies for absence were accepted from James Moncrieff (JMo), Vernon Bamforth (VB) and Deborah Hillier (DHi).

3. Urgent business

Trans toolkit

3.1. The Chair drew attention to this document, circulated earlier to governors. KC explained that the school was currently dealing with a number of challenging and difficult situations. KC stated the school would carry out an impact assessment and this area was one which would need governor support. KC referred in general terms to the different generational standpoints on the issue; the school would need to work on which parts of the toolkit to adapt.

3.2. Governors, referring to the toolkit, commented that the complexity of the issue was significant. KC commented that there was no one easy route through the issue and asked for the setting up of a small working group of governors to discuss and take forward.

3.3. Governors asked whether the school had gendered toilets. KC stated that these were gender mixed; but in the absence of government guidance about all the issues, schools had to decide on their own policy in this regard. RK added that the LA toolkit was what it recommended schools to use and adapt.

3.4. The acting Chair recommended all governors read the toolkit and inform DH that they had done so.

4. **Declarations of interest** – None.

5. Minutes

5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 5 May 2022 were agreed by governors as a true record; to be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

6. Matters Arising

- Consultation about delegation of school policies review – to be done.
- Governors informal visit programme in June – done.
- Taking forward of parents' survey and feedback exercise – to be done.

7. Headteacher report

7.1. KC drew attention to her report circulated earlier to governors.

Quality of Education

7.2. Governors asked about the planning of targets, in particular design technology and participation in 'Challenge Partners'. BH stated that this had been joined in with mathematics and drama; design technology would be widened in the new academic year.

7.3. Governors asked about planning for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). BH believed this was going well, to ensure the effectiveness of delivering the school programme.

7.4. Governors asked about tutor time. LE stated this was about ensure quality in the setting out of a clear programme; drawing attention to aspects such as activities on the careers curriculum, well-being, quiz, 'drop everything and read' and mentoring. Governors suggested looking at messaging on well-being; LE stated that the session in question was called 'Well-Being Wednesday'.

7.5. Governors asked if parents' voice could be included as part of the interim school improvement plan (SIP). KC stated that this would be built into the updated SIP and agreed to meet with AM to discuss specific aspects. KC explained that the interim SIP was in place to work with, as part of her former role as acting headteacher. KC emphasised the importance attached to gather families' viewpoints.

Student Development and Child Protection

7.6. Governors asked about the budget for the summer school. RK explained that funding was coming from the school; there would be provision of a short story text, stationery packs and team building equipment.

7.7. Governors asked how many children were on roll for Year 7; KC stated that this was 322.

Behaviour and Attendance

7.8. Governors noted the reference made by M&L during their student governors' presentation to uniforms; namely the obligation to wear shirts and ties. KC did

not believe the school planned to make wholesale changes to the uniform policy; however adjustments would be made for individual students.

- 7.9. LE pointed to changes made to the policy after having listened to Student Voice comments, with regard to the wearing of PE kits; parents would be informed. LE added that there was a second hand uniform sale provision in the school. Governors asked if it were possible to return some of the money made on sales. SH explained that a number of parents donated uniforms to the school; income from sales generally went direct to the hardship fund.
- 7.10. Governors asked about attendance and persistent absence. LE stated that the school was focussing more at present on persistent absence and was seeing a steady improvement.
- 7.11. Governors drew attention to behaviour and attitudes in the School Evaluation report and believed this issue needed further examination; the parents' survey had shown levels of dissatisfaction compared to other schools, e.g. with respect to children not feeling safe at school. KC commented that Blatchington Mill was broadly in line with other schools, but agreed to work more with Parents View with a targeted focus. KC believed that the school was good overall, on behaviour and attitude.
- 7.12. Governors commented that Parent View was sometimes tricky to interpret, given that views expressed on open access could be more critical than those given in conversations. Governors believed that Parent View needed triangulating with other evidence. RK drew attention to the LA visit to the school in November 2021, resulting in the Safe and Well at School (SAWS) survey.
- 7.13. Governors recommended putting in place a process to look at this issue. KC agreed that the school could draw on the questions put by OfSTED in its parents survey for this purpose.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

- 7.14. The Chair welcomed the information provided about documentation with regard to the Self Evaluation Form (SEF), SIP overview, targets and 'Perspective. The Chair noted that this would be based on a range of evidence, provided by the School Partnership Advisor (SPA), OfSTED inspection and the school's processes; the FBG would be able to return to this issue in September. The Chair believed that there was a clear direction and mechanism as to how targets would be achieved.

8. School Budget

- 8.1. SH reported that the Finance Committee had met on 6 July, to monitor the budget going forward. SH stated that the surplus forecast for the end of the year was £356K; the outturn forecast was £500K. SH noted that this was high but not a concern given the early stage of the year; in addition, ring fenced allocations were due to be spent on the curriculum and infrastructure. SH added that figures on staffing, a massive proportion of the budget, were lagging behind changes effected in September.
- 8.2. Governors asked about the likely impact of the teachers' pay review on the budget. SH stated that this was not yet clear; at present the budget included allowance for a 1.75% increase.

8.3. SH drew attention to the LA review on low pay in Brighton & Hove and its aim to increase salary levels at the lower end of pay scales, i.e. for non-teaching staff. SH stated that this increase would be backdated to January 2022; the LA would pay for the amount due from January to March; schools would be responsible for April to the present date. SH stated that the LA had originally advised the school the likely amount to pay would be £26K; in the event, this figure had increased to £49K

9. Health & Safety

9.1. SH drew attention to the annual health & safety report, circulated earlier to governors. SH reported that the health & safety committee had met on 6 July (including JH); following the practice of convening every half term. SH referred to the LA checklist, a document to ensure measures were in place; this would be shared with governors in the new academic year.

9.2. JH praised the school's system of data collection; this was very comprehensive and straightforward to interrogate.

10. Safeguarding

10.1. RK explained that the LA were due to produce a template safeguarding draft policy over the summer; and circulated an update on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), which would be reflected in the new policy. RK drew attention in particular to the guidance on KCSIE training for governors. RK anticipated that the new safeguarding policy would be presented in September. RK added that the next LA safeguarding audit would be done next summer; following on from the last one in January 2022.

10.2. Governors asked about discussion during the OfSTED inspection about a safeguarding dashboard; i.e. coverage of metrics and a snapshot of safeguarding areas. RK agreed to look at this idea of a dashboard.

11. School policies

Policies delegation

11.1. The Chair drew attention to guidance on policies, in terms of which ones could be approved by individual governors, committees or the Full Board. The Chair undertook to present a list of policies annotated with approval responsibilities to the FBG in September.

Behaviour & Complaints

11.2. The acting Chair noted the unanimous approval of the FBG to delegate authority for approval of these two policies to KC and PS. KC added that work was being done on both, the drafts circulated earlier would be subject to additional amendments.

12. Governors' visits

12.1. The Chair reported that he, VB, AM and JMa had paid a governors' visit to the school on 14 June; had visited classrooms, met with BH, spoken to

students, talked about well-being and had seen Blatchington Mill in action. The Chair stated that his overall impression of the visit was extremely positive.

13. 'Drive To Go Paperless'

13.1. The acting Chair agreed that this agenda item could be deferred to September. SH added that she would be circulating a report on this subject nearer the time.

14. Governor training

14.1. JH reported that he had undertaken the health & safety LA training course on 27 June.

15. Governors' meetings dates list for 2022-2023

15.1. The acting Chair noted the approval of the FBG of the draft governors' meetings dates' list for 2022-2023.

16. Any Other Business

16.1. The Chair informed governors that there would be a further meeting on school places planning; to address the issue of the drop in secondary school admissions.

16.2. The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting for RM and LR; he noted the warm and appreciative thanks expressed by the FBG for the work and dedication to the school shown by both during their terms of office as governors.

Actions

- Consultation about delegation of school policies review – PS & KC
- 'Drive To Go Paperless' item addition to agenda for FBG meeting of 15 September - DH

Next meeting – Thursday 15 September 2022

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...