

## Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 28 January 2016

**Those Present:** Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Kevin Fry (KF), Sally Hunt (SH), Addy Balogun (AB), John Barker (JB – joined the meeting at 17.15 hours), Peter Gerry (PG), Richard Goodsell (RG), Ashley Harrold (AH), Richard Mills (RM), Soo-Min-Ryu (SR).

**In attendance:** David Harvey (DH – temporary clerk), Ruth King (RK), Kate Hovell (KH), Sarah Hextall (SH), Lyndsey Thompson (LT)

**Quorum:** 7 – meeting was quorate throughout.

### 0. Welcome.

### 1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Jenny Rusted (JR) and Gareth Chan (GC) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

### 2. Urgent Business

- 2.1. AH reported that the school had that day been the subject of considerable press and media interest, with regard to a story about pupils being asked to complete a survey on gender attitudes as homework. The story had arisen as a result of a complaint being made to the Argus newspaper by a parent, stating that it was 'inappropriate' and 'confusing' to require students to undertake such a task as homework. In the first instance, the Argus had approached the local authority (LA) press office for comment, who had released a statement helpful to the school.
- 2.2. AH stated that the survey had been circulated on a national basis to schools by the Children's Commissioner. As such it was therefore a fully legitimate and government endorsed exercise. However, given the wide interest generated in a number of media outlets as a result of the Argus story, the Children's Commissioner had since backed away stating the survey sent out was a draft. AH stated however that this was not stated in the Commissioner's original email.
- 2.3. AH reported that the press had doorstepped the school during day and, more worryingly, carried out filming close to the premises. AH also commented that several aspects of the story were wrong, for example conflating the issues of gender and sexuality (which was not the case about the survey at all) and referring to him as a woman(!). AH reported that he had put out a statement, setting out the school's position on the issue and the facts of the actions it had taken.
- 2.4. The Chair commented that this was a non-story. He understood that this survey had been distributed to all schools to carry out. Students nationally had said the terms set out in the survey were ones in common use. The Chair complimented AH on the quality of his statement on behalf of the school. AH emphasised that the school was working hard to fight for people who did not feel part of society. LT added that there seemed to be a campaign being waged by the press against schools in the area, giving examples

of Cardinal Newman and Longhill, putting out negative stories about them.

### **3. Declaration of interest**

- 3.1. RG noted his interest as included in the register in the tender process for construction of "C South".

### **4. Minutes**

- 4.1. The minutes of the meetings of 3 December 2015 were agreed as a true record and duly signed. PG asked for one amendment to be made (Page 5, 9.1, replacement of 'deficit' by 'surplus'), which was done and initialled by the Chair.

### **5. Matters Arising**

#### *Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)*

- 5.1. SH distributed DBS forms to all governors for completion (dated with that of the next FBG), stating that the school now required them to have certificates. SH informed governors that once these were issued, they could be registered online at a cost of £13, which would be reimbursed by the school. This would have the effect of not obliging governors to apply for DBS clearance again.

#### *Parent View*

- 5.2. AH commented on the initial poor level of response – thirteen. A breakthrough of sorts had been achieved by asking for returns to be completed at school parents' evenings – the figure had now reached over fifty. AH was pleased to note the high rate of satisfaction with the school expressed by parents; also that children felt safe there (a 100% return in this regard).

### **6. Pupil Premium (PP)**

- 6.1. AH introduced KH as an assistant head teacher, who was presently undertaking various roles including that of data. Her main role this academic year would be on 'closing the gap', covering welfare and attendance of children from a strategic viewpoint.
- 6.2. KH commented that the school had identified the achievement of PP students as a gap to close, going back to the academic year of 2013/2014 and it was her job to address this issue. PP students were those who had been eligible for Free School Meals for six years or more – in 2014 the national disadvantaged figure was 978, while the figure for the school was 967, leaving the school with a significant gap to close to national others of 1008.
- 6.3. KH drew attention to 2015 attainment highlights, which included disadvantaged students at the school doing better than disadvantaged nationally on 5A\*-C EM Ebacc. However on predicted attainment, outcomes for disadvantaged were lower than last year, making the gap slightly larger.
- 6.4. KH reported that the school's big success was progress. The national figure is benchmarked at 1,000, with the school achieving 1014 in 2015. This showed that disadvantaged students made better progress than non-disadvantaged at the school and also nationally. The Chair noted this achievement, commenting that it was noteworthy and clearly the school's efforts had paid off. KH thought that PP outcomes

for 2016 were looking positive, but with a predicted figure for PP of 1,008 and non PP of 1,034 there would still be a gap.

- 6.5. KH turned to attendance, acknowledging that PP was not where it should be. This was a top priority to address and would be tackled as soon as possible to improve outcomes. Data on this issue however was constantly changing.
- 6.6. KH discussed disadvantaged students, with respect to value added in Key Stage 5, where there were 14 in both Year groups, a small number. KH acknowledged that in terms of value added for PP for A levels, disadvantaged students were not doing as well as non-disadvantaged (but were at AS levels). KH stated that, for KS5, it was about doing something on an individual basis for the students, given the small numbers involved. KH added that retention of FSM students at this level was higher than non-FSM.
- 6.7. KH drew attention to the next steps planned to address the PP issue, which included:-
  - Improve PP attendance
  - Maintain scrutiny on PP students to ensure predictions come to fruition for 2015/16
  - Further evaluation of PP interventions and costing to establish most cost effective strategies
  - Look at FSM numbers studying academic courses at KS5
  - Improve outcomes for FSM students studying academic courses at KS5

Governors asked about the issue of retention. KH stated this was a question of students staying for two to three years to follow A and AS level courses. AH added that retention was generally strong, but needed to include EU students.

- 6.8. KH expanded on the measures being taken, by pointing to mentors being assertive and having an attendance group for intervention in place. KH thought that the biggest way to make a difference was to see what was going on in the classroom on a day to day basis; about teachers knowing who the PP students were and focussing on them for marking and checking progress. AH made the point that non disadvantaged results were also going up, so there was a question of assessing the gap on relative attainment.
- 6.9. Governors asked about the current ratio of PP to non-PP at the school. KH stated that PP was 25% of the current cohort.
- 6.10. KH stated that there was a focus on the 85-90% group of persistent absentees, with a push on contacting their homes pointing out how just a day here and there added up and affected learning adversely. LT added that there were many strategies on tackling this issue across the school, not least finding out the reasons for poor attendance.
- 6.11. The Chair commented that attendance was clearly a major issue to resolve. It would be useful for governors to learn more about the rewards and sanctions in place. The Chair also drew attention to the school website PP statement, which needed an update on how the funding was used and its impact. Overall, the Chair noted the FGB's agreement with the school's approach on PP.

## Action – KH to update school website PP statement.

### 7. Finance Committee

- 7.1. PG undertook to review the draft minutes of the 18 January Committee meeting and circulate to all governors. PG provided a short overview of items covered:-

#### *All Weather Pitches*

PG reported that SH had supplied him with copies of the two contracts, to see if any terms needed review. SH had reported to the Committee that the hockey club had asked to use the booking slot gaps from April to August at the previously agreed preferential rate. The Committee had agreed this proposal.

#### *Sinking Fund*

The Committee had noted this needed a close look at and monitoring; a shortfall was undesirable.

#### *Bank accounts signatories*

SH reported the background to this issue, in that the bank had lost its records of the school's signatories to the Non-Public Funds (NPF) account. This had now finally been resolved, with new signatories to the account now set up and acknowledged by the bank; the account could now be operated. Up until now, the public funds (PF) account had had to be used for NPF transactions; these could now be separated out.

Governors asked how this situation had arisen. SH stated that the bank could not provide an explanation. SH speculated that possibly a confusion had arisen when 'Friends of Blatchington Mill' had changed their signatories, which may have had a knock on effect on the school as well. PG assured governors that there had been no mismanagement of funds on the part of school officials.

SH added that the school would pursue a complaint against the bank, with a demand that it refund any charges made to the account as a result of its mistakes. Once this had been resolved, the school would move its account, not least because of these problems but also to split the funds held in one account for bank default protection purposes.

#### *School meal contract*

PG reported that the Committee was looking into this matter, because of problems reported with regard to use of software systems. A question had arisen over ownership of the hardware and software used. AH added that the system was breaking down now, more often than was acceptable.

### 7.2. **C South building project**

SH reported that the tender process was now complete, with four bids having been received. The school had decided, with the Committee's authority, to look further at the two cheapest, despite their bids being higher than the pre-tender cost and budget. A further look at the value engineering aspects of these two bids had been taken by the quantity surveyor (QS), allowing a decision to be made to go with Cheesmur. This company had provided further detail on their bid (to the satisfaction of the QS) as requested and had undertaken to complete the work on time i.e. by September 2016.

Accordingly, the school had issued a Letter of Intent for the set up costs to start in two weeks.

AH asked that the FBG now agree formally that the work could go ahead, namely construction of two classrooms (one to include a laboratory) and one office, to be ready for September. The FGB voted unanimously to approve this action.

AH reported that information had been provided to local residents on this project. No comments had yet been received back. SH added that the construction site would be in an enclosed compound, with plans to take the manager through the DBS process in place. In addition, the builders would be taken through a safeguarding process and CCTV possibly installed to monitor the compound. SH stated that the intention was that the construction would have a low impact on the school.

The Chair assured the FBG that the Committee would keep this project under review.

## **8. Head's report**

- 8.1. AH spoke to the report circulated earlier. Drawing attention to RAISEOnline, the main issue was to achieve a basic understanding, that the data contained therein matched with what the school was saying about its assessments.
- 8.2. AH stated that the inspection dashboard gave a sense of attainment and progress achieved by the school. It pointed to the school's strengths in 2015 where results had improved over the dip in 2014, with a number of areas of strong performance. The school average for 2015 for 8 B+ grades for each student was very good.
- 8.3. AH commented that there were new measures on attainment 8 and Progress 8, which would be more important. This related to the basket of subjects, taking the best 8, comprising of different elements on how this was scored. The school was comfortably above the national average in this regard, which should be the same next year. On Progress 8, all students had achieved a score of 0.5 on English which was very positive; disadvantaged students 0.59; being beyond that indicated a particular strength. AH stated that the school's disadvantaged students were doing well against national standards as well as English as an Additional Language (EAL) ones; performance here was very strong. The overall school progress 8 score was 0.28.

### *Appendix 1*

- 8.4. AH pointed to this setting out detail on the Key Stage 4 average points score per pupil, which was strong for the school.

### *Appendix 3*

- 8.5. AH pointed to this setting out the English and Maths transition matrices. There was a focus on higher achieving PP students which was really important and positive. Three PP students in Maths had achieved A\* this year, in comparison to none last year.

### *Appendix 4*

- 8.6. AH stated that this set out information on Progress 8 in a chart element and Special Educational Needs (SEN) support.

### *Appendix 5*

- 8.7. AH explained this showed what had happened to KS2 to KS4 value added over the last three years. AH stated that this would be the first piece of information to show to

OfSTED inspectors. There was progress on value added, with this year being particularly strong showing some phenomenal scores. With regard to SEN (K – signifying those students without statements), the school was looking at, in particular, working on teaching assistant job standards which contribute to the quality of student support.

#### *Appendix 6*

- 8.8. AH drew attention to the inspection dashboard again, which showed that PP were doing better than non-PP students nationally.

#### *FBG comment*

- 8.9. The Chair asked how this information fed back into the School Development Plan. AH stated that all aspects of SEN (K), disadvantaged students, PP and attendance fed back into the SDP.
- 8.10. The Chair noted the improvement shown by the school since 2013 – 2014, when it was last inspected. At that time, progress on PP and SEN had been issues of concern – it was good therefore to see this situation turned around now. The Chair noted that, looking at this latest data information, there were still issues (particularly on attendance) but a much smaller number. The Chair asked AH to convey the FBG's compliments on this overall performance to his staff. AH stated that there was no complacency about these achievements, the job was only half done but done well.

### **9. Email useage**

- 9.1. The Chair referred to the discussion held by governors at the 3 December 2015 meeting on this subject. This had been to do with the issue of login information, allowing governors access to the school's secure email system, in the form of their being issued individually with school email addresses. AH added that this was an important issue, highlighted by Cardinal Newman School's recent OfSTED experience which had drawn an uncompromising stance on meeting every aspect of safeguarding.
- 9.2. The Chair suggested putting in place a system whereby governors were alerted to emails being in their secure areas, by means of messages to this effect sent to their private accounts.
- 9.3. Governors asked for assistance in gaining access to the school system for their individual machines. AH stated this could be done, by them bringing their devices in for security and compatibility checking by the school IT department.
- 9.4. The Chair commented that some aspects of information about governors on the school website needed updating.

### **10. Sixth Form review**

- 10.1. AH pointed to the two reviews taking place at the moment, that of the LA (for the local area) and also the wider (Education Funding Agency – EFA) South Coast one. AH stated that the school could not take part in the latter, given that it would have no access to its findings.
- 10.2. AH believed that the school should be giving further consideration to what the sixth form did, in terms of local collaboration. With this in mind, AH reported contact with Hove Park School with whom there was a good working relationship. The fact was that

Blatchington Mill's numbers needed to go above 250 to make the sixth form viable. That and putting in place a mixed programme (academic and vocational) to appeal to all students and meet their needs.

- 10.3. AH assured governors that the school would need its own quality assurance of teaching at Hove Park; also robust procedures to check on the student provision.

## **11. School policies**

- 11.1. The Chair asked governors to consider approving four school policies. AH commented that this process needed better standardisation, making it more up to date and as current as possible.

### *Aim Higher*

AH stated that this was a replacement for the one on Gifted and Talented. This had been related to a government initiative focussing on at least 10% of students to stretch and challenge them further. AH's view however was that the approach should be to encourage as many students as possible to reach this level. Governors agreed with this more inclusive approach and endorsed this policy.

### *Anti-Bullying*

Governors endorsed this policy, subject to a number of minor changes and updates being made. Governors asked how this policy might cover staff; AH explained that this was set out in the whistleblowing policy.

### *Attendance and Punctuality*

Governors endorsed this policy. AH warned that governors would need to come back to the issue of unauthorised absences. Governors asked how absences from class (rather than from school itself) were recorded. AH stated that this was done separately under truancy.

### *Health and Safety*

AH explained that this was based largely on the LA policy. Governors asked whether there was guidance here on liaising with building contractors, which was confirmed. SH added that an action plan would be drawn up to meet H&S requirements. JB and RG agreed to become H&S link governors. The FGB duly endorsed the H&S policy.

**Action – SH to produce H&S action plan.**

## **12. Clerk to Governors job vacancy**

- 12.1. The Chair reported that neither of the two candidates recently interviewed for this position were selected. Both he and AH were now pursuing other avenues to fill this vacancy.

## **13. Training**

- 13.1. PG reported that the system of training delivery by the LA had recently changed; governors should now apply online to the Brighton & Hove Education & Enterprise Marketplace (BEEM). He stated having recently attended the Introduction to Chair and Vice Chair course.

- 13.2. AH encouraged governors to undertake training on preventing radicalisation, this was provided by Channel online, which issued a certificate after completion.

**Action – Clerk to circulate information on BEEM.**

**Action – Clerk to circulate ‘Channel’ training link.**

**Action – Governors to consider use of the website ‘The Key’**

#### **14. Chair’s Actions**

- 14.1. The Chair referred to the RAISEOnline login issue. AH agreed to ask the data office to arrange access for governors.

**Action – AH to arrange RAISEOnline access for governors.**

- 14.2. AH informed governors that Cardinal Newman was arranging briefings about the lessons learnt with regard to their recent OfSTED inspection experience. With this in mind, SH recommended that child protection and safeguarding be put on the next FBG agenda.

**Action – Clerk to put safeguarding on next FBG agenda.**

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...