

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 15 December 2016

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Kevin Fry (KF), John Barker (JB), Ashley Harrold (AH), Andrew Wallace (AW), Sally Hunt (SH) and Richard Mills (RM).

In attendance: Ruth King (RK – staff), Lindsey Thompson (LT – staff), David Harvey (DH – clerk), Noah Rutter (NR – staff), Alexis Crawford (AC – staff) and Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager).

Quorum: 7 out of 12 governors present with 3 vacancies – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Welcome.

1. To receive a report on the work of Student Commissioners (AH/NR)

- 1.1 AH introduced NR, explaining his role with student voice and setting out the nature of the Student Commissioners (SCs) initiative, which was to have effect in terms of changing working practice and not just a method of expressing views.
- 1.2 NR stated that the SCs was not a new idea, but one revamped and brought up to date. A relationship had been established with Brighton University, whereby a small amount of funding had been secured to start a student research project. NR commented that it was important for students to lead this project and ensure it had impact. The idea had been raised at school assemblies, with students selected at random from Years 8 & 9 to secure a wide diversity of participation.
- 1.3 NR stated that he had met with these students, along with another colleague, to set them tasks and give them ideas for issues to improve and focus on; the students were then split into smaller groups, with two key questions for each to work on.
- 1.4 NR stated that a link had been established with a school in Finland, with the idea of bringing a Finnish perspective on teaching and learning to Blatchington Mill. In addition, a SCs diary had been created on Firefly; also assistance promised from Year 11 students and student governors.
- 1.5 NR commented that possible challenges to be faced might include how to encourage students to lead on the project and work independently, finding best practice. NR described next steps as including the collating of answers to research and the creation of an action plan, which would be presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT); setting out areas for improvement and change. By the end of the school year, a joint document would be created.
- 1.5 Governors asked why only students from Years 8 & 9 had been selected. NR stated that the amount of funding available had dictated use of a small group to start with; also students from Years 8 & 9 had less curriculum demands on their time than others.
- 1.6 Governors asked for details of the envisaged projects. NR gave the headline titles of learning environment; health (canteen, diet); extra-curricular communities (trips); teaching and learning; and systems, rewards & sanctions. NR added that these subject headings were issues raised by the students themselves.
- 1.7 Governors asked how the students had felt about being selected to take part in this project. NR stated that all had been offered the option of not taking part; only two had chosen this response.

- 1.8 Governors asked how other parties might be drawn into consultations. NR stated that students from other Years would be interviewed; also there would be involvement by the Student Council.
- 1.9 Governors commented that some years ago students had observed lessons – some had liked this idea, others thought it a step too far. AH pointed to the quality assured survey method, which allowed for expression of the student voice about lessons without personalising comments. NR added that this particular aspect of the project would be delicately handled.
- 1.10 AH suggested that the students involved make a presentation to governors at the next meeting of the FBG on work done so far.
- (Note – NR left the meeting at 17.20 hours)

2. Curriculum

Curriculum plan

- 2.1 AC drew governors' attention to the 2017/2018 curriculum plan. This set out the curriculum vision for students to experience; broad and balanced with a wide range, to ensure outstanding progress at every stage. AC explained 'interleaving' to mean the alternating between subjects – e.g. fractions with other topics. AC also referred to the importance of developing creativity, encouraging independence and allowing for extra-curricular activities.
- 2.2 AC turned to the allocation of time allowed for each subject. In this regard, Blatchington Mill's plan on mathematics, English and science was broadly in line with other schools in Brighton and Hove. Music had been changed and put in line with the other subjects of Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) and Religious Education (RE).
- 2.3 Governors asked for more information on how subject periods had been devised. AC stated that mathematics, English and science had been double weighted, for six periods each in Key Stage 4. AC added that the triple science option was only offered to more able students; bearing in mind that obtaining two good grades on this subject was better than three average ones.

EBacc

- 2.4 AC stated that the original government plan was to have a certificate covering passes in mathematics, English, Science, (a) language and (a) humanities (e.g. history or geography), presently rated as part of the school's performance, to be made compulsory by 2018. However, changes in requirements now meant that pupils identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) would no longer have to do the EBacc. Also, the government had issued a consultation on the issue on 3 November 2015, closing it in January 2017. So far, no response or result had yet been issued.
- 2.5 AC commented that the school's assumption was, in the absence of further government instruction or guidance, that Year 8 would have to pick up the EBacc, as part of performance measures. AC stated that, with the Department for Education (DfE) yet to make a final decision, most schools in Brighton and Hove thought that Year 8 would start on the EBacc.

'Fertile' questions

- 2.6 AC referred to a Key Stage 3 scheme of learning audit, which had pulled out what was good and what needed further development; also to consulting an 'outstanding classrooms' textbook, which contained great curriculum ideas, including discussion about 'fertile questions'.

- 2.7 AC explained the idea was to devise a question to engage students and introduce an underlying concept about which they had to learn. This idea had been launched at the end of 2015 with a small group of staff, for them to consider in their subject areas; then a whole school training session was carried out. Examples of fertile questions included: - 'how many people is too many people'; 'why do we sleep'; 'is God a racist'; 'can plastic grow on trees'. So a series of lessons would be carried out, for students to research and present answers; e.g. Drama tackled the question 'what is communication without words'.
- 2.8 Governors praised the school for taking on this initiative, which clearly stimulated learning and was an exciting prospect. AC stated that the school was now evaluating progress so far and planning another session for next term; for inclusion in the Year 7 scheme of work. Some leaders had come up with subject areas that could really take on this concept; other were considering how it could be done. AH added that, for example, science was very fact led, so this 'fertile questions' concept was tricky in this area.
- 2.9 Governors asked how less able students were coping with this idea. AC stated that part of the evaluation process was checking how this was being received in subject areas and reviews of support being in place for lower ability students.
- 2.10 The Chair commented that applying this idea to mathematics might be challenging as well. AC stated that teachers would plan what concepts they wanted students to address.
- 2.11 Governors asked how this idea fitted with the need to secure good exam results. AC referred to the Key Stage 3 schemes of work which included the need to make better progress; 'fertile questions' was a good way of encouraging staff to revisit work and look at what the school wanted students to achieve.
- 2.12 Governors commented that SEN students, who did not always fit into a controlled way of learning, might well do better with this 'fertile' approach.
- 2.13 Governors asked if parents had been consulted on this concept. AC stated that it was still at an early stage of implementation. The school aimed to put it on Firefly and make homework part of the planning. The Chair described this as being a very interesting initiative, for students to adopt different approaches to learning. The Chair asked that governors be given an update in due course. AC stated that schemes of learning would be available by July 2017.

(Note – AC left the meeting at 17.50 hours)

3. Apologies for Absence.

- 3.1. Peter Gerry (PG), Fiona Bauermeister (FB), Richard Goodsell (RG), Addy Balogun (AB) and Gareth Chan (GC) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

4. Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chair commented that, in recent weeks, governors had been asked to participate in a number of panels (disciplinary, permanent exclusion and complaint). A number of problems had arisen, with regard to use of official school 'schmail' and personal email addresses. The Chair suggested that henceforth requests for participation in panels by governors be sent out to personal email addresses, to save on time it took for them to access these messages.
- 4.2 The Chair also forewarned governors that there would be a number of panels scheduled in January and asked what timing would better suit them for these hearings. Governors asked that consideration be given to schedule them for 17.00 hour starts. SH

commented that this would be difficult for staff disciplinary hearings, which would normally take place during the working day.

5. Declarations of interest – KF notified the FGB of his role as staff Unison (union) representative.

6. Minutes

6.1. The minutes of the meeting of 22 September 2016 were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

7. Matters Arising

- Special Educational Needs report circulation – to be done.
- Budget approval by Chair to be actioned as part of the Finance Committee meeting proceedings of 26 September – done.
- Convening of GB special session ('deep dive' working group) to address post 16 performance strategy on 20 October at 17.00 hours – done, with record of meeting circulated.
- FBG and Committees membership compilation and circulation to all governors – done.
- FBG members to send the Clerk a test message, to confirm successful 'schmail' address registration – done.
- Circulation of training information to governors – to be done.

8. Any matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda – none.

9. School budget update 2016/2017

9.1. SH referred to the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 21 November, and the budget monitoring report tabled for this financial year which had been done. SH noted that a balanced budget had been achieved, with a process of monthly monitoring now established. SH stated that a report presented to governors at this meeting had shown a £36K surplus outturn forecast; which was a much healthier position than hitherto.

9.2. SH highlighted the specific aspects of agency costs being high; the mismatch between the financial and academic years; also the insurance claims made as a result of the two lighting strikes. SH drew governors' attention to the imminent completion of the C South project (which had come in on budget); the school would be able to move in, in January 2017.

10. To review conclusions and outcome of governors' 'deep dive' meeting of 20 October (PS)

10.1. The Chair referred to this special session, where governors had met to discuss sixth form issues. Drawing on AH's presentation of results at the FBG of 22 September, the sixth form was likely to be rated as 'requires improvement' by OfSTED; with the rest of the school as 'outstanding'. The Chair informed governors that those at the meeting had gone through plans presented by AH to address the issue, which included changes to sixth form leadership and A level course cuts as points for action.

- 10.2. AH stated that, given the availability of up to date data, the FBG meeting of 26 January 2017 would be a good time to revisit this issue. The Chair added that drawing on data would inform on progress achieved from assessments. AH stated that, although the core results showed that the sixth form had performed badly, there were nevertheless very strong aspects such as the high numbers of students achieving progression to University. AH added that the current predictions for this year were better (on the basis of measuring value added); it was important for the school to show it was acting on this issue.

11. Headteacher report

- 11.1. AH invited governors' questions on his report circulated earlier. The Chair asked about the predictions set out on pages 2 and 3. AH confirmed that these were current projections. The Chair drew attention to the figure of 19%, appearing in the Key Stage 5 table (without equivalent) for AS A*/B, for the second half of the autumn term. AH stated that, on vocational courses, students did better on BTech than A level courses; the relative value of these qualifications were not as greatly weighted as before. AH felt that the equivalent grades would improve
- 11.2. The Chair drew attention to the unvalidated Progress 8 figures on English and Mathematics, commenting that the predictions were negative. AH stated that English and Maths were double weighted, making the predicted grades lower. AH informed governors that grades were now being submitted into a central database, in order to secure a better picture of how students were performing against a more accurate sample.
- 11.3. Governors asked what measures were being put in place to address the Pupil Premium (PP) figures. AH spoke of a bespoke plan, setting out an alternative programme with support.
- 11.4. The Chair noted that the difference with figures on disadvantaged students were greater than last year. AH stated that there was a difference on attainment, with Progress 8 being positive last year. AH pointed to the figure of 0.81 on Key Stage 5 value added, which showed the impact of the process.
- 11.5. Governors commented on the high turnover of teaching assistants (TAs). AH stated that four had been appointed at the last round of interviews. SH stated that the turnover might have something to do with the school's requirement for full (rather than part) time employees in this role. AH concluded that, comparatively speaking, the school's turnover was not excessively high.

12. To review RAISEOnline early release data

- 12.1. AH explained the new data layout, which showed the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, compared to each other on a national basis.

13. To receive an update on the Pavilion & Downs Teaching School Alliance (to include set-up and possible establishment of an educational trust)

- 13.1. AH provided governors with a background of this issue. Blatchington Mill had put in a bid to become a teaching school, in part to access new income streams but also to help with recruitment and training; along with four other schools in Brighton and Hove. No one school had qualified in meeting all the criteria specified, so it was decided all five would apply as a unit. At this point three succeeded (Hove Park, Dorothy Stringer and Steyning); Blatchington Mill had not because of the school to school support

element.

- 13.2. AH stated that this enterprise would take time and energy to set up, to include a structure and trust. An official, at assistant head teacher level, would be appointed as head of the training school across the five participating institutions. Another facet of the arrangement would be that AH would operate in the trust on behalf of governors.
- 13.3. Governors wondered if this would turn out to be a *quasi* academy arrangement. AH stated that this would not change the entity of the school, rather that it would carry out work on its behalf. The trustees' angle was that decisions would be made about the teaching school on an equal share basis. AH added that the teaching school would take contributions from all five participating schools
- 13.4. The Chair asked about the trust charging outside parties for time spent on services supplied. SH stated that an agreement would be drawn up by the five in terms of how the income would be shared by trust members.
- 13.5. The Chair stated that the next steps required that governors give a go ahead in principle, for the school to pursue this initiative. AH commented that the five schools doing this together would be a guarantee of greater security, rather than Blatchington Mill attempting this endeavour on its own.
- 13.6. Governors asked about likely costs, including the trust having employees. AH stated that there would be a net cost to the school in setting this structure up; but having it in place would help with recruitment and retention.
- 13.7. The Chair commented that, for the local governing body to become a director of the trust, governors would need to know more about their responsibilities in taking on an undertaking of this nature.
- 13.8. AH stressed that all these details had been provided only for information at this stage, asked for room to explore the options and governors' agreement to continue with this initiative. The Chair noted governors' approval for AH to follow up this proposal in principle.

14. To discuss the local authority high needs top up funding for schools letter

- 14.1 AH referred to a letter from the local authority of 2 November 2016, on high needs and a proposal to implement a mid-way band of SEN top up funding to address budget pressure. AH stated however that, whilst a system of three rather two bands was acceptable, the school's range of needs still required the top rate of funding.

15. Safeguarding

- 15.1. RK gave governors an update on Focus Prevent work; also that use of the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) was going well. RK also reported on the local authority feedback on the safeguarding audit report carried out at the end of the last academic year which had been generally positive. Finally, RK reported that there were eleven students at the school on a child protection plan.
- 15.2. RK raised the issue of governors being issued with Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates and noted that three were still outstanding. DH confirmed that all three had been contacted in this regard; they had responded and were taking forward their applications as requested.

16. Committee membership 2017/2017 (Finance, Pay & Personnel, Recruitment and Panels)

- 16.1. The Chair noted that all governors had been allocated places, with AW stepping forward to volunteer to join the Recruitment Committee.
- 16.2. The Chair noted the need to appoint, in addition, a link governor with responsibility for health and safety. SH added that it would be worthwhile for such a governor to participate in the school health and safety committee.

17. To approve five updated school policies – Safer Recruitment; Behaviour; & Charging and Remissions; Disciplinary; and CIC/AFC.

Safer Recruitment

- 17.1. The Chair noted that this policy was based on the local authority model. SH added that the school was already following its principles; new additions included teachers on probation & employees' obligation to inform the school of police cautions received. SH added that the school already had a procedure in place to check a new employee's right to work in the UK.
- 17.2. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

Behaviour

- 17.3. The Chair noted that this policy had been updated; AH added that it matched current practice at the school, which was to promote positive behaviour. Governors asked about 'drop-ins'; AH confirmed that these were minuted.
- 17.4. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

Charging and Remissions

- 17.5. AH commented that this was a new policy, just brought in; with practice already in place.
- 17.6. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

Disciplinary

- 17.7. SH stated that the procedure with reference to the guidance had to be adopted. The model procedure would be adapted to appear as a Blatchington Mill policy, with no other text changes.
- 17.8. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

Children in Care (CIC)/Adopted from Care (AFC)

- 17.9. AH raised the issue of how the school used funding for such students, to ensure outcomes and progress; the policy required a named lead. In terms of a Pupil Premium link governor, this was PS.
- 17.10. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.
- 17.11. AH placed on record his thanks to Jason King for his work on this policy.

18. To review progress on updating audit information held about governors skills

- 18.1. The Chair noted that there had been five responses before the meeting; that a number of governors had passed completed forms to DH at the meeting for processing. Once complete, the Chair stated there would be a need to convene the Recruitment Committee to review the exercise and decide on next steps to fill the three co-opted governor vacancies.

19. Governors' use of school email addresses

- 19.1. The Chair proposed that DH contact governors using their personal email addresses to cut down on time on exercises such as securing volunteers to participate in panels. Governors agreed this proposal. SH warned that such messages had to be unclassified in nature and contain no sensitive information.

Actions

- Student Commissioners 'work so far' presentation for next FBG agenda – Clerk
- Follow up of teaching school alliance proposal - AH
- Appointment of health & safety link governor - PS

Next meeting – Thursday 26 January 2017 at 17.00 hours (RAISEOnline)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...