

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 16 March 2017 – MAIN SET

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AH), Andrew Wallace (AW), Peter Gerry (PG), Fiona Bauermeister (FB), Richard Goodsell (RG), Addy Balogun (AB), Sally Hunt (SHu), Kevin Fry (KF), Lee Redmond (LR) and John Barker (JB).

In attendance: Ruth King (RK – staff), Lindsey Thompson (LT – staff), David Harvey (DH – clerk) and Sarah Hextall (SHX – school business manager).

Also present: Noah Rutter (NR - staff) & three Student Commissioners (Ji-Hyun Lee, Ella Gooch and Sandile Ndawana)

Quorum: 11 out of 13 governors present with 2 vacancies – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Welcome.

- 0.1. The Chair welcomed LR to his first meeting of the FBG in his role as newly appointed co-opted governor.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Gareth Chan (GC) and Richard Mills (RM) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Urgent Business - None.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The minutes (main set and confidential annex) of the meeting of 26 January 2017 were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

- Student Commissioners' report update on agenda for next meeting – done, to be discussed at the present meeting.
- Pavilion & Downs Teaching School Alliance to be on agenda for next meeting – done, to be discussed at the present meeting.
- Receipt of official school emails on mobile phones - to be discussed at the present meeting.

6. Any matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda – None.

7. School Commissioners (SCs) update

- 7.1. NR provided background information to this initiative. NR stated that pupils had been selected on a random basis from Years 8 and 9 to become SCs, to pick on areas of school activity to look at, assess what was good and what could be improved. Groups of students selected had undertaken active research, taken into account practice at other schools and brought back the results to Blatchington Mill. The SCs had focussed

in particular on teaching & learning, lunchtimes/canteen facilities, rewards/sanctions and extracurricular work.

- 7.2. *Teaching & Learning* - The SCs explained that they had held meetings, asking teachers and pupils in the school for their views (also a school in Finland). A feedback sheet had been produced, for teachers to see what their pupils thought (on an anonymous basis); lesson plans had also been looked at, including the range of styles, visual aids and book work.
- 7.3. *Lunchtimes/canteen facilities* – The SCs commented that they had considered ways to improve this provision, e.g. availability of food and healthy options; outside areas for students to sit, transforming these into creative spaces. SCs stated that they had also considered the conditions of the toilet facilities, focussing on cleanliness.
- 7.4. *Rewards/Sanctions* – SCs had considered the ‘Passport Points’ (and prizes) system and noted there was an issue of recognition to look at, i.e. the production of a guide to make awards fairer.
- 7.5. *Extracurricular access* – NR stated that this was in the context of difficulties currently being addressed by student support; with a view to now create a wider availability, e.g. setting up of taster sessions and after school clubs.
- 7.6. Governors asked for more details about the information provided by the SCs from their contact with Finnish schools. The SCs stated that there were not so many sanctions applied in Finland; also the students there were able to sit and eat their lunches outside; and payment was required for after school activities.
- 7.7. Governors asked about the feedback exercise from students about teachers. The SCs explained that this part of the initiative had not yet started, but would be taken forward with teachers that were keen to participate.
- 7.8. SHX undertook to speak to the SCs about the toilets and canteen issues raised.
- 7.9. The Chair concluded by paying tribute to the high value of the work being done by the SCs; a view endorsed enthusiastically by all members of the FBG.

8. School budget update

- 8.1. SHX recalled that she had circulated headline figures to governors ahead of the meeting, following up a meeting of the Finance Committee on 27 February (which had looked at the current year’s budget). SHX commented that the projected figures were daunting, illustrated by the fact that last year’s budget had had a carry forward figure of £250K included; this year only £50 – 60K was envisaged (although this was higher than the original estimate of £3K).
- 8.2. SHX stated that the problems had arisen as a result of:-
 - Blatchington Mill having fewer Free School Meal (FSM) children on roll (a lower level of Pupil Premium grant);
 - A reduction of sixth form funding from last year (the increase of students completing courses was welcome news, but there were now fewer students staying on, after their GCSEs);
 - Costs had gone up (salaries increased by 1%, also National Insurance and

pension contributions).

- 8.3. SHX stated that there was now little in the way of costs that could be cut back further. In addition, the current budget estimate reflected all staff being more careful with expenditure. SHX informed governors that she had allowed curriculum budget holders to carry their unspent funds forward into the new year. The Chair asked about the £66K carry forward figure. SHX explained that this was included in the headline figure of £166K, of which £120K was allocated to curriculum.
- 8.4. Governors asked about the predicted deficit. SHX explained the difference between the £283K (deficit) and £450K (in year deficit) figures.
- 8.5. Governors asked what scope the school had to address the situation. SHX stated that the school could apply to the local authority (LA) to carry forward a licensed deficit of up to £250K; but this would have to be accompanied by a plan to clear this figure within three years.
- 8.6. The Chair asked if the £60K payment from the LA for the Special Educational Needs (SEN) case had been made. SHX confirmed that this amount was included in the figures presented.
- 8.7. The Chair asked what action the school planned to tackle the situation. AH stated that the figures were dreadful, but the school had been in a worse situation last year. However the school was hampered by the fact that it could not make the same cuts this year, as the business section restructure had been carried out and was now factored in. The plain fact was that income was not sufficient to cover costs.
- 8.8. AH commented that there was a national debate currently going on, to which the school should contribute. Also the LA SEN underfunding situation still had not been resolved, to the extent that the school's needs had not been properly addressed. The negotiation with the LA to put a specialist Unit in place at the school could therefore be speeded up.
- 8.9. AH drew governors' attention to the fact that, last year 90% of the budget had gone on staffing costs – now the figure was 80% as a result of the restructure. However, it was still the case that improving standards for children with existing resources was very challenging. One idea put forward was to engage the services of a fund raiser, whose costs would have to become self-financing; who would make accessing grants a priority.
- 8.10. Governors asked if there was any scope to derive more income from additional use of the premises facilities. AH stated that the school had reached a peak with this resource, with an income now realised of £80K.
- 8.11. SHX highlighted the issue of the (0.5%) apprenticeship levy, imposed by the government on all employers with a salary bill of £3M or over. In principle, this fell to the LA to pay, but it had decided to share the bill amongst all the maintained schools.
- 8.12. Governors asked what the school had to achieve and in what timeframe. AH stated that whatever was put forward had to be possible, bearing in mind the school's core activity of putting teachers in front of children. SHX added the target was to have a sustainable budget over a three year period.
- 8.13. The Chair commented that Blatchington Mill was in different circumstances now. Other schools in Brighton and Hove were in the same position. The Chair specified:-

- The first part was to put measures of internal economies in place;
 - the second was engage in the public debate drawing attention to the impossibility of many schools setting a budget at proposed funding levels,
 - the third to address the £60K SEN money which had enabled the school to balance its budget, but was not the full amount it should have received for the case it made.
- 8.14. Governors asked about numbers of SEN students that would be starting at the school. AH stated that numbers for statemented Education, Health & Care (EHC) plan ones were not yet known; for last year there had been 17 SEN students in Year 7, 8 were expected this year. AH reminded governors that the first £6K of expenditure for their support was expected from the school. SHX added that there were often many in-year transfers; LT stated some were on the admissions waiting list.
- 8.15. AH commented that Blatchington Mill had a third of all statemented children in Brighton and Hove. If the local system of funding was properly recalibrated, this would mean an extra £80K of funding for the school. However it was the case that the LA was committed to the principle of equal distribution of numbers across the city.
- 8.16. Governors thought there was a need to look at the national picture and wondered where the school's leverage lay – by means of headteachers or governors taking up the debate. AH highlighted the government's national consultation and thought that the FBG could contribute to this exercise. But it was a fact that the school had exhausted every avenue in cutting costs, as a result of last year's restructure.
- 8.17. The Chair noted that the school needed more income. AH stated that he was unwilling to approach parents for additional funding. Governors asked if establishing the SEN Unit would be a good way forward. AH stated that this was at the stage of putting forward expressions of interest, but the school certainly had a good case. Governors asked about sixth form income. AH stated that the school made a (net) £40K as part of its partnership with Hove Park in this area.
- 8.18. Governors noted AH's need for direction from the FBG on this issue, that all aspects had to be examined, including the range of subjects covered and the need for a sustainable budget. However there was a requirement for staff, parents and students to be informed. Parents would have a contribution to make to the debate, but it was important to consult staff first. AH agreed that the internal process should be completed first, before widening the debate.
- 8.19. The Chair itemised a suggested plan:-
- AH should go back to look at the structural aspects, with a focus on the curriculum (to aim for a three year sustainable budget). A proposed solution would be worked on for presentation to governors, with staff and parents being informed after this was done.
 - Formulation of an approach with regard to the broader aspects of the national picture, involving the LA and other headteachers. On the latter, engagement with other schools for something to come out of a headteacher approach would be necessary (to say this was a shared problem, not specific to Blatchington Mill)
 - Identification of other ways to generate funding.

- 8.20. **(Note – This paragraph has been removed for sensitivity and confidential reasons; and appears in a confidential annex to this main set of minutes)**
- 8.21. Governors asked if schools should be more competitive with each other, in terms of looking at securing additional income. AH stated that it was better if schools were all strong in performance, rather than try to outdo each other.
- 8.22. The Chair suggested that an additional meeting of the FBG be scheduled for 6 April, in order to consider AH's proposal. Governors agreed this idea.

9. OfSTED Inspection Report

- 9.1. The Chair recalled that OfSTED inspectors had inspected the school on 8 February 2017. This had been classed as a short inspection, on the hypothesis that the school would retain its 'good' rating – which it continued to be. The Chair stated that the inspectors had looked at the key areas of improving outcomes, better progress, pupil premium and performance management processes.
- 9.2. The Chair commented that the school and governors had emerged positively from the report. Next steps for the school including addressing the issue of attendance by particular groups, students' A level progress and SEN students' progress.
- 9.3. AH stated that the issues identified by the inspectors were areas on which the school was already working, especially aspects of teaching and learning. AH noted that the report had focussed just on the monitoring of standards being kept up, rather than commenting on the richness of activities carried out. AH expressed satisfaction in particular about the positive comments made about leadership and management.
- 9.4. Governors noted the bullet points made for areas of improvement, highlighting the statement that students felt safe at school and able to learn. Governors expressed considerable pride in the overall achievement of the school in securing such a good endorsement of its performance – emphasising their recognition of the significant contribution of the staff in this achievement.
- 9.5. The Chair drew governors' attention to OfSTED's Parent View website facility, comparing comments made at the last inspection to this one, which now were more positive. Last time, 84% of parents stated that they would recommend the school to others; the figure was now 92%, on the basis of a similar number of responses each time.

10. Headteacher report (including data)

- 10.1. AH invited governors' comments on his report, circulated earlier. Governors noted that there were two 100% figures in the headlines under Key Stage 5. AH stated that this reflected the school's efforts to secure completion rates; to support the students through the courses but also making sure they were doing the right ones. AH added that the data would be revised with updated figures on 24 March. AH highlighted the improvement in value added figures, showing that the school was working for more uplifts from C to B grades this year.
- 10.2. The Chair asked for more information about the attendance data, in particular about the two groups of disadvantaged and SEN students. AH drew governors' attention to the SEN group's complex needs, stressing the school's aim to improve attendance by these two groups. LT spoke of the setting up of an attendance support programme, with the overall figure reaching 94.7% - in Years 10 and 11; some groups had improved

by 2% from last term. LT pointed out that Blatchington Mill was the third lowest in the city for persistent absence.

- 10.3. The Chair asked about attendance in Year 12. AH stated that smaller cohort numbers would have bigger impacts on the statistics; also individual students with very low (20%) attendance would drag the overall figure down. However, AH noted that classroom behaviour was good, with a general indicator being positive. LT added that the number of fixed term exclusions over the last three years were going down.

11. To receive an update on the Pavilion & Downs Teaching School Alliance

- 11.1. AH acknowledged that this initiative was slow in being taken forward. But in terms of engagement, funding would have an impact on training for staff. AH stated that both the local universities were involved, as were the national leaders of education (NLEs), with steering and wider engagement groups to be established.
- 11.2. AH stated that the Department for Education (DfE) financial contribution would amount to £60K as seed money in the first year, to be followed by £40K in the second. AH believed that most of this money would be used to fund the salary of someone to coordinate the alliance. School improvement money from the LA would also be used to support the initiative as well.
- 11.3. AH stated that being part of the teaching school alliance would allow Blatchington Mill to invoice other schools for staffing support. AH hoped to be able to brief governors more fully about progress at the next meeting of the FBG.

12. Safeguarding

- 12.1. RK reported that there had been a Challenge Partners visit just before the OfSTED inspection, which had been very useful in that valuable feedback had been provided as a result. RK stated that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) figures showed that the level of referrals made by the school were judged appropriate.
- 12.2. RK informed governors that she had recently joined the local safeguarding children's board (LSCB), comprised of LA, police, education and health officials – for discussion of safeguarding issues on a strategic level.

13. Governors' use of school email addresses

- 13.1. The Chair drew governors' attention to the possibility of accessing their official school emails by using the Outlook 360 web facility; just by inputting their addresses and password. The alternative form of access was to download the Outlook app and securing LA permission (accompanied by AH's authorisation). The drawback here was that, if a governor's phone was lost or stolen, the LA would arrange for all data on the device in question to be completely deleted – making regular backups essential.

14. Governor training

- 14.1. PG noted that RG had recently carried out two courses; preparation for OfSTED and RAISEOnline. PG urged governors to sign up for training, as much as possible.

15. Any other business

- 15.1. The Chair drew governors' attention to a recent Hove Partnership conference. Attendees had discussed future developments of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), with

information provided by Brighton University in this regard.

- 15.2. The Chair commented that there had been discussion of setting up collaborative agreements between school governing boards. This mechanism allowed for governors to sit on different school hearing panels, creating a wider pool of participants on which to draw. The Chair agreed to give this idea further thought to see if the FBG should investigate entering into such an agreement.
- 15.3. AH noted that, from others, there had been a tone of inevitability in the discussions about academisation amongst the primary and secondary schools. However there had also been debate about federations, i.e. the combining of governance at institutions. One benefit of such a mechanism was that it was reversible, unlike signing up to a MAT. The Chair commented that academisation was not necessarily inevitable anymore, pointing to the strength of schools in Brighton and Hove.

Actions

- Consultation with SCs about toilet and canteen facilities – SHX
- Scheduling of additional FBG meeting for 6 April – Chair
- Note of appreciation to staff for OfSTED inspection rating achievement – Chair
- Update of Recruitment and Retention Committee activities for next meeting - AB

Next meetings – Thursday 6 April 2017 at 17.00 hours (sustainable budget proposal); and Thursday 18 May at 17.00 hours (Budget)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...