

## Minutes (MAIN SET) of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 13 July 2017 at 17.00 hours

**Those Present:** Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AH), Addy Balogun (AB), Sally Hunt (SHu), Lee Redmond (LR), Gareth Chan (GC), Richard Goodsell (RG), Richard Mills (RM) and John Barker (JB).

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

**Also present:** None

**Quorum:** 9 out of 13 governors present with 2 vacancies – meeting was quorate throughout.

### 0. Apologies for Absence.

- 0.1. Fiona Bauermeister (FB), Kevin Fry (KF), Peter Gerry (PG) and Andrew Wallace (AW) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

### 1. Urgent Business -

The Chair informed governors that KF had stepped down from his role as a staff governor with effect from 13 July; governors expressed their thanks to KF for his valuable work as a governor over the last few years. He also informed them that a school production was due to take place that evening at 19.00 hours.

### 2. Declarations of interest – None.

### 3. Minutes

- 3.1. The minutes of the meetings of 18 May 2017 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

### 4. Matters Arising

- Commencement of H&S school Committee with governor participation

#### *Health & Safety (H&S)*

AH reported that KF had raised concerns about H&S, drawing attention to the role of the FBG and governors' responsibilities in this regard. SHX circulated a report (of areas to address) and governor role paper to all governors (to be sent round electronically as well), acknowledging that the school's performance in this area was not as strong as it could be. SHX stressed however that the safety and welfare of all was at the core of where the school operated.

SHX recommended that H&S become a standing item on which to report on a regular basis. Part of the work to be conducted would include the involvement

of RG and AW as link governors, alongside school staff. SHX paid tribute to KF for his efforts in bringing the H&S issue to the attention of the FBG. Ultimately, responsibility lay with governors, to hold the school to account on this issue.

Governors asked if they should conduct a 'walk through' in the school, looking at H&S issues. SHX thought this a good idea, similar to that agreed by the Finance Committee, where the chair of this body had carried out a similar exercise on financial issues. SHX believed that H&S could be presented in a positive light, with a plan in place to permit presentation of a regular report to the FBG.

Governors asked if a risk assessment was in place for the school production that evening. SHX believed that the system of carrying out risk assessments was generally good in the school, but not necessarily carried out for every single activity. SHX agreed to check if one had been done for the production.

Governors asked if an expert official from the local authority (LA) had been consulted about providing advice and support. SHX stated that school staff had all done the relevant risk assessment training.

Governors asked if risk assessments were in place for activities such as sports. SHX stated that the LA produced useful guidance templates – but would check if these were in place. AH added that, because of the nature of the school premises site (two buildings of different ages), taking forward H&S work was tricky. The LA's condition survey report for example, focussed on priority areas for attention such as the roof.

The Chair agreed that the report and role documents were sensible ways to stage the issues for attention and asked that they be circulated electronically to all governors.

#### *Creativity*

- Update for FBG in September to see creativity project update – to be done.

#### *Equalities*

- Consideration of governor involvement in school equalities policy and work – The Chair asked that this be deferred to the next meeting of the FBG.

#### *Long term financial strategy*

- o Letter to LA about long term financial strategy options (SEND, Post 16 and PAN) – done.

- 5. Any matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda** – The Chair noted the desirability of setting up a programme of governor visits to the school to look at a variety of priority areas; and suggested this be put in place for September. AH drew attention to the need for a system to alert and invite governors to specific school events.

#### **6. Headteacher report (including data)**

##### *Data*

- 6.1. AH highlighted what was happening at Key Stage 5 level (actual numbers of grades), with the expectation that Value Added would not be negative. At KS4, AH pointed to what would be reported in the league tables – 1 to 9 and not A to G as before, so statistics would look differently this year; with 5 rated as a strong pass; Attainment 8 to be reported; attendance figures and a breakdown; finally a number of updates on activities and staff changes.
- 6.2. RK added that the government had indicated that the strong pass (5) would become the norm. AH stated that 4 as a grade had been adapted across Brighton and Hove, as it was more stable – 4 plus was in line with C plus.

#### *Attendance*

- 6.3. LT drew attention to the issue of the redrafted attendance roll document. When this had been renewed in Spring 1, the positive impact on Spring 2 and Summer 1 & 2 could be seen. Blatchington Mill was currently in third place in the LA for highest attendance – with the expectations (thanks to renewed efforts) to rising up to second and first.
- 6.4. The Chair paid tribute to the school's efforts on improving attendance and the positive impact these were having. LT added that the school had trialled a programme for Year 10, which included a reward system of prize awards for improved attendance. As a result, 18 out of 25 children's attendance improved to a rate of 100% over eight weeks – with students expressing their appreciation. LT believed that this initiative was changing attitudes to the ethos of attendance. AH added that the school was in line with achieving the OfSTED report targets.

#### *Teaching School Alliance (TSA)*

- 6.5. AH highlighted the appointment of Ellen Mulvihill (formerly of the LA) as Director of the TSA. AH reported that Blatchington Mill had put in a bid to the £140M fund for school improvement, which would be used for KS2 & 3 for maths teaching. If this bid was successful, it would allow Blatchington Mill to support four primary schools' teaching of maths. AH stated that there would be a formal launch of the TSA in September – overall it amounted to a really positive way to improve teaching.

#### *Post 16*

- 6.6. AH paid tribute to the assistance provided by AB (endorsed by the Chair) in compiling the report on this issue. The intention had been to provide an account of the several different aspects of the Post 16 provision, e.g. course offers and the LA view. AH drew attention to the recommendation on next steps in the executive summary.
- 6.7. **(Note – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes)**
- 6.8. **(Note – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes)**
- 6.9. The Chair asked governors to consider the report carefully and provide questions for the FBG to present, via DH, at least two weeks before its next

meeting; for AH to consider responses. (**Note** – rest of this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

- 6.10. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

#### *Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN)*

- 6.11. The Chair drew attention to the letter he had sent to the LA on this subject (previously circulated to governors), noting the FBG's approval for taking this action. AH noted that the LA had sent a holding reply, drawing attention to the fact that Brighton University's planned secondary free school would not now open until September 2019. In addition, Kings School of Portslade Aldridge Community Academy (PACA) planned new build (presently located in West Blatchington Primary School) had been delayed, pushed back a year.

- 6.12. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

### **7. School Budget Update**

- 7.1. SHX circulated a multi-year budget summary, which had been submitted to the LA, requesting a licensed deficit. The LA's rules allowed for such a deficit of up to £250K to be licensed, the school had asked for one of £220K – on condition that a balanced budget was submitted 2019/2020. SHX predicted that the 2017/2018 deficit would be £205K by the end of the year, but would be balanced by 2019/2020. Overall the multi-year budget met the LA deficit criteria.

- 7.2. AH added that the school had to be realistic about the financial future, meaning that the budget would be subject to further restructuring. However the budget as presented was Post 16 and PAN neutral.

- 7.3. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

- 7.4. AH explained that, with more pupils in the school (subject to PAN approval), there would be no need to reduce the teaching staff. With regard to the SEN section, due to staff resignations, this looked now very different. AH stressed however that this section's restructure started on the principle of ensuring students' needs and not the need to reduce staffing.

- 7.5. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

- 7.6. AH stated that the present budget as presented was a worst case scenario, as the school hoped to finish the year under the £205K deficit predicted. The fundamental pressures on school budgets were still enormous.

- 7.7. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

- 7.8. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes).

- 7.9. Governors noted the static nature of the electricity, gas and oil charges figures. SHX stated that this reflected an LA recommendation, to submit a standstill budget. SHX stressed that the curriculum flexibility had not been reduced. AH added that he wanted to achieve a surplus, with a view to investing. The SEN

restructure had proved to be a positive change, with a better working environment.

7.10. (**Note** – this paragraph transferred to a confidential annex of these minutes)

7.11. Governors emphasised the need to revisit the issue of reducing the teaching complement, to ensure they were monitoring the changing situation closely. This was about its effect on the whole school. AH stated that the multi-year summary was accurate for Years 1, 2 and 3, but that 4 and 5 were estimates only.

7.12. Governors noted that the Finance Committee were looking at this issue in great detail already. The Chair agreed that this committee should continue to consider the impact of budget changes on pupils, on a termly basis.

7.13. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the multi-year budget (with the caveats expressed about monitoring the impact on pupils and staff) and duly signed it.

## **8. Long Term Financial Strategy**

8.1. AH provided an update on the key areas:-

*Additional SEN funding from the LA*

8.2. AH confirmed that the school had been given £40K by the LA.

*SEND Unit*

8.3. AH stated that the school would not be pressing forward with this proposal. Financial modelling showed that the school would have its PAN funding subtracted from the additional SEN money (as soon as the SEN students were taken off roll and entered into the unit); this made the scheme not viable, given all the necessary additional arrangements to set up and run the facility.

*SEND leadership restructure*

8.4. AH confirmed that this exercise had been completed, in time for September. Secondment of a SEN Co-ordinator from HPS would help with support, coaching and mentoring of staff.

8.5. The Chair noted these updates and that the strategy was being taken forward.

## **9. Collaborative agreement with Hove Park School**

9.1. The Chair drew attention to the document already circulated to governors, which was based on a template used by Varndean and Dorothy Stringer schools. The key provision was to have an arrangement in place, whereby governors from Blatchington Mill and HPS could sit on each other's panel hearings.

9.2. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this agreement and undertook to take it

forward with the Chair of Governors at HPS.

## **10. Governors' meetings dates list for 2017/2018**

- 10.1. AH asked for a number of amendments to the FBG dates; adding exam data (interim), Post 16 and development plan to September; deletion of RAISEOnline from January; moving of curriculum from December to January.
- 10.2. AB asked that 9 November for the first meeting of the Pay & Personnel Committee be changed, as this was the evening for the Year 11 record of achievement. AH added that this meeting would have to approve staff pay progressions and appraisals recommendations. AH stated that he would have to review all of them – 110 in number – to ensure the robustness of the system.

## **11. Safeguarding**

- 11.1. RK informed governors of an improvement to her office arrangements, which ensured a better way of working on sensitive issues. RK also provided details of her acquiring experience of Prevent and Channel Panels work, which had proved very interesting. RK explained that Channel Panels were an arrangement, whereby individuals of potential concern were assessed and discussed, with a view to deciding on future work.

## **12. School policies**

### *Safeguarding*

- 12.1. RK confirmed that there were no changes to this document, having checked it with the LA and for any Department for Education (DfE) amendments. The Chair stated that this exercise had been completed, as a yearly update.
- 12.2. Governors asked if there had been an increase of abuse amongst the students. AH stated that this was dealt with under the 'positive behaviour' policy. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

### *Examination Access Arrangements*

- 12.3. AH explained that this was the first time of presentation to governors. This policy dealt with access arrangements for students with additional needs and did not contain anything controversial. It focused on students' normal way of working, with no advantage accorded them for the exam itself. AH stated that previous access arrangements had been less regimented; now a log of evidence was required before they could be put in place. AH recommended that governors review this policy every two or three years.
- 12.4. Governors asked if this policy applied to students who were ill. AH stated that such an issue did not relate to access, but to special arrangements being applied – this was something entirely different. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

## *Complaints*

- 12.5. The Chair related the history of a recent complaint, which had gone through three stages (a Chair review, a governors' panel and an LA review). The Chair reported that the LA had commented on governors making attempts to follow the existing policy, which had not been fully achieved; e.g. there had been timescale slippages. The Chair had responded to the LA, undertaking to update the policy drawing on their advice.
- 12.6. The Chair stated that the revised policy, now in front of governors to approve, was based on an LA template; the DfE best practice on complaints procedures had also been drawn on. The Chair highlighted the fact that the LA still needed to clarify their policy about the provision of meeting and panel notes (ownership of them and how they were agreed) – this would be done over the summer.
- 12.7. Governors raised the issue of the phrase '*an admission by a school that it could have handled a situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence*'. Governors expressed the concern that, for this to be deployed safely, there should be some form of legal certainty of no liability being admitted. The Chair agreed to contact the LA to obtain information on this point. Subject to this caveat, the Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

## **13. Governor training**

- 13.1. The Chair deferred discussion on this point to the next meeting.

## **14. Any other business**

- 14.1. None.

## **Actions**

- Consideration of governor involvement in school equalities policy and work – PS
- Electronic circulation of H&S report and governor role paper to all – SHX/DH
- Carrying out of risk assessments on e.g. school productions and sports activities – SHX
- Devising of governors' school visit programme – PS
- Reinstating of school events dates advisory system for governors - AH
- Post 16 report questions to DH for submission to AH – All
- Taking forward of collaborative agreement with HPS - PS
- Rescheduling of 9 November 2016 as first meeting of PPC – DH
- Enquiry to the LA about the school complaints policy, with regard to an

admission of handling a situation better – DH

**Next meeting** – Thursday 21 September at 17.00 hours (Exam data (interim picture); Post 16; development plan)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...