

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 31 January 2018 at 17.00 hours

(Note – this meeting rescheduled from the original date of 25 January)

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AH - headteacher), Addy Balogun (AB), Andrew Wallace (AW), Lee Redmond (LR), Richard Goodsell (RG), Claire Harrington (CH), Janet Such (JS) and Michael Bedingfield (MB).

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

Quorum: 9 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Apologies for Absence.

Peter Gerry (PG), Gareth Chan (GC), Richard Mills (RM), John Barker (JB) Fiona Bauermeister (FB) and Sally Hunt (SHu) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

1. Urgent business

1.1. None.

2. **Declarations of interest** – None.

3. Minutes

3.1. The minutes of the meetings of 14 December 2017 were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

- Equalities framework draft – to be done.
- External Partnerships school visit – to be confirmed.
- Circulate list of dates for potential visits by governors – to be discussed, as part of the headteacher's report.

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

6. School Budget update 2017/2018

6.1. SHx drew attention to the meeting of the Finance Committee, which had taken place on 15 January. SHx commented that previous concerns about governors' attendance had now been addressed fully, with a good turnout noted at this session.

6.2. SHx highlighted the projected deficit forecast by the school of £88K, which was

a good deal healthier situation to that of the previously notified budget showing a (local authority licensed) deficit of £220K. SHx paid tribute to all members of the school community who had contributed to the efforts in cutting costs, at the same time ensuring that standards were protected.

- 6.3. The Chair endorsed this commendation on behalf of the FBG and asked AH to convey governors' thanks to staff for their efforts in this regard.
- 6.4. SHx noted that savings had been made to staffing costs, but had been managed ensuring the school's needs were met fully.
- 6.5. SHx drew attention in particular to discussion in the Finance Committee of plans to improve the school's security. SHx stated that this would be achieved by means of securing the perimeter of the school, using electronically controlled gates. SHx reported that the Committee had approved the school's choice of contractor to carry out this work.
- 6.6. The Chair asked SHx to provide further details of the project. SHx informed the FBG that this would focus in the first instance in securing the Frant Road entry point at the beginning of the day. The counter-terrorism consultant who had advised the school, stated its greatest threat was from assailants using vehicles as a weapon, which meant access permitted by Frant Road was a risk.
- 6.7. SHx explained that, in the long term, the school wanted an electronic gate that could be closed during the day, with code pad access. Governors recommended that the number be changed on a regular basis. SHx stated that a contractor had been selected to carry out the work; part of the facility planned would include downloadable access permissions to phones, laptops and iPads.
- 6.8. AH updated governors about confirmation received that the school would receive £80K in September 2018 from the growth fund. This had come about due to Blatchington Mill's eligibility on grounds of schools in expansion – funding would be paid on a rolling basis, linked to numbers.

7. Headteacher report

Data

- 7.1. AH drew attention to his report, circulated earlier to governors, highlighting the separate item on historic data. AH commented that the layout and information provided was similar to that which appeared on the Analyse School Performance (ASP) Department for Education (DfE) website. AH drew attention to the current Year 11 projections, including grade patterns; data covering all students; filtered versions for specific groups (disadvantaged, Pupil Premium (PP) and Special Educational Needs (SEN))
- 7.2. AH highlighted the two main reporting figures tables, i.e. Progress 8 (P8) and Attainment 8 (A8). With regard to the A8 figures, AH noted that the projected figure was 50.5 – divided by ten, this gave an average grade of 5 per student, which was a strong pass; P8 showed a figure of 0.29, a third of a grade better than expected. For PP, there was a lower A8 figure of 43, meaning that attainment was lower but nevertheless positive. AH drew attention to the last set

of A8 and P8 figures for SEN students which were the most important.

- 7.3. The Chair noted that the A8 projection for 2018 of 50.5 was the same as last year. AH explained that this Year 11 cohort had a higher level of SEN and disadvantaged students than any other Year group – it was noticeably different on prior attainment.
- 7.4. Governors asked if the differences in Year 11 were specific to this area or town. AH undertook to find out the answer, noting that this specific set of data was shared. Turning to the rest of his report, AH drew attention to other benchmarks, attendance and behaviour.
- 7.5. Governors reported having recently attending local authority provided training on data interpretation, specifically on ASP reports. Governors asked whether it was worthwhile tasking a committee or working group to look at data in more detail. AH stated that, in the first instance, Blatchington Mill used its own school data tracking system, filtered by student level. AH stated that three reports were set out in his summary, which showed a negative SEN progress score. In particular, this showed up concerns on mathematics which the school was tackling.
- 7.6. The Chair noted that last year's data compared to the projection for 2018 showed that, under A8, whereas the Open P8 group had made the least progress in 2017, for 2018 it was likely to become the best group.

Attendance

- 7.7. The Chair asked for more information about attendance, noting that this was lower than at the same point in the previous year. AH acknowledged the concern about attendance, which remained. The school had a plan in place to address this issue, which was affected by staff absence on sick leave as well. AH noted that the two week half term break had had a major impact on attendance figures for two additional half week periods; on behaviour and standards too. AH commented that academy and Diocese schools had reverted to a one week autumn break this year. LT added that having this longer break had had an effect on children's cognitive skills.
- 7.8. The Chair asked about the LA's plans for this two week half term break. AH stated that extending the scheme was under consultation; the commitment at present was to retain the one planned for the autumn in 2018 (the second year of operation).
- 7.9. AH drew attention to action being taken on persistent absence as well; acknowledging that there was a clear link between poor attendance and progress & attainment (Year 11 attendance of 93.5% was the lowest in the school)
- 7.10. The Chair asked about the whole school number of 1500, which did not seem to match against Year Group actual figures which were below 300, e.g. Year 7 with 299, Year 8 with 299 etc. AH stated that these figures were subject to a state of flux, on and off roll with constant changes and lag in updating records.

Exclusions

- 7.11. The Chair asked if there were any positive aspects to report about exclusions. AH stated that there was a strong school focus on this issue; commenting that fixed term exclusions were going down.

Options

- 7.12. AH discussed the Options process, which was not something introduced to improve the school's standing in league tables; rather for the benefit of student interest. The process set out four options outside the core subjects, done in two blocks. This was a positive change, giving staff greater flexibility, allowing one teacher to take on more subject specific classes.

Science Open Day

- 7.13. LT explained that this was being run for the first time this year, where all classrooms would be open for people to see learning going on and use information sheets; led by lead professionals. This would be rolled out for core subjects this year, to see if it could be expanded in the next. LT promised to let governors have a date for the Science Open Day, as soon as this was provided by the lead professional.

Governor visits

- 7.14. AH set out the following proposed dates:-

22 February (9.00 to 11.00 hours); 6 March (9.00 to 11.00 hours); 19 April (11.00 to 13.00 hours); suggesting that a programme could be devised later.

Twilight

- 7.15. The Chair asked about the next Twilight INSET session for disadvantaged students and improving outcomes. LT explained that this was scheduled for 20 February (15.30 hours), with a programme structure that included workshops (to look at growth mindset). Staff would attend two workshops, and evaluate and plan future actions.

- 7.16. LT provided information about two further sessions; 21 March at 15.30 to 18.30 hours (well-being in the workplace, with leaders helping staff and practical sessions of art and music); 19 April (Best of Blatch, for staff to present what they were most proud of)

Specialist Leader of Education (SLE)

- 7.17. The Chair congratulated LT on becoming an SLE. LT explained that her focus would be on improving behaviour and attendance; also to reduce exclusions.

Sixth Form consultation

- 7.18. RK gave a brief update of this issue, noting that a recent survey had elicited a wide range of views, but few in numbers of responses provided. AH noted that a

statutory notice (changing the age range of the school) was now out and due to close on 19 February. RK added that the LA would reach its final agreement at committee level on 5 March.

- 7.19. The Chair noted that the increased Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) of 330 had definitely been confirmed. AH noted that this had been increased, with the schools' adjudicator authorising this for one year; now agreed by the LA for future years as well.

8. Analyse School Performance (ASP)

- 8.1. AH commented that this was difficult year to analyse the school's performance, but as there was finally benchmarking available, AH acknowledged that the data was disappointing; the school was not where it aspires to be on GCSE results and would therefore be looking to improve. AH noted that, at best the school had achieved neutral progress (it was in the 53rd percentile).
- 8.2. Governors agreed with this assessment, noting that it was straightforward to pick up aspects of performance, such as those of disadvantaged students; and expressed interest in learning about the school's strategy to improve these areas.
- 8.3. AH noted that, before, the school could not see how it compared to national statistics as it had been using internal school data. AH commented that the school was third in Brighton & Hove for its progress score – however on a relative basis, it was second.
- 8.4. AH drew attention to the inspection data summary report (IDSR) which showed interesting information about disadvantaged students' progress. In 2016, the school had been in the top 16%, 2017 it was in the bottom 40%. AH stated that not every disadvantaged student had done badly, but some groups had not achieved any qualifications at all, which was unacceptable.
- 8.5. AH went into detail on A8 and P8 methodology; and how the students were scored in terms of how they did in English, Mathematics and the three eBacc subjects. There was a real tension here, with regard to differentiation and how students accessed these subjects.
- 8.6. AH acknowledged that, overall, progress had dropped. Looking at specific subjects AH stated that the school's performance on English had held, but not the same on Mathematics. AH spoke about the choice offered to students, whether to do the foundation or higher exam. This was difficult for borderline students, with the school being cautious about entering them for the higher option.
- 8.7. On P8, AH highlighted students doing IT GCSE, results of which showed 1 or 2 grades below expectations. The impact had been -0.5 on progress; but this year not all students would do IT, as the school had put in place a structure to make sure this issue did not occur again. AH also mentioned performance on languages, which had had weak outcomes (French slightly stronger, but Spanish weaker).

- 8.8. The Chair commented that in previous years, data for 5+ A*-C had showed lower attainment for English and Mathematics, compared to other three subjects. AH stated that attainment on English and Mathematics was strong; languages and the other basket subjects were moving the overall outcomes down.
- 8.9. AH set out the strategies in place to address this shortcoming, with a focus on attendance and behaviour in classrooms a priority. Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Teaching & Learning strategies would address the needs of specific groups of students (e.g. SEN); with reviews of assessment feedback carried out and resources tailored as a result; better use of data and tracking to obtain a better picture on progress (recognition of the need for a strategy on disadvantaged students in Years 9, 10 & 11 to address this issue – parental engagement here was a factor).
- 8.10. Governors asked about the bar charts, showing projections. AH explained that this set out estimates of P8, against actual figures for A8. The difference was where students should be achieving A8 – one was the target, the other was the prediction.
- 8.11. Governors asked about the accuracy of forecasts. AH stated that these had been more so last year on mathematics but not so much in English. With regard to history and geography, the school was predicting on an unknown specification. AH stated that other factors to bear in mind included how mock exams related to actual results.
- 8.12. The Chair commented that the IDSR data was disappointing, showing a lot of average results. AH acknowledged this observation, but stated that these were still better than the results of three years ago. They had not declined, but equally the improvement had not been sustained.
- 8.13. The Chair noted that, in terms of comparisons with other schools in the area, a number were below or well below the P8 average in Brighton & Hove. The Chair believed that the school's strategies should be linked to governor visits, e.g. seeing how teaching assistants (TAs) were deployed with SEN students; also how behaviour was managed.
- 8.14. The Chair asked how disadvantaged students could be identified by visitors in classrooms. AH stated that there was a seating plan that could be consulted. AH added that the real underperforming group was comprised of students on Free School Meals (FSMs). AH stated that, when compiling the School Development Plan (SDP), change would be implemented in a sustainable way. Any governor visit therefore would take in aims of the SDP; also see how staff supported SEN students.
- 8.15. AH suggested the two dates of 22 February and 6 March for governors to visit; the Chair, LR and MB agreed to take part. The Chair asked that other governors be approached to see if they could also attend and on which date.

9. Long Term Financial Strategy

- 9.1. AH reported that there was no change on the planned Sixth Form closure or PAN expansion. AH added that staffing on SEND was being looked at; the Teaching & Learning Responsibility (TLR) review would be conducted on a long term basis (affecting 47 staff). On the latter, AH noted that each staff member with a TLR had completed an audit tool.

10. Teaching School Alliance (TSA)

- 10.1. AH recalled that this had been formed a year ago, comprised of five secondary schools. The TSA would provide three main areas of training – Initial Teaching Training; CPD; and School to School support. AH spoke of the TSA coordinating a bid for funds (£450K to £480K) from the DfE, under the Strategic School Improvement Development (SSID) scheme; to improve attendance and address exclusion outcomes in five named schools. Funding would be shared 40/60 between Brighton & Hove and West Sussex, with work coordinated by Blatchington Mill and Varndean

11. Safeguarding

- 11.1. RK reported that the presentation (mentioned at the last FBG of 14 December 2017) had been given at the school on 17 January to parents by a representative of the Breck Foundation, on the subject of online safety and the risks of grooming. RK stated that attendance at this presentation had been good (fifty); Friends at Blatch (FAB – who had funded this presentation) intended to bring back the Foundation speaker to present to students at a future date.
- 11.2. RK reported as well that the deputy safeguarding leader would be trained on 1 February.

12. School policies

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 12.1. The Chair asked AH to indicate any changes to this policy, of which governors should be made aware. AH commented that it was basically the same draft, with changes made to names of personnel.
- 12.2. Governors raised an issue with regard to transition. AH confirmed that there were staff tasked to work on transition, with visits arranged to all feeder primary schools in the area and plans compiled for specific students before they started at Blatchington Mill

Accessibility Plan

- 12.3. The Chair noted how this policy was linked to wider health & safety aspects; also how there was a wider sense of accessibility covered such as the curriculum.
- 12.4. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of both these policies.

13. Governor training

- 13.1. The Chair noted that RG, LR and JS had recently attended data training given by the LA.

14. Any other business

- 14.1. AH noted that there was a clash of dates for the next meeting of the FBG, namely that there was a Year 7 parents evening scheduled on 15 March. AH suggested reconvening the FBG of this date to Monday 26 March, a proposal to which all FBG members agreed.
- 14.2. The Chair noted SHx's proposal that the Finance Committee meeting of 5 February be cancelled; with another meeting scheduled for 21 May as this was during a period when there would be significant work done on next year's budget which would require Committee oversight. Committee members present at this meeting agreed this proposal.

Actions

- Passing of FBG's commendation to school staff for budgeting efforts in achieving savings – AH
- Governors' visits of 22 February or 6 March (email to request governors to indicate which date they would be able to attend and confirm date on which more governors were able to attend) – DH
- Notification of rescheduled meeting of the FBG on 26 March to all members – DH
- Notification of cancelled meeting of the Finance Committee on 5 February and additional meeting on 21 May to all members – DH

Next meeting – Thursday 26 March 2018 at 17.00 hours (Budget).

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...