

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 30 January 2020 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Adam Harvey (AdH), John Barker (JB), Richard Mills (RM), Deborah Hillier (DHi), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Lee Redmond (LR) and Addy Balogun (AB).

In attendance: Ruth King (RK – staff) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

Quorum: 12 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Apologies for Absence.

1.1. Janet Such (JS), Alex Morrison (AM) and Gareth Chan (GC) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

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

3. Minutes

3.1. The minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2019 were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

- Hove Park School issue – AsH confirmed that £20K of the £30K had been journaled across to Blatchington Mill's budget; leaving an outstanding amount of £10K, which was now the subject of discussion with Hove Park and the local authority (LA). The Chair asked if there was still a role for governors to play. AsH agreed to keep him informed of progress on the issue.
- Preparation of (whole school attendance data table) terminology glossary – done.
- Invitation to governors to lunch at the school – AsH extended an open invitation to board members to attend the school for this purpose; drawing attention to the refreshments on offer at the present meeting which had been prepared by the new catering supplier.
- Production of governor induction policy – The Chair reported that AM had produced a first draft which would be reviewed and subject to further work.
- Circulation of SDP presentation – done.

5. Homework

5.1. AsH made a presentation on this subject, highlighting the following points:-

- Background (looked at approach, research and improvement process);
- research base;
- strategy and plan (what homework to set and implications);
- types of homework (main types – five categories, e.g. reading and vocabulary);
- examples of vocabulary (piece of reading);
- mathematics (hegarty task, independent learning task (ILT), types of work being set);
- homework set so far (by Year group and average per student);
- homework completion so far (removal of the compulsion principle, with no sanctions being imposed);
- logged as missed (excellent homework and teachers' rewards for high standards);
- homework club (set up space in school for students to use);
- costs so far (£3K);
- attendance by groups (Pupil Premium (PP), Special Educational Needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL), the school was looking at putting levels of support in place especially for SEN such as a transport provision);
- Staff views (feedback very positive);
- Student views (Key Stages 3 and 4 mixed views but largely positive, a demonstration of inconsistency in homework being set);
- Next steps (e.g. work on building up attendance).

5.2. Governors asked about homework set and what students were supposed to complete. AsH referred to a sliding scale and work being done to achieve consistency.

5.3. Governors asked about the variation in homework being set. AsH pointed to some element of front loading such as science, but not all subjects would be able to be planned in the same way. AsH noted that some departments were setting more homework than others, e.g. mathematics and science; with a

desire to link the work to lessons.

- 5.4. Governors asked about the types of homework and which ones seemed to be more effective, in terms of completion rates and standards achieved. AsH undertook to look into this point, commenting that at the moment results were varied.
- 5.5. Governors asked if there was any stage whereby students were admonished for not completing homework. AsH confirmed that the previous punitive process of issuing tiered warnings and detentions was no longer in place; instead teachers were promoting the benefits of doing homework to pupils.
- 5.6. The Chair noted that non completion, according to the data set out in the presentation, did not seem to be a major issue – 4% or one pupil per class and seemed to be manageable.
- 5.7. Governors asked about the issues of inconsistency in setting and whether marking and workload might be a factor. AsH spoke of providing support to teachers, in order to make the feedback process more straightforward.
- 5.8. Governors asked about the due dates for completion and recommended that, for motivation and meaning, work needed to be connected to what pupils were doing in class.

6. School budget

- 6.1. In the absence of Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), AsH pointed to the work done by her on the outturn forecast and the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS). With regard to the forecast, AsH stated that there was likely to be no carry forward or deficit at the end of the financial year. AsH explained that the anticipated carry forward from before, had been accounted for in additional expenses linked to the new catering contract and the changeover process.
- 6.2. AsH drew attention to the budget increase of 4%, which would result in additional income to the school of £425K – most of which would be accounted for by additional staffing.
- 6.3. Governors asked about the Term Time Only (TTO) support staff issue. AsH reported no change in the situation; the LA had delayed making a final decision on funding for a year.
- 6.4. Governors asked about changes to the National Funding Formula (NFF), with respect to amounts due per pupil. AsH reported that this would not impact on this year's budget.
- 6.5. The Chair drew attention to the changes in the SFVS exercise this year, which included a comparison dashboard. The Chair reported that LR and JMa would be visiting the school to review completion of this form on 11 February.

7. Headteacher report

Attendance

- 7.1. AsH reported that this issue remained a focus for the school, which was working to improve the situation. AsH pointed to recent benchmarking statistics, which showed that locally the picture was good in that Blatchington Mill was second best in Brighton and Hove for attendance and best for persistent absence.
- 7.2. Governors asked about the decline in some of the statistics. AsH drew attention to Year 9 where there had been a significant decrease from last year (students taking days off and some not attending at all) – the Year office was looking into this issue.
- 7.3. Governors asked about follow up action taken on absences due to illness. AsH stated that the school did look at this, but do also need to trust parents' statements of illness unless there are child protection concerns.

Behaviour

- 7.4. AsH drew attention to the Twilight sessions, which were a popular model and working better than INSET days, e.g. on behavioural change; and exclusions which were the lowest in Brighton and Hove (improvements were down to restorative work done with students).

Curriculum

- 7.5. AsH referred to the Teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) restructure and the filling of two new posts; Director of Learning and Director of Progress.
- 7.6. Governors asked about the take up of languages. AsH spoke of the need to increase the take up of languages, but of the school's desire to achieve this positively. AsH stated that the school wanted to remain inclusive and internationalist. AsH pointed to the key subjects in this regard of French, Spanish, Latin and Arabic. With regard to the last, AsH commented that this was the second most commonly spoken language in school; running a GCSE course for 15 to 20 students would be viable in Year 9.
- 7.7. AsH drew attention to the mock examination results, which would be reviewed again as they had given some cause for concern; predictions were not as strong as last year.

Digital Badges

- 7.8. RK spoke of the Acclaim Our Future City initiative and the issue of two digital badges which were now live. RK drew attention to the plans for students to help with CVs going beyond standard qualifications.

Barriers to Learning

- 7.9. AsH highlighted updates to tracking enhancement and support being given to the SEN team.

Finance

- 7.10. AsH referred to renovation of seating spaces and the positive feedback to the new catering provision – but with some critical comments about portion size and pricing.

News item

- 7.11. AsH drew attention to a Blatchington Mill student being awarded a prestigious poetry translation prize.

8. Pupil exclusion hearing panel outcome

- 8.1. The Chair drew attention to a permanent exclusion of a student in 2019, a decision which had been subject to an appeal by the parents; this had been heard by a panel of governors (PS, LR and MC). At this meeting, the Chair stated that the school had made its case for this permanent exclusion, with the parent present being permitted to appeal against the decision. The Chair reported that the governor panel decision was that the school was correct in taking this action; that all due procedures had been followed in this case.
- 8.2. The Chair reported that the issue had then been submitted to a LA independent review panel, at the request of the parent; this had been attended by himself, with this panel made up of a lay chair, a governor and headteacher. The Chair explained that this panel was charged to see whether the correct process had been followed by the school (i.e. the legal procedures, also the equality act) and could uphold, reconsider or quash the decision taken.
- 8.3. The Chair stated the outcome of this second process was that the independent panel had upheld the school's governor panel decision and made a number of follow up recommendations. The Chair informed governors that these included the school to update its behaviour policy (including to take account of 2017 exclusions guidance and revised policy due to be presented for governors' approval at the next meeting of the FBG). The Chair concluded by saying that he had met with AsH to review these recommendations and ensure they were acted on.
- 8.4. AsH confirmed the point made by the Chair about taking action on the independent panel's recommendations and expressed regret that the school had not succeeded with the student in question.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. RK drew governors' attention to the school's designated safeguarding lead

(DSL) undertaking training on right wing terrorism; also on gangs and violence. RK stated that the DSL would feedback on this training to heads of year.

9.2. RK reported that the school eSafety policy had been reviewed and updated this month; it would be presented to governors for approval at the next meeting of the FBG.

9.3. Governors asked if there was any concern about gang problems affecting the school. RK did not believe this to be the case.

9.4. Governors asked if incidents of mental health problems were on the rise. RK stated that this was not the case and the school regularly monitored this situation.

10. School policies

10.1. AsH informed governors that the school had signed up to use of the 'Key' compliance tracker, in order to monitor gaps of coverage; and was also drawing on LA model policies such as pay (which had been agreed with unions). AsH stated that producing an updated behaviour policy was a priority.

11. Governor training

11.1. The Chair drew governors' attention to an LA governance briefing to take place on 4 February.

12. Hove Partnership

12.1. MC reported that she had attended the last session of the Hove Partnership, which had the involvement of representatives from primary and secondary schools. MC stated that at the next meeting work would be done on a Partnership Terms of Reference, to look at shared priorities, finance, well-being and improvement, primary schools developing their curriculum offer.

12.2. RK reported on her activities helping with subjects at primary schools; work on music had just been completed, geography had just been launched and work would be done on design. RK added that the Teaching School Alliance had asked Blatchington Mill to help with this work.

12.3. The Chair paid tribute to the work being done by RK (now co-chair of the Partnership) with the primary schools which reflected well on Blatchington Mill

13. Actions taken by Chair - None

14. Any Other Business

14.1. AsH notified governors of a school musical being put on – 'Back to the Eighties' – to take place on 11, 12 and 13 February; to which governors were cordially invited.

Actions

- Circulation of homework presentation – AsH
- Presentation on behaviour - AsH

Next meeting – Thursday 26 March 2020 - Budget

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...