

Minutes of a (virtual) meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 29 April 2021 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), John Barker (JB), Alex Morrison (AM), Deborah Hillier (DHl), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Janet Such (JS), Richard Mills (RM) and Gareth Chan (GC).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Ruth King (RK – Deputy Head Teacher), Kate Claydon (KC - Deputy Head Teacher), Alessandro Capozzi (AC - Deputy Head Teacher) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

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

1. Apologies for Absence.

1.1. Addy Balogun (AB), Adam Harvey (AdH) and Lee Redmond (LR) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. **Declarations of interest** – None. The Chair asked that the current register table be posted on the school website – the Clerk agreed to arrange this action.

3. Minutes

3.1. The minutes of the meeting of 25 March 2021 were agreed by governors as a true record; to be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

4. Matters Arising

- Message to staff from governors, expressing appreciation for work done on the Covid-19 testing operation – done.
- Gift to staff, from NPFs, as appreciation for work done on the Covid-19 testing operation – to be done.

Published Admission Number (PAN)

The Chair noted that the local authority (LA) PAN proposal had caused considerable concern amongst schools in Brighton & Hove; and reported having attended a recent meeting of secondary school Chairs of Governors. The Chair stated that the LA were now considering the next stage of the process and intended to hold a 'pre-consultation engagement', which would include consideration of issues such as basic principles, data, primary school plans, disadvantaged pupils and catchment areas. The Chair added that the LA planned to put forward a paper for consideration by the LA's Children and Young Persons' Committee in June.

Federation & Academisation

AsH commented that, in addition, some primary schools were considering federation; with Blatchington Mill being consulted by them about this idea. AsH added that the Department for Education (DfE) had announced re-booting of the academisation drive on 28 April; there had been no reaction from the LA as yet.

The Chair asked that the PAN issue be placed on the agenda for discussion by the FBG at its next meeting of 8 July 2021.

5. School budget

5.1. SH informed the FBG that she was in the process of reviewing the draft budget; an early version of which had been submitted to the LA at the end of February. SH stated that the LA required final submission by 21 May; the Finance Committee would review this draft at its meeting of 10 May.

5.2. SH reported that the carry forward from the previous financial year (2020-2021) was £376K; as well as the Covid-19 grant of £73K. SH stated that the draft budget included a provision for increased Key Stage 4 staffing for the next two years; also that an average of £340K to £345K was forecast as surpluses for the next three years. SH assured governors that £345K fell below the LA authorised carry forward limit.

5.3. The Chair praised SH and her team for their work done on the draft budget; also members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for their role as well. The Chair noted that the Finance Committee would be expected to formally approve the final version of the draft budget at its meeting of 10 May.

6. Headteacher report

6.1. AsH referred to his report circulated to governors earlier and highlighted the following issues:-

Year 9 options

6.2. AsH acknowledged that the Year 9 options process had been carried out slightly later than usual; this delay had allowed for better consideration of informed choices and the school to decide on the kind of curriculum to offer. AsH stated that the whole process had been carried out online, with a Q&A facility on the website and had worked very well for parents and staff.

6.3. The Chair praised KC for this long (four hour) stint and considered it had been very professionally done. The Chair noted that heads of department had answered all questions raised, in an efficient manner.

6.4. Governors echoed the Chair's praise for this process, noting that the information provided had been very strong on all subjects. Governors believed that this same style of process could be used by parents of children in higher Year groups; there might be a preference for this system in the future for those would like blended learning. Governors commented that it did not appear that anyone had missed anything; discussion went beyond the options and subjects being taken into areas not previously considered. Governors believed that the process had been really helpful, core subjects had been represented well; this would be good to show OfSTED.

- 6.5. Governors supported the positive message presented and agreed the process had been well prepared and presented. Governors asked how parents might ask follow up questions. KC stated that this could be done by emailing the Year 9 office.
- 6.6. Governors asked if there was any aspect of this process that the school would take forward, when Covid-19 was no longer a factor. AsH believed that, with regard to this process, there had been an improvement in engagement, not least because of the time saving – this would be retained in the future. AsH stated that there was a balance to achieve however, given that there was better interaction achieved when the school premises was visited.
- 6.7. The Chair noted all these positive comments about the process and that the opportunity for subject specialists to show their enthusiasm had been clearly taken.

Year 11 assessments

- 6.8. AsH informed governors that the Year 11 assessments process was ongoing; the Centre policy had been completed and now on the website – it was worth governors taking the time to look at this document. AsH commented that Year 11 students were working through their assessments and doing fine; there was confidence in how this was going and they were coping well.
- 6.9. Governors asked if there was a possibility for Year 11 students to do Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) before they left school. AsH stated that it had not been possible to cover aspects of Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) education remotely; now that students were back on the school premises this was being done. Governors noted the example of a PSHE lesson being carried out on testicular cancer on 29 April, which had been very good.
- 6.10. Governors noted the examination timetable and asked about contingency planning for fire alarms. AsH provided details of the school fire evacuation plan and process, which would be reviewed and checked. AsH added that Year 11 students were subject to a study leave arrangement; they were only present in school for examinations; in-class assessments were being done up to 24 May.

Extra Curricular Sport

- 6.11. AsH stated that activities in this regard had started up again in the last few weeks, which had been appreciated by students and staff. AsH emphasised that this had been done with all due appropriate Covid-19 measures being taken. AsH stated that the school had taken a change in approach, with regard to the Risk Assessment in place; a balance had been struck between outside control measures and the wider benefits of running sports clubs.

Adjustments to restrictions in school

- 6.12. AsH informed governors that Covid-19 restrictions remained in place at the school; but these were increasingly looking to be out of sync with the process of conditions being relaxed by society in general. AsH stated that the school was looking at taking decisions on when to unlock measures; this would be a careful task. AsH believed that the school would have to be transparent about the changes envisaged; and this would start after half term with a move to more regular attendance times.

- 6.13. Governors agreed with this approach, noting that anything that helped with social interaction would be good for pupils. Governors asked what leeway the school had with changing restrictions. AsH stated that the DfE had promoted some 'must have' conditionalities, whilst allowing schools to have a looser structure in place, e.g. bubble numbers. AsH commented that a school could have a bubble the size of a Year group (or pick a point up to this number) – the question was to decide how many contacts a child could have.
- 6.14. Governors asked how this was managed for sports activities, in terms of cross bubble arrangements. AsH confirmed the only sports currently allowed were distance based ones, e.g. cricket and rounders. AsH added that only relatively small groups were participating so far and were asked to carry out home testing.
- 6.15. Governors wondered if this could be addressed by a staged process, i.e. a two, three or four class bubble arrangement. AsH stated that school could choose how many bubbles had contact and would talk more about these arrangements.
- 6.16. Governors asked if the school monitored the children who were testing twice a week. AsH stated that this idea had been considered and not taken up as an option; in order to keep the process on a light touch basis and functioning as friction free as possible.
- 6.17. The Chair asked about teachers returning to classrooms and the risk posed by corridor interaction. AsH stated that teachers being in classrooms was judged to be a high priority but that the risk of movement about the site was significant; this would be looked at for implementation in September.

7. School Partnership Advisor (SPA) visit to school

- 7.1. AsH referred to the SPA visit of 20 April report circulated earlier to governors; this set out her view of the school and had been sent to the LA.
- 7.2. The Chair commented that this was a positive report and highlighted in particular the SPA complimentary view of online lessons – four had been looked at (Y8 music, Y9 geography, Y11 English and Spanish). The Chair praised the school for a very professional job in this regard, which had showed how well teachers engaged with children and opportunities for assessment. The Chair recommended governors view these lessons on YouTube for themselves.
- 7.3. AsH pointed to a significant outcome of this process, namely the full record the school now possessed of every lesson retained since March; this amounted to a valuable resource for students – to go back to lessons, rewind, pause and work at their own pace.

8. Safeguarding

- 8.1. RK drew attention to the major issue which had arisen over sexual disclosures online – dealing with the outcome had been a major focus for the school, with a number of different actions taken. RK stated that more disclosures had been made about Blatchington Mill than other schools in the city; but since Easter the situation had calmed down.

- 8.2. RK felt that it had been a positive step for children to feel able to come forward and make these disclosures; about incidents, the majority of which had taken place outside the school premises. RK reported that the police were now identifying cases that were appropriate for them to deal with and the school were not yet at a point to draw any conclusions as yet.
- 8.3. RK informed governors that she had done a video, for inclusion in PSHE lessons for all Year groups that would go out next week. RK provided details of other actions being taken by the school, such as support to families and children involved in the disclosures (including those students who had lost parents in the last twelve months); and visits by the primary health worker.
- 8.4. Governors asked if anything had come up in the disclosures which had meant the school having to review any of its safeguarding procedures. RK drew attention to an issue which had arisen over seating plan policy; thought would be given to who sat where.
- 8.5. Governors asked about interventions in general. RK stated that the school's processes had not been queried; parents and students had access to the Year offices and had been made aware of who to consult.
- 8.6. Governors asked why it had been that Blatchington Mill had attracted the most disclosures; and about the current atmosphere in the school. RK believed that the number of referrals had been down to if the school concerned had had a student demonstration. RK stated that, as Blatchington Mill had been involved at such an early stage, it had attracted the most comments; after Easter, other schools had become more drawn in. RK commented that atmosphere in the school was generally fine, all were aware of what action was being taken. RK added that children and parents affected had been invited to the school to talk about safety issues and a series of questions.
- 8.7. AsH considered the work being done by the school on this issue to be absolutely vital and praised RK and her team for everything being done in this regard.

(Note – RK left the meeting at 18.10 hours)

9. Health & Safety

- 9.1. AsH provided governors with an update on the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the death of a colleague on the premises in 2018. AsH stated that the HSE had completed its investigation and informed the LA of the result. AsH reported that he and the Chair had met the LA to discuss the implications – the HSE could consider follow up action, e.g. issue fines or initiate prosecutions – but no indication on what would happen had yet been given.
- 9.2. AsH stated that the HSE had had a response from the LA; and had confirmed that its case was with the LA and not the school; and agreed the LA was the employer in this case. The Chair added that the LA had met with the leader of the council and was keen all parties work together co-operatively.
- 9.3. AsH recalled that the school response in 2019 had been to work through an open action plan; and it had put appropriate changes in place. AsH noted the HSE had stated its view that the school's subsequent actions had met its 'notice of contravention'.

9.4. Governors asked if there was any requirement by the LA for the school to carry out any internal disciplinary procedures. AsH did not believe that this was required; the school had resolved all the outstanding issues and there were no pending actions. AsH added that SH had spoken to the relevant staff about the report; in addition there was no question of the school lowering its vigilance.

9.5. The Chair asked about the Health & Safety Committee and the process for putting this matter forward for its consideration. SH stated that she would be scheduling a meeting of this Committee before the end of term. AsH added that, as a next step, the LA would find out from the HSE what further actions were required.

10. School policies

Review of administration of medications policy

10.1. SH asked that this be put on the next agenda of the FBG for its meeting on 8 July.

11. Governor training

11.1. The Chair noted that there was none to report.

12. Any Other Business

12.1. The Chair noted that current LA advice for governors not to hold meetings on school premises, unless this was essential. The Chair commented however that this advice might change nearer the time of the next FBG meeting; if this happened, governors' views would be sought as to where this would be held.

Actions

- Posting of governors' business & pecuniary interests register table on school website – DH
- Addition of PAN as an agenda item for the 8 July 2021 meeting of the FBG – DH
- Scheduling of Health & Safety Committee meeting before the end of term – SH
- Addition of review of administration of medications policy as an agenda item for the 8 July 2021 meeting of the FBG – DH

Next meeting – Thursday 8 July 2021

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...