

Minutes of a (virtual) meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 16 September 2021 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS – arrived 17.30 hours) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH – headteacher), Lee Redmond (LR), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), John Barker (JB), Alex Morrison (AM), Mariea Christodoulou (MC) and Addy Balogun. (AB).

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

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – DHa noted the nominations of PS as Chair and LR and JMo as co vice chairs; and the unanimous approval of the FBG to these appointments. In the temporary absence of PS, JMo agreed to take the role of acting Chair.
2. **Apologies for Absence.**
 - 2.1. Claire Harrington (CH), Deborah Hillier (DHi), Gareth Chan (GC) and Richard Mills (RM) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
3. **Declarations of interest** – None.
4. **Minutes**
 - 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 8 July 2021 were agreed by governors as a true record; to be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.
5. **Matters Arising**
 - Setting up of governors' classroom visit programme for September – to be done.
 - Addition of safeguarding & child protection policy approval as an agenda item for the FBG meeting of 16 September – done.
 - Addition of climate change to agenda for the FBG meeting of 16 September – to be done, deferred to the next meeting.
 - Despatch of message of appreciation to all staff – done.
6. **Governing Board Code of Conduct 2019-2020**
 - 6.1. The acting Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this document; a hard copy to be signed on the board's behalf at the next available opportunity.

7. Headteacher report

7.1. AH explained that he would make the examination results the main focus of his presentation and undertook to circulate additional documentation including data analysis after the meeting.

Examinations 2021

7.2. AH stated that the results had been produced as a result of teacher assessed grades rather than from examinations. AH made a detailed presentation covering the key aspects of Year 11 outcomes:-

- the context (the process had been set out on the school website);
- considerations (different working conditions for students, comparisons, appeals and progress not being able to be measured);
- 2018-2019 (the last set of grades issued through an examination process);
- Attainment 8 (the key measurement, English & Mathematics, EBacc subjects & open group);
- Key comparable figures (attainment 8 – all students had increased, very positive to see this happen for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Pupil Premium (PP) groups in particular.

AH explained that this had happened because this different method of assessment had benefitted these student groups more than the others; also from the way the school had operated during the lockdowns, in terms of good access to IT and other forms of supports);

- Pass thresholds for subjects in 2020-2021 (standard passes for Grades 4+ and 5+ showed very strong pass rates and high attainment; for Grade 9, the pattern had not shown grade inflation)

7.3. The acting Chair asked about which groups had been included in the SEN and PP figures. AH stated that the PP group had been bigger and included Free School Meal (FSM) students.

7.4. AH stated that there had been a very small number of appeals made (providing specific details), half of which had been upheld; those which had not been, the school had been in contact with parents.

7.5. The acting Chair asked if there had been any queries made about autumn examination retakes. AH stated that there had not been many in this regard.

7.6. Governors asked if the appeals made had been confined to few or many subjects. AH stated that these had been made across a range of subjects.

7.7. The acting Chair asked if students had demonstrated any signs of anxiety about the uncertainty over what would happen in 2022. AH commented that the Year 11 cohort had spoken of their difficulties with facing the coming academic year; the school would be taking steps to inform them very soon about the nature of the forthcoming assessment system.

Year 7 Summer School

7.8. RK stated that a full evaluation (to be completed by the end of October) would be prepared for the Department of Education (DfE); and made a detailed presentation, covering the aspects of :-

- Aims and Content (setting out opportunities and encouraging social interaction, including an understanding of the school's ethos (resilience, discovery, kindness and inclusivity) and finding their way around the site).

RK noted that 240 had attended (out of 280 who had signed up); also that a significant number of achievement awards had been given out during the week. RK described the programme sessions (three in a day) with activities taking place inside and outside (e.g. making scones, first aid, design, sports, treasure hunt and science). RK stated that there had been four days of activities, with an additional day set aside for sports.

- Photographs of activities (RK highlighted the particular ones of gardening, trampolining, spray painting and use of the boulder wall).
- Impact (RK stated that a follow up survey had been conducted with staff, students and parents; a third of parents had responded, whose comments were very positive)
- Next steps (RK stated that, in the next two weeks, the school would look at the differences between the students who had and had not attended the summer school, to assess its impact (a control group and the attendees).

7.9. Governors praised and thanked RK for what appeared to have been a very positive initiative with an impressive impact, commenting on the excellent combination of a serious approach with the opportunity to participate in fun activities.

8. Safeguarding

8.1. RK gave an update on the sexual harassment and disclosures issue; the process was at the point of conclusion in terms of cases raised, all of which had been taken seriously by the school. RK confirmed that the school would continue to work with and support those students who had brought forward allegations and that actions by the school had been in accordance with official guidance on these issues. RK drew attention to the increase of mental health issues being reported; a further update would be given at the next meeting under this agenda item – also, by this time the school would have sent in a child protection audit to the local authority (LA).

8.2. The acting Chair asked for confirmation that members of staff were up to date on their statutory safeguarding duties. RK agreed to provide this confirmation of completion at the next meeting.

Child Protection and Safeguarding policy

8.3. RK reported that a lot of changes had been notified in August; a number focussing on low level concerns – which was a positive and welcome development – many on managing allegations against staff. RK added that the

staff code of conduct was presently up for review; the LA would be supplying a new model template in the next two weeks.

- 8.4. RK drew attention to other changes in the policy, which included having a nominated person in charge of children in care and an update on social media aspects.
- 8.5. The acting Chair asked about the designated governor safeguarding leads. RK stated that PS and CH were currently in these positions.
- 8.6. The acting Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the changes to the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

9. Committees' membership for 2019-2020 (Finance, Pay & Personnel, Recruitment and Panels).

- 9.1. The acting Chair noted that governors' membership of these Committees would stay the same as the previous academic year. PS drew attention to the need for the Governor Recruitment Committee to meet soon and welcomed the offers of JMa and LR to participate.
- 9.2. The acting Chair noted MC's offer to become the child protection and children in care link governor; also his own to be the student careers link governor.

10. School policies

Child protection & safeguarding policy

- 10.1. The acting Chair noted that this had been discussed and approved under the safeguarding agenda item (paragraph 9).

Policy review in relation to protected characteristics

- 10.2. AH stated that there needed to be a heightened awareness of this aspect of policy and drew attention to the two main aspects of the practical effects and a longer piece of work. AH spoke of the considerable complexity in dealing with this issue, in ensuring that all protected characteristics were supported in the school policy.
- 10.3. AH explained to governors that the LA had just issued a Trans inclusion toolkit. AH noted that social pressures were very complex and difficult to navigate, in particular in how to manage and resolve complaints. AH spoke of a number of complaints being dealt with by the school at the moment; one of which had been upheld. AH stated that this related to the school not listing sex as a protected characteristic in its policies, just gender. AH confirmed that the school had therefore changed its approach in this regard – sex should be a protected characteristic - and would be making this change to a number of its policies. The acting Chair noted that sex and gender identity were listed as protected characteristics in the government Equality Act.
- 10.4. AH stated that, whilst the school was drawing on LA guidance on Trans inclusion, it was important that governors were informed on the matters involved and confident in the schools practice in this area. AH noted that the LA had offered training (four sessions up to December 2021) and

recommended strongly to governors that they read the toolkit and attend at least one. PS endorsed AH's view that the FBG needed to be on top of this issue; also his request to governors with regard to the toolkit and training.

11. Governor training

- 11.1. AH drew governors attention to the LA's email about Trans inclusion; that it contained links to the available training.

12. Any Other Business

Behaviour

- 12.1. At the acting Chair's request, KC provided an update on behaviour which was going well, since the return to school by students. KC stated that the return for students to be able to walk around was working well and it was good to see them back in lessons. KC added that teachers could see the benefits of walking around classrooms, making the delivery of lessons much easier for staff. The acting Chair asked that a more detailed update on this issue be given to the next meeting of the Curriculum Committee.

Covid vaccinations

- 12.2. AH highlighted the recent government requirement that 12 to 15 year olds be vaccinated. AH stated that the LA and Sussex NHS had talked through the rationale for this decision, taking account of the small clinical benefit but factoring in the possibility for school disruption. AH stated that one Pfizer vaccination dose was being offered and consent would be sought by the LA and Sussex NHS vaccination teams – school staff would not be undertaking this action.
- 12.3. AH stated that the planned timeframe for inoculations was that this was to be done before half term; for Blatchington Mill a two day period would be required. AH commented that the programme was generating some opposition; to manage this, the LA was setting up phone lines. AH stressed that the school was NOT offering advice on whether to take the vaccination or not – these decisions would be taken by families. Questions on the process should be referred to the school, who would transmit them to the NHS for answer.

(Note – AM left the meeting at 18.30 hours)

Attendance

- 12.4. AC reported that attendance at the beginning of term had been recorded as 95.6%, which was good. AC added that there were some legacy issues in this regard; the attendance team's capacity would be built up to manage this work. AC stated that some useful aspects of the coronavirus measures had been retained, e.g. spacing and escorting; and highlighted the strong assembly programme. AC concluded by drawing attention to the number of positive Covid cases.

(**Note** – JMo left the meeting at 18.40 hours)

Governor departures

- 12.5. The Chair drew attention to the imminent stepping down of JB as a governor and thanked him warmly for his work on behalf of the school, noting that this had included chairing the Finance Committee and taking part in a number of headteacher interview sessions. JB commented that he had been involved in the school for over 38 years and it had been a privilege and a pleasure to see it evolve so successfully.
- 12.6. The Chair expressed similar sentiments on the news that AB was also planning to step down shortly and paid tribute to her considerable contribution in service of the school for over thirteen years. AB commented that she had started originally as a parent governor in 2008 and enjoyed greatly the experience of being a governor.

(**Note** – RK, AC and KC left the meeting at 18.45 hours)

Acting and substantive headteacher appointment process

- 12.7. The Chair drew attention to the minutes of the 1 September 2021 extraordinary FBG meeting and noted governors' approval of them. The Chair noted completion of the actions of:-
- Production, circulation and circulation of advertisement for acting headteacher position
 - Circulation of headteacher recruitment guidance to all governors
- 12.8. The Chair stated that a programme had been devised for the governors' panel (JMa, JMo, PS and CH (who had dropped out due to illness)); who were due to meet on 20 September (the student panel would also be involved) to carry out the interview process. The Chair stated that the governor panel aimed to reach a decision on the successful candidate at the end of the day.
- 12.9. The Chair stressed the importance of beginning the substantive headteacher appointment process as soon as possible; to include looking at the implications of the appointment, setting out timescales and producing an advertisement by 10 October. The Chair noted the agreement of JMa and MC to meet on 21 September at 17.00 hours; and asked DHa to circulate notification of the scheduling of this meeting to the rest of the panel.

Health and Safety link governor

- 12.10. SH highlighted the need for a successor to Adam Harvey as link health and safety governor; the Chair agreed to consult with JMo on this issue.

Actions

- Circulation of summer school and examinations presentations to all governors – DH/RK/AH

- Confirmation of completion of staff being up to date on statutory safeguarding duties – RK
- Reading of LA trans inclusion toolkit - all
- Attendance at trans inclusion LA training session before December 2021 – all
- Review of school policies to check consistency with Equalities Act and enter sex as a protected characteristic if required – AH
- Circulation of information about meeting of substantive headteacher appointment panel on 21 September – DH
- Consultation about appointment of health & safety link governor – PS & JMo

Next meeting – Thursday 9 December 2021 (Exam data (full picture))

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...