

Minutes of a (virtual) meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 9 December 2021 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Gareth Chan (GC), Richard Mills (RM), Alex Morrison (AM), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Mark Sorrell (MS), Jim Henderson (JH), Vernon Bamforth (VB) and Kate Claydon (KC - Head Teacher).

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

Quorum: 11 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Introductions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed the newly appointed co-opted governors to the meeting – MS, JH and VB – and thanked JH for his support in the recent headteacher candidate selection and interview process. All three new governors introduced themselves to the board, providing brief details of their backgrounds.
- 1.2. The Chair welcomed the new deputy Head Teacher (EE) to the meeting, who also introduced herself to governors.

2. Apologies for Absence.

- 2.1. Lee Redmond (LR), Claire Harrington (CH) and Deborah Hillier (DHi), had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The Chair pointed out an error in the date of the 16 September 2021 FBG draft minutes (it read 17 September); the clerk agreed to correct this mistake.
- 4.2. The minutes of the meetings of 16 September (FBG) and 24 November (eFBG) 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. The Chair recommended this action be carried forward for consideration at the next meeting. KC confirmed that, at present, the school was restricting the numbers of visitors to the school, for pandemic reasons.

- Addition of climate change to agenda for the FBG meeting of 16 September – The Chair noted AM’s offer to take on the role of link governor on climate change and sustainability; and recommended he liaise with the school Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to take this work forward.
- Circulation of summer school and examinations presentations to all governors – done.
- Confirmation of completion of staff being up to date on statutory safeguarding duties – done.
- Reading of LA trans inclusion toolkit and attendance at trans inclusion LA training session – The Chair noted those governors who confirmed taking these actions and encouraged others to do so as well.
- Review of school policies to check consistency with Equalities Act and enter sex as a protected characteristic if required – done.
- Circulation of information about meeting of substantive headteacher appointment panel on 21 September – DH
- Consultation about appointment of health & safety link governor – to be discussed in current meeting.

6. Substantive headteacher appointment process

6.1. The Chair noted that this had been a successful appointment process. The Chair recalled that the advertisement had been posted; eleven interested candidates had applied for the position; six had been shortlisted to undertake a range of activities over a day (including panels for curriculum, resources, students and leadership) with school staff, an LA representative and local primary school headteacher; three candidates had been selected to go forward to the second day for full interviews and give presentations to the governors’ panel; KC had been the panel’s unanimously approved candidate to be appointed. The Chair commented that all governors had been pleased with the outcome.

6.2. KC thanked all those involved in the process. The Chair added that he had spoken to four of the unsuccessful candidates, who considered it to have been a positive experience and expressed appreciation on how the process had been handled and its fairness. The Chair took this opportunity to present his thanks to all the governors and staff involved.

7. Headteacher report

7.1. KC drew attention to her report circulated earlier to governors, setting out a summary of activity in the SLT areas.

Quality of Education

Assessment

7.2. AC stated that this was a question of ensuring assessment had been mapped out for the five Year groups; setting out clarity on what was being done on each subject; making sure the process was reliable, fair and triangulated; use

of feedback in the planning process; revisiting the process to ensure quality assurance.

Curriculum Overviews

- 7.3. AC stated that what was being taught had been mapped out and published on the school website; what was being chosen for each subject and outcomes; the next steps would involve looking at the overviews in detail; teachers would be asked what was being taught and why.

INSET

- 7.4. AC highlighted the participation by staff on Special Educational Needs (SEN), drawing attention to plans to hold workshops covering such issues as autism and dyslexia; setting out what was being done to include students in the curriculum, including those educationally disadvantaged.

Attendance

- 7.5. AC acknowledged that attendance was challenging to manage at the moment; the current percentage was above 90%. AC confirmed that, officially, Covid-19 related absences were now classed as illnesses and so would affect the school's attendance statistics. AC highlighted the work being done by the Year teams to monitor the situation and pointed to the school being below the national and local averages on attendance and persistent absence.

- Governor questions

- 7.6. Governors asked about specific subjects in the curriculum and where the school was ahead or continuing the journey. AC stated that Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) was a beacon in the school, with an impressive amount of understanding and research in this subject; science and geography were similarly successful. AC acknowledged that, although there had been significant developments in English, work was still to be done on sequencing of learning. AC also highlighted that although a very good system and assessment was in place for mathematics, delivery still needed some improvement.
- 7.7. Governors asked about attendance and if there had been many applications for home schooling, since pupils' return in September. AC provided details of exact numbers of applications which had been accepted – these had had to be approved by the local authority (LA). AC confirmed that the number of such applications was very small.
- 7.8. Governors asked about access to the curriculum material on the website. AC undertook to see how this could be promoted, signposted and shared.
- 7.9. Governors asked how the work on school leaders articulating visions was being done. AC stated that this work would be done as part of the overviews process, when staff would articulate their thinking; some subjects had been covered already in this regard.
- 7.10. The Chair recommended that ways be found to track how many times curriculum overviews were accessed on the school website; as a way of seeing the extent of parental interest and use. KC agreed to find out how this might be done.

- 7.11. Governors commented that, with regard to the curriculum overviews, thought might be given to prioritising what students were learning rather than what teachers were doing. KC agreed to consider making the overviews into a more accessible version and subject to additional developmental work.
- 7.12. Governors praised the website which was a good resource and recommended framing the overviews document in a whole school context and set out how subjects were contributing to the central vision. KC stated that this was work yet to be done.

Student Development/Child Protection

Student Personal Development – Able, Gifted & Talented policy (AGT)

- 7.13. RK drew attention to this AGT policy now appearing on the school website; also to the extra-curricular activities being planned.

Careers, information & guidance

- 7.14. RK highlighted the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) running for Year 10, discussion about career pathways; appointment of a new careers lead (action plan underway to put in place short, medium and long term improvements to school practice); students access to Skills Builder during lockdowns; careers fair for post-16 advice (including information on academic and non-academic routes); the recording and auditing of careers work done in the past; and issue of a careers newsletter last week.

- 7.15. Governors asked if any students had applied to the LA apprenticeship scheme. RK agreed to look into this enquiry, noting that some had come to work at the school under this scheme.

Duke of Edinburgh

- 7.16. RK confirmed that there was a strategic plan in place to fill this gap, students would be covered.

Extra curricular

- 7.17. RK stated that a staff member had been tasked to look at this issue and an action plan was in place. RK commented that a number of after school clubs were undertaking activities and acknowledged that there could be more. RK stated that trips and productions plans were subject to Covid-19 considerations.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

- 7.18. RK confirmed that all staff had undertaken the required safeguarding training.

Summer School

- 7.19. RK spoke of the work done with two Year 7 focus groups, asking for their comments on how this event had impacted on them in terms of what they learnt. RK reported that their expressed views were very positive in nature, highlighted the team building sessions and the premises tours.

- 7.20. Governors asked if the school could repeat the exercise, albeit scaled down because of budgetary considerations. RK stated that the school could run a single day event at a cost of £20K (the full week funded by the

Department for Education (DfE) had cost £88K) – this would depend on a budget being made available.

Behaviour and Culture

Student Support Cluster and Year Team Meetings

- 7.21. EE drew attention on the refocus on the school vision and values and work being done on this by the Year teams; heads of Years being challenged to demonstrate values in action, to be embedded into everyday practice. EE spoke of encouraging students to be clear on behaviours and attitudes deemed important by the school. EE referred to developing this work further, including the aspect of pastoral support and ways to have in-person assemblies.

Normative messaging

- 7.22. EE stated that the school continued to build on this work, for the next stage, language would be refined for rolling out into subject teams.

Restorative work

- 7.23. EE stated that the school would ensure all Year teams were confident in leading restorative conversations with students about behaviour.

Data Tracking and Intervention Log

- 7.24. EE spoke of the coordinated work being done to track behaviour across all the Year groups.

- 7.25. The Chair asked if the data tracking and intervention log might create reports that could be seen by governors. EE explained that these showed behavioural categories in Year groups (e.g. Year 8 not being prepared) and how these could be addressed – and confirmed such reports could be shown to governors.

- Governor questions

- 7.26. Governors asked about staff's skills to use the restorative practices system. EE confirmed that all the Year teams were invested in this system, which was already underway in the school; it was now just a question of formalising it.

- 7.27. Governors noted that school's emphasis on having a positive culture and asked about having a system in place to recognise students' praiseworthy behaviour and achievements. EE confirmed that there was scope within normative messaging for the school to highlight good behaviour; in a combination of drawing attention in assemblies in a number of achievement categories, but also engaging in quiet recognition of individuals.

Barriers to learning

- 7.28. KC provided information about SENCo succession planning; catch up funding (review of Year 11 mock examination results, to see what could be done for students); homework club (consideration of expanding this provision); contingency plans (discussions with students and parents about arrangements in case examinations do not go ahead).

(Note – AM left the meeting at 18.20 hours)

Budget

- 7.29. SH reported a very positive situation with regard to the forecast outturn surplus. SH stated that the 5% carry forward limit would not be an issue, as money had been earmarked for specific expenditure. SH reported that work on the staffing budget had started as the LA spreadsheet was now available; a draft would be ready in February 2022.
- 7.30. SH provided details of staffing movements in the finance, facilities and human resources teams; recruitment was now going on all year round, instead of at specific times. SH stated that work was continuing on health and safety matters; it was now a year on from the audit, with only one outstanding matter to resolve. SH commented that the health & safety committee had not met for some time but confirmed the school continued to track all accidents and incidents.
- 7.31. SH informed the FBG that the facilities team was working with the Brighton & Hove Hockey Club on the All Weather Pitches (AWPs); also the Brighton & Hove Cricket Club who were funding new nets and mats; also funding lighting replacement. SH stated that IT & network services were busy on the challenge of maintaining Chromebooks and working on the replacement phone system.
- 7.32. Governors asked if the school was prepared in the event of a cyber-attack. SH confirmed having discussed this issue with the IT department; using the Google system meant the school enjoyed a good level of resilience; also having two servers on site with a good LA firewall showed the school had good and robust protection in place.
- 7.33. Governors asked about the school's policy with regard to prescribing paracetamol. SH confirmed that the school nurse was very careful about doing this and was in any case required to call parents before providing this medicine.
- 7.34. Governors asked about school policy with regard to pregnancies and working from home. SH stated that the policy would be updated in this regard very soon.

(Note – GC and VB left the meeting at 18.30 hours)

School Development Plan (SDP) & SLT communications strategy

- 7.35. The Chair noted that the SDP had evolved, showing changes to the allocation of responsibilities and deadlines.
- 7.36. Governors asked about the reshaped appraisal process and the individualised targets. KC explained that the key driver was what was happening across the school, that quality was in place to meet SDP targets.
- 7.37. Governors asked if the school would be fully staffed in January 2022. KC confirmed that this was not completely the case, with plans in place to manage gaps; there were in any case no timetabling issues.
- 7.38. Governors asked about plans and timing to make the SDP more long term. KC stated that this work would begin in January; to have a three year SDP, drawn up by a more collaborative and shared ownership process.

7.39. Governors volunteered their support to help with work on a three year SDP; acknowledging that staff had priority in this task. KC felt that governors' views on areas to develop in the SDP would be very useful; she undertook to decide what mechanism could be put in place to facilitate this contribution.

School preferences

7.40. KC provided the FBG with details of first preferences numbers for September 2022 which were down on previous years as a result of falling rolls in Hove. KC added that official predictions for the next ten years were concerning, forecasting significant reductions in numbers across the city; this pointed to major implications for schools.

7.41. The Chair recommended the FBG hold another discussion on this issue at its next meeting; taking in long term data and consideration of the implications.

8. Safeguarding

8.1. The Chair recommended that discussion on this item and review of the documents circulated earlier be postponed to the next meeting of the FBG; RK accepted this decision.

9. School's & governors' OfSTED preparedness

9.1. KC stated that work had already begun on prioritising tasks to be in readiness for the next OfSTED inspection; including updating the SDP, ensuring website compliance, updated school policies. KC commented that this work would be led by the SLT, in a manner to reassure staff that it was business as usual. KC added that the level of preparedness would include compiling a documentation checklist. KC thanked the Chair, JMo and MC for volunteering to help with this process on behalf of the FBG.

9.2. KC stated that AC would be working with subject leaders on preparedness and communications with staff and parents. KC was sure everything would be in place at the right time; the SLT would support staff in having a calm and measured approach; and was confident about being able to show the good areas of the school.

10. School policies

Health & Safety

10.1. SH drew governors' attention to a number of minor changes (specific staffing names) and recommended agreement. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this policy

Administration of medicines

10.2. SH highlighted minor changes to this policy in the form of updates to gender and sex references. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this policy.

11. Link governor roles

Joint Health & Safety

11.1. The Chair thanked JH for his offer to take the other joint link governor role on health and safety, with GC. SH informed JH that there were three meetings of the H&S committee a year, with two school walks held over this period as well.

School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

11.2. The Chair thanked JMa (and LR) for their offers to take on the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) link governor roles.

Special Educational & Disabilities (SEND)

11.3. The Chair thanked MS for his offer to take on the SEND link governor role.

11.4. The Chair noted MC's continuing link roles in child protection and children in care.

12. Any Other Business – None.

Actions

- Setting up of governors' classroom visit programme for September – PS & KC
- School admissions discussion for next FBG agenda – DH
- Safeguarding discussion for next FBG agenda (as the first item) - RK.

Next meeting – Thursday 27 January 2022 (Curriculum)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...