

Minutes (main set) of a (virtual) meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 5 May 2022 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), James Moncrieff (JMo – arrived 18.00 hours), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Lee Redmond (LR), Mark Sorrell (MS), Jim Henderson (JH), Vernon Bamforth (VB), Alex Morrison (AM – arrived 17.40 hours), Deborah Hillier (DHi) and Kate Claydon (KC - Head Teacher).

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

Quorum: 11 out of 14 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Claire Harrington (CH), Richard Mills (RM) and Gareth Chan (GC) apologies for absence were accepted.

2. Urgent business

- 2.1. (**Note** - text on this item appears in a confidential annex).

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2022 were agreed by governors as a true record; to be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

5. Matters Arising

- Taking forward of governors' Whatsapp group communication system – DH updated the FBG about progress on putting this system in place and noted all those present giving their permission for their personal telephone numbers to be stored on the appropriate app, in order to take this facility forward.
- Contact with network services about governor access to BMS360 and Google domain – SH stated that a system was in place and being worked on by the school human resources (HR) department, in order for governors' personal details to be stored on it, so that official Google Mail email addresses could be issued. SH added that, as a result of this being done, governors would henceforth have access to a shared drive and a folder where up to date official governance related documents could be stored and accessed.

- Provision of educationally disadvantaged system guide for governors – on the present agenda for discussion.
- Addition of educationally disadvantaged system to next FBG agenda – done.
- Taking forward of parents' survey – KC stated that this was work in progress with AM and DHi; to be done by the next meeting of the FBG.
- Consultation about delegation of school policies review – to be done.
- Circulation of governors' skills audit template form for completion – done. DH reported that he had received several responses and believed the exercise would be completed shortly.

6. School educationally disadvantaged system

- 6.1. KC drew attention to two documents circulated earlier to governors – the *Educational Disadvantage & Approach and Technical Guide*; and the *Disadvantaged Students support approach*. Highlighting the first, KC explained that there were two key strands – a review and planning process & Pupil Premium (PP) strategy. KC stated that the school's aim was to move away from dealing with students as a homogenous group with the same needs, to identify what it was that they needed to improve. KC emphasised that this aim was for teachers not to label students – e.g. PP – but instead adapt the school's pedagogical approach.
- 6.2. KC commented that the school now had more expertise in identifying what the actual issues were, e.g. a lack of vocabulary. KC added that teachers deliberately did not know who the students categorised as PP were, in order to avoid negative stereotyping and bias; and paid tribute to Ashley Harrold (former headteacher) and Alessandro Capozzi (former deputy headteacher) for the work they had done to bring this system to its present state of implementation.
- 6.3. Governors commented that the school's innovative approach was refreshing, with respect to the emphasis on identifying students' needs and not their PP status. Governors praised the quality of the two documents, which set out the school's strategy and approach. Governors noted that, from a national perspective, students from disadvantaged backgrounds tended to underperform; and asked if teachers did not know who the PP students were, how the correlation between progress data was managed.
- 6.4. KC explained that there was a correlation and pointed to the explanation set out in her headteacher's report produced after the mock examinations. KC stated that the school was working on a bigger tracking document, which would make it clearer as to how the PP students were doing; subject leaders would also have access to PP data.
- 6.5. Governors noted that future OfSTED inspectors would talk to middle leaders and subject leads about PP students' performance and asked about sharing the data.

- 6.6. Governors asked if the use of the title 'Educational Disadvantage' was correct. KC conceded that this could be something to move away from; at the moment the school was focussing on the key process to embed and there was an importance for teachers to understand some pupils were disadvantaged; however the school was open to the idea of changing this title.
- 6.7. The Chair praised the quality of the 'approach' document which was a clear summary of the process. The Chair noted that the OfSTED inspector had picked up on the issue of data analysis and it would be useful for governors to have this information; and asked if it would be possible for this to be done by the next meeting of the FBG. KC confirmed that this would be possible; governors would be able to track data over time and hold the school to account.
- 6.8. The Chair noted the PP strategy was posted on the school website but was missing an analysis of the previous year's impact. KC confirmed that this information would be added. The Chair asked whether other schools in Brighton and Hove had adopted the same 'Educational Disadvantage' approach. KC did not believe this was the case, making Blatchington Mill's use of this system exciting and a game changer.
- 6.9. KC spoke briefly of the school's PP strategy, the key steps that would be followed and how this would be moved forward; taking into account aspects of assistant headteachers' capacity with regard to access to the curriculum, e.g. literacy.
- 6.10. The Chair asked about Year 7 and primary schools' data – KC stated that this had not been available, because no SATs were undertaken by these year groups as a result of Covid. The Chair asked about baseline aspects to measure attainment with regard to Year 7. KC explained that the priority was to complete the Year 11 examinations process; action for Year 7 would follow directly afterwards this term.

7. Headteacher report

- 7.1. KC drew attention to her report circulated earlier to governors.

Absence

- 7.2. KC reported that the picture now was much better since Easter; staff absences were still an issue but easier to manage.

'Week of Action'

- 7.3. RK confirmed that this had taken place with students undertaking various activities, e.g. a sponsored cycle. RK added that voting was now going on to decide on which charities the money raised would go to – the total so far amounted to an impressive £7,523. RK paid tribute to teachers' constant encouragement to those students who had participated.

- 7.4. Governors noted the ongoing correspondence and pictures on this initiative, also the clear evidence of the massive and positive impact.

Assemblies

- 7.5. EE commented that it was great to see the students back in assemblies and noted there had been a push on keeping up standards and consistency; with smartness of uniforms a focus. EE noted that Year 7 and 8 in particular had not had many opportunities in recent months to mix with other year groups.

Year 10 mock examinations

- 7.6. KC explained the school approach about the move of Year 10 exams to now take place after the Year 11 GCSEs (this had usually happened before). KC stated that the purpose was to improve the readiness and capacity of Year 10 students before taking the mocks.

Year 11 end of school arrangements

- 7.7. KC provided brief details of these arrangements, to include a leavers' assembly and a prom.

New school Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)

- 7.8. KC explained that these documents had now been made operational for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and showed the process clearly. KC stated that more evidence was being added, including feedback from staff and parents' surveys in as much detail as possible. KC spoke of the broad overview and what would be included; also going through the targets and putting in detailed actions and success criteria.
- 7.9. KC confirmed that she would be working with AM and DHi with regard to the parents' survey, with the aim of honing in on areas where parents feedback would be most useful – this process would be followed over the next five or six weeks.
- 7.10. KC stated the SEF part would be finished by the May half term break; with top level targets set just after, by mid-June. KC added that all top level targets in the SIP would be available to see by the end of term.
- 7.11. The Chair asked if governors could review this process. KC welcomed the idea of governors looking at specific areas, teaching and the general atmosphere in the school.
- 7.12. Governors asked about the action plan following the OfSTED report and if there was sufficient guidance, given the report's brevity. KC stated that OfSTED's main focus had been the quality of education, which was very much a priority in the SIP as well as assessment. KC commented that the brief nature of OfSTED reports was the style now employed by inspectors and common to all schools recently inspected.

Year 11 data

- 7.13. KC drew attention to the top line analysis of Year 11 data, with Progress 8 looking strong and Attainment 8 predicted to be high as well; the hope was that the school was being realistic. KC acknowledged that the gender gap had widened further; the school would look into this further to identify the reasons. Turning to the Attainment 8 analysis, KC stated that this gave out a positive picture and in which subjects where the achievements were the best.
- 7.14. The Chair asked about the subject analyses, where some had been lower than expected, e.g. mathematics; and about action to be taken to improve

them. KC stated that the first priority was to support students to succeed in their examinations and make sure they had what they needed.

- 7.15. Governors noted that mathematics was one of the weakest areas and asked if this was a concern and about the accuracy of forecasts. KC stated that the school would go back on these figures and track them, to see whether forecasts matched up with results.
- 7.16. Governors stated that the data overall told an encouraging story and was positive. Governors asked about support, guidance and advice given to teachers, in terms of forecasts linked to results. KC explained that training had been carried out last year, with teachers using these same models; and acknowledged the need to look closely at the accuracy of predictions.
- 7.17. Governors noted the low figures for mathematics and asked about planning for the following year, specifically about support, given this was a substantial issue for students who did not succeed in securing a grade 4. KC assured governors that this was all part of the school's planning, which went back to Year 7. KC added that statistics from the Year 10 mock examinations would help with assessing the picture. KC noted that the first set of mock examinations carried out had had a set of comparative statistics across Brighton and Hove; the school's predictions did not look inaccurate

Staff changes

- 7.18. The Chair welcomed the imminent arrival of the newly appointed deputy headteacher, who would be an asset to the school; and thanked those governors involved in the recruitment process.

OfSTED follow up

- 7.19. The Chair asked if the school had received comments as a result of the OfSTED report being now widely circulated to governors and parents. KC stated that the school had not received much in the way of feedback and commented that there had not been much in the report to surprise anyone.

Health and Safety incident

- 7.20. (**Note** - text on this item appears in a confidential annex).

8. School Budget

- 8.1. SH informed governors that an earlier version of the multi-year summary or three year plan had been shared with the Finance Committee at its meeting of 25 April. SH explained that staffing details had been updated, matched against the curriculum plan; now showing a 70.6% proportion of spend in the first year, 76% in the second and increasing to 77.6% in the third. SH expected staffing to remain stable for the three years and drew attention to a turnover factor of 1% in each of the three years.
- 8.2. SH also drew attention to details of other expenditure in wider categories, e.g. premises of £84K, which would include a CCTV upgrade. The Chair noted details of other expenditure, to use up the underspend, in particular the window replacement programme and All Weather Pitches (AWPs) sinking fund top up.

- 8.3. SH stated that the school would carry out a significant window replacement programme this summer at a cost of £350K; also decoration, deep clean and IT network improvement tasks too. SH drew attention to other aspects of the budget with regard to income from PP Free School Meals (FSMs), Covid catch up money and the recovery grant.
- 8.4. SH highlighted the carry forward from last year to this, which had now been confirmed; for 2022-2023 it was 5.1% of the budget and 2023-2024 3%. SH confirmed that the school would be able to carry forward this 5.1%, as the budget contained a number of ring fenced amounts. SH stated that this draft plan would be submitted on 20 May and asked the FBG to delegate final and formal approval to the Finance Committee. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous agreement to this proposal, of delegating FBG approval of the three year plan to the Finance Committee.

Scheme of Delegation

- 8.5. SH stated that any school expenditure above the limit of £25K needed approval of the Finance Committee and FBG and drew attention to the following items:-
- *Minibus fleet*
- 8.6. SH stated that the proposed lease would cost the school £40K in the first year and £20K for each of the following four years. SH confirmed that the minibuses would be made wheelchair accessible, towbar fitted and school badged or liveried – all these costs had been entered in the budget.
- *Chromebooks*
- 8.7. SH stated the plan was to issue one chromebook to each new Year 7 student; this would cost £68K.
- *Windows replacement*
- 8.8. SH stated that the first wave of the work would cost £45K; the school would go with the lowest price tendered and best value.
- *Photocopiers & printers*
- 8.9. SH provided details of a proposed procurement contract at a cost of £15K to £20K.

9. School policies

Policies delegation

- 9.1. The Chair stated that this item would be deferred for discussion at the next meeting of the FBG; to cover the issue of delegation of review and approval of school policies to individual governors, committees or the Full Board.

Online safeguarding

- 9.2. RK informed governors that this policy had been updated with no major changes to the previous version.
- 9.3. Governors suggested that text be entered into the web filtering section in the form of a supportive measure if 'flagged' items were detected, in order to be

supportive to the person(s) concerned. RK agreed to consider this addition and explained that web filtering was more to do with material that was found or was directed against the user.

9.4. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this policy; keeping in mind this proviso.

10. Safeguarding

10.1. RK confirmed that the school continued to deal with the usual number of issues and highlighted discussion of the OfSTED report. RK added that the inspector had commented positively on the diligent work done by the school safeguarding team. RK stated that the school was aware of issues now emerging, post pandemic, from children in terms of what they had had to cope with during the lockdown periods and now demonstrating some odd behaviours.

10.2. Governors asked if the school had a link to the LA on safeguarding matters. RK confirmed that the school was in contact with the Education and Safeguarding link officer in the LA; who in turn maintained links with outside agencies such as social services.

10.3. Governors asked about the school's pro-active stance on safeguarding issues. RK stated that, following the major disclosures eighteen months ago, the school had been participating in a pilot harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) behaviours group, whose work had concluded at Easter. RK explained that this work was at an early stage and had been designed to address and encourage positivity amongst boys; and would be rolled out to a small number of students. RK also highlighted a lot of work being done by the school on Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) education in specific Year groups.

11. Governors' visits

11.1. The Chair noted that as a result of the pandemic there had not been an opportunity for governors to carry out visits to the school. The Chair suggested governors begin a programme of visits again, perhaps starting on an informal basis. KC welcomed this proposal, suggesting this be done after half term in the week beginning 6 June; and undertook to check staff availability and circulate dates.

12. Governor training

12.1. JMo stated that he had recently undertaken courses on NSPCC safer recruitment; Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity & Anti Racism for managers and LA Disadvantage strategy – education strand. MC confirmed having completed the NSPCC safer recruitment course.

13. Any Other Business

13.1. The Chair expressed the hope that the next meeting of the FBG would be held on the premises. KC added that the lower school production was due to be staged on the same evening.

Actions

Consultation about delegation of school policies review – PS & KC

Governors informal visit programme in June – KC

Taking forward of parents' survey and feedback exercise – KC, AM & DHi

Next meeting – Thursday 7 July 2022

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...