

Minutes (main set) of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 15 September 2022 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH – ‘virtually’, from 17.15 to 17.45 hours), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Alex Morrison (AM) and Mariea Christodoulou (MC).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Ruth King (RK – Deputy Head Teacher), Brandon Hughes (BH - Deputy Head Teacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

Quorum: 6 out of 11 governors present – meeting was quorate from 17.15 to 17.45 hours.

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – DHa noted the nominations of PS as Chair and JMo as co-vice chair; 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; and deferring the election of the second co-vice chair until the next meeting of the FBG.
2. **Apologies for Absence.**
 - 2.1. Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Gareth Chan (GC), Mark Sorrell (MS), Jim Henderson (JH) and Vernon Bamforth (VB) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
3. **Declarations of interest** – None.
4. **Minutes**
 - 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2022 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the acting Chair.
5. **Matters Arising**
 - Consultation about delegation of school policies review – to be done.
 - ‘Drive To Go Paperless’ item addition to agenda for FBG meeting of 15 September – done.
6. **Governing Board Code of Conduct 2022-2023**
 - 6.1. The acting Chair noted two queries about ‘Principles’ (point 8, page 2); complaints (point 11, page 2) – and the unanimous approval of the FBG to adopt this document; and signed it on behalf of the FBG.

7. Safeguarding – school policy

- 7.1. RK informed governors that this policy had been published on the school website and had been read by staff. RK confirmed that it contained no substantial changes to the version already seen by governors.
- 7.2. Governors raised the issue of a clear reporting procedure for complaints, which had been excluded. RK stated that this issue had been raised with the local authority in order to resolve it; to put in place a plan in the knowledge that the complaints policy was due to be updated; with the aim of not excluding safeguarding.
- 7.3. The acting Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school safeguarding policy.

(**Note** – CH left the meeting at 17.45 hours)

8. Matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

- 8.1. The acting Chair drew attention to the current number of vacancies on the board (three co-opted governors and one parent governor); also PS's stated wish to step down as Chair at some stage during the new academic year. The acting Chair stated that he would discuss these issues with KC and PS; and set out an action plan and timeline to address them.

9. Urgent business

- 9.1. KC drew governors' attention to the holding of a school open evening on 13 October and asked for volunteers to attend.
- 9.2. **Note** – text reflecting discussion on this paragraph appears in a confidential annex to these minutes.

10. Headteacher report

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) development

- 10.1. KC drew attention to the expanded capacity of the SLT, where other key roles had been brought in, i.e. the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), Director of Learning and Director of Progress.

GCSE Examination Results 2022

- 10.2. KC highlighted the data information contained in her report, adding that analysis had been done on the subject statistics, taking out non-attending students; and identification of issues to improve. KC acknowledged that the results had been disappointing and recognised the school had to improve; this issue had been discussed fully with staff; particularly taking note of the poor performance with regard to Pupil Premium (PP) students.
- 10.3. KC drew attention to some positive news with regard to the improvement of Progress 8; also predictions had been accurate. Nevertheless, KC highlighted the areas of concern with regard to mathematics and English; also the performance of PP and non-attending students.
- 10.4. Governors asked why there had been a particular issue with mathematics and English. KC stated there was no one factor to explain these specific results; e.g. there had been a move in classes to mixed ability in mathematics – possibly the department had not been ready for this change, so the school

had gone back to top sets. KC mentioned the SLT principles of “trust and verify”; there was need to have more checking of student progress data, also work on quality assurance.

- 10.5. KC noted that other schools in Brighton and Hove had done well in comparative terms; she had spoken to them to identify learning points for Blatchington Mill. KC believed that one reason for this difference was the resources put in by them to extra staffing and support; this pointed to the school doing the same this year for mathematics staff support. KC also pointed to Blatchington Mill not having the same level of alternative provision on site.
- 10.6. BH added that he had had discussions with the heads of mathematics and English; with a view to putting work in place with individual pupils rather than cohorts and bringing in target grades.
- 10.7. Governors drew attention to the school’s results in recent years which had shown an upward trend; also the tracking and progress of educationally disadvantaged pupils. KC stated that the school’s system had been based on assessments rather than prior attainment data; so now it would look at bringing this back in (i.e. attention paid to data) – there was a need to have both trust and accountability.
- 10.8. Governors asked if this represented a change of policy or approach. KC stated that this represented a shift back to the pre-Covid approach and tightening up what should be happening anyway.
- 10.9. Governors asked if this new approach was linked to the cause of the disappointing results. KC acknowledged that this would be more in line with the pre-Covid approach. KC stated that quality assurance was not as tight as it should be; data was now available for Year 10 students – this was not in place before to check and monitor.
- 10.10. Governors asked about comparisons with other schools. KC stated that there were a number of different factors; during the pandemic some had gone back to previous teaching systems more quickly. KC highlighted that Blatchington Mill had a different system in place and had not done ‘live’ teaching in the same way as other schools – which had gone back to an intervention heavy approach. KC stated that the school had relied on a principle of quality of initial teaching. With regard to mathematics, KC believed the school had done the right thing by building up confidence through mixed ability groupings.
- 10.11. The acting Chair noted the school’s acknowledgement that it could not be complacent; but nevertheless this was only one year of results. The acting Chair emphasised that staff should not panic, but instead stick to the strategic plan and its key principles of stability and balance; this would instil confidence in staff in what they were doing. The acting Chair noted that the significant amount of disruption had had an effect; also the bubbles and chromebook lessons approach had not been adopted by other schools and this should be considered a highly relevant variable in this summer’s results.
- 10.12. KC assured governors that the school was now focussing on honing consistency; staff were collaborative and collegiate about the years to come – nevertheless the school had to do better this academic year.

Trans Inclusion

- 10.13. KC commented that the school was dealing with very difficult issues, both on a local and national level; it did not want these to impact negatively on students. KC stated that the school continued to work with individual students and families; and was waiting the Department for Education (DfE) to issue guidance.
- 10.14. The acting Chair asked about the equality impact assessment. KC undertook to bring this to the next meeting of the FBG. RK encouraged all governors to read the Trans inclusion toolkit. KC added the school was looking at how the toolkit could be adopted; either in a wholesale or nuanced way.
- 10.15. The acting Chair commented that it would be good for governors to receive training on the toolkit. RK stated that this provision was best coming from the LA. The acting Chair asked if governors could be guided by the school through the toolkit's headlines and key policy points – KC agreed this could be done.
- 10.16. RK informed governors that the school had issued a live document, to do with the issue of preferred names and pronouns wanted by the child; taking into account contact with families with regard to use of preferred or birth names – this issue was very sensitive.

Student governors update

- 10.17. The acting Chair praised KC for the update provided, with the comprehensive details of actions taken set out and that perhaps the student voice section of the headteacher's report to governors could be the first item in the document, to symbolise 'students first'. KC stated that this had been a positive process; opportunities would be created for the student governors to contribute and for the school to better communicate with them about what had been done on their concerns raised.
- 10.18. Governors recommended that a review of the actions taken be included in this process. KC stated that there would be a meeting with the student governors, to discuss what had been done and how information might be disseminated; then look at the next level of concerns for improvement.

Quality of Education

- 10.19. The acting Chair praised the information presented in the report, particularly the appendices – everything set out was thorough and comprehensive. BH referred to professional development, for staff who led and those needing support; the desire for staff to use evidence to see what was and what was not working; the 'Teacher Walkthru' programme which allowed for evidence that meant adjustment was necessary to address problems that arose
- 10.20. Governors asked about groups working with BH. BH stated that there were four teaching and research coaches, training middle leaders – a model of team coaching would be brought in as well.
- 10.21. The acting Chair asked how the Quality of Education Committee could help and engage with the CPD process. BH stated that it was important to use quantitative data and feedback from stakeholders to hold him to account. The

acting Chair suggested drawing on departmental case study improvement plans for governors to review. KC believed this could be done for English and mathematics.

- 10.22. BH drew attention to the Brighton and Hove Challenge Partnership (led by Varndean school); five members of the SLT had signed up to become national reviewers – for work to be done on quality of assurance subject review, lesson observations and identification of strengths and areas for further development.

Safeguarding

- 10.23. RK confirmed that staff had completed or were in the process of doing so, their safeguarding training. RK highlighted the aspect of a quiz being introduced; staff had asked for more information on how to respond when children wanted to divulge something; also for more training on self-harm and awareness on trauma and anxiety.
- 10.24. RK drew attention to a table of statistics and figures on safeguarding circulated earlier to all governors; the increase in numbers was a concern. The acting Chair commented that this might be to do with there being less of a taboo over disclosure and asked if the school had capacity to deal with this aspect of work.
- 10.25. RK stated the issue was not so much about the hearing of disclosures, but what was done about them. RK added that the level of counselling and support provided depended on the nature of the disclosure in question. RK pointed to the service provided and cases accepted by Front Door; but that of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was a challenge to access; its threshold for referrals was very high.
- 10.26. Governors asked about pastoral care provided by the school; in particular the critical point of contact with respect to the assistant head of year. RK stated that the school was making more use of the form tutor as well as the assistant head in this regard; both of whom had a safeguarding role. RK referred to the triage roles and believed that the school's capacity was adequate. KC added that there would be a need for more central capacity, once the triage process was started and taken forward. RK added that there was a concern about capacity to support students' mental health and a full review of staff; a school model for this role is being completed by the SENCo.
- 10.27. Governors expressed concern that the situation was likely to become worse; relationships established between the child, its parents and the assistant head were crucial. Governors commented about the impact of a central resource on the establishment of individual positive bonds.
- 10.28. The acting Chair noted governors' concerns about the provision of pastoral services; also the paramount nature of safeguarding as an issue for children. RK emphasised the importance of governors undertaking safeguarding training; they could watch online some of these sessions provided to staff and see what was done.
- 10.29. The acting Chair asked what was required of governors. SH stated that one such requirement was to read and be familiar with the school safeguarding policy and the government guidance on Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE), September 2022 update.

Summer school

- 10.30. RK stated that this had gone well and provided attendance figures; this had been high. RK believed that a five day duration worked well and noted that children increased in confidence over this period. RK informed governors that a review had been carried out on 14 September on costs; payment of staff was a significant consideration when planning for next year's event.

Behaviour and attendance

- 10.31. EE drew attention to the work being done on building culture and behaviour routines in classrooms; these needed to be clear and the impact of habits duly identified. EE highlighted the involvement of Brighton & Hove inclusion service; to de-escalate situations of poor behaviour, what to do to help and involve all staff.
- 10.32. EE drew attention the focussed work of the Year teams; the awareness of staff with the pastoral messages; a major push on uniforms (improvements had been seen in this regard); a student led assembly (a focus on black history month).
- 10.33. Governors asked about targets and monitoring of progress. EE stated that the school was now into the third week of term and could already see patterns of punctuality and behaviour; also teachers applying correct procedures. EE added that the school was tracking achievement points as well, keeping parents informed.

Barriers to learning

- 10.34. Governors asked for statistics on the information provided about the impact of PP. KC stated that the school was checking the accuracy of figures for PP in every Year group, which would be tracked throughout the year.
- 10.35. Governors asked about SEND and the large numbers of interventions to be made by teaching assistants (TAs); and the training they would be given. KC stated that it would be D grade TAs doing this work with the support of C grades; and would have potentially the same training needs.
- 10.36. Governors asked about recruitment of TAs. KC acknowledged that this was a challenge. SH added that the school was fully staffed with C and D grade TAs; but was short on B grades. SH was confident that the LA initiative (and planned increase in the next two months) on low pay would go some way to address this issue.

Summer works

- 10.37. The acting Chair praised KC and SH for the clearly visible improvements to the school premises, with regard to the works which had been completed over the summer. KC expressed thanks for this comment and suggested governors write a letter of appreciation to the school facilities team – the acting Chair agreed to undertake this task.

11. Health & Safety checklist

- 11.1. SH noted that this document had been shared earlier with governors; all schools in Brighton and Hove had been required to complete it in the summer term. SH confirmed that all replies in the form had been backed up by

evidence. SH informed governors that the LA had commended the school's good practices.

- 11.2. SH stated that the risk areas were low as identified by the LA's analysis; with the exception of allergies management – this was being addressed by the catering team and herself. SH confirmed that an action plan would be compiled to address the comments in the document – an update would be presented to governors.

12. Drive to Go Paperless

- 12.1. SH undertook to circulate a document, in preparation for governors' discussion of this issue at the next meeting of the FBG.

13. Safeguarding

- 13.1. The acting Chair noted that discussion on this item had been carried out earlier in the meeting; covered under paragraphs 10.23 to 10.29.

14. Committees' membership for 2022-2023 (Finance, Pay & Personnel, Recruitment and Panels).

- 14.1. The acting Chair noted that membership of these Committees would stay the same as last year.
- 14.2. MC informed governors that she currently attended the Partnership meetings on behalf of the Chair and asked for an additional governor to help with this task.
- 14.3. Governors noted that new members were required to participate in the Finance Committee, as some had left during the summer.
- 14.4. The acting Chair undertook to meet with RK on careers; AM with SH on sustainability. AM added that governors were needed to work on and monitor implementation of the Governors' Induction policy.

15. Governors meeting calendar 2022-2023

- 15.1. The acting Chair noted that this document contained details and information about board and committee meeting agenda items and the school policies cycle for the coming academic year. The acting Chair recommended that chairs meet with school leaders to see how to fit items with future agendas; in this regard, he undertook to meet with BH about the Quality of Education Committee.
- 15.2. KC agreed to take forward the checking of the school policies cycle with PS; JMa on the updating of the items for the Finance Committee.

16. School policies

Child protection & safeguarding policy

- 16.1. The acting Chair noted that this had been approved by the FBG earlier in the meeting (covered in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.3).

17. Governor training

- 17.1. AM informed governors that he had attended a National Governance Association (NGA) event on sustainability; JMo on sessions on KCSIE, Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity, Trans toolkit, Fire Safety, Health & Safety and data protection.

18. Any Other Business – None.

Actions

- Governor recruitment and succession planning action and timeline discussion – JMo / KC / PS
- Governors to attend school open evening on 13 October 2022 – all
- Reading of trans inclusion toolkit – all
- Letter of appreciation to the school facilities team about the summer works on the premises – JMo
- Circulation of 'Drive to Go Paperless' document to governors – SH / DH
- Meeting about future items of discussion by the Quality of Education Committee – JMo / BH
- School policies cycle check – KC / PS
- Finance Committee agenda items check - JMa

Next meeting – Thursday 8 December 2022 (Exam data (full picture))

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...