

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 8 December 2022 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Mark Sorrell (MS), Jim Henderson (JH) Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Alex Morrison (AM), Phil Howard (PH) and Mariea Christodoulou (MC).

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

Quorum: 8 out of 10 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. James Moncrieff (JMo) and Vernon Bamforth (VB) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Re-appointment of co-opted governors; election of a co-vice chair

Re-appointment

- 2.1. The Chair informed governors that the terms of office of JMo and MC were due to expire on 12 December; both had, subject to review by the FBG, agreed to be re-appointed for further four year terms of office. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the re-appointments of JMo and MC for four year terms of office, with effect from 13 December 2022.
- 2.2. The Chair informed governors of Gareth Chan's (GC) decision to step down as a governor, on the expiry of his term of office on 24 November 2022; and expressed his thanks to GC on behalf of the FBG for his work and service to the school.

Election

- 2.3. The Chair recalled that, at the meeting of the FBG of 15 September, the election of the second Co-Vice Chair (the first being JMo) had been deferred to the present date. The Chair drew attention to the nomination of JH for this role and noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this appointment.

Vacancies

- 2.4. The Chair drew attention to the five vacancies on the board (1 staff governor, 1 parent governor and three co-opted governors). The Chair informed governors that he, JMa and KC had interviewed three co-opted governor candidates, with one more interview still to take place; and decided on

appointing two – both had confirmed their agreement to accept these roles. The Chair added that the process to advertise and possibly elect a new parent governor would begin in January 2023.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2022 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

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

6. Headteacher report

School Improvement Plan

- 6.1. KC informed governors that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had gone through this latest version of the SIP, which was a work in progress.
- 6.2. Governors asked about completion of the SIP and whether the school was content with progress achieved so far. KC stated that the SIP was a three year plan, issues would be worked on during the course of the present year and the SLT continued to hold strategic meetings. KC added the recently completed Challenge Partners report showed that effective planning was in place.
- 6.3. The Chair asked about the process and recording progress; specifically the due dates entered in the SIP. BH explained that these were entered as defaults and would be adjusted to reflect the current situation. KC added this was part of the detail being worked on at the moment, including success criteria.
- 6.4. The Chair asked when the SIP would be used to log progress. KC confirmed that some would be done in the present year, but this in general was work in progress.

Challenge Partners report

- 6.5. Governors highlighted the paragraph in this report, which suggested the quality of provision and outcomes would be improved by attention to teachers'

feedback, delivery of learning and level of challenge to students – this was key and fundamental. KC stated that the report had been compiled by school leaders and visiting reviewers from outside, to review the functioning of the school; and gave leverage to taking action on where Blatchington Mill should be.

- 6.6. BH highlighted the sections of the report which addressed success criteria and a systematic review of the curriculum; and commented on what was working. BH drew attention to the departmental improvement plans and how teachers were being held to account; also whether there was sufficient challenge in the curriculum. BH confirmed that teachers had bespoke targets, which fed into departmental targets, in turn into school targets.
- 6.7. Governors asked if the report had brought up anything unexpected. KC did not believe this was the case, but stated the school was still verifying various aspects.
- 6.8. Governors asked how often such a review would be carried out. KC stated this would be done on a yearly basis and felt the experience had been of a positive and collaborative process.
- 6.9. The Chair noted the comment in the report suggesting that governors should visit the school more frequently; and recommended the board consider its approach in this regard; specifically re-schedule the Special Educational Needs (SEN) visit which had been planned for the current term.

Local and National Landscape

- 6.10. The Chair noted the information provided about the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) issue; i.e. the impact of the falling secondary roll and the planned headteachers and local authority (LA) summit meeting (at which consultation proposals would be presented). The Chair stated that the summit would take account of the need to reduce PANs across the city, e.g. perhaps by changing the catchment areas.
- 6.11. With regard to Y7 preferences, governors asked about the big swings in the figures for some schools from the previous year. SH stated that this might be as a result of some schools' results dropping significantly in one year. KC added that these schools were now achieving improved results and Blatchington Mill had worked with parents to find out what they wanted to know and had elicited many different views.

Year Group analysis

- 6.12. KC drew attention to this specific table of statistics, noting the greater number of boys to girls in Year 9; also, the number of behaviour issues in this group which were being addressed by mentoring. KC added that the school was looking at the analysis of students moving, e.g. Year 10.
- 6.13. Governors asked about students joining and leaving. KC stated that most Year groups were nearly full; those leaving had done so for a number of reasons, e.g. moving out of area or abroad or to other schools.

Results data

- 6.14. KC stated that this information had been shared with all staff and acknowledged this was not where the school wanted to be. KC commented

that the school's recent results were average, but should be much better. KC stated that this had been a difficult message for staff to hear; nevertheless, procedures had to change for the better.

Quality of Education

- 6.15. BH drew attention to his QoE report which contained an initial analysis of assessments and noted that mock examinations would take place in January 2023. BH highlighted the autumn term predictions, matched against last year's figures. BH stated that there were some changes, but mostly the figures were fairly close. BH acknowledged that there was a discrepancy with English and mathematics.
- 6.16. Governors asked if the figures from the end of last year and the most recent were based on Google Form assessments. BH acknowledged that, for this reason, he was not fully confident about these predictions; as a result he had gone back to teachers to check how they had calculated grades. BH stated however that he had full confidence in the mathematics figures; which showed no progress (or value added, compared to students' starting points). BH acknowledged this was a major concern and was looking at how this shortcoming could be addressed.
- 6.17. The Chair asked about the English department staffing situation. KC acknowledged this was not ideal and provided details of what had happened (including the impact of absences) and measures being taken in mitigation.
- 6.18. The Chair asked why there was a particular issue with mathematics. BH stated that the head of department was reviewing the situation and would be devising a development plan to address it. KC added that there was also an issue of Pupil Premium students underachieving, which individual class leaders were addressing.
- 6.19. The Chair asked that KC let governors know what was being done in this regard. With this in mind, KC invited governors to visit and see how subject leaders were made accountable.
- 6.20. Governors asked whether it was clear to teachers, based on last year's results, what success would look like. BH stated that this type of target did not exist, only target grades; also this year's cohort was much stronger this year than the last.
- 6.21. The Chair noted that the prediction for attainment 8 was 55.12; which compared favourably against the national figure of 50. BH commented that if this prediction was sustained, it would make the school above average.
- 6.22. BH highlighted subject predictions, particularly art and design which looked good, but could be better; in drama the picture was more positive. The Chair asked about the PE predicted progress. BH explained this was based on Key Stage 2 outcomes. With regard to subject specific gap data, BH stated this was being addressed through pastoral work.
- 6.23. Governors asked about gaps between non-SEN and SEN students. BH stated this was a small proportion, but the school wanted these students to achieve the same as their non-SEN counterparts. KC added there was specific support in place on a one to one basis for PP students for English and mathematics

6.24. Governors asked about the school's system for teaching mathematics, noting that the PP gap here was the biggest. BH confirmed that this had changed in the autumn term, to having a top set and mixed ability set system in place.

6.25. The Chair noted that, after the mock examinations took place in January 2023, the next data report would be much more comprehensive.

Student Voice

6.26. KC reported that senior students were doing visible work, making presentations in assemblies; also an update on actions taken following points raised by the student governors.

Staffing

6.27. KC provided details of vacancies, particularly in middle leadership posts and action being taken to address this issue.

Trans Inclusion

6.28. KC drew attention to a document drawn up by the school, setting out a compilation of information on the subject. KC stated that this was an overview, to give a sense of the information available and links to various organisations. KC highlighted in particular unofficial guidance by a group of organisations (including the NAHT) – this appeared to be the direction to be adopted by the Department for Education (DfE).

6.29. KC drew attention to the summary of key recommendations, as well as the Trans inclusion toolkit and the quality impact assessment. KC stated that the school had set out in this document its position, namely that it was an inclusive institution. KC highlighted the difficulties for example when dealing with the issue of changing names and the possible impact of medical treatment; and drew attention to the work being done with Year offices not to make hasty decisions.

6.30. Governors asked how many students had come to the school's attention, in the sense of wanting to re-identify or gender questioning. KC provided an estimated number; and stated that the DfE would be issuing its guidance shortly.

6.31. Governors asked how teachers were being supported on this issue. KC stated that they were being referred to the Year offices; who held records of students' preferred pronouns and name preferences; and maintenance of contact with parents on individuals. KC added there was an additional complication with the issue of examination results; the school had to use legal names in this instance.

6.32. Governors praised KC for the impressive amount of expertise she had built up on this issue.

Teaching and Learning

6.33. BH referred again to his QoEC report, in which the success criteria for a three year period was set out; also expectations for achievements at the end of the present year; and what activity he had been supervising.

- 6.34. The Chair asked about target grades and teachers' response to these being reintroduced. BH stated that teachers were content to have these solid benchmarks in place.
- 6.35. Governors asked about reading criteria tests. BH acknowledged that 21% of Year 7 students were below average and this was the weakest year group in the school. BH stated that the inclusion department had identified the weaker students and doing interventions with them; in addition, the school library were promoting the use of audio books – these opened children up to new vocabulary and grammar structures.
- 6.36. BH then turned to the information provided about department improvement planning, the format had now been finalised. BH stated that, with regard to the curriculum offer, he would be returning with proposals to re-model the structure. BH added that he had liaised with other schools on this task, looking at and exploring different options, flexibilities, SEN pupils' approaches and cultural studies.

Attendance

- 6.37. LE described the school's aim as keeping its record in line with the national average. LE drew attention to the improvement this half term, but acknowledged this could be better. LE stated that letters were being sent out to families, reiterating the school's expectations about students' attendance – parents had reacted positively to this initiative.
- 6.38. LE stated that PP students in particular received targeted mentoring sessions, to talk through the consequences and impact of non-attendance, also behaviour.
- 6.39. The Chair noted that Year 11 boys were a concern in this regard. LE stated that the school was paying special attention to this Year group; absences were largely due to minor illnesses. In these cases, LE stated that the school was emphasising to parents how absences would impact negatively on their children's examinations.
- 6.40. LE highlighted the specific issue of persistent absence, instances of which were higher in Years 10 and 11. LE stated that the school was monitoring individuals in these Year groups; building on fortnightly attendance meetings.
- 6.41. Governors asked about the definition of persistent absence. LE stated that this was for those with attendance less than 90%; and informed governors that the LA were mounting a particular campaign to address students with 50% or less.
- 6.42. Governors noted from LE's presentation that there were no pupils who had not been contacted and no-one missing from the school's monitoring efforts.

Family Partnership meetings

- 6.43. KC stated that these were going well; LE added that by speaking to parents, the school could explain how they could work with Blatchington Mill to drive up attainment. LE stated that parents had valued the chance to meet teachers in person and were very positive about the experience.

Barriers to Learning

- 6.44. The Chair asked about the school's PP approach. KC confirmed that there was a level of attention to PP in everything the school did; it was an important focus. KC recommended governors visit the school to look at the school's work on PP.

7. Budget

- 7.1. SH referred to recent analysis carried out on expected outcomes; the expected surplus had reduced from the budgeted and forecast figure. SH explained that this difference was to do with the impact of the various pay awards; the curriculum budgets were expected to be completely spent as well (including the contingency fund of 10%). SH gave the examples of purchases of new induction cookers and a batch of cameras.
- 7.2. SH reported that progress continued to be made as a result of the recent audit. The Chair welcomed news of the building improvements continuing.
- 7.3. SH informed governors that she was now starting to compile a staffing plan for the next three years and would produce a draft outline for the next FBG to review.

8. Drive to Go Paperless

- 8.1. SH referred to her document on this subject, circulated earlier to governors; highlighting the increased use of chromebooks which had had an impact. SH also drew attention to the creditworthy work done by the school HR team to make all their personnel files electronic; the finance team were starting on this track as well.
- 8.2. Governors asked about students doing work on mathematics using paper. BH confirmed that mathematics was done on paper and not chromebooks. SH added that there would be no compulsion imposed on curriculum areas to go paperless. KC noted that, in any case, examinations would still be done on paper.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. KC informed governors that, with the current illness absence of Ruth King (RK), she had recently taken on the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) role; and was in contact with the LA on this issue. KC added that the school would be doing the child protection audit next term, with LA support.

10. School policies

Leave of absence

- 10.1. SH stated that the draft policy had been circulated to governors earlier, which was based on an LA template. SH added that all the adaptations for the school's own circumstances had been highlighted. SH drew attention to the increased onus on local decisions (i.e. of the school and line manager) and commented the policy was less prescriptive than the previous model.
- 10.2. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school leave of absence policy

Safer recruitment

- 10.3. SH commented that the school had made this policy more stringent. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school safer recruitment policy.

Scheme of Delegation

- 10.4. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school Scheme of Delegation policy.

Complaints

- 10.5. The Chair informed governors that work on this policy was not yet complete. The Chair referred to discussions between the school and the LA about an issue between the dealing with safeguarding matters and complaints. The Chair stated that the LA had now produced a text addressing this point, to show how such a specific complaint would be dealt with.
- 10.6. The Chair stated that the draft would now be finalised, taking into account a number of other suggested amendments; for circulation to all governors. The Chair noted that this policy could in any case be approved by himself and the headteacher.

11. Governors committees membership

- 11.1. The Chair informed governors that this subject would be discussed again in January, when the newly appointed governors would be present. The Chair added that JH would now take on the health and safety link role, in succession to GC. The Chair confirmed that he and MC would take on the safeguarding and child protection link roles, in succession to Claire Harrington (CH). The Chair expressed thanks to PH, for his offer to join the Finance Committee; and asked all governors to think about whether to make any changes to the present arrangements.

12. Governor training

- 12.1. The Chair noted PH's agreement to undertake the LA's governor induction training course.
- 12.2. MC reported that she had attended a recent meeting of the Hove Partnership, at which a detailed presentation on academisation had been given; and agreed to circulate the minutes to governors for information.

13. Actions by the Chair

- 13.1. The Chair informed governors that he had one outstanding co-opted governor candidate interview to carry out. The Chair referred to particular responsibilities and what governors could contribute according to their skill sets, making the most of their time e.g. monitoring visits to the school – the new appointees would have a role in this regard.

14. Any Other Business.

- 14.1. The Chair noted the operation by the school of a food bank facility and asked if governors could contribute in some way. SH stated that this facility was used to make donations to Purple People and Hangleton.

Actions

- Production of three year staffing plan draft outline – SH
- Consideration of changes to committee membership – all
- Circulation of Hove Partnership meeting minutes (academisation presentation) - MC

Next meeting – Thursday 26 January 2023 (Curriculum).

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...