

Minutes (Main Set) of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 4 July 2023 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Jim Henderson (JH) Vernon Bamforth (VB), Phil Howard (PH) and James Tulley (JT).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Lizzie Edmed (LE – deputy headteacher), Brandon Hughes (BH – deputy headteacher) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 6 out of 12 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Were accepted from Mark Sorrell (MS), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), James Moncrieff (JMo), Tim Shutler (TS), Bonnie Brito Costa (BBC) and Mariea Christodoulou (MC).

2. Urgent Business

Permanent exclusion panel

- 2.1. The Chair informed governors of the likelihood of needing to convene a permanent exclusion panel shortly. KC explained that the local authority (LA) was working with the family for an alternative placement for the pupil concerned, but this so far had proved unsuccessful.
- 2.2. The Chair noted the agreement of JT, PH and JH to participate in such a panel on 20 July at 10.00 hours. LE confirmed that she would be compiling the required documentation.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 4 May 2023 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

- Governors participation in KC's suggested schedule of monitoring visits to the school in the new academic year – the Chair noted that planning would be done by BH in September, for visits to take place in October.
- Supply of draft anti-bullying, attendance, equalities and whistleblowing school policies to governors for review – KC confirmed that attendance had been completed and work continued on the other three.
- Provision of materials to governors' 'virtual' panel on fixed term exclusion parent representation – done.

6. Headteacher report

Local landscape

- 6.1. The Chair asked about transfers to King's school. KC stated that some had left Blatchington Mill but others had come in; other movements depended on King's waiting list, there was a pattern of children moving schools in Brighton and Hove.
- 6.2. Governors asked if this was a new development. KC stated that Kings were in a position to offer additional places. LE added that there were a number of schools in Brighton and Hove who had capacity in different Year groups; this meant that parents could move their children more quickly than before.

Working in Partnership

- 6.3. Governors asked about the school working with Challenge Partnership. KC confirmed the school's keenness to be a part of this initiative, but take up of hub membership had been slow. KC added that Year group 'taster day' visits to the universities had been planned, but the universities had found managing the numbers to be a challenge.
- 6.4. Governors asked about actions taken with the Our City Our World sustainability project. KC stated that the school was committed to this project and consideration was being given to where this would be put on the curriculum.

Student development

- 6.5. Governors asked about support for the 'Blatch Experience'. KC acknowledged that, in terms of speakers, there was a need to ensure more diversity on those visiting the school.

Anti-Racist work

- 6.6. Governors asked about feedback and the Building the Anti-Racist Classroom (BARC) meeting. KC confirmed that a response had been sent to the LA who had been content with the school's account; also the clarity of the school's complaints policy. With regard to BARC, KC stated there would be one meeting every half term; more work would be done on moving forward with this initiative.
- 6.7. Governors asked who would take part in BARC meetings. KC stated that this would be a combination of her, LE, other staff and parents / carers.

Communications and Public Relations

- 6.8. Governors asked about filming and inclusion of themselves in some form. KC stated that the school was working on a schedule of filming and was looking at the operational focus.

Staffing

- 6.9. Governors complimented KC on the success of recent recruitment and asked about participation in the new staff induction day. KC confirmed that the school was now fully staffed. BH recommended that governors attend the new staff tea on 7 September, rather than the induction day.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) development

- 6.10. Governors asked about challenge and testing of the SLT culture. KC stated that this was ongoing; the school was looking at the SLT working more collaboratively as a team on a trial basis; to road test key qualities and behaviours.

Moda Living update

- 6.11. Governors asked about section 106 money and possible projects. KC drew attention to canteen covered area, the wild quad and tennis courts refurbishment.

Safeguarding

- 6.12. Governors asked about training for staff. KC confirmed that this was up to date; more would take place in September, with the inclusion of key tips.
- 6.13. Governors asked about sharing information. KC stated that this related to Front Door for Families and the caution applied in this situation.

Quality of Education

- 6.14. BH stated that a lot of progress had been made in the current academic year, good performance in many areas, with plans in place to improve this still further. BH added that the school was hopeful with regard to Year 11 results and drew attention to the work done by the school on improving pupils' confidence.
- 6.15. BH referred to the anticipated governors' visits from October, and also the intention to repeat heads of department presentations as had happened this year. BH drew attention to the professional development programme, which had been conducted very positively over the year; changes planned for the new academic year included have twelve short twilight sessions (instead of the current six arrangement) on a variety of topics.
- 6.16. The Chair highlighted the discussion and review of data at the Quality of Education Committee meeting of 21 June, where various elements of students' performance had been talked through. BH added that, at this meeting, governors had agreed to strip out use of the word 'monitoring' (given its' judgemental connotation) and make the review process more collaborative.

Attendance

- 6.17. Governors asked about the work being done on emotional based school avoidance. LE promised that case studies would be shared (along with the

format and progress made), showing that students had made outstanding progress on their attendance; having been set personal targets. LE added that this was a pilot scheme and consideration would be given on how it would be upscaled.

- 6.18. Governors asked about the issue of fixed penalty notices. LE provided exact figures of the number issued, the majority of which were for unauthorised absences (i.e. children taken on holidays, to benefit from cheaper airfares). LE added that each case was reviewed thoroughly, before a fine was imposed – the revenue from which accrued to the LA.
- 6.19. Governors asked if this problem was becoming worse. LE stated that, in comparison to last year, the number of fines had increased this year. Governors asked the number of days on average that children were taken out of school. LE stated that this ranged from 5 to 10 days.
- 6.20. Governors asked about pupils' response to *positive reinforcement*. LE stated that this had been well received, particularly the aspect involving skipping the lunch queue.
- 6.21. The Chair asked about access to the *onsite alternative provision*. LE stated that the school was in the process of finalising this programme; at present there were 25 to 30 students on the books, but the intention was to keep access small.

Examinations

- 6.22. The Chair praised the school's efforts to encourage students to take their examinations. KC stated that this effort had been carefully tracked, with the school working with students, in order to ensure they took their examinations.

Health and Safety

- 6.23. Governors asked about the existence of asbestos on the premises. SH confirmed that the school maintained a comprehensive asbestos register. SH added that the school met the LA standard on how asbestos was monitored; issues such as signposting exact locations were under consideration.

Facilities

- 6.24. Governors asked about the installation of a covered area near the canteen. SH confirmed that this was a priority project; efforts were in place to secure the visit of an LA surveyor; the work would probably be done next summer.
- 6.25. Governors asked about vaping as an issue for the school. LE stated it was not as major an issue as it was for other schools, because Blatchington Mill operated a zero tolerance policy – pupils were suspended if found with vapes. Governors asked if there was a correlation between vaping and behaviour. LE did not believe this was the case; the school was often surprised at those who were caught with vapes. Governors asked if vaping had replaced smoking tobacco. LE stated that the school had had only one case of having to confiscate cigarettes in two years.
- 6.26. Governors asked about insurance and responsibility for hirers' arrangements. SH stated that the school asked hirers to arrange their own public liability insurance; and offered the school's assistance if required.

7. Budget

- 7.1. SH confirmed that the school had responded to the LA about its' excess surplus carry forward in the budget; provided a detailed breakdown justifying this figure; this issue had been discussed by the Finance Committee at its meeting of 3 July, governors present had commended the school's approach.

8. Annual health & safety report

- 8.1. SH noted that health & safety had been covered in the headteacher report; and recommended that this subject be retained as a standing item for discussion at FBG meetings.

9. To receive an update on the H&SE prosecution of the local authority

- 9.1. **Note** – text reflecting discussion on this agenda item is recorded in a confidential annex to this main set of minutes.

10. Safeguarding

- 10.1. KC reported that no response had yet been received from the LA with regard to the recent safeguarding audit.

11. School policies

Attendance

- 11.1. LE stated that a standard template had been used for this policy to ensure full compliance and was in line with guidance issued last September. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the attendance policy.

Children Previously In Care

- 11.2. KC explained that this draft had been newly updated from the old version as a matter of priority. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the CPiC policy.

12. Governors' Strategy Session

- 12.1. The Chair drew attention to the draft record circulated of this session; a note had been uploaded to Google Drive for governors to add their comments. Governors commented that it would be important to set a date for a review, to check the impact of the session, with a view to assisting the process of holding themselves accountable.
- 12.2. JT undertook to check the draft record with a view to discussing it at the next meeting of the FBG and agree future actions; and set a date for a follow up session in the new academic year.

13. Committees' membership and special responsibilities

- 13.1. The Chair drew attention to a table which would be uploaded into Google Drive and asked that governors sign up to join Committees and take on the special responsibility roles (e.g. safeguarding); in time for discussion and finalising at the FBG meeting in September.

14. Governors' meetings dates list for 2023-2024

- 14.1. KC undertook to check this draft list against the school calendar. SH noted

that, with regard to next year's budget, the sequence of dates would be submission of the draft budget by the end of February 2024, for review by the Finance Committee at its meeting of 22 April; for approval by the FBG at its meeting of 2 May 2024 and a final check by the Finance Committee at its meeting of 13 May 2024 – for submission to the LA by 19 May 2024.

- 14.2. SH noted that the ratification of appraisals pay progression recommendations would be done by the Finance Committee at its meeting of 13 November 2023; for payment to be made to staff at the end of December.

15. Governor training

- 15.1. The Chair noted no update to report.

16. Actions taken by the Chair

- *Permanent exclusion – parent representation*

The Chair reiterated the information discussed in section 2 above (under urgent business) and thanked governors for volunteering to serve on this panel.

- *'The Key' subscription*

The Chair noted that governors at the Finance Committee meeting of 3 July had agreed the school could take out a subscription to the governance section of 'The Key'.

- *Admission Arrangements*

KC drew attention to the document circulated to governors, on behalf of the LA, setting out its proposal in this regard. KC stated that this represented a change in direction for the LA on catchment areas; in that it was suggesting that the more popular schools take more students with an obvious implication for undersubscribed schools; and invited comments as part of a consultation process. KC noted that the deadline had been impossibly short, i.e. 30 June, so this amounted to a testing of the water on this issue.

Actions

- Addition of comments on governors strategy session - all
- Check of governors strategy session draft record and production of next steps proposal – JT
- Joining of Committees and taking on of special responsibility roles - all

Next meeting – 14 September 2023 Exam data (interim picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...