

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 4 December 2014

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Addy Balogun (AB), John Barker (JB), Fiona Bauermeister (FB), Balint Besze (BB), Janet Felkin (JF), Peter Gerry (PG) Richard Goodsell (RG); Sally Hunt (SH) (from item 7), Kay Johnston (KJ), Jenny Rusted (JR); Nikki Slowey (NS)

In attendance: Mark Brunet (clerk), Richard Chamberlain (RC), Ashley Harrold (AH), Ruth King (RK)

Quorum: 7 – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Harry Hall and Gareth Chan had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
- 1.2. Martin Jones is suspended for 6 months from attending meetings.

2. Membership

- 2.1. PS welcomed the new student governor Balint Besze (KS3) and governors introduced themselves.
- 2.2. PS welcomed Richard Goodsell who has now been co-opted. Governors noted that Dr Gareth Chan had also been co-opted but had not been able to re-arrange his shift this evening. Governors noted that the other applicant for a co-opted post had withdrawn and that one further application is to be considered by the recruitment panel once their skills matrix has been received, and noted that the election for the vacant parent governor post is underway.

3. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

4. Declarations of interest

- 4.1. No governor had any pecuniary interest to declare in any item on the agenda.

5. Minutes

- 5.1. The minutes of the meetings held on 18 September, the continuation of that meeting on 10 October and the Away Day on 8 November were agreed as a true record and duly signed.

6. Matter arising

- 6.1. SLT responsibilities – grids showing this are in governors' packs.

7. Linking Governors with SLT roles

- 7.1. JF explained that the current roles of SLT as outlined in the grid would change once the Assistant Head on maternity leave returns (in March).

- 7.2. Governors asked JF about the changes put in place during the maternity leave and noted the areas which are currently being covered, further noting that the areas will not change even if personnel responsible do.
- 7.3. Governors discussed in depth how to make any linkage between governors and SLT as effective as possible, noting particularly the potential value of this in providing both a focus for visits and also to encourage better knowledge of the school.
- 7.4. There was further discussion about clarifying expected outcomes from visits and linkages, the way in which strategic decision making was helped by understanding of the school, the value of planning areas of work in advance, and the best way of matching governors to areas of work.
- 7.5. Governors will send their areas of interest to the Clerk to collate and re-circulate; teaching and learning areas are those which are relevant.

ACTION: ALL TO SEND AREAS OF INTEREST TO THE CLERK BY 15/1/15

8. Head Teacher's report.

- 8.1. JF spoke to the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting, noting that this is arranged to reflect the Ofsted headings and reflects the school self-evaluation. Governors noted that there is a consultation taking place currently about the Ofsted headings, but these are not expected to change significantly. As with any snapshot, events move and the report reflects the situation at the date at which it was written.
- 8.2. Governors noted in particular that assessment of teaching is following the model used by Ofsted during inspection, not providing grades to individual teachers but reporting on trends and issues over time.
- 8.3. Governors discovered the meanings of acronyms: MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) and CIB (Computing, ICT and Business).
- 8.4. Governors explored with the Head the way in which research is embedded in the school improvement process.
- 8.5. Governors asked about the way in which "drop-ins" are organised and noted that these are done by every teaching member of SLT, collated by AH and then discussed at SLT where the findings are triangulated. Governors asked about the duration and frequency of drop-ins, noting that these were less stressful for the teacher than the previous observation regime but had particular value as they were more flexible, being able to explore different aspects of classroom practice.
- 8.6. Governors asked how the drop-in process links to support for those teachers who would benefit from it, and AH explained that the best way of identifying such opportunities was believed to be from progress data and curriculum level knowledge of the teacher, which was information gained over a longer period than just one lesson.
- 8.7. Governors also explored how students' views are included in the school's self-evaluation and noted how this is gained through talking to the students during the drop-in process, as well as through other student voice channels.
- 8.8. KJ reported that, in her experience, the current process was more constructive and less stressful.

- 8.9. Governors thanked JF for the SEF element of her report, which they thought was something to re-visit annually.
- 8.10. Governors asked how the judgement of behaviour as “good” had been arrived at, when the drop-in reports appeared to make several comments about behaviour; RC explained how other data also contributed to this judgement, such as detentions, exclusions, attendance and other sanctions. Governors noted that it would be helpful to include this information in the paragraph on behaviour.
- 8.11. Governors asked for further explanation of the work referred to in the report to improve behaviour, especially poor behaviour towards members of staff; RC explained the way in which the PIER (Pupil Intervention & Engagement Resource), outside specialists and consistent use of sanctions are used.
- 8.12. Governors discussed the trends in achievement, particularly comparisons with national figures and gaps, and noted that Raiseonline is published on 5 December and will be the main topic of the January meeting.
ACTION: CLERK TO CIRCULATE ACCESS LINK TO RAISE TO ALL GOVERNORS.
- 8.13. JF noted that the aim of her report is to help governors to understand the school; governors may consider how they might be able to help Ofsted inspectors during an inspection, and the jargon in the report is therefore to some extent unavoidable.
- 8.14. Governors welcomed the format of the report, and asked that specifically it might include some indication of the school’s view of what was required to improve further.
- 8.15. Governors discussed the ways in which safeguarding issues are covered out of school hours; it was AGREED that governors would all be provided with personalised orange (accompanied) badges.

9. Curriculum focus

- 9.1. RK explained the way in which the curriculum is changing due to national initiatives and reforms, and looked at each Key Stage both in the national context and how this was being reflected in the school.
- 9.2. Key issues include the acceleration of the KS1-3 curriculum, (which implies that Y7 baseline assessment will be important in future); the removal of “National Curriculum Levels” (with the expectation that systems for measuring progress would be more closely linked to the National Curriculum expected outcomes) and other changes in particular curriculum areas.
- 9.3. At this school, these changes pose interesting challenges, particularly around transition between Key Stages. Shorter lessons, as introduced this year, are helpful in this context as research suggests that more frequent lessons are a better way of helping students to learn.
- 9.4. The “maths mastery” programme and new schemes of work are in place to address these issues. Governors asked about the practicalities of this and were pleased to hear that the school has acquired one 3-D printer already and has just received a philanthropic donation to allow the purchase of a second.
- 9.5. Governors noted in particular the changes at KS4, including the move to “Progress 8” (and the loss of 5EM – five good GCSEs including English and maths - as the measure of success; the changes in the exam system including linear exams rather

than modular, the loss of tiered papers in English, the change in grading methods, numbers not letters, with A* becoming grades 8 and 9...)

- 9.6. Governors asked what the influence of any political change might be and RK stated that the feedback from Ofqual was that this system would not significantly changed for the next few years.
- 9.7. Governors noted the changes to the ways in which some qualifications count to success, and some do not; the changes in BTEC's (exams under the auspices of the Business & Technology Education Council), the ways in which the exam grades cross over from the old system to the new between now and 2018.
- 9.8. KS5 is still volatile; there have been five changes to the regulations regarding the KS5 curriculum since 1 December. In particular, some content for the new curriculum specifications have not yet been published – but are to be taught from September 2015. The key point that governors noted was the turbulence at KS5.

CLERK TO CIRCULATE PRESENTATION AND COLLATE QUESTIONS.

10. Finance Committee

- 10.1. RG reported on the meeting of 24 November, which had looked at the financial situation of the school and the current work being done on setting a budget.

11. LA response to letter from PS and JF to Jo Lyons

- 11.1. Governors noted the response from the Local Authority and did indeed agree to differ, as suggested.

12. Policies:

PS confirmed that all had read the policies proposed for approval.

- 12.1. Governors AGREED to adopt the Safeguarding Policy, noting that this is based on the model LA policy; governors asked for a summary into a separate document.
- 12.2. Governors AGREED to adopt the Behaviour Policy, after clarifying the way in which the "Pink Slip" system was integrated into the sanctions ladder.
- 12.3. Governors AGREED to adopt the Attendance & Punctuality Policy
- 12.4. The Child protection Policy is now incorporated in the Safeguarding Policy (see 12.1).
- 12.5. Governors AGREED to adopt the Supporting Students with Special Medical Needs Policy, subject to amendments to remove references to other schools.

13. PAN

- 13.1. PS noted the response which had been received (from JR), thanked her for that, noted also the comments which MJ had submitted, but noted finally that there were still many unknowns about where events might go and decided that the work done had been useful in being able to prepare the ground for events as they developed, but that no further work was required on this at the moment.
- 13.2. Governors agreed, however, that further discussion would be required before any change to the size of the school was agreed.

14. Training

- 14.1. Governors noted the report from PG and his exhortation that they both take advantage of the opportunities on offer and let him know if they do so, also to let him know of any training completed since September. In particular, the Conference in January is very valuable.

15. Skills audit

- 15.1. PG reported that he has passed the administration of the skills audit to the clerk, although he would still be leading on this.

16. Chairs actions

- 16.1. PS reported that he had taken no actions on behalf of the governing body.

17. Confidential items

- 17.1. All those other than appointed governors and the clerk left the room for a confidential item.