

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 3 December 2015

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Addy Balogun (AB), John Barker (JB), Fiona Bauermeister (FB) (from item 7), Gareth Chan (GC) (from item 8), Peter Gerry (PG), Richard Goodsell (RG), Wajiha Fazel (WF), Ashley Harrold (AH), Richard Mills (RM), Jenny Rusted (JR), Soo-Min-Ryu (SR), Oliver Shaw (OS) and Andrew Wallace (AW)

In attendance: Mark Brunet (clerk), Ruth King (RK), Lyndsey Thompson (LT)

Quorum: 7 – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Welcome.

0.1. Governors thanked AH and LT for the CPD session which had preceded the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence.

1.1. Kevin Fry and Sally Hunt had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Membership

2.1. Governors noted the two vacancies for co-opted governors; – the Local Authority is aware and has been asked to consider any suitable applicants coming to their attention via SGOSS.

3. Urgent Business

3.1. PS reported that he had received the resignation of MB as Clerk, to take effect on 31 December. PS has spoken to the LA about the correct procedure for recruitment of a replacement, and governors noted that the aim is to recruit in January.

4. Declaration of interest

4.1. RG noted his interest as included in the register in the tender process for construction of “C South”.

5. Minutes

5.1. The minutes of the meetings of 17 September and 7 November were agreed as a true record and duly signed.

6. Matters Arising

6.1. PS reported that the remit of the post-16 Area Reviews was Sixth Form Colleges only, but now the LA is looking to review Sixth Form provision generally in the city including schools; one meeting has been held so far looking at Terms of Reference for a group to undertake this. The next steps are to look at viability, range and diversity of provision.

6.2. AH noted that these are quick reviews; it is now anticipated that reports will be published in April. There is involvement from both officers and members in the process. ToR for the city review are not clear; but what is clear is that Blatch needs options going forward that involve other providers. The Sixth Form here is vulnerable

because of small size. AH noted that a review of the academic results of our students who have gone to Varndean College and comparison with those who study at Blatch 6 has shown that those who stay get higher average points score – Blatch meets a different need. AH reported also that Hove Park, BACA, PACA & Blatch are working together and looking for a Duke of Edinburgh scheme co-ordinator (a shared TLR for an existing member of staff).

6.3. Governors asked for milestone info on the reviews; AH reported that the review had originally been intended to be complete by February, but now April; LA are aligning their review with the EFA one, but expect their results to inform the EFA.

6.4. PS reported that the next meeting is scheduled for January and he will report back then. PS will circulate documents for LA review and also EFA Sussex Coast review (AH will put them together).

ACTION: AH ASSEMBLE REVIEW PAPERS; PS CIRCULATE

6.5. The clerk noted that e-mail logins for the Local Authority system are in each governors' meeting pack; governors were asked to sign up. Governors discussed briefly how and when to use this system and agreed to consider this in more depth at the next meeting.

EMAIL USAGE TO BE ON NEXT AGENDA.

7. Head's report

7.1. AH spoke to report the circulated earlier.

7.2. Governors noted that there are 3 data points a year now rather than the previous 6; Y11 has just been completed and the results are driving intervention. A new personalised report goes to teachers with a salient overview of their classes in terms of how well they are doing against targets, to help drive intervention at class level.

7.3. RAISE is now out – Clerk to circulate login. The headlines look good.

7.4. The measurement for progress in the report is shown as 1013 but events subsequent to the report have changed that and it is now 1014. 1000 is the national average; governors noted these good results. Governors noted with even more approval that the Value Added for FSM students in the school is better than the average for national non-FSM students.

7.5. AH noted that there are now booths at open evenings for parents to provide feedback on Parent View – this system, recently put in place, has attracted 13 responses so far. The school will do this consistently in future, and is looking to make it even easier for parents to express their views.

7.6. Governors asked about the responses received to the question about how effectively the school deals with bullying, which AH stated reflects the national picture!

7.7. Governors noted the overall positive nature of the responses.

7.8. Governors asked the cost of the "Firefly" learning platform and AH reported that it had been about £8,500 for the basic software, which cost was offset partly against costs not being taken elsewhere as a result of other platforms being replaced by this. The possible suite includes a "parent app" which will allow yet other licenses to go.

7.9. Governors asked for further explanation of the behaviour table and LT explained this – the numbers are the numbers of students in each year in each section – B1 is perfect,

B4 is not. B2 is where a student has had an “R&R” (restorative) session with a teacher. Governors asked about the period that the report covers – AH noted the value of spotting trends. LT reported that no student has had more than 2 interventions. The report covers behaviour for the first half of the autumn term.

- 7.10. PS asked student governors for their views about the system; students expressed positive views.
- 7.11. LT stated that behaviour is most affected by a teacher’s “mental set” – studies have reported a 42% reduction in behaviour issues with a positive “mental set”.
- 7.12. PS asked student governors for their views on Firefly; this was thought to be really good for the Sixth Form – even for students not physically present in school; KS4 found it really useful for all sorts of things that make work easier.
- 7.13. AH stressed that the school was conscious of the potential for there to be issues with access to on-line systems, possibly in particular among disadvantaged students, and reported that the School is building a picture of who is (and is not) using Firefly and looking at how to help those who experience barriers to access.
- 7.14. Governors asked what platforms were compatible and AH reported that the application was cross-platform; it is being used all day with a notable surge from 3pm to 5.30.
- 7.15. Governors asked for further explanation of the reasons behind the maths progress gap. AH stated that the school was not happy at the gap, which is a national issue (although that is not an excuse). Blatch is doing better than the national average, but the gap is indeed an issue; work is being done on improving the outcomes. Maths predictions are more cautious than those from the English department. Tutoring for KS4 PP students is happening; but significant work is also being done at KS3. Governors note that this is not just for students who are predicted C/D borderline, but across the expected grades where progress is below expectations.
- 7.16. Governors, in response to a query, were informed that there had been 70 PP students out of 300 in last year’s Y11 cohort, but this percentage is changing lower down the school – the demographic of the school population is changing.

8. Curriculum

- 8.1. AH – spoke to the report circulated prior to the meeting. The school was, he stated, taking a holistic view of the curriculum, going back to basic principles, to be clear as to what the school is aiming to do for the students. Breadth is important. The school is aiming to redefine the curriculum ethos for each subject area – what does the subject do for each student, why should the school do it? Exam results are a narrow representation of what students have achieved. There is far more; one challenge is how to show that.
- 8.2. AH drew the attention of governors to three changes which the school intended to implement from September 2016. Firstly, triple science would not be an option at KS4, but included in science time on the timetable; science results are not strong, and it is believed that this will help that. Governors noted that there is a new curriculum for science GCSE.
- 8.3. Secondly, IT GCSE will be in an option block next year for KS4; it will therefore have more time than currently, but students will have to choose specifically to take this. Computing used to have entry criteria, but AH stated that there shouldn’t be any bar to

those who want to study computing and criteria are being removed.

- 8.4. Extended day courses, in Performing Arts subjects, have historically been paid for by students' parents. AH expressed particular unhappiness at the idea of students paying for qualifications; it affects the take-up of PA subjects in the options blocks, particularly by higher ability students, which implies smaller class sizes that there would be otherwise. So there will be no GCSE extended day classes, all PA options will be in option blocks.
- 8.5. Governors confirmed that these changes were to be from September 2016. They confirmed that AH was confident that extended day activities can fit into option blocks.
- 8.6. Governors asked why extended day had been put in place originally– governors who had been in post for some time remembered that this was for students who wanted to do more than was possible just from the choices available in option blocks. RK gave the view that universities valued quality and character rather than how many exams a student had passed.
- 8.7. AH stressed that there would still be after school provision, but not leading to GCSE results.
- 8.8. Governors asked about the financial implications of these changes and AH stated that he would report back on that.

AH TO REPORT TO NEXT FGB ON FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CURRICULUM /
EXTENDED DAY CHANGES
- 8.9. Governors – agreed that chasing lots of exams is not the thing to do, and further noted that what had been IT time was being reallocated to English and maths. Governors noted that IT has historically been good for results but expressed the views that English and maths were more important; they noted that primary school maths is now more rigorous, but that rigour has not been experienced by current Y9 for whom the GCSE they will take is, however, more rigorous, hence more time given to maths. Governors noted that English and maths count double in the “Best 8” calculations, so improving these will help school results overall.
- 8.10. Governors asked about Modern Foreign Languages, noting that this appears across option blocks. The government target is that 90% of secondary students should take a language at GCSE; school take-up is currently much lower, so considerable change is needed. Staffing considerations follow from that. AH stated that every other school is doing the same – so there is a scarcity of MFL teachers. Governors noted that Latin is in the options again for next year.
- 8.11. Governors explored issues around science in some depth, considering the contact time in the subject, noting that the curriculum content is changing, but double science content is not yet published. Governors also explored with AH the ways in which students are able to switch streams in science study during KS4 = governors noted the importance of preparing students for KS5 in science.
- 8.12. Governors queried the decisions proposed on making IT optional, noting the relevance of the subject to employment skills. After a rigorous discussion, governors concluded that this is indeed the right decision.
- 8.13. Governors requested that this topic be reviewed at the middle of the academic year.

9. Finance Committee

- 9.1. PG – noted that the minutes of the meeting held in September had been circulated to all; of note, he mentioned the move to a different model of reporting which he stated was easier to understand for those without extensive financial expertise. This is a developing process. Current indications of out-turn are for a £55,000 surplus at the end of the year, but still being followed through.
- 9.2. All-Weather Pitch account is also an issue – the hockey club would like use at a discount, an issue which is still being followed through. The pitches need using more in the summer to make the finances secure.
- 9.3. The committee have been looking to see if some of the reserves in Non-Public Funds can be used to reduce ongoing costs for instance by building a gym (students currently use Corals' facilities which costs money). The committee will continue to investigate possibilities and report back to governors in due course. Governors asked whether any gym would be self funding, and noted that it was likely that neighbours would have a strong view of such a project; PG confirmed that the committee will consider these factors.
- 9.4. The “C south” building project is out to tender with a return date of 18/12. Governors discussed how the project should move forward and, after discussion, AGREED that the Finance committee should be delegated the power to scrutinise tenders and the tender report further AGREED that the committee be authorised to proceed to contract, within the budget for the project. Finance committee will meet on 7/1/16 to that end. AH reported that he has prepared a leaflet for residents, which will be delivered by hand next Thursday.
- 9.5. Governors expressed congratulations to the new Business Manager for her input and progress in the job.

10. Pay & Personnel Committee

- 10.1. AB reported that the committee had met last week, considering the report on staff appraisal; they had scrutinised the process and decision making behind proposals for pay progression and had agreed all the items proposed. They had agreed also to the adoption of the pay policy. AB noted that the meeting had been after the paper deadline for this meeting, but Clerk would circulate the pay policy to FGB.

ACTION: CLERK TO CIRCULATE PAY POLICY
- 10.2. The committee had also discussed issues surrounding TLRs and noted the changes in these reflected in the pay policy, and further noted with approval the minimal number of staff (if any) who will be affected.
- 10.3. Recruitment in some subjects had been difficult, but long-term cover is in place for one particular problem area.
- 10.4. Governors noted from AH's earlier report that the media officer had left; AH reported that an apprentice was being appointed, with a remit to cover PR as well, and social media. Governors discussed the way in which the school has experienced previous success with employing apprentices and noted that the school has done the mentoring required rather than a third party.
- 10.5. Governors explored the remit of the proposed “Director of Global studies” and AH stated that this was geography plus extra – a world view, and the post would also co-

ordinate an enrichment week.

11. Training

- 11.1. PG – noted that RG had attended a lot of training, so has he, and exhorted others to take the opportunities on offer. Course list is available on line, clerk to circulate link. Governors noted that Child Protection and RAISEonline are important topics where training is of particular value. Governors agreed that this topic needs a longer agenda item soon on an FGB agenda.

12. Chair's Actions

- 12.1. PS noted that he had already reported on the meetings of Sixth Form chairs and heads;
- 12.2. There had been meetings on changes in SEN support provision within the LA also; AH and PS are meeting their opposite numbers from Hove Park on Monday.
- 12.3. Noting that this was MB's last meeting of FGB, PS expressed his personal thanks for his service; as a new Chair of Governors MB had been very helpful; he had helped governors through reconstitution; through local difficulties which governors had faced and now supported governors in appointing a new Head. His advice in meetings on proper matters had been valuable. PS expressed the thanks of the governors for MB's expertise and experience.

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...	P. Sowrey
Position ...	Chair of Governors
Date ...	28 January 2016