

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 18 May 2017 at 17.00 hours – MAIN SET

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AH), Andrew Wallace (AW), Fiona Bauermeister (FB), Addy Balogun (AB), Sally Hunt (SHu), Kevin Fry (KF), Lee Redmond (LR) and John Barker (JB).

In attendance: Ruth King (RK – staff), David Harvey (DH – clerk) and Sarah Hextall (SHX – school business manager).

Also present: Jacqui Fawcett (JF – director of performing arts)

Quorum: 9 out of 13 governors present with 2 vacancies – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Welcome.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Gareth Chan (GC), Peter Gerry (PG), Richard Goodsell (RG), Lindsey Thompson (LT – staff), and Richard Mills (RM) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Urgent Business -

The Chair drew governors' attention to a forthcoming *complaint hearing* (scheduled for 14 June) and asked for volunteers to participate in the panel.

KF drew attention to the importance of *health and safety* matters and encouraged the school to take this forward, in terms of governor involvement. SHX confirmed that a school H&S committee was about to start meeting and would supply the FBG with an annual report. The Chair noted that RG and AW had agreed to participate in this process.

3. **Declarations of interest** – KF is the Unison union school and health & safety representative.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The minutes of the meetings of 16 March & 6 April 2017 were agreed by governors as a true record. The Chair stated that he would review those for 16 March, in order to identify text of a confidential nature; and classify those for 6 April as commercially sensitive. Once having completed these two tasks, the Chair would sign both sets of minutes.

5. Matters Arising

- o Consultation with SCs about toilet and canteen facilities – SHX reported that work here was on-going.
- o Scheduling of additional FBG meeting for 6 April – done.

- o Note of appreciation to staff for OfSTED inspection rating achievement – done.
- o Update of Recruitment and Retention Committee activities for next meeting – to be done at the present meeting.

6. Any matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda – None.

7. Headteacher report (including data)

Creativity at Blatchington Mill School

- 7.1. AH introduced the work being taken forward by JF on this aspect of school activity, which would be a focus on student interests.
- 7.2. JF described this project as being part of the 'Our Future City' (OFC) initiative, which was to be a ten year programme for young people at schools, colleges and universities, to develop their creative thinking. JF stated that she had participated in a number of planning meetings and pilot sessions with students this year, to discuss issues such as project management and take forward the idea of a real life plan.
- 7.3. JF pointed to one such idea, that of using Quad 2, which was currently disused. Students from Year 7 would have control of the steering project, involving science, drama and music teachers. As a result of initial meetings, an exciting plan and commission had been devised, which would focus on opening up access to the Quad.
- 7.4. JF stated that the first group would work on a model, similar to activities undertaken in 'enrichment' week. Students, along with form tutors, would be given time off during the timetable to develop the project. This would aim at opening up the Quad and making it useable, then develop wildlife, seating, history and sound boxes. Provision of equipment would be funded by local companies and parental donations.
- 7.5. JF commented that, in the process of working on this project, students would develop skills not possible to pick up in regular classroom teaching lessons. Tutors would see their progress and students would acquire material to put on their CVs – e.g. the help they would be giving to design use of the Quad. JH stated that AH had already come up with a second Key Stage 3 commission idea, to carry this through to Year 10 and look at the issue of homelessness.
- 7.6. Governors asked if this initiative would take the place of creativity week. JF stated that this was under discussion. AH added that activities week had been stopped, after having carried out an evaluation of its impact. Although some of what had been achieved was tangible, activities carried out had been mainly trips. AH emphasised that the first group here was a trial one, to build a model which would involve more people later. JF stated that although the first group consisted of Year 7 students, the idea was to make it bigger, using Continuing Professional Development (CPD) from OFC and going on up to Year 8
- 7.7. Governors asked how membership of the first group had been decided. There was a risk of criticism, from others excluded who wished to take part. AH stated that timetabling was different in Year 7 to other groups in the school, in that students were together much more than elsewhere (70%). As a result, AH commented that it would be easier to bring out students from their tutor groups. JF drew attention to the mixed ability of the students selected; also the desire of not wanting to cause too much disruption.

- 7.8. Governors asked if form tutors would have some of the skills necessary for this initiative, such as project planning and management. JF stated that OFC staff would have these and help tutors in this regard. JF added that the project would start in June, for an update to be given to governors in September; who would be able at this stage see a roll out.

Challenge the Gap

- 7.9. AH informed governors that a programme on this issue had been worked on across the school, with a focus on 15 Pupil Premium (PP) students from Year 7 with mixed ability and background. AH stated that a lot of work had been done in the first stage, which had reflected a real team effort, to establish what support would work best for them. AH stated that the second stage would involve applying lessons learnt to the rest of the school. AH commented that so far the impact on students had been seen to be very positive, in terms of better grades and behaviour. AH added that the School Development Plan (SDP) for the next academic year would take on board a lot of this work.
- 7.10. Governors asked about the two main strategies. AH stated that the first related to the 'Fixed or Growth Mind Set' which went to how students view problems, i.e. whether they gave up immediately when facing a challenge or if they tried to tackle it after first acknowledging their difficulty. AH then discussed the second, i.e. 'Differentiation by Choice'. This went to the presentation of different tasks, with students choosing the degree of difficulty in tasks they completed.

Timing of the School Day

- 7.11. AH reported on the consultation on the proposal to adjust the school day to start and finish an hour later. All groups consulted, i.e. teachers, parents and students (impact on extra-curricular activities), seemed to be split on being in favour of or against the proposal. AH stated that, as a result and on balance, the school would not go forward with the proposal. AH added in passing that, on Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) education, the school planned to do more work on healthy sleeping and would write to parents on the issue.

Holocaust Memorial Exhibition

- 7.12. AH drew attention to the work done by Year 8 in this regard, which had been very well done. The public display of students' work in the theatre exhibition had been positively received.

Attendance

- 7.13. The Chair noted the positive picture of the latest situation, with the improvement achieved by the school of 95.3%, which was above the national average of 95%. Clearly the impacts of the reward system were having a good effect. AH drew attention in particular to the excellent work being done by LT on strategy. Processes were working well, with improvements clearly evident. The Chair endorsed this praise of LT.

Data headlines

- 7.14. The Chair noted that Value Added (VA) had been an issue last year on certain subjects – there had now been a positive development in Year 12. AH stated that, once an issue had been identified, the school was developing a strategy with staff and then following it through – this was having a positive impact. VA, having been rated as below the

floor, was now level.

- 7.15. Governors asked how data was affected by courses that were attended by only a few students. AH acknowledged that performance here could cause a spike; so this meant that in cases like these there was not a big enough sample to categorise the achievement as 'good'.

8. Equalities in School

- 8.1. AH drew governors attention to the work being done in the school over the last five years with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) students, along with the 'Allsorts' group who had visited Blatchington Mill and paid tribute to the positive efforts being undertaken in this regard and their good impact.
- 8.2. AH however pointed to two groups of students who were feeling less confident about their treatment, namely Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) and Jewish. Both groups had reported receiving racist (in Year 8) and anti-Semitic comments respectively recently.
- 8.3. Overall, AH had noted a definite change in attitude towards these two groups and the school was doing work to identify why this was happening. This included development of staff training, to enable a better understanding of the issue; also with the local authority and community leaders; with involvement of families in a continuing dialogue.
- 8.4. AH acknowledged the conclusions drawn from this work were depressing. A lot of the problem was due to easy access students had to the external world through the various forms of electronic media. These sources of online material were influencing students in what they thought and said. AH noted that in particular there were spikes of incidents, drawn from terrorist atrocities and controversial political elections.
- 8.5. AH stated that, as a result, the school had to deal with incidents in a different way, to establish a better routine. AH anticipated further spikes in the future, linked to the forthcoming general election, with possible inflammatory statements being made on immigration. The school's idea was to take ownership of the debate and encourage a civilised understanding of the issues.
- 8.6. Governors asked about parents of the students making these comments and their reactions to these being made. AH stated that discussions had taken place, which had helped to reshape ideas. Some had been challenging, in the sense of concepts expressed on what constituted prejudice. The school had had to explain to families what they had not previously realised was inappropriate language.
- 8.7. Governors asked if students were engaging with the process. AH confirmed that this was the case, particularly in Year 8 (Year 9 seemed to have had the most anti-Semitic comments). AH stated that the school was becoming better in anticipating an issue arising in advance.
- 8.8. Governors commented that far right ideology seemed to be becoming stronger, along with radicalisation. It was good that the school was taking action in this regard. AH added that aspects of the Brexit debate were not helpful and so the school was making a redoubled effort on the promotion of British values. AH asked that governors take on more of a role in shaping the school's equalities policy, to take on students and parents views as well.
- 8.9. Governors commented that there was every likelihood that the next government would bring in a new immigration bill, before the end of the school year. The school should

therefore anticipate another spike of interest, given that it would become a headline throughout the year. AH stated that the issue was all about school culture, where there was a consensus and a set of principles.

- 8.10. The Chair stated that it was very good for the school to take a proactive stance on the issue. The Chair agreed that it was right for governors to become more involved in the work being carried out. Governors commented that their support for the school could be made more public.

9. School Budget Update

- 9.1. SHX highlighted the current 2017/2018 budget, with the bottom line deficit figure of £279K, which had taken account of the £117K carried forward from last year. SHX noted that there had been a few areas underspent, this had been as a result of asking budget holders to defer expenditure. SHX drew attention to the important £397K in-year deficit figure; this would be £324K in 18/19 and £377K in 19/20. SHX stated that the cumulative deficit in 19/20 would reach £981K; predicting that increases in income for 20/21 would be smaller than previous years.
- 9.2. AH highlighted the key issues which affected these deficit figures, namely the *Post 16 provision* (challenging); the *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) profile* (the LA funding allocation issue); and *staffing* (more teachers on the Upper Pay Scale (UPS) and therefore expensive than the national average). On this last point, AH drew attention to the high standards achieved in classrooms as a result of having more experienced teachers on the staff.
- 9.3. SHX drew attention to some specific areas of overspend, namely on agency staff. The school planned a meeting with Hove Park to address this issue. Supply costs were different, in that this applied to teachers being brought in to cover absences as and when needed; and were known to the school.
- 9.4. Governors asked which was the biggest issue. AH pointed to Post 16 and SEND, explaining that there was a tension to resolve in the sense that the school could not afford the surplus in staffing needed. SHX added that the school managed mid to long term absence well.
- 9.5. Governors asked about the legal position over presenting a deficit budget. SHX explained that a deficit of up to £250K could be licensed by the LA. However this was dependent on the LA itself having a sufficiently large enough reserve of funds to manage deficits by schools across the city.
- 9.6. Governors asked what would happen if no solution was found for the problem. AH stated that the LA would have to be consulted, as there was a line between what could be achieved and the authority held by the school to maintain standards. On the SEND issue in particular, the school's difficulty was based on its demographic position, with PP addition higher elsewhere in Brighton.

10. Long Term Financial Strategy

- 10.1. AH set out the key areas for consideration:-
SEND Unit
- 10.2. AH stated that the proposal to set up a SEND unit in the school continued to be investigated (similar to the ones set up in Brighton Aldridge Community Academy

(BACA) and Hove Park); for students to be placed by the LA. However despite having chased up the LA for a response, nothing had been received back yet. AH asked that governors themselves write to the LA to press for a decision. AH stated that, if agreed, opening of such a unit would take place in September 2018, which would reduce the in-year deficit to £200K in five years' time. AH commented that there had to be a better reshaped provision for these students.

SEND leadership restructure

(Note – text recording governors' discussion of this item has been set out in a confidential annex to this main set of minutes)

- 10.3. (Note – at this point (18.30 hours) PS (the Chair) left the meeting. AB took over as acting Chair for the rest of the meeting).

11. Committees update

Recruitment and Retention

AB referred to the Committee's meeting of 9 February which had reviewed the FBG's skill sets. Most were rated at '4' which was good, showing up however gaps in finance and local community links skills.

In addition, the Committee had considered applications from four candidates to fill vacancies on the FBG. Two had been selected, with one accepting the appointment (LR) and the other deciding instead to join a different school. AB noted that there were still two vacancies to fill.

AB reported that the Committee had also looked at the Department for Education (DfE)'s competency framework for governance document.

Pay and Personnel

AB stated that the proceedings of this meeting (6 April) were confidential in nature. It covered two issues, the first being AH acting as mentor to the new Headteacher at Hove Park School; the second relating to a pay award to a staff member.

12. Safeguarding

- 12.1. RK gave an update on safeguarding developments at the school, confirming that training for new staff was being done. RK informed governors that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) no longer existed, with its work now being handled by the Front Door for Families (FDfF). RK confirmed that the referral route would stay the same.
- 12.2. RK stated that she was a member of the local safeguarding children's board (LSCB) and had been to her first meeting. RK reported that there had been a serious case review this week, with another due in late June

13. Governor training

- 13.1. No reports of training were made.

14. Any other business

- 14.1. None.

Actions

- Commencement of H&S school Committee with governor participation – SHX
- Update for FBG in September to see creativity project update – JF
- Consideration of governor involvement in school equalities policy and work - PS
- Letter to LA about long term financial strategy options (SEND, Post 16 and PAN)
- PS

Next meetings – Thursday 13 July at 17.00 hours (Progress and Final Budget)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...