

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 28 March 2019 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH), John Barker (JB), Janet Such (JS), Adam Harvey (AdH), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), James Moncrieff (JMo), Lee Redmond (LR), Judith Mackenzie (JMa) and Addy Balogun (AB).

In attendance: Matilda Barrowman (MBa – student governor), Aya Alaedine (AA – student governor), Esther Barnard (EB – staff), Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Ruth King (RK – staff) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 11 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Student governors' presentation.

- 1.1. The Chair introduced MBa, AA and EB to the FBG, recalling that their attendance at this meeting had been postponed from the session in January; and had been discussed during a governors' visit to the school on 23 January. The Chair stated that these governors (six) had been given a tour accompanied by the student governors and had taken part in a discussion to go over key points presented by them.
- 1.2. EB explained her role in the school, which was to work with pupils, on tasks such as the student voice, senior students and mentoring. EB added that she held meetings with students once a half term with year representatives; minutes were produced and shown to AsH. EB circulated to governors a table of issues prepared by the students and invited MB and AA to present them.
- 1.3. AA highlighted the canteen (e.g. use of plastic, vegetarian and vegan options) – AsH stated that the school was in the process of tendering the catering contract, with the hope of attracting five bids. SH added that the school would continue with the existing provider until December 2019 and the selection process would include student involvement. SH confirmed that the school had specified the importance of recycling and menu variety in this process.
- 1.4. MBa highlighted toilets (e.g. usage during break time, locks). SH stated that the toilets in the PE block had been refurbished last summer; planning of a project to put in new ones was presently with the local authority (LA). MBa asked about the provision for non-gender toilets; SH confirmed that all newly installed toilets would have this requirement in mind. AsH added that capital funding recently made available to schools would be used to provide more facilities for the increased number of students.
- 1.5. AA drew attention to the issue of uniforms (e.g. black trainers, jumpers and ties). EB added that there had been a discussion to introduce a different coloured stripe on ties for each Year group.

MAIN SET OF MINUTES

- 1.6. MBa asked that the enrichment week be reinstated. AsH explained that this activity, involving trips, visits and sports had been greatly appreciated by some students but not so much by others. AsH pointed to the immense amount of work this had meant for staff in organising this week; also costs were an issue. AsH stated that consideration was being given to running it again and would provide a further update in due course.
- 1.7. AA asked about making better use of the Year 11 common room and the year group areas. MBa asked about students' contact with Millie Blatch, the school dog and refillable water bottles.
- 1.8. The Chair praised the presentation of issues made by AA and MBa, in particular the point made about students being able to make the most of their school days. The Chair suggested that the student governors return to the FBG to make another presentation in July.

(Note – AA, MBa and EB left the meeting at 17.45 hours)

2. Apologies for Absence.

Richard Mills (RM), Gareth Chan (GC) and Michael Bedingfield (MBe) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

- 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 31 January and 13 March 2019 were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

- Update on 'educational disadvantage' at the next meeting of the FBG – to be given at the present meeting.
- Start and implementation of the two consultation processes (TLR &SLT) – done.

6. Any matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda

- 6.1. The Chair informed the FBG of Andrew Wallace's (AW) decision not to seek re-election as a parent governor; also of RM's term of office expiring on 31 May 2019. The Chair stated that this meant the school having to run a parent governor election for these two vacancies. AsH added that the school had devised a way of voting electronically, with information on the candidates already sent out to all parents and carers; for their responses to be sorted on the due deadline.

7. School Budget update and long-term financial strategy update

Budget

- 7.1. SH informed the FBG that she had submitted the draft budget to the LA at the beginning of March. SH explained that the budget for 2019/2020 had been

MAIN SET OF MINUTES

balanced (with a surplus of £54K); for 2020/2021 also balanced (with an in year deficit of £50K); but for 2021/2022 more work was needed to ensure a closer balance.

- 7.2. SH drew attention to the school not being in a licensed deficit position in the coming year; also the need to look at capitation budgets and for potential savings for 2021/2022. SH stated that the final budget would be ready by the end of May for the Finance Committee to scrutinise and recommend to the FBG for its formal approval. The Chair noted that this action would be done at the meetings of 23 April and 16 May respectively.
- 7.3. SH highlighted the fact that a deficit of £49K for 2018/2019 had originally been forecast; in fact the year would end with a £5K surplus. SH commented that the whole school deserved credit for this achievement, in being aware of and taking action on making savings wherever possible.
- 7.4. The Chair believed that a tribute to the work done by AsH and SH was also merited; particularly as part of the work on balancing the budget had been done during the inquest week (a highly pressurised time for both).

8. Headteacher report

Restructure consultations - Senior Leadership Team (SLT) - Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR)

- 8.1. (**Note** – text of governors’ discussion on the SLT and TLR consultations appear in a confidential annex to these minutes).

Educational Disadvantage and Pupil Premium (PP) report

- 8.2. AsH invited questions from governors about the school’s PP report for 2019, circulated earlier – in particular the section on ‘educational disadvantage’.
- 8.3. Governors asked why the numbers of Free School Meals (FSMs) children had dropped. AsH explained that this was a reflection of the school’s intake – Blatchington Mill had the least number of disadvantaged children in Brighton & Hove.
- 8.4. The Chair drew attention to the section on educational disadvantage, the measures taken and the impact. AsH stated that measuring impact was very difficult.
- 8.5. Governors considered this report to be thoughtful and set out a good strategy, noting that the gap narrative on progress focussed on the school’s disadvantaged students with national figures. Governors suggested putting something tangible in to show what the school was doing, whilst acknowledging the difficulty of doing this, given the number of variables involved.
- 8.6. Governors asked about PP students. AsH stated that this went to treating them as a separate group and what was being done specifically for them; however the school’s main aim was for all of its students to do well.

MAIN SET OF MINUTES

- 8.7. Governors believed the school approach to be good and asked about the reputational risks and how parents of disadvantaged students might react. AsH stated that there was no obligation for the school to tie in PP to particular students.
- 8.8. Governors asked about research and whether other schools were adopting the same approach. AsH was not aware of any doing exactly the same thing; confirming that school staff regularly carried out visits to other establishments to see how they addressed this issue.
- 8.9. Governors asked about technological difficulties experienced by the economically disadvantaged students; e.g. problems at home with not having the right IT devices and if the school had measures in place to mitigate these issues such as welfare support. AsH confirmed that there was pastoral support in place and software extended classrooms.
- 8.10. The Chair noted that, with regard to attendance, there was a significant gap on persistent absence between PP students (28%) and non PP ones (8%). AsH stated that, with regard to the 140 or so FSM students, about a third were below 90% absence (with some of that number a lot lower). AsH stated that it was hard work for the Year offices to encourage these students to attend school, including putting in place bespoke plans.
- 8.11. The Chair asked about the use of case studies. AsH stated that whilst some approaches worked with some families, there was no easy answer. RK added that the school constantly evaluated those which worked and those that did not; qualitative work was done with families and teachers.
- 8.12. The Chair noted the focus in particular on mathematics and the increase in teaching groups. AsH stated that this was one of the weakest subjects, for which it was difficult to secure teaching staff. The Chair asked if there was a similar focus on other subjects. AsH pointed to English and science in this regard.
- 8.13. Governors asked about the disadvantaged students with high prior attainment. AsH stated that this was not as big an issue as middle or low attaining students.
- 8.14. Governors asked about the use of Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating system on reports, questioning whether it was likely that PP students would have more 'red' on their documents. AsH stated this system was under review.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. RK provided the FBG with updates on staffing changes (the deputy safeguarding lead); training done by assistant year team leaders (including safeguarding adolescence and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/Front Door visits).
- 9.2. RK stated that child protection meetings were held in the school once a half term; also that as a result of a tragic incident at another school, Blatchington Mill was taking a close look at all cases of bullying, including investigations of old

MAIN SET OF MINUTES

reports.

10. Health & Safety

- 10.1. AsH reported that the Coroner had held her court hearing on the tragic fatality last summer; the Chair had been present for the whole week of the proceedings. AsH confirmed that the school had fully co-operated with what turned out to be a very difficult process; the coroner had issued a narrative verdict at the end.
- 10.2. AsH confirmed that the outcomes had been shared with all staff and revisited areas for learning; the school was in the process of formulating its response to the coroner's Section 28 report.
- 10.3. Governors asked about the school's contact with the deceased's family. SH confirmed that she had spoken to his brother just before the inquest. AsH added that he would receive a copy of the school response, when this was produced.
- 10.4. The Chair informed the FBG that he would respond on behalf of the governors; AsH and SH on behalf of the school – these would be coordinated.
- 10.5. SH stated that the Health & Safety Executive (H&SE) investigation continued; it would visit the school and LA at the end of April to review the contraventions and failings identified on the direction of Working At Height – this would be completed in May.
- 10.6. Governors asked if there was a possibility of the school and LA being fined. SH acknowledged that this might happen, with the school being possibly liable to pay around £15K in this regard.
- 10.7. The Chair noted that once the HSE completed its investigation, there was a possibility of prosecution against the school and LA; or no further action being taken. SH confirmed that no individual would be prosecuted.
- 10.8. The Chair reported having attended a Chairs of Secondary Schools last week, with concerns being expressed of being put in a similar situation. The Chair noted that the LA had pointed out to schools the actions it expected them to take (including adoption of its new model H&S policy) by 29 March.
- 10.9. AsH confirmed that, as a result of this accident, the school had already revised its existing H&S policy with the LA's approval. AsH stated that the school would adopt three of the LA's amendments out of its new model template into its policy (staffing structure, H&S lead and headteacher responsibilities). The Chair noted that the school would confirm to the LA that it had adapted its existing policy accordingly.
- 10.10. Governors asked about the possibility of engaging an external H&S audit. AsH agreed to look into arranging such a visit.
- 10.11. The Chair noted the school's intention to make the minor changes necessary to its existing H&S policy, to take account of the LA's advice; also that it would write to the LA confirming that its policy adhered to the same principles – the

MAIN SET OF MINUTES

FBG agreed to this action.

- 10.12. The Chair raised the importance of the Board acquiring H&S training. The Chair noted that, part of the reporting back process, required that the FBG to say that it was being proactive on H&S issues and knew about management and monitoring. The Chair recommended arranging separate H&S training, ahead of the LA's next own session scheduled for 20 June, to take place before the end of May.
- 10.13. With this in mind, the Chair suggested this take place after the next meeting of the FBG on 16 May; to make this session run from 17.00 to 20.00 hours. SH agreed to research which external training provider might supply this session.
- 10.14. The Chair noted that, with the departure of AW and Richard Goodsell (RG), AdH and GC had volunteered to succeed them in these link governor H&S roles. The Chair recommended that both attend the next session of the school H&S committee – SH agreed to reconvene this meeting, to take place before 16 May and notify governors.

11. School policies

- 11.1. The Chair noted that discussion on the H&S policy had taken place under the previous item.

12. Governor training

- 12.1. JMa confirmed that both she and AdH had completed the LA governor induction training; AdH added that he had done the school finance course as well.
- 12.2. AB reported that she would be attending the governance conference on 30 March.
- 12.3. The Chair drew attention to circulation of the LA training programme for 2019/2020 to all.

13. Actions taken by Chair

- 13.1. The Chair informed the FBG that he had just completed a process, involving the suspension of a member of staff, with the school.

Actions

- Arrangement of external audit visit – SH
- Arrangement of external H&S training for governors on 16 May – SH
- Convening of school H&S committee meeting for link governors to attend - SH

Next meeting – 16 May 2019 (Progress and Final Budget)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...