

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 12 July 2018 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AH - headteacher), Richard Goodsell (RG), Claire Harrington (CH), Peter Gerry (PG), Andrew Wallace (AW), Addy Balogun (AB), Lee Redmond (LR), Richard Mills (RM), John Barker (JB), and Michael Bedingfield (MB).

In attendance: Lyndsey Thompson (Staff – LT) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 10 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

0. Welcome.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Ruth King (RK – staff), Sarah Hextall (SHx – school business manager), Janet Such (JS), Gareth Chan (GC) and Fiona Bauermeister (FB) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Urgent business

2.1. None.

3. Declarations of interest – None.

4. Minutes

4.1. The minutes of the meetings of 17 May and 14 June 2018 were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

- Letter of thanks to SHu for her service to the school as co-opted governor – done.
- Contact with local authority to identify co-opted governor candidates for the Board to succeed PG and SHu – to be done.
- Promotion and advertisement of co-opted governor vacancies – done.
- Proposed dates for a governor discussion on the Teaching School Alliance – to be discussed during the current meeting.
- Highlight changes in updated drafts of school policies to previous versions – done.

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

Recruitment of successor co-opted governor candidates

- 6.1. The Chair recalled that there were now two vacancies for co-opted governors to serve on the FBG. The Chair informed the FBG that the school had put out a recruitment advertisement online, with the result of four applicants coming forward to submit application forms, with a further four expressing an interest in applying. The Chair stated that the end of term (24 July) would be set as a deadline for accepting applications.
- 6.2. The Chair notified the FBG that the Governor Recruitment Group (GRG) would therefore be constituted in early September, to consider and approve applications, in time for the first meeting on 20 September. The Chair stated that, in addition to this process, the successful candidates would be invited for an introductory discussion at the school with himself and AH.
- 6.3. The Chair asked for volunteers to serve on the GRG; RG, AW, MB and CH (as well as himself) agreed to undertake this duty. The Chair tasked DH with circulating suggested dates for the GRG to meet in the first week of September; also to contact the local authority (LA) with a view to advertising the vacancies further afield.

7. School Budget update 2017/2018; 2018/2019 and long-term financial strategy update

- 7.1. AH drew attention to the following two proposals circulated to all governors by SHx and asked for FBG agreement on both.

Transfer of funding for specific projects from Non Public Fund (NPF) to Budget Share

- 7.2. AH explained that this was to do with funding for the installation of three automated remotely controlled gates, as a security deterrent. AH stated the issue was whether the school would pay the cost from the main school account (which would not attract a VAT liability) or the NPF. AH drew attention to the research on this question undertaken by SHx, who had found that the transfer could be done (the LA auditor department had stated that such an arrangement was acceptable). AH confirmed that this transfer would result in a saving of £8K.
- 7.3. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this transfer proposal.

School building works

- 7.4. AH explained that the balance of the money would be used on putting in place a project of school building works to be carried out in the summer. AH stated that this would include a programme of refurbishment as well as the creation of a Year 11 common room (involving the use of outside huts and conversion of a computer room to maths classrooms). AH promised that the Finance Committee would be presented in due course with a detailed breakdown of plans and costs.

- 7.5. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this building works proposal.

Capital Funding

- 7.6. The Chair asked AH to give an update on the LA capital funding issue. AH recalled that, since the cancellation of the new secondary school project, the LA had identified £15M for distribution amongst schools in Brighton & Hove; Blatchington Mill had been allocated £500K. AH commented that, after queries being presented to the LA by headteachers about their allocations, a new method of disbursement had been devised.
- 7.7. AH stated that the LA had not yet decided what the pot of money would look like, as part of implementing this new method of allocation; in any case approval of disbursement would be agreed by various Committee stages (including the Children and Young People). AH added that the LA had adjusted the pot to stand now at £16.5M. AH concluded by saying that the LA had been notified of the school's needs, which included toilets refurbishment and canteen improvements.

8. Headteacher report

Progress

- 8.1. AH drew attention to the summer projection for Year 11 progress, noting that it was stronger overall than in 2017. AH stated that these figures compared very favourably to other schools in the city, particularly for disadvantaged students; noting too that this was the first year of moving to new specifications.
- 8.2. AH highlighted the data breakdown in groups, for the whole cohort then e.g. for Pupil Premium (PP) and Special Educational Needs (SEN). AH also drew attention to the Post 16 projection, noting the school maintained responsibility for Year 13 and noted that the value added picture was now more positive.
- 8.3. AH explained that, although there was negative value added for BTech, this had happened because staff were marking students on where they were at – they had not yet finished the work assigned. AH stated that the school would closely monitor this situation.

Attendance

- 8.4. AH noted that it had been a difficult autumn term, particularly for persistent absence; Year 10 stood out in this regard. AH stated that, nevertheless, staff had made a significant effort to improve this record, with the result that the current overall figure stood at 94.95% (the official level was 95%). AH added that Blatchington Mill had the second best record on attendance in Brighton and Hove. AH acknowledged that persistent absenteeism negatively affected the performance of these particular students; although there were considerable complex needs of SEN pupils to manage.

Numbers on Roll

- 8.5. AH drew attention to the difficulties for the school in maintaining the maximum

figure of 300 per year. AH noted that it took four weeks approximately for the LA to place a student at the school from its waiting list, on the occasion of a departure. AH commented however that Year 10 was now full, but it was true that gaps had a major impact on the school budget. Finally, AH highlighted that Year 7 for September was oversubscribed, with 60 on the waiting list.

Transition

- 8.6. LR gave a brief overview of the transition event at the school on 6 July, where 330 children came along to an impressive welcome, including banner displays and music. LR paid tribute to the teaching staff who made a point of greeting those waiting in queues – this treatment compared very favourably to other school in the city. LR noted that there had been a transition day on 9 July for parents, which had also been well organised – groups had been small and therefore able to ask good questions.

Modern Foreign Languages Hub

- 8.7. AH informed governors that the school had applied for a pilot project to create centres of excellence in MFL teaching. AH stated that as a result the school had been successful as one of only 7 schools chosen to lead this work in the UK and would be recognised nationally for excellence in MFL teaching.

Duke of Edinburgh award

- 8.8. AH stated that this was going forward very successfully and had received good feedback.

Staffing

- 8.9. AH explained the school's approach to not replacing staff who had left the school on retirement or resignation. AH stated that the school had anticipated forthcoming retirements and decided not to recruit successors, to manage the reduction in commitment required for the Post 16 provision. AH added that, when the school expanded as a result of the Published Admission Number (PAN) increase, it would recruit as appropriate.
- 8.10. AH highlighted too the recruitment of a new Assistant Head Teacher (AHT) and SENCo.

9. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) restructure

- 9.1. AH confirmed that this had now been completed and all issues arising resolved. AH stated that letters had been issued to the specific staff affected, commenting that if the school received appeals, he would revert to governors to decide on next steps if necessary. AH commented that there was no action required of governors at this moment however.
- 9.2. AH stated that, as a result of this restructure, the fixed term contracts of all the Teaching Assistants (TAs) had been made permanent – with interview for the new positions due to be carried out next week.

- 9.3. The Chair paid tribute to AH, SHx and members of their team for managing this restructure process very well.

School cleaning contract 2018/2019 consultation

- 9.4. AH described the background to this issue as being one of wanting to make changes to how the school was cleaned. AH stated that Union reaction to the school's initial proposal on how to improve the situation had been very strong, with the result that a full consultation would now be carried out in the new academic year.
- 9.5. AH stated that the main change would be to remove the routine payment of overtime, for unsocial hours and Saturday working. AH commented that it was undesirable to have this arrangement in place and did not reflect the right pattern of working for the school. AH stated that the practice of payment for unsocial hours working seemed to be historic in nature; but this was not needed to ensure the school's cleanliness. AH stated that the aim would now be to start a full consultation in September, to be concluded in January 2019.
- 9.6. The Chair commented that the case presented by SHx was clear and set out the existing situation in detail. The Chair added that the summary provided was useful, particularly on the point that there was no instruction on writing covering the provision of payment for unsocial hours working. AH stated that the Union view was this practice was now part of an unwritten contract.
- 9.7. Governors asked if the same personnel would be used or if the school would go to a different company for this service. AH stated that the school wanted to do things differently, as the current standard was not good enough – a view endorsed by two independent audits. AH commented that the cleaning team leader had complained that his operation was understaffed – a view not endorsed by the audits.
- 9.8. AH stated that no decision had been taken on whether to go with an outside supplier, this would not be part of the consultation process. AH noted however that the LA had a preferred supplier who did good work; it was important of course to ensure that any company selected (if this decision was taken) was one that the school wanted to work with.
- 9.9. The Chair noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school going forward with this consultation process.

10. Teaching School Alliance (TSA)

- 10.1. AH stated that Ellen Mulvihill had offered to give a presentation to governors on the TSA, on a date to be decided. AH drew attention to the TSA taking part in an AMEX conference on assessment on 11 July, from which there had been positive feedback. AH drew attention to a number of strands of activity, which were being embedded within the school.

11. Safeguarding

- 11.1. AH provided details of Operation Encompass, a project designed to improve

communication between the police and the school about traumatic incidents affecting students – this would take effect in September.

- 11.2. AH drew attention to the revised government document on Keeping Children Safe In Education; however the LA had not issued a recommended template policy yet. AH stated as soon as this was received, RK would revise the school's own version accordingly.
- 11.3. AH highlighted the hire of two SENCOs (one on Social Emotional Mental Health – SEMH), who would be given the same level of safeguarding training as RK.
- 11.4. AH stated that the safeguarding audit was nearly complete and on track to be finished by the required deadline of 20 July.

12. Governors' school visits

- 12.1. The Chair spoke of the aim for governors to arrange more monitoring visits to the school, which could be linked to specific events. LT suggested governors attending the staff mathematics open day, where they could see teaching being carried out.

13. Link Governor Responsibilities

- 13.1. The Chair spoke of carrying out a review of school policies and found that designated governors were all covered as required.
- 13.2. The Chair asked that the role of Children In Care (CIC) be now taken on by a governor on a more permanent basis, as well as Children Adopted From Care (CAFC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). CH and AB agreed to take on this role on a joint basis.

14. Annual school health & safety report

- 14.1. RG (link governor for H&S) drew attention to the significant amount of work done by SHx on this report, confirming that required processes were now in place. RG added that he and AW had carried out their first H&S walk, which had concentrated on laboratories at the school. The Chair noted that governors had now taken account of their H&S responsibilities.

15. School trips policy

- 15.1. LR confirmed that he reviewed this policy and had recommended updates and clarification of certain aspects – these were now in place. LR stated that RK now planned to meet the parent who had raised concerns with this policy, on 19 July.
- 15.2. The Chair asked that the school produce an updated copy of this policy for the FBG to review at its next meeting. In regard to the request made to attend an FBG meeting, the Chair confirmed the FBG's policy to keep its sessions closed, unless it chose to issue a specific invitation.

16. School policies

- *Health & Safety*

The Chair noted that this policy had been revised; RG confirmed that he had reviewed it and was now content – it would be checked in future on an annual basis.

The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this policy.

- *Data protection*

AH stated that work continued on bringing this policy up to date.

17. Governor training

- 17.1. RG confirmed having attended the H&S training session by the LA on 19 June (for a legislative update as well as refresher purposes).
- 17.2. MB, AB, PS and RG reported having attended the Governance Strategy meeting on 20 June.

18. Governors' Meetings Dates for 2018/2019

- 18.1. AH stated that he and SHx were working on the draft list and would be suggesting some alternative dates, to avoid clashes on the school calendar. AH stated that a new list would be circulated shortly.

Actions

- Contact with local authority to advertise vacancies for co-opted governor candidates for the Board to succeed PG and SHu – DH
- Circulation of NGA skills audit form to governors, for completion by 15 August – DH
- Circulation of revised governors' meetings dates list for 2018/2019 – AH/SHx/DH
- Circulation of suggested dates for meeting of the GRC in September to review co-opted governor applications – DH
- Production of data protection and school trips policies – AH/RK

Next meetings –

- Thursday 20 September 2018 (to be confirmed) - Exam data (interim picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...