

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College held on 31 January 2019 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH), Richard Mills (RM), John Barker (JB), Janet Such (JS), Gareth Chan (GC), Adam Harvey (AdH), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), James Moncrieff (JM), Lee Redmond (LR), Lyndsey Thompson (Staff – LT) and Michael Bedingfield (MB – arrived at 17.45 hours).

In attendance: Alessandro Capozzi (AC - Assistant Headteacher), Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Andrew Wallace (AW), Judith Mackenzie (JM) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 12 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Welcome.

- 1.1. The Chair explained that the planned presentation by the student governors would be postponed to another occasion.
- 1.2. The Chair added that six governors had attended the school on 22 January for an official visit and had been accompanied by the student governors during their tour. The Chair reported that the student governors had given a very good account of themselves, had been excellent ambassadors for the school and thanked AsH for organising the visit.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Addy Balogun (AB) and Ruth King (RK – staff) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

3. Introduction and confirmation of appointment of a new co-opted governor; also notification of additional resignation

- 3.1. The Chair notified the FBG of JM's request to become a new co-opted governor, who had met him and AsH prior to this meeting to discuss her application. The Chair recommended to the FBG that her appointment be formally approved, which was done on a unanimous basis. JM thanked the FBG for this approval and provided brief details of her background (legal, human resources, strategy and transformational change).
- 3.2. The Chair informed the FBG that AW's term as parent governor had come to an end with effect from 22 January 2019; who had decided in any case to step down from this role and not run for re-election. The Chair paid tribute to AW's commitment, dedication and hard work on behalf of the school as a parent governor over the past four years and welcomed him to the meeting in the role of an observer.

- 3.3. The Chair added that RM's tenure as parent governor was due to finish on 31 May 2019 and so the school would be organising an election for these two vacancies shortly. RM confirmed that he would be presenting himself as a candidate for re-election. The Chair explained that, if there more than two people presented themselves as candidates, then the school would run an election for the two vacant positions.

4. Urgent business –

- 4.1. The Chair drew attention to two recent press articles about the school; one concerning an armed threat, the other reporting a fire outbreak in the kitchen. The Chair stated that the school had responded quickly to these issues, sending out emails to parents immediately; whose response to the actions taken were positive. The Chair complimented the school for its handling of this matter and asked for views on whether governors should be included in this communication policy.
- 4.2. AsH commented that the school had to deal with many incidents on a weekly basis and so had to prioritise which to communicate to a wider audience (e.g. parents). AsH undertook to consider doing this for governors on incidents which were likely to appear in press reports.
- 4.3. Governors commented that they were comfortable with the school's decision in these two cases, adding that their role was not to monitor day to day management issues but could be contacted if deemed appropriate to do so.

5. Declarations of interest – None.

6. Minutes

- 6.1. The minutes (main set and confidential annex) of the meeting of 13 December 2018 were agreed by governors as a true record and duly signed by the Chair. The Chair, in addition, asked governors to check the roles and responsibilities table circulated earlier – noting that GC had relinquished his School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) monitoring role.

7. Matters Arising

- 7.1. Presentation by AC – to be done at the present meeting.

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

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

Budget

- 9.1. SH reported that the outturn forecast indicated that the school anticipated the budget balancing at the end of the financial year. SH stated that the Finance Committee had scrutinised this forecast, with a view to approving the budget by 1 March 2019. SH reported that, on preparing the first draft of the next two years' budget, the school was anticipating a deficit of approximately £200K – however work on this estimate was at a very early stage.

- 9.2. The Chair asked what figure the school had anticipated this time last year. SH stated that this was £300K, making the school in a better position now.
- 9.3. AsH believed that the school's long term financial plan was good, taking into account factors such as the Sixth Form closure and the Published Admission Number (PAN) increase.
- 9.4. SH alerted the FBG to the requirement that the SFVS form needed approval by governors by the end of the financial year – this was an assurance needed by the local authority (LA) that the school was meeting a number of financial related standards. SH reported that two governors had visited the school to carry out spot checks as part of the SFVS completion exercise.
- 9.5. JB (Chair of the Finance Committee) confirmed carrying out this visit with LR, informing the FBG that they had carried out checks on the emergency business plan, expenditure against budget and an audit trail for installation of the school's security gates. JB reported that all three items had appeared correctly handled. LR added that this had been a very useful and productive visit, which had highlighted a few additional areas for them to look at. AsH welcomed this scrutiny, which was a good example of governors working with the school.
- 9.6. The Chair confirmed his formal intention to sign off the SFVS form, given JB and LR's endorsement and noted the FBG's approval of this decision.

10. Presentation on Pupil Premium & disadvantaged students; and performance data

- 10.1. AC presented the results for last year, providing information about progress 8 and attainment 8 measures. AC stated that Blatchington Mill's data was typical of most schools, with headline figures showing a slight decline for progress 8 overall and for English but with a slight improvement in mathematics; also the same decline on EBacc for year on year progress. AC pointed to the small improvement on progress with the open bucket of subjects, which is still significantly negative as in 2017.
- 10.2. The Chair asked about the EBacc and open buckets, with regard to pupil progress subjects. AC stated that, for the EBacc subjects, students had done well on science; with the open subjects such as design not so well. AsH added that because there had been an increased take up of EBacc subjects, the situation had become more complex when interpreting data from the results.
- 10.3. AC stated that the average attainment 8 score compared favourably to other schools and the LA figures. AC commented that the strong passes (5+) compared well to similar schools, nationally and the LA. AC considered that comparison to similar schools had more value, rather than the LA which was too varied a picture.
- 10.4. Governors noted that results on languages, while high, were lower than the LA. AsH commented that the overall LA bar was high, reflecting strong results across the board and students of high ability taking the exams.

- 10.5. AC drew attention to the Key Stage 4 performance data, providing some key highlights including the fact that female students outstripped male pupils which matched the national picture; however boys at Blatchington Mill had done better than the national average. AC also highlighted prior and middle attainers; pupil premium (PP) students (progress below expectations from KS2 results); Special Educational Needs (SEN) students (achievement below expectations from KS2); and English as an Additional Language (EAL) students (significantly greater progress than expected and the national figure).
- 10.6. Governors drew attention to the progress 8 scores, specifically the high and middle attainers; also the percentage on languages. The Chair commented that results in individual subjects appeared to have pulled down progress, e.g. IT and business studies. AsH acknowledged that, on the latter subject, students' progress had been poor but the course had been excessively technical and dry.

2018 Notable Actions

- 10.7. AC drew attention to teaching and learning Continuous Professional Development (CPD); review and planning (management structures); annual department reviews; and a focus on Year 11.
- 10.8. AC highlighted *educational disadvantage*, where assessment would be used more fully to target support. AC described the negative effects of labelling – PP – which created an unconscious bias. AC noted that, to classify a student as PP because of his or her family's income was not a useful way of directing educational resources.
- 10.9. AC pointed to the need for understanding students' context (e.g. homelife, accommodation and low income factors) and how this demonstrated attainment was very complex. AC explained that, in deciding what to do about this issue, the school would focus on students who were educationally disadvantaged. AC stated that this would be done by drawing on Fischer Family Trust (FFT) and KS2 baseline data; with students making progress in the lowest 10% receiving additional support as educationally disadvantaged.
- 10.10. AC stated that teachers would be asked to review this process and identify what was causing problems, e.g. poor vocabulary. AC pointed to the 10% figure as one that could be managed by the school, to draw on PP funding and press on with pedagogy.
- 10.11. Governors expressed concern that if the 10% were prioritised in this way, that middle ground children might miss out. AsH stated that this system was all about improving teaching practice across the whole school.
- 10.12. Governors asked whether pupils would be provided with their own individual action plans. AC stated that, rather than producing individual plans of this nature, the school would address students' needs as a whole.
- 10.13. Governors noted that this amounted to a more targeted approach being taken and asked if there would be any obstacles in taking this forward. AsH believed the school was justified in adopting this approach in how to use PP funding

(which was done at its own discretion); the key question was of having high standards for everyone. However, AsH acknowledged that attendance by PP students was still an issue.

- 10.14. Governors were impressed with the detail of the process as explained by AC, which enabled teachers to do things which made a difference. Governors wondered how this was being embedded around the school and how it was fitting into the culture of learning. AsH paid tribute to the middle leaders in the school, who were a highly skilled and fully engaged group; this process also met a number of objectives in reducing workloads.
- 10.15. Governors asked how this fitted with planning for staff training and pedagogical strategies. AsH confirmed that this was being taken forward.
- 10.16. Governors asked about children who did not appear in either the top or bottom 10% and how they would be supported. AsH stated that 90% of money came from the main education fund and the aim was to ensure the whole cohort made good progress.
- 10.17. Governors asked about the impact on teachers' workloads with respect to e.g. data input requirements. AC confirmed that this process was being marketed as amounting to workload reduction, with no additional data input being required - in fact, data drops were being reduced to two a year.
- 10.18. The Chair recommended that this initiative be revisited at the next meeting of the FBG, particularly for governors to see what happened when children moved out of the bottom 10%.

(Note – AC left the meeting at 18.30 hours)

11. Safeguarding

- 11.1. AsH noted that there were no substantive developments to report.

12. Health & Safety

- 12.1. AsH provided an update of the tragic incident which had occurred in the summer, when a staff member had died in a work related accident on the school premises. AsH stated that three sets of investigations had been carried out; the police (concluded); the LA (concluded); the Coroner's inquest (yet to take place and would attract press interest); the Health & Safety Executive (H&SE).
- 12.2. AsH stated that the LA had produced a detailed report of their investigation which he had discussed with the Chair. AsH invited governors to attend the school and read this document if they wished. AsH circulated physical hard copies of the LA's executive summary of conclusions (a report extract); also the school's summary of learnings and actions for governors to read.
- 12.3. Governors complimented the school on its very thorough response, noting that it focussed on the Working At Height (WAH) issue and wondered if other risk areas were being looked at as well. AsH confirmed that, in general, other risks

would be identified ahead of time – giving the example of teachers identifying at an early stage the recent problem of overcrowding in the East Wing corridor.

- 12.4. Governors raised the issue of the Working Time Directive and the possibility of staff working over 56 hours a week. AsH stated that he did not want staff working anywhere near this figure – 37 hours should be the maximum. AsH acknowledged that this meant the school having to monitor overtime very carefully.
- 12.5. Governors asked about staff who had second jobs. SH confirmed that, as part of the conditions set out in the revised code of conduct, staff were obliged to inform the school if they were employed elsewhere.
- 12.6. Governors asked if there was a system of ‘near miss’ reporting. SH stated that this could be done on the school ‘HS2’ forms.
- 12.7. The Chair informed the FBG that he and AsH had met with the LA at an early stage of it producing this report; account had been taken of the school’s comments. As a result, the Chair believed the final report had been adjusted to reflect more of the LA’s own responsibilities. The Chair noted that there was very little in the report commenting on governors’ responsibilities; it was the section about staff performance and appraisal arrangements and action was planned to take account of this recommendation
- 12.8. The Chair stated that next steps would include attendance at the Coroner’s inquest on 25 February 2019, which would be open to the public (all governors were welcome to attend – he would be doing so for the entire length of the proceedings). The Chair confirmed that a solicitor from East Sussex LA would support the school and agreed to circulate more information when this was available to governors.
- 12.9. AsH noted that members of the FBG possessed a variety of different skill sets and welcomed any further comments on the school’s response.
- 12.10. The Chair noted the considerable amount of time taken by the school in dealing with this incident. The Chair believed that, nevertheless, the school was still functioning really well under a very positive atmosphere; which was a tribute to all the senior leaders under the circumstances.

13. School policies

- *Health & Safety*

- 13.1. AsH considered the new revised version to be better than the previous one, which was based on the ‘Key’s website model – which was benchmarked against external guidance and checked legally. AsH was confident that this new version reflected better practice.
- 13.2. Governors asked if staff had read this new policy. AsH confirmed this would be done directly after approval of the policy by the FBG.
- 13.3. Governors asked about security of the school premises site. AsH confirmed that

the school had taken on learning and follow up actions as a result of the incident; stating that since installation of the new gates, security of the site was much better.

- 13.4. Governors noted that individual responsibilities were set out in the new policy, but it was not clear what would be done if anyone contravened instructions, e.g. ignoring the ban on smoking. SH agreed to include a link to the disciplinary process and reference to other relevant policies.
- 13.5. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this revised Health & Safety policy, subject to a number of minor amendments being made.
 - *Behaviour*
- 13.6. AsH confirmed that this would be circulated for the next meeting.

14. Governor training

- 14.1. The Chair noted that the latest LA summary of training courses had been circulated to governors, highlighting the Governance Briefing session at Longhill School on 5 February 2019.

15. Any Other Business

- 15.1. SH reported that members of the Finance Committee had authorised the application for a debit card to be issued against the Non Public Fund account held at Barclays.
- 15.2. SH drew attention to the revised staff code of conduct, circulated earlier to governors.

Actions

Update on 'educational disadvantage' at the next meeting of the FBG - AsH

Next meeting –

- 28 March 2019 Budget

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...