

**Meeting of Full Governing Body
10th May 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
4.15pm for 4.30pm start**

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Mick Baker, Lydia Bower, Lara Coleman, Jane Dickson, Alison Frost, Les Gunbie, Vanessa Hickey, Matt Hillier, Reg Hook, Dick Knight, Millie McDevitt (Chair), Jenny Poore, Rosie Reekie, Bronagh Shevlin, Derek Swindells
Officers:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
In Attendance	Andrea Cumming, Roshan Dias, Loretta Lloyd, Giles Ward , Jo White

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
	Note - agenda item 5 was taken after item 2, the minutes are recorded in original agenda order.	
1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a) Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome.</p> <p>b) Apologies for Absence Haydn Stride was absent from the meeting , later apologies were received.</p> <p>c) Declarations of Interest None in relation to agenda items. The register of interest was included within meeting papers.</p> <p>Note - At this point Rosie Reekie advised that she was stepping down as Governor as she did not have the time to devote to it as she had wished. Governors thanked her for her service and for her contribution to Governance business.</p> <p>4.38pm Rosie Reekie left the meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>Governors were advised of the appointment of a new Headteacher at Varndean School and a wish to build upon the collaboration that had been developed with the outgoing Headteacher.</p>	
3	<p>Last Meetings Dated 8th March 2021</p> <p>a) Approval of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved seven pages of minutes from the meeting held on 8th March 2021.</p> <p>b) Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere on Agenda None</p>	
4	<p>Headteacher Report</p> <p>The Headteacher supported by the senior leadership team presented his report to Governors including updates on four specific issues as requested by Governors.</p> <p>Year 11 Assessments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam boards were still charging the schools full fees for the exams (£100k at Stringer) yet all the marking and administration for the whole cohort was being done by the school team. One student in year 11 representing Great Britain in the European Championships in gymnastics and was currently spending the week in training. On her return she would complete the assessments demonstrating resilience of students. 	

- The robust process meant all papers and assessments had been kept in case of appeals. It would be a clerical check of marks, linked to the baseline grades.
- Three stage process with assessments over 8 weeks during lesson time. No more than two assessments a day lasting 45 minutes. A large number of assessments had to be put in place to not disadvantage students who had a small number of learnt topics.
- A small number of students that had become deschooled during lockdown were coming in after school three times a week to do their assessments with a few not coming in at all.
- On the whole the assessment process was going well, and the school was catching up on all the students that were out of school for various reasons, something that would not have been possible to do with the usual exams.
- Assessment marks moderated centrally with grade boundaries set using historic data. Departments would then be able to argue the case where grades were not typical and to provide evidence before the centre assessed grades were submitted.
- A few parents were not accepting the need for assessments and felt that historic data should be sufficient to base grades on. However, the exam boards would be going back to the school and look at a selection of students within each of the eight subjects specifically looking for evidence for the grades.
- The process was very robust but tight regards the timings and very time consuming for teachers. Appeals could be made to the school but on process only, following which they could appeal to exam boards who would then seek evidence from the school to support the grades. If the board found that grades were over inflated, they could direct a lower grade be applied. This would be made clear to parents.

Questions and comments from Governors

- What were other schools doing for assessments?
- What efforts were being made to ensure that disengaged students had the opportunity to come away with some grades?
- How many students had been accounted for in a possible appeals process, how did it differ from previous years?
- Would those students not attending assessments be marked down considerably or would previous academic progress be considered?
- The additional work expected from teachers was unreasonable, was any protest to the DfE being considered in terms of the additional work and the fees being charged by the exam boards?

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- Some schools had been looking at going down the route of exams, but most had backtracked since and were going down a similar route with the final methods for tweaking grades different. There were some using the mocks as baselines, this was not something that the school wished to do as the grade boundaries for the mocks had been set by the departments not using any proper data analysis. Additionally, students would not have revised for the mocks in the same way.
- The impact would be on the student themselves not the school as the data would not count in performance tables. To support students the after-school session were being held and were working well. These were focussed on the students who did not feel that they could come into school. Separate quiet rooms being used for some students to complete the assessments.
- Appeals usually to exam boards only with an opportunity first to come for an informal discussion first the three days after exam results issued. Apart from pupil premium students there was an expectation that the families would pay for the appeal and if successful the cost was refunded. In the current year there was no charge and no downside to appealing to the school. The expectation was that there would be more appeals.
- None of the non-attending students were covid related and all had not been making good progress in school previously. The issue was that evidence needed be provided to support gradings, the mocks were back in November and any previous assessments would have been returned to students. All had been told that if they did not attend, they would likely get a "U". In practice if the rationale was there on the odd occasion a grade 1 or 2 might be given.

- Unions were putting the pressure on regards the additional work expectations. It was possible that a rebate might be received back from the exam boards as had happened in 2020.

5.38pm - Alison Frost arrived at the meeting.

Governors thanked Andrea Cummings for her contribution in leading data and assessments across the city. Via the co-chairs, Local Authority officers had passed on their appreciation for her work in this area acknowledging her expertise and knowledge.

5.40pm - Andrea Cumming left the meeting.

Poverty Proofing

In March 2021 Children Northeast visited the school meeting with groups of students to discuss poverty proofing. A report had been received following this visit the highlights of which were detailed in the Headteacher's report. Loretta Lloyd talked Governors through the findings.

Governor comments and questions

- How much did the school put on its website about poverty proofing and what had been done?
- Different audiences on the website , would not wish what the school is doing to be unknown and underestimated.

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- There was a dedicated page on the website for pupil premium and free school meals. Rather than list what the school had put in place , signposting to the right person to talk to had been the direction that had been taken.
- The pupil premium report of around 50 pages is published on the website that specifically details what was being done.

5.51pm - Loretta Lloyd left the meeting.

Admissions

- A meeting had been held with the Local Authority to discuss admission numbers.
- The school's admission numbers (PAN) yearly was 330 with a net capacity across the school of 1650. Having 330 in a year group offered the opportunity for a broad and balanced curriculum , something that school leaders would be reluctant to lose. With fewer student numbers there was potential for a narrowing curriculum offer with specialist subjects like Latin and creative subjects being lost.
- Potentially numbers will go down as numbers in primary school reduced , students would still want to go to Dorothy Stringer.
- Students on the outer edges of the city were closer or had better accessibility to schools outside of the city such as Lewes Priory and Ringmer than the Stringer/Varndean catchment area. Governors acknowledged that schools in East Sussex such as Lewes Priory and Ringmer attracted students from our catchment due to family concerns that they would not get a place at Stringer or Varndean. Families in the catchment favoured East Sussex schools over schools further away in the city.
- 330 students were allocated to Dorothy Stringer on admissions day with a drop off to independent schools of 16 students leading to reallocation of further students bringing the school back to PAN for September 2021. The appeals process was now with the Local Authority.
- Balfour Primary School a feeder school on the same site had its PAN reduced by 30 a year from its next reception year.
- Currently Dorothy Stringer had one toilet block and there were queuing issues. Installation of an additional toilet block was being followed up by the school.
- Physically 360 students from September could not be accommodated.
- A statement of case had been prepared for the appeals process, the Headteacher was not expected to attend in person to present the school's case. The appeals were considered by an independent panel the decision of which would be final.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been criticism of spending on the security fence, yet this was an area that had been raised by Ofsted as a safeguarding issue for the school. in more than one report and was a necessity to keep students' safe <p>Restructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure process had come to an end with a meeting scheduled with the panel to ratify the final recommendations. • The new structure would strengthen pastoral support by providing additional capacity. • Creative solutions had been identified to specifically to support environmental education , an area that Governors were keen to have as a priority. <p>In addition to the four reporting areas requested by Governors the Headteacher highlighted a few points from his report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning walks had recommenced with year 8 maths the most affected area by disjointed learning during lockdowns and had higher levels of pupil premium students. Observers would be looking for quality of education and whether the staff and students understood what was being learnt. • Teaching and learning in the school had been self-assessed as a 1- because of the special educational needs and disadvantaged student progress. Along with literacy these formulated the core areas within the school development plan going forward. • Interview underway for design and technology and English and a temporary appointment had been made to science. • The Pavilion and Downs Teaching School was being wound down with the introduction of regional hubs. Connections were being made with GLF for future support. <p><u>Questions and comments from Governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the school going to manage to ensure that SEN students coming into Year 7 do not fall through the gaps? Was there capacity with all the additional work to support them? • Could you reference the wider picture on environmental education? There was a Headteachers' conference, and a Governors session was planned for 24th June. • A zoom call with the local green MP was held recently with a year 7 group. There seemed to be a lot of pressure on students to resolve the green issue which was a lot to expect from young people particularly having gone through the challenges brought about by COVID. A balance between informing students and not overwhelming them required. • To drive a greener ecologically led programme on the site needed to be on the agenda for the team dealing with premises and the PFI partner. <p><u>Responses to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transition process from year 6 had commenced. One aspect of this would be face to face meeting with staff something that had not been possible the previous year. There would be a transition day with the students due to visit on 2nd July. Summer school would be held for two weeks during the summer as an additional transition opportunity. The provision map for those students with plans would be put on the school system with a session held during the first inset to pass on information about the children with SEN. • Rob Sandcock from the school had led a session at the Headteacher's conference. The school is a designated "greener" and eco school, however litter was poor. Conservation of resources was a key area to make a difference at the school. For schools to be carbon neutral a longer-term plan was required with financial support. <p>ACTION - Climate education to be a future discussion topic for Governors.</p> <p>The Chair closed this item with an acknowledgement of the additional work on the school team of various issues together with the pressure from the wider community from issues relating to admissions, much of which was outside the control of the school .</p>	MMc/JD
5	<p>School Development Priorities</p> <p>a) Literacy</p> <p>Jo White the literacy coordinator for the school provided Governors with an update on priorities and developments within literacy during the academic year to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus for year on supporting students with reading fluency 	

- At start of the year the whole staff working with students took part in training on reciprocal reading, a strategy using techniques involved in the reading process making them explicit when coming across a new piece of text. The four key skills taught were predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarising and how to model them in class.

4.44pm - Loretta Lloyd joined the meeting.

- Follow up session with literacy leads from different departments with a follow up session in November and then January inset there was another session open to all members of staff on how to support students reading during lockdown.
- Use of word of the week continued and developed , with teachers using it in their lessons.
- A lot of cross curricular work on literacy across the school.
- Latest research indicates that children benefit from hearing vocabulary spoken in the classroom, this was being worked on for introduction the next year,

The Headteacher added some points for Governors information:

- The school screened for reading at the start of year 7, in current year this was completed online.
- An additional literacy tutor engaged using catch up funding.
- Drop everything and read (DEAR) sessions continuing for years 7 to 10.
- Literacy a high priority area for school development with the strategy continuing into the following year supported by additional resources.

Governor comments and questions

- Can you give an example of the types of additional books that had been made available in the library for students to enjoy reading?
- For boys in particular having access to something that they wanted to read was important and supported.
- Had the school looked at any of the research about reading on screen versus reading on paper and how the brain is used for the different types of reading?
- Some students might struggle with assessment (CAT) tests via screen, including those with undiagnosed SEN. As part of a general offer the school could provide alternatives for those having difficulties.
- What assessments had there been for key stage 3 students in relation to English?
- When students are set in English is that based on teacher knowledge of ability?

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- In the library a lot of texts were quite simple in their approach, not providing challenge whilst being engaging and accessible. Companies like Barrington Stoke were delivering quality young adult fiction directed at students with reading difficulties. This included dyslexia friendly texts that were accessible but still challenging and engaging.
- Looking at establishing a list of 50 books to read before you are 16, with a variety of texts. All reading was good reading, judgements were made on providing a suitable stock.

4.56pm - Vanessa Hickey joined the meeting.

- It was the first time that an assessment had not been completed on paper and the school was not currently at the stage to evaluate online against paper-based assessments. Most of the time students were reading physical text enabling them to highlight parts which they could not do online in the same way.

4.57pm - Andrea Cumming arrived at the meeting.

5pm - Dick Knight arrived at the meeting

- SEND along with disadvantaged students was a key priority for the school, comments about assessment methods were useful.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stage three students were assessed for reading skills on entry in year 7 and then those identified as having issues would be retested later on. There was no further monitoring throughout the school currently of reading skills, this could be done but would require investment in an appropriate programme. • Students are not set in key stage 3 for English. In year 7 students are taught in mixed ability classes, there nurture classes for less able and then in key stage 4 stretch classes for more abled. • A pilot had been started for each subject area to provide a list of assessments that provided breadth and enabled each student to be given a percentile that would be used to assess progress and identify underperforming students against starting point. This was put on hold due to covid but would be reintroduced once a full set of data was available. <p>5.15pm - Jo White left the meeting.</p>	
	<p>BREAK at 6.25pm to 6.30pm</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Business Manager and Business Group Report The Business group provided an update on business conducted at its meeting of 29th April.</p> <p>a) Financial Outturn End of year surplus figure of £539k including around £100k of committed expenditure. Detail of variations against budget were detailed to Governors noting that biggest in year fluctuation was from successful application for covid grants. Governors were further advised that the expenditure against the governors' line budget related to NGA member ship and training subscription. Governors were encouraged to take advantage of the resources available.</p> <p>b) Capital Expenditure Priorities Governors were advised that capital expenditure included a new phone system. A rolling programme of £30k investment in updating IT equipment had been set up to keep equipment up to date and useable.</p> <p>c) Budget - for approval Since the business group meeting there had been some further adjustments to proposed budget for 2021/22 which the Business Manager talked governors through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitulations for curriculum moved back to 100% for all departments with any surplus positions from the previous year added. £15k set aside separately for departments to bid on for additional funding in year. • Funding for covid 19 testing grant included for summer term as the school were on a scheme of funding at £1k a week during summer term. • Summer school income had been included; this did not impact on overall budget as it would be netted off against expenditure. • Let's Dance and Stringer Dance income and expenditure had been factored in as it was now expected that those events would take place in March 2022. • School games income and expenditure also included since being confirmed as continuing until October. • The surplus on the revised budget had been changed to £124k. <p>Governors were next taken through the budget with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staffing changes incorporated within the budget including those arising from the consultation. • Full staffing in terms of exam invigilators, swimming and lettings staff included. • Supply and agency costs in line with two years previous expenditure. The impact of home learning during teacher absence in an ongoing situation post covid was uncertain. • Contract cleaning increased for the coming year to take into account covid preventative measures. • No significant covid 19 expenditure included as good stock of PPE held in school. • Utility forecasting should be more near normal levels. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering was a difficult area to predict, £148k income did not cover the expected expenditure. The direct staffing costs related to the canteen were covered under salaries. Social distancing was happening in the canteen , the full menu was not available and there was limited capacity to serve students leading to less time for selection. Creative ways of using technology to improve efficiency in the canteen were being considered. School meal prices had been held at 2018 prices at £2.30, lower than some other city schools. A price increase was considered by Governors. <p>6.52pm - Giles ward arrived at the meeting.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed an increase in the meal deal to £2.40 from September 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lettings income was based on actual lettings projected for the rest of the year. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved a budget for 2021/22 with expenditure of £9,867,035 against an available budget including carried forward of £10,009,507. The in-year position was one of deficit at £469,568 with a surplus carried forward to 2022/23 of £142,471.</p> <p>7pm - Roshan Dias left the meeting.</p>	
7	<p>Other Reports and Updates</p> <p>a) Safeguarding Update</p> <p>The safeguarding lead governor introduced this item advising that she had met with the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) , had completed the updated safeguarding training noting that best practice was to have two governors leading on safeguarding, something that was in process. She further advised that the single central register and child protection monitoring software (CPOMS) had been reviewed as part of the visit. A further recommendation was that safeguarding was an item on every Governing Body agenda hence the inclusion of the item at the meeting. The DSL presented an update on four safeguarding initiatives at the school.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff have to read the keeping children safe in education document at the start of each school year. Key messaging that safeguarding was everyone's responsibility and that any concerns needed to be raised for recording on CPOMS. Prevention was through educating young people on making best decisions about risk taking behaviour. The school's safeguarding policy was updated annually and ratified by Governors. Safeguarding audit completed by schools in the Local Authority annually, within this was a section on governance. Level of staff training proportionate to the individual's role, at least annual training for all with the most recent a few weeks ago. Safer school app launched at the school to staff with parental rollout and parents to follow. This app provided an up to date and reliable source of safeguarding advice and support accessible at any time to support good sessions. End of term safeguarding sessions to cover any new staff arrivals. Supply teachers do training through their agencies and are provided with an update of safeguarding at Dorothy Stringer document. <p><u>Peer on peer abuse</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safer schools survey outcomes had been shared with governors previously , these demonstrated that students generally felt very safe at school. Termly data for bullying incidents showed a slight increase. In response all heads of year had received training on CPOMS to help them identify patterns and trends within the year group so that they could respond and put in appropriate intervention. 	

- The PSHE department had put on extra lessons about peer-to-peer abuse , what it is , why it is unacceptable and how students could report it.
- Equalities group looking at how the school responds to racist incidents.

Sarah Everard Response

- Initial response to the death of Sarah Everard was to pause PHSCE curriculum and replace with lessons around the sexual violence and harassment against women.
- Permanent changes to be made to the curriculum to focus on harmful sexual behaviours and how to challenge them.
- Network meeting for all schools to be attended by DSLs to share ideas on how to respond to concerns around sexual violence and harassment.
- Female staff member added to the child protection team.
- Areas for development around student voice and development of ways that students could report concerns.

Mental health concerns

- Increasing number of reports received about student mental health escalating towards the upper years. The most common concern raised was emotional health by a teacher , then self-harm, suicidal thought and eating disorders.
- Level of risk in each case assessed with individual support plan developed for the individual.
- Students most of concern monitored through the high-risk student register.
- PHSE had delivered lessons around mental health including calming techniques.
- Slight increase in mental health concerns after the most recent lockdown.

Governor comments and questions

- Were the incidents of students raising concerns about their own mental health higher than two years ago?
- How would the new pastoral structure provide extra capacity?
- Was there any correlation between attendance and those students where there were concerns?
- What has feedback been from the boys regards the school's response to Sarah Everard ?

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- CPOMS was not available two years ago, most schools had a concern around mental health. The concerns were more complicated currently. Time out cards use had increased indicating that they might be struggling more in class.
- The pastoral managers would have time to be on call and react quickly, the current pastoral managers had settled in well and made an impact on supporting all students.
- Attendance was an area for focus subject to close monitoring to identify why students were not attending school. Anxiety would be a reason for some of the absences.
- Boys had not been adverse to the schools response and the challenge to sexual behaviour towards women. There had been a small increase in concerns raised mainly regards sexualised language. Contact made with parents about any incidents that had been raised, generally they had been very supportive in response.

ACTION - Safeguarding to be a regular agenda item for Full Governing Body.

7.31pm - Giles Ward left the meeting

b) Any training/ courses/ meetings that governors have attended

- SEN link governor had attended the governors forum on SEN
- New governor had attended induction.

**GW/JD/
MMc**

8

Policies and Other Documents

a) Single Central Register

Governors received confirmation that the single central register had been checked.

9	<p>Governance</p> <p>a) Planning & Review meeting - update The planning review meeting had been scheduled for 14th June straight after the Full Governing Body meeting with an external facilitator to support Governors with future planning.</p> <p>7.47pm - Lara Colman left the meeting.</p> <p>b) Strategy & Vision - update The Headteacher provided an update on the work underway in developing the school key values . Three areas had been identified for inclusion within values which were resilience, creativity, and respect. Student engagement planned for later in the week on develop the values with direct quotes from them.</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Equalities Group meeting on equalities held with governor contribution. Update from equalities lead at future meeting.</p> <p>b) Website Governors appreciated the inclusion on the school website of an acknowledgement following the death of a former teacher at the age of 104.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 7.47pm Date of next meeting - 14th June 2021</p>	