

**Meeting of Full Governing Board  
27<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
4.15pm for 4.30pm start Via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

<b>Governors Present:</b>	Mick Baker, Lydia Bower, Jane Dickson (Chair), Alison Frost, Les Gunbie, Matt Hillier, Reg Hook, Dick Knight, Bronagh Shevlin, Haydn Stride, Derek Swindells
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Andrea Cumming, Loretta Lloyd

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>a) Welcome</b> The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome.</p> <p><b>b) Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies for absence received from Lara Coleman, Vanessa Hickey and Millie McDevitt.</p> <p><b>c) Declarations of Interest</b> Governors were reminded to complete their annual disclosure form. There were no declarations relating to items on the agenda.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Chair's Update</b> The Chair provided an update on matters arising and business conducted on behalf of the governing body since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vice Chair – Millie McDevitt had stepped down as Vice Chair of Governors. Election for replacement completed under agenda item 7.</li> <li>Planning meeting – thank you to all the for the useful contributions. The sense from the meeting was that it was the not the right time to move to a committee structure as proposed and instead to keep link responsibilities with a renewed focus on school development strategies alongside governors' statutory obligations.</li> </ul>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Last Meeting Dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021</b></p> <p><b>a) Approval of Minutes</b> The Full Governing Board reviewed and approved nine pages of minutes from the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021.</p> <p><b>b) Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere on Agenda</b> None</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Headteacher's Report/Update</b> The Headteacher introduced this item advising that his report to Governors was split into two parts being the exam results and an overview of the year to date.</p> <p><b>a) Exam Results</b> Andrea Cumming presented Governors with a PowerPoint on the 2021 year 11 exam results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student exam outcomes for 2021 had come from a teacher assessment process as in 2020. The results would not be used in ranking tables or looked at by Ofsted during any inspection.</li> </ul>	

Signature.....Date.....

- Progress 8 score of +0.26 had been calculated using national data from 2019 being the latest set of results available. The measure had very little value except when it came to comparison of groups with schools.
- A robust process was adopted which the teaching team had a high level of confidence in regards outcomes. The set of results was in line with expectations for that cohort should they have gone through formal exams.
- There had been very little challenge from exam boards to schools where results might have been out of line with expectations, or they seemed particularly high. A moderation process was therefore absent making comparison of schools very unreliable.
- There were examples of individual students making more than three grades progress than expected from their starting points.
- There had been 29 stage one centre appeals,(8 from one student). The scope of those appeals were to check addition of marks, the grade generated from the marks and check that correct review process completed. Each department had produced their own quality assessment plan detailing exactly what data was to be used with a separate review and independent setting of grade boundaries.
- Following the internal appeal process there was one grade change from a borderline case and 5 stage 2 appeals (3 from one student).To date 2 appeals had been rejected.
- There had additionally been some informal requests to review the grades at a similar level to the formal appeals submitted. The same review process was used.
- The whole process had put great responsibility on the teachers , it was hoped that normal exams would return in 2022.
- The school still had a gap in progress between those students in the disadvantaged group and their peers. Those students had been supported as best as the school was able to do during lockdowns with the issue of things like laptops to enable them to keep up with their learning online.
- The gender gap had widened with boys not making as good progress as girls, potentially due to the different styles of learning over the course of the year. Progress of boys was a high priority item on the school’s development plan.

4.52pm – Derek Swindells arrived at the meeting.

- It was known that some syllabuses would be modified in the current year and that more choice in exam questions might be provided in some subjects.
- The school were going to introduce two sets of mock exams during the year to provide more evidence keep students on a preparation path.

4.54pm – Loretta Lloyd arrived at the meeting.

- Students being prepared for the fact that every piece of work they did was important and might count towards their final outcome in year 11.
- To close the gender and disadvantaged groups it had been recognised that underachievement needed to be tackled earlier with does starting to coast from year 7 picked up early in the process. A trial had been started two years previously looking at relative percentiles based on positioning of students in a year group in every subject from a baseline starting point. This would identify those in the bottom 10% - 15% regards progress.

Comments and questions from Governors

- Did the family that appealed 8 gradings genuinely believe that the gradings were too low?
- There was a suggestion of unfairness on how school’s had applied grades, this would indicate that some students had been disadvantaged by the rigour put in or the different approach that schools had taken.
- Morally the school had to set its own standards and follow them through.
- Would the school consider changing the boundaries for next year?

- The teachers at Dorothy Stringer had done an amazing job, it was a huge effort to move from an exam process and to create their own assessments.
- How did the students experience compare with what they should have gone through in terms of wellbeing and stress levels?
- Where students were not happy with grades was there a need for public relations to confirm confidence in outcomes. Governors would not want the situation where students were leaving school with some discontent over the process.

Response to Governor comments and questions

- There had been an interpretation that a student could not get a grading less than their mocks which was not correct.
- 4matrix the assessment system used by the school has a facility of sharing and comparing data with the schools that use the same system. It was possible to see from the available data from over 300 schools nationally that Dorothy Stringer's results were in line with historic results. There had been a lack of challenge from exam boards that might have led to some disadvantage nationally.
- The exam boards picked two subjects at each school and requested the papers for six students, a very small percentage of the overall papers.
- It was hoped that the standard exams would return, if not there might be a slight rebalance of the grade boundaries alongside a rigorous and fair process.
- For the majority of students, it was easier and much less stressful. They did not have to learn all the subject matter and had more knowledge of what was coming up on the papers. The maximum time that they had on assessment was 2 x 40 minutes and there was flexibility to catch up with missed papers. For teachers the process was much harder.
- The school was past the situation where they needed to reassure families of the accuracy of the process. Students had the opportunity to sit exams in November and only three were taking this up, though some may be sitting them at sixth form college. Most students were delighted with their results, they had been prepared and knew what to expect. There were a few disappointments in line with numbers seen in any year. Families received frequent bulletins during the exam period to keep them informed of process and kept in the loop.

**b) School Overview**

- The main summer building works had not taken place. The toilets could not be started until September which would have caused significant disruption.
- Safeguarding logging process established for concerns to be reported anonymously through the stringer learning gateway, this would cover any bullying or harassment issues.
- Five pastoral managers now in place significantly impacting on the availability of a contact for students throughout the day.
- Workshops being organised on sexual harassment and consent to be delivered by WISE charity as part of the PHSCE curriculum.
- The impact of Covid at the start of the year had been less than at other local schools currently at around 30 including two members of staff. Mass lateral flow testing completed prior to return to school followed up by regular messaging for students to remember to retest weekly. Dedicated slots for each year group at lunchtime retained along with one way systems around the school. Any larger scale staff meetings, assemblies and parent meetings were continuing to be held virtually. Face coverings not mandated and those wishing to continue to wear them allowed to do so.
- The open evening would be held in person with booked appointment slots to control the numbers in school at any one time. A remote part available for those not comfortable with visiting in person.
- Vaccinations to commence on school site commencing 15<sup>th</sup> October operated by the NHS vaccination team.
- Student numbers had fluctuated with a dip below the 330 in year 7 during the summer holidays. Reallocations completed to bring back up to pupil admission numbers. In the next year there were still more students than places in the catchment area, so

	<p>oversubscription was likely. Indication of application numbers would be available in November following closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> October.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four children had arrived at the school from Afghanistan , despite not speaking English the children had settled in well with the support from other students and EMAS the English language service.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments and questions from Governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were other schools taking Afghan refugees on their roll?</li> <li>• What strategy did the school have on ventilation of the school the use of equipment to change the air and covering of additional costs?</li> </ul> <p><u>Responses to Governor comment and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The placement of Afghan refugees was unknown though it could be assumed that through the fair access scheme that all the city schools would be taking refugees on roll.</li> <li>• The school would continue to ventilate the building in the colder months and would take a decision on children wearing coats in class if needed. There were some rooms without sources of natural ventilation which were being monitored. There was no additional budget available.</li> </ul>	
5	<p><b>School Development Plan (SDP)</b></p> <p>The Headteacher presented the final school development plan for 2021-22 noting the key priorities that link governors could be attached to for monitoring purposes. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress of children with special educational needs.</li> <li>• Literacy with an adaptation of the whole school reading sessions.</li> <li>• Curriculum learning walks by department.</li> <li>• Key stage 3 percentiles used to measure progress.</li> <li>• Development of CPD culture of research linked to performance management system.</li> <li>• Boys progress and reduction of the gender gap.</li> <li>• Disadvantaged student progress and reduction of gap.</li> <li>• Student attendance and punctuality to lessons.</li> <li>• Wellbeing and mental health service to support students.</li> <li>• Staff wellbeing.</li> <li>• Progress and feedback.</li> <li>• Supporting the school to become carbon neutral.</li> <li>• Embedding school values.</li> </ul> <p>5.30pm – Alison Frost left the meeting.</p> <p><u>Comment and questions from Governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What activities could Governors take in relation to monitoring the SDP without increasing the workload of staff members? Would it be an evaluation of the school’s own internal evaluation process?</li> <li>• It was hoped that the 10_point school climate action plan from the Headteacher’s conference was still on the table</li> </ul> <p><u>Response to Governor comment and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining a curriculum learning walk would enable Governors to have a look at what staff had put in place for their part of the curriculum and would provide an opportunity to hear from students about their learning. The next department scheduled for a learning walk was modern foreign languages. Governors were welcomed to join the programme.</li> <li>• A meeting was set up to look at a number of areas regarding the climate at which the ten point plan would be a discussion point.</li> </ul> <p><b>AGREEMENT – The Governing Board approved the key priorities for school development</b></p>	

<b>6</b>	<p><b>Policies and Other Documents for Approval</b></p> <p><b>a) School Uniform Policy</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced this item explaining that uniform despite being an operational matter in terms of day to day implementation it had become an area of interest for Governors in relation to the strategic implications , particularly around cultural values. There had been communication from a number of parents and carers to the Headteacher and to the Board directly expressing concerns about school uniform in the past few weeks. There had been guidance on uniform on the website and other documents such as the school prospectus. These had been incorporated into an overall uniform policy for governors’ consideration.</p> <p>The Headteacher advised that the school had chosen to have a uniform, that there were some compulsory items of clothing though adaptations would be considered for individual children , i.e., religious reasons or special educational needs. There were no plans to change the uniform items that children were expected to wear. Operational information for staff had been removed from a first draft of the policy.</p> <p>There had been a meeting with the supplier to discuss the new legislation and the potential impact on cost if the school moved from a single supplier arrangement to an additional supplier. There had also been a discussion about the adjustable waist and the suppliers showed they did have this in the school skirts.</p> <p>An informal discussion had taken place between Governor representatives and the Headteacher following the governors planning meeting. A paper had been put together for that meeting by three governors that appeared to reflect the whole board for which there was an apology.</p> <p><u>Governor comment and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft policy was a good step forward but did not address all the areas that had been raised as issues.</li> <li>• There was a broader debate to be had about the societal issue of how girls experienced being at school. Putting that aside and just looking at uniform requirements, there was still a way to go to reach a consensus on what the requirements would be, how they were expressed in policy and how the adherence to policy would be monitored. That consensus was unlikely to be reached in the time available at board level. A working party might be a better way of coming up with a policy that satisfies concerns expressed.</li> <li>• There was a further point relating to the anticipatory duty under the equalities act and the skirt only being available in one length that could not be altered.</li> <li>• A letter had been circulated from an individual governor on legal aspects of uniform policy including the anticipatory duty, equalities, and exceptions from SEND. One of the issues noted was the assumption that those who had altered their skirts in current Y8 were being disadvantaged, causing undue hardship to those on low incomes. Another point was around including clarity on types of adjustments for a student’s SEN needs.</li> <li>• More explicit coverage of adjustments for individual needs and communication to families was recommended.</li> <li>• It was not any of the Governors’ intentions to undermine anybody at school in fulfilling their duties and monitoring school uniform. Could the message be taken back that the discussion on uniform was not an attempt to undermine staff on uniform or change policies. It was about Governors fulfilling their responsibilities , to discuss things openly without staff feeling undermined.</li> <li>• Governors did need to discuss issues arising from parental and student communication however uncomfortable those discussions might be and, in this case, help the school through a challenging situation.</li> <li>• What the community was saying about the governors not supporting the school regards uniform would be based on misinformation.</li> <li>• Governors needed to agree policy that that those administering it would be happy with.</li> </ul> <p>6.25pm – Reg Hook left the meeting.</p>
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- The current draft policy had some points that required clarity such as that around all staff enforcing policy, did that include premises and catering staff?
- A part on sanctions did not include anything in relation to parental responsibilities. What is done with outdoor wear if not allowed to be brought into school?
- The new legislation obliges Governors to have regards to cost.
- Governors were aware of the school being able to put uniform policy into practice and were conscious of other pressures that staff were under. It had been an uncomfortable process to go through, but it was hoped that it was appreciated that robust challenge was something that Governors had to do as part of their duty
- The proposal for the way forward would be a small group to finalise a policy that the whole team could sign up to.

Response to Governor comment and questions

- There had been some tailoring of skirts to meet the requirements of the old black school skirt that had stated a maximum measurement above the knee. An incorrect communication had gone out to the current year 8 students when they were in year 7 in the welcome booklet, and it was just this group that would be affected by the need to get replacement skirts that met the current requirement. The Headteacher suggested that the skirts in Year 8 which had been tailored were replaced by the school to resolve the equalities issue around cost.
- Before release of the uniform policy, it would be put through the legal team at the Local Authority to ensure compliance with current legislation.
- Very few people bought the former black skirt from the school shop, and many purchased from American Apparel, which was costly and did not conform, the current standard skirt came in about knee length on most students. Some skirts had been altered significantly in length, mainly in years 10 and 11 turning them in miniskirts, that were being held down when going up stairs. School leaders were aware that there was some peer pressure to wear skirts short. Minutes from a student leadership meeting had included the sentence “girls are more afraid of other girls judging them than they are of the consequences of wearing a short skirt”.
- The Headteacher had come in, listened to staff as to what needed to happen and helped implement it. School staff felt that they were being undermined by discussions on school uniform.
- Uniform adherence needed to happen as the situation was untenable. It was an operational issue for the school not a strategic one and governors support was needed to make life better for all students.
- Only the current year 8s needed to be advised of the misinformation around school length as they were the only year that received the information booklet with the error. The Headteacher was happy to write to parents offering replacement of shortened skirts.
- There was a section in the uniform policy on equalities with the advice to contact the SENCO if adjustments for needs were required.
- If students were different sizes reasonable adjustments could be discussed with the SENCO as currently happens. The school skirt was manufactured to be knee length or longer, if they were tailored to knee length that would be fine. If governors wanted to go to a trouser only uniform that could be implemented if there was the wish from students.
- Staff were hearing the message that governors did not support them on uniform.
- What was happening was that parents and children were saying that governors did not agree with uniform policy and were going to change it.

**AGREEMENT/ACTION – Working party of Andrea Cumming, Bronagh Shevlin, Lara Coleman and Mick Baker to work up a final uniform policy.**

**b) SEND Information Report 2021/22**

The SEND information report had been updated for Governors’ approval. Under this item Governors noted a positive feedback letter regards the SEND provision at Dorothy Stringer. There were some points summarised in writing by the SEND lead governor who had been unable to attend the meeting. These were around accessibility going beyond those with physical limb

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	<p>impairment and wheelchair users, reference to fluorescent lighting and limitation of acoustic accessibility and additionally to requirement to have an emotionally accessible environment.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p><b>a) Instrument of Government – Change to Name (Board)</b></p> <p><b>AGREEMENT – The Full Governing Board proposed to the change of name from Body to Board.</b></p> <p><b>b) Governor Responsibilities</b> Following a decision by the Chair, Vice Chair and Headteacher to not move forward to a committee structure at the current time, governors were invited to advise their areas of interest to link with. These would include the key school development priorities. Identified earlier in the meeting.</p> <p><b>c) Meeting Dates</b> Seven board meetings during the year, dates were noted.</p> <p><b>d) Code of Conduct</b></p> <p><b>AGREEMENT – The Full Governing Board adopted the revised NGA model code of conduct for Governors.</b></p> <p><b>e) Skills Audit</b> Governors were requested to complete a skills audit form to enable a summary of all responses to go to Nominations Committee.</p> <p><b>f) Recruitment of Governors</b> Nominations had been sought for Vice Chair of Governors, there had been a number for Mick Baker , he left the meeting whilst his appointment was discussed. It was noted that any potential conflicts of interest in regards Mick Baker’s relationship with staff members would be managed and that would limit his role as Vice Chair to a point.</p> <p>Applications had been received for the HR link Governor with interviews scheduled for October. It was noted that an additional financial link governor be sought.</p> <p>The process for election of a parent governor was underway with documents drafted ready to go out in the weekly newsletter.</p>	
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>a) Open Evening</b> One or two governors to be present at the open evening on 7<sup>th</sup> October.</p> <p><b>b) Headteacher Appraisal</b> Panel of governors required for the Headteacher’s appraisal meeting scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> October.</p> <p><b>c) Stakeholder Meeting on Safety</b> Governors invited to attend a community meeting , details to be circulated.</p> <p><b>d) Student wellbeing</b> Proposals for Governor monitoring of student wellbeing included a set of questions coming out of the safe and well at school survey to ask groups of children with a follow up process to assess progress. Governors were supportive of that approach. Haydn Stride and Lydia Bower to take on this responsibility.</p> <p><b>e) Governors Training</b> Email through details of any training attended to Lydia Bower as link governor for that area.</p>	

	Meeting ended at 7pm Date of next meeting – 8 <sup>th</sup> November	
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