Meeting of Full Governing Board
16th October 2023
4.30pm in School Library

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Mick Baker, James Bennett, Rachel Borland, Philip Brown, Emma Grose, Matt Hillier, Dick Knight, Catherine Packham, Bronagh Shevlin, Bridget Taylor (Chair)
Officers Present:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
In Attendance:	Sara Bailey, Richard Baker, Sam Colburn, Andrea Cumming

	Agenda item	Action
1	**Introduction** a) **Welcome** The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. b) **Apologies for Absence** Apologies for absence from Hiba Nour with notification that she was stepping down as a Co-opted Governor. c) **Declarations of Interest** Declaration forms were handed out to those that hadn't submitted one for current academic year. The current register of declarations was included within the meeting pack.	
2	**Last Meeting Dated 25th September 2023** a) **Approval of Minutes** The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved six pages of minutes from the meeting held on 25th September. The Chair signed the minutes as confirmation of their accuracy. b) **Actions and Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere on Agenda** Safeguarding training – Governors reminded to read annex A of the keeping children safe in education. **ACTION – Governors will be required to sign to confirm they had read annex A of keeping children safe in education 2023 at the next meeting.**	All
3	**Chairs Update** The Chair's update and the Headteacher's update were combined to cover the Ofsted Inspection of the school carried out on 10th and 11th October. The overall grading could not be advised as it was subject to final sign off by Ofsted. Feedback from the Chair and Headteacher was therefore generalised including the following points: • Chair and Vice Chair of Governors had been interviewed by the inspection team and were both present at the feedback meeting. From the answers given at interview and the published minutes it was clear that there was a level of challenge of school	

leaders which was important when accessing effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.

- There were some areas of great practice that was observed throughout the school.
- The second day of the inspection was more complex in terms of process with two senior HMI inspectors and three others.
- There were clear areas of improvement that the school leaders had been aware of with one included within the school improvement plan.
- When visiting classes to observe teaching and learning the inspectors saw exactly what the school leaders had been talking about to them. They went to six different subject areas being English, maths, geography, languages , art, and PE. The level of teaching and learning came out strongly during these visits.
- The alternative curriculum was looked at closely to evidence the breadth of the curriculum on a daily basis.
- Careers came out strongly alongside the work with the disadvantaged group of students.
- The latest set of outcomes data could not be used as it was still unvalidated data.
- There were discussions about the impact of covid and what the school had put in place to adapt the curriculum in response.
- Online portal for uploading evidence to enable Ofsted to triangulate the information that was obtained from the inspection.
- Whilst the school leaders did know the gradings this needed to remain confidential during the process of quality assurance.
- There was a good response to the parent questionnaire with many positive comments.
- The final report would be due within 4 to 6 weeks.

Comments and questions from Governors
- Did anybody detect a change in approach from Ofsted?
- Groups of staff were interviewed which was different than before.

Response to Governor comments and questions
- There were check in meetings during the process , with the lead inspector asking first about wellbeing. The process was very robust and was a pressure on everyone.
- Interviews were by department.

4	**Headteacher's Report /Update** Covered in 3 above.	

5	**School Development Plan (SDP)**
	   a) **Sign off on Final SDP**
	      The Headteacher reminded Governors that the three key areas of school development were attendance, literacy, and culture. Circulation of the development plan had been delayed by the Ofsted visit, it would follow by email circulation. In the meantime it was shown on screen noting that Ofsted had seen the plan.
	
	ACTION – Circulate the school development plan by email , any questions from Governors to be directed to the Headteacher. Final sign off on the plan to be at the November meeting.
	
	   b) **Deep Dive - Attendance**
	      Sam Colburn the school's attendance manager provided Governors with an overview of where the school was with attendance. The following points were noted:
		MH/All

- FFT Aspire was used as a management tool to monitor attendance, screens from the system were shown to Governors to example what information was available.
- The school was sitting just below the national average overall.
- Data had been analysed intensively with a development plan set in place. .
- With the current year 9 there was an issue with girls truanting , following a period of providing individual support the situation was starting to improve with more attendance in class.
- The focus would now be turned to Year 8 as attendance was starting to drop, and in year 11 where there were a number of non-attenders.
- Any cases where students fell below 90% attendance would be picked up by the pastoral managers, severe cases would be picked up by the attendance manager and head of school.
- Last year there had been a trial with pupil premium students , with conversations to understand the obstacles to attendance. This process had been carried forward into the current year. One example of an obstacle was sleep deprivation , those students affected had been put into a group with a plan to deliver a sleep clinic.
- Many girls with poorer attendance were having difficulties with relationships within school. The pastoral managers were running interventions to tackle relationship issues.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENCO) works closely with the attendance team.

The Deputy Head with responsibility for attendance added the following points:
- Brighton & Hove was low in terms of attendance over the last quarter , with the school sitting quite low in the Local Authority.
- Post COVID there were more challenges with parents keeping children away from school with minor illnesses.

The Headteacher added the following points:
- Primary attendance was higher than at secondary, Year 7 at eth school was at national level. Poor attendees at primary get worse in secondary.
- The current year 11 were the group that had the most disjointed learning experience.
- The previous year 11 had the best ever outcomes, their attendance was above average, demonstrating that if students attend they do well in exams.
- Statistically girls do better at school than boys , with attendance of year 11 girls at the school being low this would impact on outcomes , therefore a large focus was placed on this area through improving relationships.

Comment and questions from Governors
- Is Brighton historically an area of low school attendance ?
- Is primary attendance in Brighton also below the national averages?
- Those students with the poorest attendance were those most impacted by COVID.
- Is there peer group pressure impacting on attendance?
- Are you able to break down the data further to identify from the non-attenders who is genuinely ill.
- Some children register in the morning and then do not go to class, how does that look.
- Those internal truancies would not necessarily show in the data.

- It was a complicate situation with lots of impacting factors, had there been any larger findings, for example around pull factors? What positive things make a difference in school.
- Do we know what the internal truants are doing and where they are going?
- Lesson registration was quite a thorough system.
- Is there anything that can be done around communicating to students the benefits of school.
- A national campaign about the benefits of attending school should be underway.
- Are there particular subjects that were worst hit with truancy?
- Academically Dorothy Stringer School was at the top of the leader board in Brighton & Hove yet with attendance they were mid table. Was there a reason , were some children turned off by the ethos at the school? Was that part of the problem?
- Year 11 are quite a fragile group with issues of confidence.
  Can areas be identified that are doing well with attendance from who best practice could be learned?
- Attendance is social issue, children today are under greater pressures, it is an issue for the government to resolve. This could be a long-term problem through social change.

Response to Governor comment and questions
- Historically seaside towns have lower school attendance. Brighton is a particularly relaxed town. Disadvantaged attendance was worse In Brighton & Hove than in other authorities, it had not been possible to identify what the reason behind this was and what other authorities might be doing differently.
- Primary attendance is also lower.
- We think that year 11 are the most impacted by COVID , they were also challenging year group on arrival at school.
- It is individual attendance , peer pressure doesn't seem to have an impact. Some students were not leaving their homes. There were 35 students in year 11 with extremely low attendance.
- Every single student with poor attendance is known about , there are safe spaces for each year group.
- Every lesson is registered , picking up internal truancy and triggering an alert system.
- Unless a student misses an official registration point they will show in the data. The school is aware of every lesson missed and can use that data in discussions with heads of year.
- Even when broken down into groups there is still variances , it needs to come down to an individual level. It had not been possible to identify a larger factor such as transport that would be easy to resolve.
- There is a lot of wandering of corridors, this would be picked up. Some were in the woods , hiding which was a safety concern, banning access to the woods had been considered. Despite extensive security fencing students still managed to get out. That was why the registration at each lesson was so important. Duty staff had been increased to assist with searching for missing students.
- Messaging is always positive about school attendance, the benefits of social interaction as well as educational outcomes.
- Attendance hubs had been put into some schools, the evidence of effectiveness of these was unclear. The Department of Education was present at a recent meeting with schools where schools were requesting financial support with tackling the attendance issue.

- Truancy tends to be linked with individuals , not subjects. The Heads of Year were trying to understand through conversations why individuals would rather hang around corridors than go into class.
- The school addresses issues of disengagement by offering support to individuals to feel comfortable back in class. There was a lack of resilience , because that growing period in year 7 was missed.
- It is possible to break down national data to regions. The patterns of attendance in Local Authorities were the same though some were doing better. The size of catchment areas was an impacting factor, more vulnerable children in the Dorothy Stringer had to travel distances and get two buses.
- Due to COVID attitudes were different, holidays were seen as more essential for wellbeing.

The Chair summarised the Board's position on attendance being one of collective concern and an issue where great importance was attached, requiring ongoing close monitoring. The Board would put its voice to getting more national support on new strategies on how to deal with.

6	**Business Group**	

Business Group

The notes from the Business Group meeting held on 2nd October were included within the meeting pack.

a) **Budget Monitoring Report**

The School Business Manager presented the budget monitoring report to end of August 2023 noting the following:

- £250,000 needed to be kept in reserve for maintenance of the artificial turf pitch (ATP) as part of the original loan agreement.
- Projected overspend in current year at £85k.
- More detail of variances on staff budgets had been requested by the business group. To report at next meeting of the group.
- Indirect staffing costs included supply and agency.
- Additional £26k in professional services including legal not currently included within the budget monitoring report.
- Further information and analysis of catering income and expenditure to go to next business group meeting.
- The DofE miscalculation would affect 2024/24 budget , the impact would not be too significant as the assumptions on budget for that year had been an increase of just 2% in allocation.
- The recovery grant would be more than expected offset by less tutoring grant being available.
- Adjustments had been made to budget lines with five virements proposed to the Governing Board.

AGREEMENT – The Full Governing Board approved five virements as detailed within the Business Manager's report.

The Chair of Governors added that the Business Group had requested further information for some deep diving as the school was getting close to a critical point where it was dipping into a deficit position.

Comment and questions from Governors

- Was there a point about student numbers been underestimated ?

	• There had been some staffing matters requiring resolution had they been concluded. Response to Governor comment and questions • There was lagged funding with budgets based on student numbers on census day. This year numbers were 1651. The issue was that as numbers of students were potentially going to drop off in line with what was happening in primary schools. dropped off in the city. The criteria for admissions was subject to a consultation with disadvantaged children being one of the priority groups. Schools in the outskirts of the city were likely to be impacted by these changes. Dorothy Stringer was currently in a stable situation regards student numbers. • Staffing issues previously reported had been resolved. Currently there were two matters not staff related that required ongoing support from legal department, these had financial implications. b) **Terms of Reference** **AGREEMENT – The Full Governing Board approved the Business Group's terms of reference as presented.**	
7	**Policies and Other Documents for Approval** a) **Staff Appraisal Policy** Approval deferred see 7a. b) **Teachers Pay Policy** Approval deferred as model policy from Local Authority not available. Staff appraisal policy to be reviewed alongside the pay policy when available. c) **School Uniform Policy** Further review of the school uniform policy in line with school processes to be undertaken before bringing to Full Governing Board for approval.	
8	**Governance** a) **Governance Evaluation** Governors considered the section on board culture and practice within the governance evaluation form. b) **Skills Audit** Governors completed their skills audit forms in discussion in pairs. c) **Diversity Monitoring and Publication** Governors agreed to the collection of diversity information to inform training and recruitment but not to publish data as individual governors might be identifiable. A statement would be published in place of the data.	
9	**Any Other Business** a) **Log In to WIFI** Request from Governors to have a guest WIFI login in provided every week as access on some devices was limited in school. **ACTION – Request to schools ICT for guest access to be set up for Governors' use.**	MH

b) Governor Vacancies
Two co-opted vacancies, Nominations Panel to meet and look to go out to advert to seek a candidate with financial skills.

c) Open Evening
Positive feedback received.

Meeting ended at 6.41pm
Date of next meeting – 27th November 2023