DOROTHY STRINGER SCHOOL
EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Meeting of Full Governing Board
21st October 2024
4.30pm in School Library

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Mick Baker, Sarah Bakhtiari, Robin Bradshaw, Eleanor Fagan, Matt Hillier, Emma Morey, Catherine Packham, Bronagh Shevlin, Bridget Taylor (Chair)
Officers Present:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
In Attendance:	Andrea Cumming, Cassie Dale

	Agenda item	Action
1	**Introduction** **a) Welcome** The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. **b) Apologies for Absence** Apologies for absence from Eugenie Teasley. **c) Declarations of Interest** No declarations relating to items of the agenda. The declarations register was included within the meeting papers.	
2	**Last Meetings Dated 30th September 2024** **a) Approval of Minutes** The Full Governing Board reviewed and approved eight pages of minutes from the meeting held on 30th September. The Chair signed the minutes as confirmation of their accuracy. **b) Actions and Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere on Agenda** None	
3	**Chair's Update** The Chair confirmed that as agreed during confidential discussions at the previous meeting that a letter had been sent to the council and that the matter was ongoing.	
4	**Head's Report /Update** The Head presented his report to governors in the standard format highlighting some key points and responding to questions from governors. • Open evening for prospective families had been held followed by a number of open mornings over a two-week period. All sessions had been well attended with positive feedback received.	

	4.36pm - Catharine Packham arrived at the meeting. • A building surveyor had been engaged to oversee installation of the additional canopy that was unable to proceed in the summer due to an issue with the foundations. • The music room building project had been completed. The contribution from the PFI company towards that project were currently not known. • Recent staff appointments included a new receptionist, a member of the data team and a member of the alternative provision team. • One potential adjustment to a teacher contract following a request to reduce hours to parttime. • Student attendance was an issue within years 8 and 9 , tied in with internal truancy. A spike in holidays had been seen from families looking to have cheaper holidays during term time. There were attendance marks for all lessons during the day with two sessions (lesson 1 and 4) officially being counted as registration. The issue of students being on site but not in class was being picked up by the on-call team during their walk rounds. City wide attendance was not back to pre-covid levels. Overall the school attendance was at 92.29%. Absence coding requirements had been updated by the government with automatic central reporting. **ACTION - Deep Dive reporting on attendance to be a spring term item.** Governors had a discussion about the engagement exercise launched by the council in relation to published admission numbers (PAN) and school catchment areas. The points of discussion are recorded within supplementary confidential minutes. Noting that the council were currently in the engagement phase governors decided to not respond to the questions being posed by the council as a Board , though were free to engage individually. A position would be taken once a formal consultation process had been launched. A separate working group might be set up for that purpose. **ACTION - Update on PAN/Catchments to families to be included in the newsletter.**	**MH** **BT/MH**
5	**School Development Plan (SDP) - Approve** The Headteacher presented the final version of the school development plan for the year for approval, noting that the three main priorities for 2024/25 were attendance, oracy and engaged learners. A set of high-level actions for school development were listed under the Ofsted categories of quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership management. A further detailed action plan was included with columns recording impact, progress and governor monitoring. Comment and questions from Governors • Would the board benefit from having the priorities as headers on future agendas. • There was a lot of actions within the school development plan for Governors to track. • Engaged learning was more about shifting culture , what was the strategy for making a change in behaviour and attitudes?	

- How will engagement be measured?
- Has an exercise been done to look at where the non-attendees live geographically?
- It would be useful to have information on what the reasons for non-attendance have been identified as , if transport is a factor thsi will be relevant to the current catchment/PAN discussions.
- When learning walks are undertaken what monitoring is done and how is it fed back to staff?
- The learning walk monitoring records could be used to evidence progress and change over time.
- Are children asked about their learning with the responses used as part of the feedback?
- Expectations on handling persistent absence had been included within teachers' appraisal targets, given how complex persistent absence was how would the appraisal targets be monitored? Would it be on how often children were in school or on how form tutors were working to build home school links.
- There were some milestones within the SDP with some going into 2026. How does the SDP document and the set of priorities for 2024/25 fit into the longer-term vision and is that captured and expressed elsewhere.
- A longer-term strategic document would be useful as a guidance document for the Board.

Response to Governors' comment and questions
- The Board's annual agenda includes a deep dive on an area of school development at each meeting. Deep dives on attendance, oracy and engaged learners would make sense with additional tracking on the action items.
- On the whole the school has a supportive culture in which people want to learn. The issue was more around the students who are quieter and passive in class, who have the ability to learn but may not feel fully engaged within the group. It might be a confidence issue, requiring encouragement and reassurance that their voices are as important as others. It is also part of the social equity work that the school was doing with the University of Sussex, looking at how to level up the leadership opportunities and mentoring on taking risks to build confidence.
- Body language of students was a way of measuring engagement, bringing in new people as observers with a fresh perspective and experience of other schools would support with the monitoring. The level of progress made was a more tangible measure. Attainment was strong at the school yet progress was nearer average, there was a culture of "that's good enough" which was where the cultural shift was needed.
- An analysis of where non attending students lived had been undertaken in the past to identify whether transport might be a barrier to attendance. There was a very clear correlation to geographical locations.
- Learning walks used to be over a two-week period focussed on a year group or a department. The responsibility had been transferred to the subject leaders with learning walks over two days with a form for completion that is fed back to the team.

	• A process of reverse mentoring had started in year 8 where students tell the teacher what they are enjoying and not enjoying in lessons. • Monitoring of targets in relation to persistent absence would be by using soft data, such as the expectation to welcome back a student who had been absent. Form tutors are required to do an attend form if a student had been off for a while to identify what the barriers to attendance were as part of a triage process. The attendance team get involved in more severe situations. • Oracy and engagement are likely to stay within the SDP for a few years. Attendance was a longer-term issue with a vision of improvement over a five-year period. • The Stringer Way was the school's strategic vision document. **AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Board approved the school develop plan subject to consideration being given and incorporated of comments made by Governors.** **ACTION - Future deep dive reports to the Board on the areas of attendance, oracy and student engagement.** **ACTION - Development of a process of recording progress made, possibly a traffic light system for reporting to the Board on the wider range of targets.**	
6	**Other Reports and Recommendations** None	

7	**School Policies**
	   a) **Staff Code of Conduct**
	
	AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Board approved the staff code of conduct as presented.
	
	   b) **Mobile Phone Policy**
	   A new mobile phone policy was provided for Governors' consideration incorporating consolidation of what had been an informal process into a policy with attached sanctions for student non-compliance. These sanctions were explained to Governors along with the process of logging and controlling the handing in of mobiles of handing in of mobiles. Some comments about improvements to wording within the policy was suggested along with installation of signage encouraging visitors to switch off mobiles whilst in school.
	   There was a question on how effective the policy had been to date on preventing repeated breaches. It was advised that on the whole policy had been effective with children handing in their mobiles without challenge. Those students on wave 4 under the behaviour policy and were attending the alternative curriculum were dealt with by a member of senior leadership who would hold their mobiles where necessary.	

	AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Board approved the mobile phone policy as presented subject to some minor amendments following the discussion and a final read through.	

8	**Governance**
	    a) **Risk Register**
	        The draft risk register was presented for Governors' consideration. There was comment about inclusion of an entry around the risk to reputation and management of change to be mitigated by an effective communication strategy. A discussion followed about the level of communication received into school and parental expectations of a prompter response than was currently being experienced. It was suggested that this issue was not part of the risk register , though it was relevant to include something under the risk to reputation.
	        It was mentioned that a current live risk was around the school being used as a test case with legal issues unrelated to normal school business.
	
	AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Board signed of the risk register noting that it was a live document.	

9	**Any Other Business**
	    a) **Governors' Social**
	        Two dates had been suggested for s social event for Governors. Initial indications were that the dates were too near the end of term and Christmas. An alternative was suggested directly the next board meeting, this was agreed at a location near the school.
	
	    b) **Governors Development Session**
	        Dates to be provided for an offsite strategic meeting .
	
	End of meeting - 6.11pm
	Date of next meeting - 2nd December 2024	

Minutes approved

Signature …………………………………date………………………