

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 12 September 2024 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Jim Henderson (JH – Co-Chair), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Joanna McCrae (JMc), James Moncrieff (JMo – arrived 17.30 hours), Lisa Goodman (LG), Joyti Stach (JS), Phil Howard (PH), James Tulley (JT– Co-Chair), Lisa Logan (LL), Tim Shutler (TS – Vice Chair) and Emma Gibson (EG).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SHx – school business manager), Claire Harrington (CH – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)), Raquel Villalba Lorente (RVL – deputy SENCo), Brandon Hughes (BH - deputy headteacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE – deputy headteacher), Mark Bennison (MB – assistant headteacher), Sarah (S – senior student), Logan (L– senior student), Miller (M– senior student) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

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

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – DH noted the nominations of JT and JH as Co-Chairs and TS as vice chair; and the unanimous approval of the FBG to these appointments.
2. **Apologies for Absence.**
 - 2.1. Mark Sorrell (MS), and Miranda Wells (MW had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
3. **Senior students presentation**
 - 3.1. S, L & M drew attention to student voice and their aspirations; also what they wanted to achieve for involvement of students in the new academic year. S, L & M highlighted extra-curricular 'tasters'; being part of the school community; being eco-friendly; cleanliness campaigns (putting up posters and arranging assemblies); ethos for success; inviting in guest speakers (define 'heroes', i.e. noteworthy individuals talking about careers aspirations).
 - 3.2. S, L & M drew attention to proposed charity work (organising bake sales) to support various causes, including the school prom; also doing symposiums as part of student voice activities.
 - 3.3. S, L & M stated that the senior student body was divided into four main groups: - community, yearbook, fundraising and student voice. S, L & M explained plans on how to commit to realistic goals and sharing responsibilities; highlighting ways of feedback, e.g. drop-ins, regular meetings, completion of questionnaires, outlining concerns and updating notice boards.
 - 3.4. Governors asked what students were planning for the Christmas fair. S, L & M drew attention to various items such as chocolate and bottle tombolas; a pre-

used uniform sale; food & drink; a Santa appearance; craft tables; and games – profits would go towards supporting the school prom.

- 3.5. Governors asked about the mentoring programme. S, L & M explained that a Year 7 programme was already in place, over a five week period – with students being paired off. S, L & M
- 3.6. Governors asked if the senior students needed any kind of support, e.g. on logistics and developing skills. S, L & M pointed to the work already done to develop skills and the significant support received from MB.
- 3.7. Governors asked if there was anything the full board could provide for senior students. S, L & M commented that they would like to be more visible and requested help for a special jumper or tie funding. Governors confirmed that they would consider this request on receipt of a business case being presented (perhaps to the governors' finance committee meeting of 30 September); and asked about advantages and disadvantages of wearing such a jumper or tie. S, L & M acknowledged that there might be a negative aspect in being seen as too much part of the staff body; such attire should be understated.
- 3.8. Governors asked if the senior students were in contact with their peers at other schools. S, L & M confirmed this was the case.
- 3.9. Governors commented that, with regard to the 'define our heroes' proposal; students could approach the board for help, given the diverse nature of the backgrounds of its membership.
- 3.10. Governors asked about the process of being selected for the senior students group. S, L & M explained that this had involved completing a written application form, taking part in a team building exercise and then being interviewed.
- 3.11. Governors asked about the delivery of their roles. S, L & M spoke of their ability to interact with teachers and learn aspects of leadership, time management, timetabling and working with younger year students.
- 3.12. Governors asked about the senior students' observations on the school day changes. S, L & M commented that the one hour lessons were better in general and encouraged more engagement; however there were drawbacks for certain subjects in not having two hour sessions, e.g. drama and cookery.
- 3.13. The Co-Chair (JH) recommended that a date be identified in order to invite S, L & M back to the FBG, in order to update governors on progress made with their plans and proposals set out in the presentation. The Co-Chair (JH) praised S, L & M for the high quality presentation they had made and articulate manner in which it had been presented; this spoke volumes about themselves and school staff.
(**Note** - S, L & M and MB left the meeting at 17.30 hours)

4. Special Educational Needs (SEN) team presentation

- 4.1. CH drew attention to her SEND Department Context and 24/25 Action Plan document circulated earlier to governors. CH explained that this set out how the

SEN provision fitted in with school departments; with the core principle of making students feel included at its heart. CH believed that the SEN team was doing a good job but had a way to go and specified progress outcomes and aspirational places.

- 4.2. CH highlighted the model set out and the overview, which showed a growing area of needs, e.g. managing anxiety after the impact of the pandemic. CH commented that the school had achieved a great deal since the pandemic, but nevertheless there remained challenges to address. CH pointed to the detailed SEN action plan for the year and the targets set out; and introduced RVL as the deputy SENCo (and acting SENCo whilst CH is on maternity leave) to governors.
- 4.3. Governors asked about specialist places. CH spoke of the difficulties in putting in more spaces; this would be developed over time to create a more effective provision. Governors asked about the opportunities of using outside spaces. CH highlighted use of M block, which was the hub of SEN planning; but acknowledged that spaces could be made to work better; there was a possibility of retro-fitting.
- 4.4. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the list of threats set out by CH in her document, specifically inequality in access; and asked about students having private diagnoses and the possibility of extra funding. CH drew attention to the £434 additional funding provided by the local authority (LA) for each student on the SEN register; but putting forward applications for more funding was difficult. CH added that those on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting list faced two to three years before being seen. CH commented that private diagnoses raised difficulties on deciding which students to prioritise.
- 4.5. Governors asked about the school's policy with regard to private diagnoses. CH stated that this was at the school's discretion but so far had not refused to consider them. CH added that the LA did however sometimes not accept private diagnoses.
- 4.6. Governors asked about managing space allocations. CH stated that the school had not yet been in a position where it had had to turn down admissions; it did not want students not to come to Blatchington Mill.
- 4.7. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about how the school managed inclusivity, with regard to students with Education, Health & Care (EHC) plans. CH confirmed that the school was consulted by the LA about every student with an EHCP.
- 4.8. BH drew attention to the SEN (E) results and the initiative for a pilot project this year. CH added that it was difficult to gauge progress for SEN (E) students, given that some may not be attending school or accessing GCSE courses. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that, from the SEN (K) results, it appeared there had been some positive outcomes.

(Note – CH and RVL left the meeting at 18.00 hours)

5. Urgent business – None.

6. Declarations of interest – None. With regard to the SEN discussion point, one governor mentioned having a child with ADHD at the school.

7. Minutes

7.1. The minutes of the meeting of 4 July 2024 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

8. Matters Arising

- Entry of presentation by senior students with Q&A as FBG agenda item for September meeting – done.
- Governors' offers of support to contact EE – EE confirmed that some had been in touch; this had broadened horizons for students to hear about topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion.
- High prior attainment – BH stated that the Quality of Education Committee (QoEC) would look at this issue, with respect to a statement of intent.
- Safeguarding audit – EE stated that the LA had still not provided a response to the school, following submission of this document, despite being chased up.

9. Governing Board Code of Conduct 2024-2025

9.1. The Chair noted the unanimous approval of the FBG to adopt this document, which was based on a National Governance Association (NGA) 2024 template.

10. Local authority federation proposal

10.1. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that there had been no new developments to report. KC informed governors that the LA (Jo Lyons) had sent an email to all schools, expressing thanks to them for engaging with this issue and promising further details this term.

10.2. The Co-Chair (JH) emphasised that anything done on this exercise had to be in the light what was best for the students; this should be kept in mind. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that this issue had provided an opportunity to have informal discussions with chairs at other schools. KC added that she was attending an evening event on 12 September with other heads and the leader and vice leader of Brighton and Hove Council.

11. Headteacher report

National Landscape

11.1. Governors asked about the government curriculum and assessment review. KC spoke about the removal of barriers for SEN and disadvantaged students and a focus on employability and communications skills; it would be interesting to see where this exercise went.

11.2. Governors asked about funding for the teachers' pay rise. SHx explained that there would be a central schools grant allocation of £214K in September and

would cover the difference between the rise already budgeted for (2.5% - 3%) and the one recommended (5.5% - also for National Joint Council (NJC) staff) – this would have a positive effect on the budget.

Summer school

- 11.3. Governors asked about the summer school. KC confirmed that this would be run again and had been assessed as very much worth doing, showing clear value to families.

Start of term

- 11.4. Governors asked about the impact of the reshaped school day. KC believed this would be transformative in a positive way for the school, once it was fully embedded. BH added that this new system was starting to improve punctuality and address the issue of lost learning time. EE commented that, although it had been a shock to the system to begin with, late marks had had an effect. Governors commented that overall the new system was a positive innovation.

Quality of Education

- 11.5. BH commented that he was very proud of the students last academic year, who had done very well.
- 11.6. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the impact of external marking services in English and history. BH explained that this had been done, because of the high degree of subjectivity in both examinations and wanting a breadth of examiner markings. BH believed this exercise had had a large impact and freed up teachers' time to deal with e.g. feedback. SHx added that use of external marking had reduced stress levels. BH acknowledged however that this service had cost a lot of money, necessitating the school being strategic in considering which subjects would be considered; this might be expanded to include sociology.
- 11.7. Governors asked about grading expectations. BH stated that by extending the task of marking tests to themselves would be an opportunity to look at this issue.
- 11.8. Governors asked about the accuracy of external marking. BH stated that a performance analysis had not yet been done.
- 11.9. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about differences between internal and external marking and noted that doing this externally amounted to a form of moderation. BH stated that an extensive moderation report had accompanied the returned scripts. BH added that the English and history results had been very good.
- 11.10. Governors asked about Attainment 8. BH explained that this was an average score across the best 8 subjects for a given student; with their mathematics and English scores double weighted. BH added that Progress 8 applied to the best 8 subjects but compares each student's A8 score with numbers of students with the same Key Stage 2 performance nationally.
- 11.11. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the Progress 8 figure of 0.22, noting that this was very good and important. KC hoped that the final figure would be high, which would represent a major shift.
- 11.12. Governors asked why predictions were being phased out. BH considered that as these had not been a useful indicator, they would no longer be used. BH stated

that, in terms of target setting, the school would be reporting a target range to parents, e.g. 5 now but could be 7 – 9.

- 11.13. Governors asked what informed targets now. BH stated that the school used statistics reported in the Fischer Family Trust resource to decide on whether to move targets up; these were reviewed every time there was a data drop. The Co-Chair (JH) recommended that this issue was picked up and discussed by the QoEC.
- 11.14. Governors noted that GCSE results had gone up in every area, which was very good and a cause of congratulations to the pupils and school.
- 11.15. Governors asked about measures put in place to address the issues which had arisen in one specific subject. BH stated that these had been addressed and practical work would be re-moderated. Governors noted that this had had the potential to be a systemic failure, which needed tackling. BH believed this to have been a localised issue, with respect to aspects of the curriculum which needed to be delivered correctly.
- 11.16. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about virtual attendance for the departmental improvement plans (DIPs). BH stated that this could be arranged.
- 11.17. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the reading intervention figures. BH explained that a lot had been done last year using extra capacity, which would not be available this year.
- 11.18. Governors asked about QoE targets and actions. BH explained that the dates set were all end ones.
- 11.19. The Co-Chair (JH) spoke on behalf of the FBG to formally congratulate BH and his team on the excellent results.

Behaviour and attendance

- 11.20. Governors asked about consistency with behaviour routines. EE explained that this involved being out and about to monitor consistency and compliance, doing regular learning walks and book checks; and collating information.
- 11.21. Governors asked about visiting the alternative provision. EE welcomed this request and stated that this could be arranged.
- 11.22. Governors asked how many students were using the alternative provision. EE stated that fully timetabled sessions had been arranged and the first students were expected in two weeks.

Business & Finance

- 11.23. Governors asked about the new grounds maintenance contract. SHx stated that the school was happy with the new company.
- 11.24. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the increase in HS2 issues. SHx acknowledged that there was concern about the small circulation space in Design and Technology; that this was more suitable for smaller groups. SHx hoped this would be resolved by Easter, although this was more likely for September.
- 11.25. Governors asked about VO1 incident forms. SHx described these as a subjective process, with two submitted this term so far.

11.26. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the school budget. SHx reported no change to the budget situation.

12. Safeguarding

12.1. The Chair drew attention to the government's Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) document and asked governors to contact DH to confirm they had read Part 1.

13. Committees' membership for 2024-2025 (Finance, Pastoral, Quality of Education and Panels).

13.1. The Co-Chair (JH) drew attention to the updated membership table; also to his providing TS with support on health and safety.

13.2. The Co-Chair (JT) noted in particular that the role of child protection & safeguarding had been taken by EG; health & safety by TS; SEN by MS; equalities by JT; and training by JMo.

13.3. The Co-Chair (JH) asked that those governors serving on the headteacher appraisal panel undertake the appropriate training course.

13.4. The Co-Chair (JT) spoke of link governor roles to contribute more to technology and innovation issues; also that risk management should be given a higher priority.

14. School policies

Child protection & safeguarding policy

14.1. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the Child protection & safeguarding policy.

SEN policy

14.2. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the SEN policy.

15. Governor training

15.1. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that Governor Support's spreadsheet summary (summer term of 2024) of training completed by FBG members had been uploaded into the shared area.

16. Any Other Business

16.1. The Co-Chair (JH) referred to a recent legal opinion produced about use of the trans toolkit in schools; also that an organisation called 'PHSEbrighton' had written to all governors in Brighton and Hove on this subject and had invited them to a briefing to take place shortly. The Co-Chair (JH) asked that governors make their own judgements on whether to attend or not. KC added that the LA was reviewing the toolkit at the present moment.

Actions

Governors to read Part 1 of the government Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) document (and confirm this action to DH) - all

Next meeting – Tuesday 26 November 2024 Exam data (full picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...