

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 26 November 2024 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Jim Henderson (JH – Co-Chair), Joanna McCrae (JMc), Joyti Stach (JS), 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), Brandon Hughes (BH - deputy headteacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE – deputy headteacher) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 8 out of 12 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Phil Howard (PH), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), James Moncrieff (JMo), Lisa Goodman (LG), Mark Sorrell (MS) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.
- 1.2. The Co-Chair (JT) informed governors that JMo had decided to step down from his role as a co-opted governors, with effect from the date of this meeting (i.e. 26 November 2024). The Co-Chair (JT) stated that JMo had been a considerable asset for the board and thanked him on behalf of all governors for his work and dedication to the school.

2. Urgent business

- 2.1. The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention to the three key local authority (LA) issues of the federation proposal, catchment areas and the Published Admission Numbers (PANs). The Co-Chair (JT) stated that the LA was now not pushing as hard as before for schools to federate; instead had organised a working group which had met to discuss terms of reference and would focus on partnerships and collaboration.
- 2.2. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that the LA had initiated pre-formal consultations on proposed changes to catchment areas and the PANs; this had provoked a major public response, pushing back on them. The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention to the key concern of the decreasing number of students and how to ensure that those attending school were able to thrive. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that the LA was expected to make an announcement on 6 December, to reflect current thinking on catchment areas and the PANs.

PAN reduction proposal

- 2.3. **(Note – discussion on this item appears in a confidential annex to these minutes).**
3. **Declarations of interest – Parent of child at the school and in the data statistics (TS & BH).**
4. **Minutes**
 - 4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 12 September 2024 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

Performance tables

- 4.2. KC reported that the Department for Education (DfE), in checking schools' performance tables, had had to correct an error. KC stated that this had had the effect of increasing the school's Progress 8 score (to 0.3); also Attainment 8 (52.3 to 52.4).
- 4.3. The Co-Chair (JT) congratulated KC, BH, EE and the rest of the senior leadership team (SLT) for achieving such excellent results. KC explained that Progress 8 scores were based on the Key Stage 2 SATS results for this cohort with a calculation of national average progress made from each starting point. KC added that the progress of each student at the school was then compared to the average from the same starting point nationally to their GCSE outcomes. KC commented that this positive Progress 8 score therefore indicated that students at Blatchington Mill had made better progress than students nationally; and believed that the school had added additional value at GCSE for these students. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that the key message was that, having attended Blatchington Mill, these students had done better.

Instrument of Government

- 4.4. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that the LA would be amending the school's Instrument of Government to reflect its name of Blatchington Mill School (rather than the existing version of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College); also change of the FBG title of body to board.

FBG agenda setting

- 4.5. The Co-Chair (JT) reported having met with KC and DH prior to the meeting to discuss the FBG's calendar planner to ensure all issues were covered during the year; and would spend time with Committee chairs for the same exercise. The Co-Chair (JH) indicated the wish of the co-chairs that governors be encouraged to propose and lead agenda items on full board and committees; mechanisms would be developed to facilitate this process.

5. Matters Arising

- Final confirmation of governors reading of Part 1 of the government Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) document (and confirm this action to DH) – being completed.

6. Headteacher report

National Landscape

- 6.1. Governors asked about the departures of female teaching staff. KC stated that this had not been an issue for a number of diverse reasons; staff were returning to the school from maternity leave absences; also the school employed a large number of part-time staff. KC acknowledged however that recruitment was a challenge; a key issue was that there were challenges to offering significant flexibilities in working terms – this would be considered when updating the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- 6.2. Governors asked about possible linkages between the government's public school VAT policy and first preferences and PAN admissions. KC was uncertain whether those pupils leaving public schools was VAT linked; also it was hard to know exact number allocations with regard to first preferences.

Changes to the school day

- 6.3. (**Note** – discussion on this item appears in a confidential annex to these minutes).

Quality of Education

- 6.4. BH commented that the school was in a good place; comments from student focus groups were that learning was being done at a higher level. BH drew attention to the schedule of planned governor visits; sign-up sheets would be circulated nearer the time.
- 6.5. Governors asked about the use of behaviour points (BPs) in homework. BH stated that the effectiveness of BPs in homework related to the use made of being able to track it and the learning side; to check the level of students' engagement. BH added that having BPs allowed teachers to have conversations with students, which they felt were important.

Behaviour and attendance

- 6.6. TS (Pastoral Committee Chair) informed governors that the school's behaviour policy had been reviewed and approved at its meeting of 15 October; with a recommendation that it now be signed off by the FBG.
- 6.7. EE highlighted the school's attendance policy and stated that it had been made a statutory requirement from September 2023; the LA had provided a template text for the school to adapt.
- 6.8. Governors asked if there was a reference to the alternative provision (AP) in the school's behaviour policy. EE confirmed this had now been changed in the updated version.
- 6.9. The Co-Chair (JT) asked if the attendance policy needed to be more widely communicated. EE believed this did not have to be. KC added that the school

trips policy was communicated; also the school could consider putting out links to all policies. The Co-Chair (JT) commented that this would be good for transparency, to indicate that policies had been approved by governors.

- 6.10. Governors welcomed the feedback from student focus groups and asked for a breakdown on numbers. EE stated that the student groups were diverse and balanced in terms of pupil characteristics. The Co-Chair (JT) recommended that a way be found of capturing a selection of these responses, suitably anonymised.
- 6.11. The Co-Chair (JT) asked for an update on the withdrawal of chromebooks. KC commented that students were now working harder without them. The Co-Chair (JT) asked how this had affected homework. BH spoke of how the curriculum had developed, which was a whole year process; heads of department had made homework plans, to have these done on paper which was a more productive way of working. SH added that, for some students with specific access needs, chromebooks had been supplied.

Pastoral

- 6.12. Governors asked about student participation in the Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) award, particularly Pupil Premium (PP). KC stated that DoE information was all shared, with the costs subsidised – but more work would be done with these groups. KC added that the school was trying to improve completion rates; parental engagement was also important – so barriers to families had to be considered as well.

Facilities

- 6.13. SH highlighted the school's aim to improve the provision of toilets on the first floor; also the programme of refurbishing those on the ground floor (these were easier to supervise and retain a safeguarding element); also there had been an LA visit to discuss the toilet provision. Governors recommended giving this work a priority; at external events, the state of these toilets created an impression on visitors. KC anticipated that work on these toilets would be completed in the summer.

Finance

- 6.14. Governors asked about use of Section 106 monies emanating from the Moda building development. SH stated that this was to be used for social commitments funding. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that this amounted to £420K, split between Blatchington Mill and Hove Park schools.
- 6.15. Governors asked whether that, when donated, part of the Section 106 money could be used on paying for the toilet's refurbishment. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that part of the conditions of disbursement of this money was for it to be used for curriculum and pastoral projects; to drive educational outcomes. SH added that it could also be used e.g. for re-surfacing the tennis courts and development of the 'wild' quad.

Budget

- 6.16. SH stated that the outturn forecast for October had shown the school's budgetary situation to have improved – a surplus of £471K was anticipated (against a figure of £116K originally estimated). SH added that a commentary

had been put into the summary, explaining the reasons for this surplus. The Co-Chair (JT) expressed confidence that the school would be able to show a high level of prudence and finance management to the LA.

- 6.17. SH asked governors to consider authorisation for a high amount of expenditure - £149K – for an outstanding ski trip bill. SH explained that the amount was outside the delegated level for the Finance Committee and so had been brought to the FBG to authorise (the sum would be covered eventually by family contributions).
- 6.18. The Co-Chair (JH) confirmed this issue had been discussed at length in the Finance Committee meeting of 11 November and agreed by governors present. SH explained that, subject to authority being granted, the amount would be paid out of the school budget share account. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this request.

7. Safeguarding

- 7.1. KC commented that, despite being asked, the LA had provided no feedback on the recently submitted safeguarding audit. KC added that the school was providing more regular updates to staff for training purposes and looking at key areas. The Co-Chair (JT) commented that the changes to the school day had contributed to and supported safeguarding.
- 7.2. Governors noted that the government's new social care reform measure affected schools, in the provision of home schooling; i.e. parents who opted for home schooling, in certain circumstances they would not be able to do this themselves as it would now require LA authorisation.

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

- 8.1. The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed participation by the new governors in the Committees and noted no changes to the current arrangements.

9. Roles of lead & link governors

- 9.1. The Co-Chair (JT) informed governors that he had amended the table setting out details of link roles, indicating vacancies and new ones. The Co-Chair (JT) commented that there needed to be a focus on disadvantaged children, given the school was anticipating an admission of FSM students. The Co-Chair (JT) asked governors to consider taking on link roles on sustainability, careers, board development & training, cyber security & technology, attendance and behaviour.
- 9.2. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the offers from governors to fill the following roles – JMc (careers); LL (sustainability); JS (PP and disadvantaged children); TS (cyber security and technology; Section 106 funding); JH (board development and training). The Co-Chair (JT) thanked governors for these offers and agreed to finalise the table showing these roles to go on the website.

10. Governor vacancies recruitment and skills gaps

- 10.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that, following the stepping down of Miranda Wells (MW) and JMo, there were now two co-opted governor and one parent

governor vacancies; skills sets welcome included Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and finance.

11. Board objectives for 2024-2025

- 11.1. The Co-Chair (JT) explained that this was about identifying areas of focus for governors to look at; suggesting having three to five, both inward (e.g. governance and efficient decision making) and outward (e.g. championing disadvantaged children). The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed suggestions to what areas might be considered; this could also be discussed at Committee level.
- 11.2. Governors recommended they be pro-active in this endeavour and could consider the impact of the potential PAN reduction and balancing this against possible increased admissions from the new housing developments.

12. School policies

Disciplinary (guidance & procedure)

- 12.1. KC explained that the policy had not changed from the current version, but the guidance had (which was based on an LA model). KC drew attention to the highlighted significant areas, e.g. the headteacher's delegated authority. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the disciplinary policy (guidance and procedure).

Behaviour policy

- 12.2. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the behaviour policy.

Attendance policy

- 12.3. Governors asked that a reference to consistency and a fair process about BPs be inserted; this needed to be clear in the policy. KC stated that this was being done regularly in staff briefings; a flowchart had been developed to make the procedure (including the giving of warnings) on BPs clearer. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the attendance policy.

School trips

- 12.4. KC reported that Marcus Bennison (MB) had worked on this policy, drawing on guidance from the Key and checking with the LA; the draft was now very thorough, with actions by the headteacher specified. Governors recommended the school check the links entered in the policy. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school trips policy.

Equalities

- 12.5. KC stated that the school had drawn on the LA model, but this had required additional work; it had also been shared with the Blatchington Mill Anti-Racist Community (BARC) group. KC explained that work was not yet complete on this policy, so it was not ready for review and approval.

Privacy notices

- 12.6. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the privacy notices policy.

Data protection

- 12.7. KC explained that there was no LA model to follow, so the school had drawn on the Key and the DfE to reflect the way the school worked on this issue. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the school data protection policy.

13. Governor training

- 13.1. The Co-Chair (JT) encouraged governors to complete the Keeping Children Safe In Education reading task.

14. Any Other Business – None.

Actions

- Notification of JMo stepping down from his co-opted governor role to the LA – DH
- Finalisation and publication of governors' responsibilities and link roles table - JT
- Supply of suggestions for governors' areas of focus - all

Next meeting – Thursday 23 January 2025 Exam data (full picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...