

**Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School
held on 4 July 2024 at 16.00 hours**

Those Present: James Moncrieff (JMo – arrived at 17.25 hours), Jim Henderson (JH) (Co-Chair), Peter Sowrey (PS), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Joanna McCrae (JMc), Phil Howard (PH), Lisa Goodman (LG), Mark Sorrell (MS), James Tulley (JT) (Co-Chair), Joyti Stach (JS), Lisa Logan (LL), Miranda Wells (MW – arrived 17.00 hours), Emma Gibson (EG) and Tim Shutler (TS).

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Brandon Hughes (BH - Deputy Head Teacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE – deputy headteacher) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 13 out of 14 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed governors to the meeting.

2. Local authority nominated governor appointment; the safeguarding link governor

2.1. The Co-Chair (JT) recalled that, after sixteen years of service to the board, PS was stepping down as the local authority (LA) nominated governor – which had thus created a vacancy. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that in order to secure a successor, he had spoken with KC and JH to EG who had presented an application (supported by the LA) for the position; and now was recommending her application to the FBG for consideration.

2.2. In the temporary absence of EG from the room to allow discussion of her application, the Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of her appointment; to take effect from the date of the meeting i.e. 4 July 2024 for a four year term of office.

2.3. The Co-Chair (JT) also noted that EG had agreed to take on PS' other role of link safeguarding governor.

3. Apologies for Absence.

3.1. Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher) and Miranda Wells (MW) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

4. Presentation by senior students with Q&A

4.1. The Co-Chair (JT) emphasised the importance of students meeting members of the FBG and regretted that it had not in the event been possible to arrange this presentation. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that this presentation would be rescheduled to take place at the next meeting of the FBG on 12 September; by students from the current Year 10 cohort (to become Year 11 in the next

academic year) and include views on student voice, engagement, examinations and careers support.

- 4.2. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the event arranged by the school on 29 June to celebrate the life of a former member of staff – Pat Crowcroft – and praised how well this had been organised and showed off all the best aspects of Blatchington Mill.

5. Declarations of interest

- 5.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that the school was under the lens of attention with regard to governors roles on the board and emphasised the importance of keeping the main register of interests (posted on the school website) up to date. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that governors should keep in mind the need to declare potential conflicts of interests, e.g. holding positions on other boards such as charity trustees or having connections to members of staff.
- 5.2. Governors noted that there were two main strands to this issue; the annual exercise carried out at the beginning of the academic year to declare general interests; and the declaration made at the beginning of each FBG and committee meeting with regard to specific items on agendas.

6. Minutes

- 6.1. The minutes (main set and confidential annex) of the meeting of 2 May 2024 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Co-Chair (JT).

7. Matters Arising

- Proposal of a date for governors to visit the alternative provision (AP) – done. PS added that he had paid a very useful visit to the school AP on 10 June and had been shown around the facility by students, who had given background information; and had spoken to the teachers. PS praised the school's progress in developing the AP, in which impressive work was being done to improve attendance and attainment by students.
- Submission of final budget to Finance Committee for approval – done.
- Follow up meeting with KC on the school's strategy and vision – done.
- The Co-Chair (JT) spoke about the recent meeting of the Pastoral Committee, at which EE had spoken about areas of focus for the next academic year on assemblies. The Co-Chair (JT) asked governors to contact EE with offers of support with regard to their connections; to help the school with future focussed areas and real life success stories, for careers and opportunities, on issues such as racial literacy, masculinity and female empowerment.

8. Efficiency, effectiveness and impact of governance

- 8.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that there were many factors now affecting education at the school, including a falling pupil roll, implementation of a trans toolkit, artificial intelligence and the financial health and well-being of Blatchington Mill. The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention to his and JH's work on how the board could be as effective as possible; consulting with KC, other schools, boards and clerks.

8.2. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that changes would be rolled into the new academic year, e.g. :-

- reviewing the headteacher's report (to include a data dashboard);
- the highlighting of key areas of information and areas for decision;
- the use of committees (including the roles of chairs and vice chairs; and a condensed approach in the FBG);
- a look at how minutes might record and articulate governors' impact on the school (also adopt a similar approach to governors' school visits);
- making more use of board members' individual skills;
- consideration of using the associate member provision.

8.3. The Co-Chair (JH) added that he and JT would be working over the summer to compile a structure of the changes under consideration and would welcome contributions and guidance from governors.

9. Roles on the governors' committees for 2024-2025

9.1. The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed the talent offered by the newly appointed governors (JMc, EG, MW, LL and LG) and drew attention to how this might be deployed by serving on the board's sub-committees. The Co-Chair (JT) suggested governors join committees where they felt the most interest and skills alignment; and stressed that specific training for many areas of work covered was offered by the LA governor support unit.

9.2. The Co-Chair (JT) pointed to the example of the *finance committee* (budgets and resources planning). JMa (finance committee chair) emphasised how serving here was a good way to understand how the school worked and operated, aside from the education aspect. JH added that the work of the finance committee would be significantly impacted by the LA's schools federation proposal.

9.3. The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention to the *Quality of Education Committee* and the work done by BH to help governors navigate the key aspects of the curriculum, department improvement plans and outcomes for students. BH added that QoE went to the core aspect of the school, drawing attention to the daily experiences of pupils.

9.4. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that EE took the lead on the *Pastoral Committee*, focussing on issues such as behaviour, attitudes, well-being, inclusion and equalities. EE commented that students cohorts were ever changing, reflecting the changing and complex way of what was happening in the school. TS (pastoral committee chair) added that an additional focus of this committee was the leading role the school was taking on its AP in Brighton and Hove.

9.5. The Co-Chair (JT) also highlighted the school's health and safety committee, with which governors participated (including TS) and met three times a year; the pay committee which met on an ad hoc basis, to approve the pay policy and approve pay awards; and the headteacher appraisal review group - training was obligatory to participate here.

9.6. The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention as well to specific link roles such as student careers, Blatchington Mill Anti-Racist Community (BARC), equalities, diversity

and inclusion; these would be discussed separately in the new academic year, as more work was needed on what these involved and were expected to achieve. The Co-Chair (JT) explained that these roles acted as links between the board and the school.

- 9.7. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the following offers of committee membership:- JS for the Pastoral Committee; EG for the Pastoral Committee; TS for the Finance Committee; JMc for the Quality of Education and Finance Committees; LL for the Quality of Education Committee; JH for the Health and Safety Committee.

10. Headteacher report

School Partnership Advisor (SPA)

- 10.1. BH reported that the SPA visited the school about three times a year. Governors asked about calling leaders to account. BH explained that this related to training that could be applied and what impact had been had when calling leaders to account.

Challenge Partners

- 10.2. BH drew attention to the Challenge Partners visit last week; these were a group of school leaders, making a quality assurance review of Blatchington Mill. BH stated that the outcome of the visit had been very positive; amongst other areas they had looked at the school's praise and awards system.
- 10.3. Governors reported having met with one of the headteachers, who had asked questions about their roles, the nature of their visits to the school and feedback dealing with staff. Governors stated that the headteacher had commented positively on the strong sense of community, friendly nature and team ethos at the school.
- 10.4. Governors asked how the Challenge Partners personnel were matched or unmatched with the schools they reviewed. BH confirmed there was no deliberate matching or unmatching done; the next review would be done in February 2025.

Risk Management

- 10.5. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that this related to school policies being compiled for the FBG to approve; governors wanted to talk about risk in a broader sense. SH commented that the school was good in responding to crises, but could work on planning for unforeseen incidents.

High Prior Attainment

- 10.6. BH explained that this would not be the subject of a school policy; instead a statement of intent would be produced.

Quality of Education

- 10.7. BH stated that, with regards to data, the school was cautiously optimistic the Year 11 students would do well; their performance during the year had displayed a real purpose and serious focus on work. BH added that he and senior leaders were proud of the way how much progress had been achieved towards the school improvement plan targets.

- 10.8. Governors commented that the school had clearly made great efforts and done all it could to secure students attendance at examinations. Governors asked about the definition of results. BH stated that, based on data, these were realistic targets that had been set for themselves.
- 10.9. Governors asked about the EBacc statistics (a drop from 54% to 52%), but an improvement for science and modern foreign languages (MFL) in 2024 over 2023; also the average points score had increased. BH stated that EBacc was not something pursued by the school as such, it did not oblige students to take the EBacc route – statistics were included here as they were a form of measurement.
- 10.10. Governors commented that, according to the subject projections, drama was looking good. BH acknowledged that there had been a problem here, in that due to an oversight the full course had not been covered – it was possible therefore that school projections on this subject might be over-optimistic.
- 10.11. Governors asked if there were any concerns about computing and MFL. BH acknowledged that MFL results might seem disproportionately lower than other schools; but nevertheless were improving year on year. BH stated that computing was a legacy and teaching issue; but had improved this year over the last.

Behaviour and Attendance

Attendance

- 10.12. EE stated that the school was clear on the direction of travel and preparing for the new term in September.

Onsite alternative provision

- 10.13. EE stated that considerable progress had been made with the AP; Challenge Partners had been complimentary about this facility.
- 10.14. Governors asked about lunchtime detentions. EE stated that these were followed up, by having to stay in after school and a cross-over plan in place for the same day. EE added that the school had now moved away from chromebooks for a more restorative approach.

Staffing

- 10.15. SH provided details about filling recent vacancies (both for teaching staff and administrative) and cover plans for maternity leave absences. SH confirmed that the school was fully staffed for teachers in September. SH added that plans to allow staff an additional day off during the year, as part of well-being measures, had been paused for the time being.

11. Budget

- 11.1. SH confirmed that the draft budget had been submitted to the LA at the end of May; the final version had been balanced and showed a small surplus. SH stated that for 2024-2025 this had been for £116K; £115K of which was ring-fenced for the all weather pitches (AWPs – carpet replacement); but for the following two years, deficits were forecast.
- 11.2. SH added that for the next three years, the percentage proportion of staffing expenditure is anticipated to increase significantly. SH stated that this would be

a challenging period to manage; some areas of activity had been frozen, some very ambitious – also the monitoring of budget holders was up to date.

12. Safeguarding

12.1. EE informed governors that the school was still awaiting the LA's response on the safeguarding audit.

13. Local authority schools federation proposal

(**Note** – discussion on this item appears in a confidential annex)

14. Any other business – None.

Actions

Entry of presentation by senior students with Q&A as FBG agenda item for September meeting - DH

The meeting concluded at 18.00 hours.

Next meeting – Thursday 12 September 2024

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...