

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 7 December 2023 at 17.00 hours**

**Those Present:** Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), James Moncrieff (JMo), Mark Sorrell (MS), Jim Henderson (JH) (Co-Chair), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Peter Sowrey (PS), Phil Howard (PH), James Tulley (JT) (Co-Chair) 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:** 9 out of 12 governors present – meeting was quorate.

### **1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

DH recalled that PS had notified the FBG at its meeting of 14 September of his intention to step down as Chair of Governors, but to carry on in his role of local authority (LA) governor until the expiry of his term of office on 4 July 2024. DH noted that there were nominations of JT and JH for the roles of Co-Chairs; and TS and PS for Co-Vice Chairs. DH noted the FBG's unanimous approval of both sets of appointments; to take effect from the date of this meeting, i.e. 7 December 2023

### **2. Parent and Staff Governor vacancies**

2.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that there had been three applications submitted for the two vacant parent governor positions; and there would be a need for an election, to be carried out in the spring term. The Co-Chair (JT) also took account of the one staff governor vacancy and the work currently underway to fill this position.

### **3. Apologies for Absence.**

3.1. Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Joanna McCrae (JMc) and Vernon Bamforth (VB) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

4. **Declarations of interest** – None.

### **5. Minutes**

5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 14 September 2023 (main set and confidential annex) were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

## 6. Matters Arising

- Production of alternative text for point 11 of the draft Code of Conduct 2023-2024 – ‘responsibilities as a good employer’ – done; a tidied up version to be produced for the next meeting of the FBG and signing by the Co-Chairs.
- Confirmation of skills/training/continuing professional development governor link role – to be done.
- Check of trained mediators and SLT attendance procedures points in school antibullying policy – done.

## 7. Headteacher report

7.1. KC noted the questions made in writing by governors on her report, in the form of separate comments in a table posted on Google Drive and addressed (with the help of BH) specific points below:-.

7.2. *National landscape* – KC stated that she had talked through these issues with EE and BH; most students were behaving correctly with a small minority refusing to obey instructions. EE added that, without overstating the issue, there was a decline in parental engagement with a small number causing difficulties. EE stated that the school continued with its efforts to work on relationships with families.

7.3. *Local landscape* – KC did not think there was anything specific in the reasons for the differences in Free School Meals students’ proportions in Blatchington Mill and Hove Park schools; there was a free choice for families in looking at individual schools.

Governors asked if the school was planning a response to the LA secondary school consultation process. KC stated that, at present, no response was planned and the school was waiting to see what transpired - however there was a risk of more disparity occurring with what the LA was proposing.

Governors recommended the school reconsider and put in a response, setting out comments on how the situation might be exacerbated. KC agreed that she could take this action, in agreement with governors, setting out the potential consequences and impact of LA proposals.

Governors suggested the response take the form of putting additional questions, acknowledging the poverty issue and the need for support but asking about the forward planning to mitigate such issues.

KC agreed to compile a response and would work with the Co-Chairs; the deadline for submission was 22 December 2023.

7.4. *School Partnership Advisor (SPA) visit* – KC confirmed that she had spoken to BH about the results of this visit; specifically as it related to mathematics. KC added that the school would be following up by working through strands, structures and processes (including the move to increasing the number of sets). KC commented that staff would need time to adapt to these changes and noted that the mathematics leadership team was close knit and on board with what was happening.

- 7.5. *Anti-Racism update* – KC confirmed that two assistant headteachers had attended the ‘representation matters’ conference and had found it very inspiring.
- 7.6. *Parent Governors vacancies* – KC reiterated the information set out by the Co-Chair in paragraph 2.1 above.
- 7.7. *Published Admission Numbers (PANs)* – KC provided details of numbers of outside applications at the LA level.
- 7.8. *Trans inclusion* – KC stated that this was a complex situation with a number of issues to consider. KC provided details of numbers of students socially transitioning and confirmed that Year teams were working with families picking up specific issues. Governors noted that the Department for Education (DfE) had still not issued definitive guidance on the matter.
- 7.9. *Senior Leadership Team (SLT) development* – KC stated that this was in progress and planned to publish a chart and make available to all staff shortly.
- 7.10. *Teaching Staff Performance Management* – KC acknowledged that under half of staff had responded to this survey; the school would consider ways to increase the numbers of responses in the future. Governors noted however that those responses received were largely very positive in nature.

The Co-Chair (JT) asked about the shift to management from appraisal; KC stated that this was about tightening up teachers’ standards. BH added that time was allowed for staff to sit with their line managers to talk through tasks to be done.

- 7.11. *Student Governor summary* – KC stated that the new assistant headteacher had started in January; his role would include student development as well as student voice; structures and processes would be defined more clearly; then a meeting scheduled with governors to take forward involvement with student governors.
- 7.12. *Parent Voice* – KC spoke of the broadly positive feedback received from partnership evenings.
- 7.13. *Staff well-being* – KC stated that there was no process as such for teachers and support staff awards, apart from an *ad hoc* spot prizes initiative.
- 7.14. *Public relations* – KC stated that the new website design was not yet complete and subject to planning over the next two terms; consideration would be given to creating a governance tab. KC added that part of the work would include updating photographs for multiple purpose use; the SLT would consult families as part of this process. With regard to a compliance check, KC confirmed that one would be done next term.

#### *Quality of Education*

- 7.15. *Quality of Education Committee report* – BH confirmed that he was working alongside the mathematics team, following the SPA visit, discussing outcomes and quality assurance. BH added that he would provide the QoEC with an update on specific mathematics issues, following further governor visits. JMo paid tribute to the work done on the strands of education by BH and his team, which was impressive, developmental and creative – this effort should advance where students had reached.

- 7.16. *Careers* – BH stated that work on careers was being moved forward with the Enterprise Coordinator, West Sussex, Brighton & Hove Careers Hub.
- 7.17. *Gifted and Talented* – BH explained that such children were not referred to by this term anymore; rather the term ‘high prior attainment’. BH added that a super curricular programme was underway, including a tracking of these students’ data put in place. BH stated that a super curricular hub was on the school website; governors noted that this hub was accessible to all students. Governors noted that the super curricular hub would be open to all students; not aimed at any group in particular. BH stated that the school would work to identify high attaining students, including attaching labels to work sheets to help with identification.

Governors asked how transparent teachers were with such students. KC stated that the school wanted to move away from labelling such students which was part of the previous system; a future arrangement might involve a link to target grades.

The Co-Chair (JT) recommended the next FBG review the high prior attainment policy.

#### *Behaviour and attendance*

- 7.18. *Staff channel* – EE explained that once staff logged on to their chromebooks, they could click on the pastoral area.
- 7.19. *Attendance* – EE stated that a slow but steady improvement could be seen, for an upward trajectory.
- 7.20. *Onsite Alternative Provision (AP)*. With regard to the AP, EE stated that the school was navigating and learning this operation all the time; governors were welcome to visit in the spring term to meet staff and see progress achieved.
- Governors asked if the LA had provided any funding for the AP, both in terms of capital expenditure and staffing. SH confirmed that the LA had met the school’s capital bid but had not provided any funding for staffing.
- EE commented that other schools had expressed an interest in what Blatchington Mill was doing with the AP and doing something similar; discussions included how challenges were being managed.
- 7.21. Celebrating ‘Brilliant Blatch Behaviour’ – EE explained the expansion of this achievement points scheme, to include the allocation of platinum and diamond awards, over the existing bronze, silver and gold ones.
- 7.22. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the tangible impact of achievement points and if it improved behaviour. EE stated that it was too early to tell, the school was presently focussing on students engaging more with the achievement points system, making it more purposeful and something to aim for.
- 7.23. Family Partnership evenings – EE agreed that looking at the availability of virtual and interactive methods would be worthwhile; this could be done next term.

#### *Barriers to Learning*

- 7.24. *Children in Care/Previously in Care and Pupil Premium* – BH stated that, when it came to student access to resources e.g. PP pupils underperforming,

there was contact with the Year offices on how they were supported and discussions held with students.

7.25. *Examinations* – KC acknowledged that there were a number of student non-attenders this year; the attendance officer was working on this issue and working on implementing bespoke arrangements where necessary. EE added that, with any student with less than 50% attendance record; she went through this list with the attendance officer as a way of keeping oversight on the issue  
PS asked at what stage this issue became an LA responsibility. EE stated that the school kept in contact with the Child Missing in Education unit of the LA, highlighting the issues.

7.26. *Careers* – KC stated that the school was working on the issue of appointing a head of careers; with the intention of looking at this internally for the time being.

#### *Pastoral*

7.27. *Special Educational Needs (SEN)* – KC spoke of the SEN pupil transition process to Blatchington Mill; information was received from the LA (including on whether the school could meet the needs of Education, Health & Care (EHC) plan children) and primary schools (the vulnerability index). KC stated that the school met with parents of children with high needs.

7.28. *Support staff* – KC provided details of numbers of teaching assistants and stated that work was being done on job roles of the team; however the number of SEN students tended to fluctuate.

7.29. *Mental health* – KC suggested that a session on support for staff and pupils be arranged for the next Pastoral Committee meeting.

#### *Administrative*

7.30. *Allergens policy* – SH confirmed that emails to families had been sent out about not bringing nut products into school; evidence was in place to show that the school had taken all appropriate measures to manage this issue.

7.31. *Finance* – SH stated that the school was in contact with the provider about the sQuid issues and anticipated the situation in January would be better; however the school might have to consider looking for a different platform, which was a disappointing outcome given what kind of delivery had been originally promised.

7.32. With regard to the Finance Management System changeover, SH stated that the school would be in third wave of migration.

7.33. *Network services* – SH stated that timing on dealing with subject access requests depending on who and what the subject was. SH added that the school was obliged to respond to such a request within 30 days; the process started with the information in question being uploaded within 10 days; a further week to redact information if necessary; and another week to check the result. SH commented that the main time consuming element was redacting the material concerned, e.g. involvement of other names. SH stated that the school was looking at use of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) platforms and would engage a data protection assistant to help with the process.

## **8. Budget**

- 8.1. SH informed governors that she was about to prepare the Year 1 staffing budget (the backbone of the main budget); and the three year budget by the end of February 2024.

## **9. Safeguarding**

- 9.1. KC drew attention to the appointment of a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with another Assistant Headteacher to support this work. With regard to SLT performance management, the school was rewriting the section on scope and ambition on student development and safeguarding – this would provide an opportunity to check systems and processes were in place. KC expressed confidence that all this would strengthen the depth of knowledge in this safeguarding team. KC welcomed PS staying on to act in the role of link safeguarding governor.

## **10. School policies**

- 10.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's approval of the proposal that it need not have to approve policies that changed simply because of amendments to names.

*Management in Allergens in Schools policy*

- 10.2. SH explained that this draft policy was based on an LA model and had been worked on by the health & safety committee.

- 10.3. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's approval of this management in allergens in schools policy.

*Health and Safety policy*

- 10.4. SH pointed to a change in structure of the H&S policy, now based on an LA model. SH drew attention to how this model had been adapted by the school to fit its circumstances and confirmed it had been worked on by the H&S committee (with the welcome help of TS, the link H&S governor).

- 10.5. Governors asked about incident management logging. SH stated that this would be added as an appendix. SH added that staff would be given a month to read the policy and sign a declaration to this effect.

- 10.6. The Co-Chair (JH) asked if the policy changed what staff had to do. SH stated that this was not the case, just that the document now covered issues more thoroughly.

- 10.7. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's approval of this health & safety policy.

## **11. Governor training**

- 11.1. PH, VB and TS reported having undertaken training on unconscious bias; PH and JT on finance; JMo on careers education and artificial intelligence in education. The Co-Chair (JT) added that the LA finance training had been

particularly interesting on the update of moving from local to national funding formula

## **12. Any Other Business**

12.1. PH reported that punctuality and attendance at mock examinations had been very good; no banned items had been brought in; nothing inappropriate discovered during the exams themselves; work ethic and behaviour were good.

### **Actions**

Notification of PS stepping down as Chair of Governor; and appointments of JT & JH as Co-Chairs; and TS & PS as Co-Vice Chairs to LA governor support - DH

Production of a final version of the Code of Conduct 2023-2024 for signature by the Co-Chairs – DH/JT/JH

Submission of response to LA consultation on secondary schools – KC, JT and JH

Review of high prior attainment school policy at next FBG meeting – all.

**Next meeting** – Thursday 25 January 2024

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...