

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,  
Penrith, held on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 at 6.00pm in Room B1**

Present:

Mrs G Gravett (P)	Mr M Bauer (CoG)
Miss R McMann (Clerk)	Ms S Warner (S)
Mr R Shephard (CoG)	Mr A Worth (S)
Dr E Mawson (Deputy Head)	Mr P Buckland
Mr P Airey (CoG)	Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr J Ray (CoG)	Mr C Hansford (GbS)
Mr M Worrall (CoG)	

Visitors: Mr Rob Dawson to present  
item 7

9 Governors in attendance.

Quorum per article 114 – 7 Governors  
(one half of the governors holding office rounded up to the nearest whole number)

GbS – Governor by Statute  
MaG – Member appointed Governor  
CoG – Co-opted Governor  
S – Staff  
P- Parent

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted for Dr Castles (family), Ms Mills (work commitment) and Mrs Rae (family)

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest in the agenda items.

3. Any changes to the declaration of Business Interests

There were no changes to the declaration of business interests.

4. Minutes of the Governors Meeting Held Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018  
FG201819(10)

With the exception of the misspelling Mr Bauer's name, the minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record,

5. The Way Forward: Full and Frank Discussion of All Options Available to the  
School

In order to facilitate a structured discussion, Mr Buckland had prepared a detailed Powerpoint presentation outlining the following:

- Financial Projections
- Risks
- Savings
- MATS
- Sixth Form Collaboration (presented by Dr Mawson)

It was noted that the presentation would be attached to the minutes as an appendix for the benefit of those not present and also as a reference tool for Governors.

In presenting the finances, Mr Buckland began by praising the fantastic work of Mrs Armstrong, who has gone above and beyond her role for the good of the school. The slides showed figures which had been re-drafted with the assistance of the Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Business Manager (supporting due to absence in the department) and they show the school to be in a much stronger position both now and over the next three years than had previously been reported to Governors.

It was noted that the finances over the next three years are based on the assumption that the PAN intake remains at 160. Mr Buckland was positive that the outreach work by Mrs Chapman, Mrs Wilkinson and Mrs Denyer was bearing fruit as tours had gone up by 61% and those taking the test were up by 27% since last year. That coupled with changing the test provider to eliminate the element of coaching is believed to have made this a much more attractive in both in and out of catchment schools. Additionally, Mr Buckland assured Governors that this was not at a cost of lowering standards as the school is attracting so many more students and thus, he was confident that the intake was still of quality not merely quantity.

Mrs Gravett asked for clarification of the percentage of pupil premium students and this was confirmed at around 13%. In response to Mr Airey's question, Mr Buckland stated that there is no set OFSTED target for this.

With regards to numbers and funding it is predicted that by the academic year 2023/24 there will be 800 students in the main school, creating additional revenue via funding per pupil (on the basis that each year will by then have 160 students per year group). Mrs Gravett challenged the impact that this would have on the costs associated with enrolling extra students. Dr Mawson answered by saying whilst it was difficult to predict staffing costs, the school was fortunate as there are a number of part-time staff working in key areas and thus, there is flexibility within that. As a guestimate, normally budget for 1 full-time equivalent across the whole curriculum. However, last year for example managed to cover the curriculum without taking on any more staff.

Mr Buckland presented figures associated with pay awards and pensions. It was predicted that 1% of any teaching pay award would not be funded and that is what the school has budgeted for. With regards to potential savings, Mr Buckland outlined the cost of running an A-Level course is £14,400 per year and given QEGS runs some courses with very few students, it could be that eliminating the less subscribed courses could be an option. However, he did not see this as a viable solution, citing an example from 2015 when economics was dropped, resulting in 12 pupils leaving. It was noted that the CIF work to improve the school will have an impact in reducing maintenance bills.

As per Governor request, significant time was given to discuss MATS, what they entail and the options of the different types of MAT the school could potentially enter and the pros and cons of these. Questions and comments were as follows:

- *As more schools are working towards 90% teaching time, is QEGS still sticking to 85% (JR)?* Yes, as the school wants to address staff welfare. Although it could be an option, there is no intention to move to 90% (PB).
- *In relation to the above, increasing teaching time would have a negative impact on extra-curricular activities which is a key part of the school's ethos (TBF).*
- *Can primary schools be included in a MAT (PA)?* Yes, most MATS have a primary school in them (PB). Keswick School has Bassenthwaite Primary in it (GG).
- *If QEGS was a sponsor school would it control the rules (MB)?* Yes (PB)
- *Is there an advantage to forming an empty MAT (AW)?* Cannot see an advantage, could potentially be a strategic move (PB). If an empty MAT for too long, EFSA will take over the budget as the school would not be fulfilling its roles of a MAT (MW)
- *Would there be an advantage to being like Keswick in setting up a MAT and then just taking over one school (AW)?* It will be expected that they in time expand on this (MW)
- *Does being in a MAT see an improvement in academic achievement (PA)?* No, in 2018 51% were below average in Progress 8.

- The focus on MATS by the government seems to have quietened down (TBF)
- Must consider the school's reputation and have members of the SLT who have had experience of MATS and their advice is not to form / join one. Currently the school is in a loose federation which works better (PB).

Dr Mawson gave a presentation exploring different types of Sixth Form collaboration and whilst she felt there were benefits of this, this would be set against many challenges. She drew on her own experience from a previous school which had a collaborative Sixth Form and KS4. Most of the discussion centred around the issue of the inability to manage staff in the other school as they are employed by someone else, the results the pupil gets in the subject offered at the collaborative school go on this school's record, the differences in ethos between collaborative schools, and the logistics of moving students between sites. Other questions and comments arising from her presentation were as follows:

- *What is the current status regarding the government's desire to set up stand-alone Sixth Form Centres (GG)?* There are pressures on school's to be viable. It is a model they would like schools to go to (PB). It is under review as very few are successful – an area review has shown that students are wanting to stay in a school based Sixth Form and thus, this has settled down somewhat (EM).

The presentation was concluded and the final thoughts of the Governors were as follows:

- These discussions were prompted due to financial worries about the school. However, the picture presented this evening is much rosier. Additionally, with the increased PAN intake by definition this should mean that Sixth Form numbers increase. With these factors in mind see no reason to join / form a MAT. Credit to the SLT for solving the financial problem themselves (RS)
- *Agreed with above comment, do the financial projections take into account the potential rise in Sixth Form numbers (MB)?* No they do not (PB)
- Mr Martin and Miss Smith have been very proactive in external recruitment to the Sixth Form (EM)
- The two highest risks for the school would be the loss of its OFSTED outstanding rating and loss of key personnel (TBF).
- Big factor in training as an OFSTED inspector was to gain inside knowledge and at present, given the results and position the school is in, it would be difficult for the school to lose that rating. Loss of key personnel will always be an issue in any school (PB)
- Very keen to look at MATS as it is part of our duty as Governors but it presents a very different picture (RS)
- There could be scope for a strategic route if finances change for example (MB)
- The predicted deficit is so small – the situation would have to be a lot worse for this to be considered (MW)

- Continue to do what we are doing. There might be a scenario where the school is asked to sponsor another school but at the moment we do not have the capacity to do that (EM)
- In agreement that MATS do not seem like a good idea and it is good that figures are better. However, from a staff perspective they have undergone budget cuts and how long can this go on? There needs to be a level of balance as these cuts are hurting right now – still need to look closely at finances (AW)
- There is definitely a balance needed and the school’s biggest asset is its staff (EM)
- Important part of our duty to look at these options and in concluding this, it will leave more space to discuss other things (TBF).
- *Ask the opinion of Mr Worrall on the presentation given his previous background as a Chair on the Board of Trustees for a MAT (GG)?* Agree with the presentation and the conclusion of the SLT. Size matters in MATS – government is looking for 8,000 plus students for a viable MAT and they are pushing the top-down model. There are too many flaws in them and would not be able to maintain the school’s ethos. You cannot be a headteacher and a CEO (MW).

**At the end of the discussion on MATS and Sixth Form collaboration, the Governors decided to take a vote on the best option for the school. It was unanimously agreed that due to the improved finances and the evidence presented, that currently exploring MATS will not be taken any further. Similarly, it was unanimously agreed that investigating a Sixth Form collaboration further was not suitable for this school.**

Mrs Boving-Foster concluded this item by saying whilst this discussion had taken some time, it was very worthwhile as it has concluded debates that have been in the background for some time now. She made thanks to Mr Buckland and Dr Mawson for the time taken to prepare their presentations and giving a balanced view.

## 6. Risk Register

As the Governors had spent some time discussing the previous item and the absence of Mrs Rae (who requested that this item should go to Full Governors as opposed to just the Finance and Pay Committee), it was agreed that this would be postponed to a future meeting. **Action: Miss McMann to liaise with Mrs Rae as to whether she would like this to come back to Full Governors’ in March or the Finance meeting in February.**

## 7. Future I.T. policy and Infrastructure

Mrs Boving-Foster thanked Mr Dawson for taking the time to prepare the documents which had been previously circulated to Governors and invited questions and comments on them to Mr Dawson.

- *Do the machines work satisfactorily (TBF)?* Once they are up and running most are good with the average start up time being 5-10 minutes. This is something to address over the next two years. Older machines will be refurbished and set up as google chrome machines.
- *Are these changes in the budget (JR)?* Yes (RD)
- *Is a 'bring your own device' the best long-term way to save money (AW)?* The school is not in a position now or in the next three years to do this (RD) This is something to build up over the next three years (EM)
- *What is the gold standard to aim for (PA)?* This is a windows system school and looking to have all machines running on Windows 10 by 2020. The school does not have the money to do something all at once. It is very much an evolved system. All students can put Office 365 onto three of their devices for the duration of their time at school (RD).
- Was unaware about Office 365, perhaps a communication needs to go out to parents (GG)
- *Is the next three years about survival and improvement (TBF)?* To an extent it is, but a lot of this is dependent on application to the Wolfson Fund (RD)
- It is clear that there is a well thought out strategy – this is bearing fruit since employing Mr Colosi (MB).
- *Is GDPR embedded in this (MB)?* It is discussed every time the department looks at something in particular (RD).
- There is a parent at the school who works in I.T. / cyber defence for the police force – perhaps it is worth sharing this with him (JR) **Action point: Mr Dawson to get contact details.**

There was a short debate about the website and the potential to improve it. Mr Airey queried the cost of the website, which Dr Mawson confirmed as a small hosting fee with Mr Dawson responsible for everything. Mr Airey suggested that perhaps it could be improved and that students could be involved. Mr Dawson cited there may be security issues with this approach. Mr Shephard countered this and felt that social media presence is far more important and the website really serves to perform statutory requirements. Both Mr Airey and Mrs Boving-Foster felt that the website still needs to be appealing as social media will grab people and then send them to the website. Mr Dawson felt that he would like to do more work on the website, particularly on removing all the dead ends on it. Mr

Buckland concluded the discussion by praising the work Mr Dawson does against a lack of money and capacity and that he felt that the website was heading in the right direction.

Mrs Boving-Foster finished the meeting by passing on her congratulations to the SLT and staff for the school being listed as the top school in Cumbria in The Times School Performance Table.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 6.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.10pm