

Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 5th December 2019 at 5.30pm in Room E19

Present

Miss R McMann (Clerk)	Mr A Martin (S)
Dr E Mawson (Deputy Head)	Mr P Airey (CoG)
Mr C Hansford	Mr P Buckland
Mr G Miller (P)	Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr M Worrall (CoG)	Mr J Ray (CoG)

Visitors: Mr Colosi prior to the meeting proper and a Chair of Governors from another school, Mr Richard Harris who was there to observe the meeting as a peer (Mrs Boving-Foster has visited his school).

8 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

As per the agenda Mr Colosi attended the start of the meeting to assist Governors in setting up school email accounts and access to a new SharePoint. Miss McMann will send instructions to those not attending,. Mr Colosi was thanked for his time and left the meeting.

Round the table positive starters to the meeting were given and introductions for the benefit of Mr Harris.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted for Dr Jenkins, Mr Shephard, Mr Worth, Mrs Rae (work), Ms J Mills (holiday) and Mr Bauer (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 interests.

4. Minutes of the Governors Meeting Held October 2019

With the exception of correcting Appleby School's Progress 8 score to -0.2 the minutes were unanimously agreed and signed as a true record.

It is now confirmed that Dr Jenkins has taken over the role of the SEND link Governor from Mr Shephard.

5. Matters Arising

With regards to the action points from the last meeting:

- A copy of the three year budget had been sent to all Governors with the agenda for this meeting.
- A link Governor for parents and Friends of QEGS is still needed. As there were no volunteers and a number of apologies Mrs Boving-Foster said that she would send an email round to all Governors.
- Subscribing to The Key features later in the agenda.

6. Report from the Sub-Committees

Finance Committee

In the absence of Mrs Rae, Mr Ray presented the minutes. It was noted that these are subject to Mrs Rae's approval. The main focus of the meeting was the audit and Mr Ray noted some frustration that the audit report was only available on the night of the meeting (Mrs Rae had previously seen it). Therefore, the discussion was led by Mrs Rae and her deep knowledge on this. Overall, the audit is clean but there may be a delay in submitting the accounts due to the ambiguity over the CIF monies. Mr Buckland reported that he had written to the EFSA (and sent a pack of invoices) three weeks ago and whilst they have acknowledged this letter they have not yet responded. The advice from the meeting was re-iterated that it would be better to submit the accounts late and to not push the EFSA for an answer.

Mrs Boving-Foster informed the Governors that Mrs Rae would be available to take any questions over the phone during the meeting. This item was ended by saying the most important point in the Finance minutes were that the auditors were satisfied there are no irregularities in the accounts.

Education and Standards

As Ms Mills who chaired the meeting sent her apologies Mrs Boving-Foster gave an outline of the meeting which focussed on SEND, Data Drop and the school's celebration culture. There were no questions or comments.

7. Statutory Accounts

It was again reinforced that Mrs Rae would take any questions over the phone but that she had given plenty of scrutiny during the Finance meeting. Mr Thompson of Saint and Co had not yet signed the accounts off due to the unresolved issue of the potential CIF clawback and if there were monies to be paid back how long it would be spread over. However, he did not have any issues with this as the school were the ones who went to the EFSA for advice on this matter. Mr Worrall said that he felt that the school is right to wait for this and submit quality accounts.

Mr Hansford asked that in the event of the EFSA asking for the monies to be paid back in full in one lump sum does the school have the means to do this? Mr Buckland answered that yes there are £240,000 in reserves but it is highly unlikely that they would ask for it in one lump sum.

It was unanimously agreed by all Governors present that the accounts could be signed off subject to the outcome of the CIF issue.

8. Risk Register

Normally this would go to the Finance Committee but due to a full agenda in November it has come to the Full Governing Body. This is because the risk register will be needed for input into the January strategy meeting and also for the SIP. Each category was looked at in turn and Governors were asked to comment if they felt something needed to be revised.

Strategic Risks:

It was felt that ethos should be marked as a 3 and 4 as the school is growing and thus need to be mindful that the school keeps its ethos in the process. Mr Buckland took this point on board but felt that at this moment in time there is no increased risk displayed through the ethos of the staff and this is also evidenced in the questionnaires.

It was noted that the grading system should be changed to the new 1-9 scoring system as opposed to A*-C

Financial Risks

Mr Airey commented that there are numerous references in this section and throughout the document to the Head of Finance and Facilities but this person has been off since October 2018. Thus, he sought reassurances that someone has picked up these things and will continue to do so until their return. Mr Miller agreed with this adding that perhaps with this absence the likelihood of something going wrong increases. Additionally, Mr Airey cited concerns that presently the DPO for the school is subject to consultation and feels that this needs to be noted on the document and who is doing it in the meantime. Mr Buckland answered by saying that in reality many of the items on the risk register are shared out and currently he, despite it not being best practice, is the named DPO officer. He accepted that, at present, there may need to be an amendment. Mr Ray suggested a generic note in the introduction to cover this or any absence in the future. **It was agreed by the Governors that a note would be added to the introduction of this document stating that in the event of an absence that the roles would be re-delegated as appropriate.**

Regulatory Risks

Mr Airey noted that the terminology needs to be changed to GDPR and there was also another discussion on the DPO role. As all the advice states it should not be the Headteacher and as there are potentially more people asking for data and challenging it that this should be increased to a 3 and 4 on the register.

Operational

Under the physical disasters section there was short discussion as to whether the impact of frost damage should be at a 6 but it was agreed to leave that as it is.

Managerial Risks

Due to more positive financial projections it was thought that the loss of Governors should be lowered to a 3 and a 3. It was suggested by Mrs Boving-Foster that add a category titled budget deficit with a score of 2 and 5.

With regards to HR compliance Mr Miller felt that the school needs to build in more robustness in this area. It was noted that there was a typing error which should read 'advice' and it was agreed to have this rating as a 3 and a 5.

Mrs Boving-Foster gave her overview on what she thought the highest risks, as an outcome of the assessment should look like. Whilst a loss of funding and lower funding rates are of significant concern, they are beyond the school's control and this is something which is

inbuilt and dealt with as and when it may happen. Thus, Mrs Boving-Foster believed the main risks (outcomes) are:

- Safeguarding
- Trespassing
- Out of hours access
- Compliance with Data Protection Act / change to GDPR.
- Maintaining the ethos, understood in a wide sense, and with careful consideration re. the meaning of the ethos.
- OFSTED, keeping the school Outstanding
- Loss of key personal

Comments on this were as follows:

- Data Protection: there are mitigating circumstances with this and there is confidence that the right systems are in place and thus this should be a 1 year goal (JR)
- Maintaining the ethos: very impressed with Mr Worth's report to the Education Committee and the support in place (TBF)
- Loss of key personnel: need to consider who these people are and have a backup plan with good succession planning (MW).

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9. Stress Report

Mr Ray presented his report stating that his focus was on teaching, pastoral and facilities. He reported that he came to the following conclusions:

- There is a great SLT in place who are coping but are naturally stretched
- The way in which subjects are currently taught might need to change.
- Highly positive that well-being and mindfulness is taught but need to ensure systems are in place to monitor the effectiveness of this.
- New pastoral recruit means the team is as strong as it has ever been.

With regards to the strategic governors' meeting in January Mr Ray felt that there needed to be some discussions around the buildings with the number of departments (Hall, Sixth Form and Sports Hall) requiring development and what the priorities are. This all links back to ethos and providing quality.

In answer to this Mr Buckland said that there is no drop in quality with the extra intake with CAT tests producing similar if not showing more able students and that the school needs more pupils. Dr Mawson added to this saying that the facilities and rooms are not stretched.

Mrs Boving-Foster said her priority is the quality of the children that leave the school and that they have access to a rounded education. Mr Worth could not make the meeting but had emailed in some comments which were read out:

“Facilities are believed better than most schools”.

I am not sure who believes this but we have more limited facilities than UCC, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen. The PE curriculum is becoming narrower and less equitable. Increased numbers without increased facilities will accelerate this.

Gymnastics was cited as an example whereby increased class sizes would mean will not be offer gymnastics in the same way. The astroturf is shared with two other schools and these schools utilise it at the same time. Hockey was also used as an example whereby it would possibly have to be reduced and thus the concern is that balance and variety in the curriculum is not achievable.

In response to this Mr Buckland stressed that class sizes will remain the same – there will be an extra form. Dr Mawson, whilst understanding Mr Worth’s perspective and was not disputing the curriculum balance, said that overall teachers are used to teaching in a certain way, and to accommodate the overall growing number of students the structure of teaching might have to change. Overall, she felt that what the school is offering is different not worse.

Mr Buckland drew the Governors’ attention to the Masterplan which prioritises the order in which things have to be done. Dr Mawson reinforced that there is enough space for the increased Sixth Form.

The item was concluded with Mr Buckland saying he found the report very reassuring. Mr Worrall added that he found it very useful. Mrs Boving-Foster said that this would be re-visited in the January meeting.

10. SIP

As per the RAG ratings, most things are ongoing as it is still so early in the year. Mr Buckland reported that a number of departmental visits had been conducted and that he was confident in them. With regards to peer observations, this is something which is still being worked on. When asked for his opinion by non-staff Governors, Mr Martin commented that he feels that there are benefits to doing this but that there is a balance as staff are busy and there is a natural shyness amongst some staff around this area, which is part of the ethos and the more old-fashioned nature of teaching (four years ago there were no classroom observations). On the point of the ethos, Mr Martin said that the school must really take time and care to consider what the school’s ethos is.

It was also reported in this item that the first celebration breakfast will take place before Christmas. The new pastoral staff are settling in and doing well. Lastly it was noted that the Finance part is green as the school is £28,000 more favourable in the first two months.

11. Safeguarding

There are four safeguarding issues at this time but it is not appropriate to report details in this forum. Mr Buckland gave his thanks and credit to Mrs Chapman in dealing with them.

Mr Worrall reported that he had met with Mrs Chapman and they both felt that it would be advantageous for Governors to undertake the basic safeguarding training (which all staff do). This would be an online training session and would only take twenty minutes. Once all new Governor email addresses are set up, Miss McMann will send the link to complete the training. The aim is to have this complete prior to the Full Governors' meeting in January.

12. Health and Safety

Mr Buckland did not have anything to report. Mr Miller, the Health and Safety Link Governor, reported that he had looked at first aid provision and COSHH procedures in Science and felt there was good processes in place. With regards to first aid he wanted to look at how the school keeps a record of the 'use by' dates on first aid equipment and ensures things are replaced / disposed of. Additionally, he said that he would like to look at some risk assessments.

13. Governor Training

Mr Ray reported that he had completed one of the online modules of the NGA tool. When asked for an evaluation he said that it was perfectly ok and convenient in terms of being able to complete the training as and when suits.

Mrs Boving-Foster informed the Governors' that her Chair Development course is ongoing, and still proving useful.

With regards to subscribing to The Key for Governors, Mrs Boving-Foster recommended that the £569 was invested in doing so. Her rationale being that whilst the NGA was a good tool, particularly for online training, The Key is much easier to navigate in terms of finding useful articles. Mr Buckland backed this up saying that the SLT use it all the time. **It was unanimously agreed that this would be a worthwhile investment.**

14. Headteacher's Report

The main focus of Mr Buckland's report was the intention to consult on the Admissions Policy. He apologised for the late circulation but this is owing to the fact that the policy needs to be published on the website on the 20th December for the six week consultation. The changes have been highlighted on the policy but the main change is a change to an online application system. Additionally the date on page three has changed to 29th June and the wording on page 6 is now more explicit.

The Governors were reassured that those who do not have access to a computer will be given access to facilities in school.

It was unanimously agreed to accept the proposed changes and the policy will be put out for consultation.

Mr Buckland gave his thanks to all staff for the success of the Beauty and the Beast production.

There has also been notable success on the Oxbridge applications with 15 of the 18 students applying securing an interview. Credit was given to Mr Martin, Miss Smith and all other staff involved.

16. Notices

Mrs Boving-Foster read out an email sent by Mrs Jenkins reporting on a highly positive experience with the Student Council. She said that they were a pleasure to listen to and were very fair. Overall, she felt that they were a credit to the school.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 30th January 2020, 5.30pm.

The meeting concluded with a round the table analysis of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm. There was a confidential item to follow and Mr Martin and Mr. Harris, observing the meeting were asked to leave.