

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Monday 4th May 2020 at 5.30pm as a virtual meeting.**

Present

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

Visitors: none

14 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

Please note that this was conducted as a virtual meeting via Zoom due to the Covid-19 outbreak and closure of schools. Housekeeping rules to ensure everyone had chance to speak were established and Governors were reminded of the pressure that everyone is facing and therefore, to be mindful when voicing an opinion or concern.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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 5th March 2020

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record. Signing of the minutes will be arranged as soon as is practicable.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. An update regarding the Safeguarding training will be given later in the meeting.

6. Education and Standards Report

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, this meeting was held via email. Mrs Boving-Foster reported that in hindsight this probably would have been better done via the Zoom application.

Mr Hansford reported that the NGA guidance stipulated that the focus of this meeting was to be on business and monitoring. The main item was Mr Buckland's report which will be covered later in the meeting. Additionally, Mr Hansford informed the Governors that two policies, Word Processing and Access Arrangements, were also approved. There were no questions or comments.

7. Three Year Strategy Document

This has been produced on the basis of the Full Governing Body meeting in January 2020 and with later discussions between Mrs Boving-Foster, Mr Worrall and the SLT. It is based on a model from The Key that focusses on the three Ls: Leadership, Learning and Living. Mr Buckland spoke through each section and all Governors were individually invited to ask questions for each of the three sections.

Due to the uncertainty surrounding an outstanding query from ESFA as well as COVID19, the strategy will be revisited in 2021 and extended for one more year and will be revised if necessary.

Leadership – Expansion of the SLT

Mr Buckland introduced this with the news that Mrs Chapman is leaving at the end of the year and therefore, a decision has been taken to employ a temporary assistant head for one year. The process for this will be letters of interest and this will be open for all staff. After this period the school will recruit two permanent assistant heads. The intention is also that the new Business Manager will be a member of the SLT. This position has been shortlisted to four people who will face three interview panels (one with the finance staff, Jeanette and

Janet, a panel with Mrs Rae and a full interview). A date for this will be set for two weeks time and will be done virtually given the circumstances. Questions and comments were as follows:

- *Will the DPO role be part of the Business Manager's job? If so, are there concerns about the proximity to data if they are to be part of the SLT (PA)?* The role of the DPO has been written into the job description. With regards to the data this will have to be looked at on a case by case basis but SLT meetings do not tend to go through a lot of data (PB)
- *Is the school's income the same (JR)?* Catering has been hit heavily. Furloughing catering staff has realised some savings. Overall, it is difficult to say – there will be exams in the Autumn which will cost. There will be savings in capitation and reprographics. There is also the unknown of what it might cost to re-open the school (PB).
- *There is a misconception that schools are fully-funded. There are still costs that will naturally be incurred and must keep an eye on. Hoping for a strong Business Manager candidate who is pro-active with the budget and will keep a close eye on it (KR)*
- *Does this impact on this wish list (JR)?* This is why we will re-visit this in January as there are so many insecurities (TBF).
- *The temporary assistant head post is a good opportunity for someone internally (JM)*
- *Has there been much interest for this post in the school (MB)?* It is expected that there will be (PB).

It was agreed to draw the discussion on the new assistant head post to a close so that no confidentiality is breached.

Comments on the remainder of the leadership section were as follows:

- *Be interesting to see how OFSTED re-engage with schools (MW)*
- *Presume that there will be more depth with this as it progresses (JM).* The document is broad-brush strokes and there are so many variables. Overall, it is a statement of intent (PB).
- *With regards to the I.T infrastructure, the policy is to look at in September 2020 (KR).*
- *Admission policy needs to be looked at soon, if aim of change next academic year is to be achieved. Suggest start at July FGB (TBF).*
- *Need to evaluate the lessons learnt during this school closure period and do something with distance learning and include it in the I.T. policy (TBF).*

The last update from this section is that Mrs Boving-Foster is trying to get Members who are not Governors and this has moved up in priority.

Learning

Questions and comments on this section of the document were invited. Much of the discussion centred around the current school closure and remote learning:

- *Conscious that other schools have been engaging in online tuition. Whilst appreciate there are Safeguarding considerations, is it not possible to share policies / training and also have it all in place so that if there is a second wave can move quickly (PA)?* There has been a certain amount of stress involved in using the systems that are already in place and familiar with students. To throw in something completely new would make students and staff a lot more stressed. The school is in a position where it can move quickly (PB). Safeguarding is a big issue with children and also need to factor in that there may be multiple children in one household who have to share equipment and must take that into account (EM).
- *As suggested by the Government, have to look at new ways to adapt to working and look at having certain groups taught remotely (CH).*
- *Thank you for undertaking this big piece of work and putting it into a straightforward paper. Also thanks to all for doing a wonderful job in these circumstances – should take the best bits from this and look to develop (JJ).*
- *Whatever system is in place urge that there is something even a simple page for parents to refer to (GM).*
- *It is difficult to distinguish between now and the strategy and must ensure that we do not place any extra stress on anyone (TBF).*
- *The virus is not going to be a short-term thing and thus, need a strategy in place by September on when and how to train staff in a timely fashion (JR).* This is so much harder than it seems – staff are not as confident in delivering live lessons as never done it before and they have circumstances of their own such as childcare to deal with. Also have to be careful to not further disadvantage struggling students. There will be many who are classed as ‘just about managing’ and cannot assume they have the right equipment or support for this (EM).
- *This type of scenario may well become a fact of life and while the school has done a fantastic job of managing in very difficult circumstances, it would be sensible to look into how we can provide online teaching in the future (MB).*

Mrs Boving-Foster concluded this section by asking the SLT to provide a status update at the next Full Governing Body meeting, as well as looking into whether there are some areas which immediate can benefit from Vidio learning, for example, A level languages.

Living:

Questions and comments on this were as follows:

- *This section represents to student voice really well and wondering if the students on the council could be consulted as to what the success criteria is for this. This document is also written in a very easy to read format (JJ).* Conscious when writing the document that it was written in such a format and no issue with asking them regarding success criteria (PB).
- *Would it be possible for the Council to perhaps attend a Governor meeting at some stage (JR)?* Good idea if agreeable with the SLT (TBF).

- *There will be a lot of importance and an increase in mental health issues in both staff and students once start getting back to normal. We are going to have to be creative in order to manage it and offer a lot more Governor support (JM). Bereavement issues have been massive and also it will be about assessing where students are and addressing the gaps (PB).*
- *There is not much on Health and Safety and there are a few things to go on but will speak with Mr Buckland about this separately (GM). Once established these can be put onto the one year plan (TBF).*

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to accept the strategy document as it is. This will be reviewed in January 2021.

8. Headteacher's Update

Mrs Boving-Foster verified that all Governors are receiving ParentMail as this contains ongoing updates.

In addition to the previously circulated report, Mr Buckland had the following updates:

- Processes are in place for a new SENDCo, Business Manager as well as positions in Science and German.
- There has been a donation of £10,000 initiated by Dr M White on behalf of Cumbria Medical Service which is to be used to improve science facilities.

9. Safeguarding

Mr Buckland had nothing to report other than a police telephone call asking for some disclosure on an ex-student. The information has been passed on as requested.

Mr Worrall reported that he had a virtual meeting with Mrs Chapman who is run off her feet with every half day seeing on average 120 emails. The hope is that the new appointment will have a good handover period. Mr Buckland re-iterated his thanks to Mrs Chapman – a lot of issues have fallen onto her shoulders and she is doing a fantastic job. Mr Hansford queried if Mrs Chapman's resignation was expected or perhaps due to workload. Whilst Mr Buckland expressed he did not want to speak on behalf of Mrs Chapman, the move to another school is thought to be for career and personal reasons.

Mr Bauer questioned if the issue with teaching remotely is one to do with technique or the volume? Dr Mawson answered that it is a combination of both. Circumstances at home can be a big factor, staff have challenges. Some children can manage but others have stress factors which then reflects in their work. Mr Buckland added that it is difficult to deliver an online lesson - there is quantity and pace to manage, in a classroom setting you are able to give immediate feedback as opposed to having to wait for work to be emailed.

Dr Jenkins praised the food voucher system set up with Sainsburys, as detailed in the Headteacher's report. Mr Buckland said the hard work and thanks was to go to Dr Mawson.

A reminder will be sent to all Governors who have not completed their Safeguarding training to do so at their earliest convenience.

10. SIP

Given the unprecedented circumstances there are no further updates / progress on this.

11. Health and Safety

Mr Buckland had no updates on this.

13. Management Accounts

The management accounts are not normally presented in this meeting but as there has not been a finance meeting and due to the unprecedented situation, Mrs Boving-Foster thought it would be worthwhile for all Governors to have sight of them and comment / ask questions.

Whilst there is a worsening picture for this year (staff anomaly that was not picked up and other staff / HR related costs), it is still expected that the school will be solvent at the end of the year (many of the lines on the accounts may improve) and the school is not far off track on the three year budget. Mrs Rae added that the budget needs to be amended and the monthly budget monitoring form to reflect the above scenario. Additionally, she added that things are tight and must also be mindful of the CIF situation. At the year-end the school will be a going concern, but what has been happening may come up and there could be some challenges with this. However, the figures for next year show a surplus and the school is beyond where it thought it would be.

Mrs Boving-Foster reflected that whilst it is not an entirely positive picture, that overall she is happy considering the year the school has had. Also, whilst it is not ambitious, she is pleased not to go in the red and things should get better in the next year.

Mr Airey commented that the thought the provision for extra HR costs was reflected in the budget. Mr Buckland answered that £20,000 of this was but costs are at around £50,000. Mrs Rae added that the issue with the budget that it was not in last years' financial liability. She concluded that now the school has to manage the budget until the end of the year and that this is the worst-case scenario with the main issue now having been dealt with.

Mr Buckland reported that he has received three emails from CIF stating that the life safety and new build projects are closed. There has been no update with regards to the windows project. Whether or not this is significant in the circumstances this is not yet known. Mrs Rae felt that this was a positive sign.

14. Notices

Mrs Boving-Foster had the following notices:

- The annual skills audit will be circulated in due course for Governors to complete
- Thanks passed onto those who have contributed to the PPE made by the school
- The next meeting will be the Education & Standards meeting on 18th June and this will likely be done via Zoom. If in the event it is announced that schools re-open prior to this Mrs Boving-Foster requested an extraordinary meeting purely for information purposes. Mr Buckland agreed on the basis that it would be a short meeting, no longer than half an hour as this would be an incredibly busy time for the SLT.

Dr Mawson wished it to be minuted how well all staff have coped in these circumstances, inclusive of administrative staff. Many staff have had to take on different roles and adapt to make sure the school has run smoothly. Mrs Boving-Foster shared these sentiments and had written round all staff to show her thanks and appreciation. Mr Bauer also echoed this and the unpleasant pressure that SLT are under.

15. Date of Next Meeting

9th July 2020 – the exact details of this to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm