

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governor's Education & Standards Sub-Committee held on Thursday 18th June 2020 at 5.30p.m via Zoom due to Covid-19.

Present: Ms J Mills Mr C Hansford
Mr P Buckland Miss R McMann (Clerk)
Mr M Worrall Mrs T Boving-Foster
Mr M Bauer Mrs R Chapman
Dr J Jenkins Dr E Mawson
Mr A Worth Mrs J Scott (School Business
Manager)

Visitors: None

Quorum per Terms of Reference – 4
Governors in attendance – 8

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest in Agenda items

There were no declarations of interest

4. Minutes of Education and Standards meeting held April 2020

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record. Mr Hansford will sign them as soon as is practicable under the circumstances.

5. SEND Policy

This policy has been updated as per the requirement to do so annually. It was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. There were no questions or comments.

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

6. Attendance Policy

This policy was circulated prior to the meeting. Dr Jenkins felt that point 3.3 needed updating to reflect the fact that many GPs, for example, do not give letters or appointment cards and thus asked if this could be updated to include screenshots. Mrs Chapman agreed to this amendment.

Subject to the above revision, it was unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

7. Remote Teaching

Mr Hansford thanked all Governors for emailing their queries ahead of the meeting which enabled Mr Buckland to produce his response (circulated prior to the meeting).

Mr Buckland said he was happy to answer any further questions which were as follows:

- *Appreciate that next year is still up in the air but how are you going to handle things if there is a second wave of the virus (MB)?* The school is in a much stronger position. As announced in the last Full Governor meeting, the purchase of the EduLink resource will streamline everything into one application. All Zoom training has now been done and the school is starting to use it. The aim is to have one subject lesson per week done via Zoom. During an SLT meeting this week have looked at a document with three different scenarios and confident that the school can successfully handle any one of these (PB).
- *Is there scope to plan for the worst case scenario (MB)?* The worst case is about where we are now but reluctant to spend too much time planning as so much could be different by September and would just be a paper exercise. Schools are waiting for more clarity in order to plan (PB). Part of the problem is this type of setup takes time and cannot predict what will happen (EM).
- *The concern is that children's lives and educations have been blighted and would like reassurance and to feel confident as a Governor that school can respond to whatever scenario without delay (MB).* Every child in the country has been impacted by this and feel that QEGs is streets ahead of the average state school. The school is now in a far better position and will do everything it can to help the children (PB).
- *Will Zoom sessions always be audio only (TBF)?* The reason for audio only is a safeguarding one as there is the potential for something inappropriate even if it was something accidental in the background. The implications of this are too serious and it only takes one incident. Also not aware of any other schools using anything other than audio. The screen may be used to share a PowerPoint. (PB) Briefly tried it with a Sixth Form group and it did not work as there were too many distractions (AM).
- *There are so many unknowns and Governors must realise that SLT are working as hard as they can and they can only use the information they have got. It would be detrimental to the SLT if they spend the Summer holidays working on 'what ifs'(JM).* Appreciate that comment of support. Clarity is needed from the government – they are now talking of having primary school children in secondary schools and constantly second guessing is incredibly tiring (PB).
- *Second the above – must use resources and prepare to work remotely using EduLink. There must be a focus that no student gets left behind but must also keep the exceptionally bright children motivated (TBF).* The school is monitoring across all abilities. There is an increase in mental health problems in students and must also take into account the workload on staff. Remote teaching is enormously different and can only appreciate this when

- you are doing it. There is a huge burden on staff but doing everything possible for every student (PB). Extension work is being sent out to those that need it and staff are offering lots of opportunities. There are a lot of lovely conversations that are going on (RC).
- *All questions are open and no criticism is intended (TBF)*
 - *It is really interesting to hear about the pressure you are under as Governors cannot see that and the feedback from SLT is really important. There is a balance to strike and questions asked are just to gain an understanding and not to suggest that anyone is not doing their best (MB).*
 - *Based on your response in the report, is there a necessity to recommend that iPads are funded for pupils (CH)? This is something to come back to. The comment in the report was to remind Governors that attempts to start investing in them were made but it was deemed that finances were too tight. It would be useful to re-evaluate this though now the school is in a much stronger position but now is not the right time. Also, iPads may not be the best way forward (PB).*
 - *I.T. is on the strategic plan and agree with Mr Buckland that need to look at the best solution but the new School Business Manager needs to look at the Finances and the CIF issue also needs to be resolved first (TBF).*
 - *Concern that the Edulink system enables parents to look at all information on there – both in terms of the data they can access and also thinking about instilling resilience in the children and managing their work (JJ). Can decide how much and what parents can access so this will be looked at (PB).*

There was a discussion regarding the format and communication between Governors and the SLT. Whilst Mr Buckland fully agrees and welcomes questions / challenges, he felt that some of the questions were heavily loaded. Dr Mawson agreed, saying that Governors absolutely should be asking questions but need to find a way that works for everyone. In turn, some of the Governors find the responses to be defensive. Mr Bauer emphasised the trust he has in the SLT and his intention was to push them to reflect on what has gone well, badly, what could be done differently. They were not intended to demoralise - perhaps the soft edges had been lost in the written form and that both sides can learn from this. Mrs Boving-Foster said that she felt the role of the Governor is to ask the questions but also offer support and that these circumstances have been much more difficult than first thought. Mr Hansford also commented on how useful he found the last update and that should OFSTED visit, Governors ought to be prepared to answer what role they have played in lockdown. **To conclude it was agreed that going forward any questions or concerns would be sent to Mr Hansford (or the relevant head of a committee) who would then set up a meeting to discuss these with Mr Buckland / SLT prior to the committee meeting. Mrs Boving-Foster also added that she will look at the format of meetings but she felt reassured that if the pandemic repeats itself the school would be in an even better position to respond.**

8. English Department Update

Mr Buckland gave an update as per the action point from the February minutes. Due to Covid-19, results are now based on teacher assessment and will reflect past

performance. The guidance in light of circumstances is not to analyse the data but Governors can be assured that prior to the lockdown, the school was implementing all measures it said would. This will be re-visited as the school moves forward.

9. Headteacher's Update

Mr Buckland reported the following updates:

- Pastoral Zoom meetings will also commence next week. The school has been obtaining parental permissions and is doing well in collating this. Thanks were extended to all those involved in SEN.
- Mr Dawson has successfully won a Wolfson Fund technology bid for circa £26,000 and some of this money will be invested in laser cutters and 3D printers. This is a great achievement and thanks were given to Mr Dawson from both Mr Buckland and the Governors.
- Grades for exams have been submitted on time. Dr Mawson added that a lot of time has been spent on this and happy that the system used was representative. Whilst staff will be aware of the grades students will get (these are subject to moderation), the students will still get an envelope on results day.

With regards to the three year plan, Mr Worrall felt this will need to be re-evaluated in the Spring term. Dr Jenkins commented that the students should have fulfilled their aim of reducing the use of paper.

Mrs Boving-Foster asked if what students who would have completed their A-Levels have done (i.e. go onto university, defer entry etc) could be added onto the agenda for the first meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed. The number of meetings and timing of them will be reviewed in the coming weeks and reported / discussed at Full Governors' on 9th July.

Meeting closed at 6.40pm