

Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 9th July 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)
	Mr M Bauer(CoG)
Mr C Hansford	Mr R Shephard
Mr P Airey	Mrs K Rae

Visitors: none

13 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.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Ms Mills (family commitment)

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 in May and the Extraordinary Meeting Held in June 2020

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

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. All Governors have now completed their Safeguarding training and were thanked for taking the time to do this.

6. Education and Standards Report

This meeting was held via Zoom. Mr Hansford confirmed that all Governors had read the report and invited any questions. There were no questions or comments.

7. Finance and Pay Minutes

Mrs Rae summarised that as per the meeting, the school is in a better position recording a lesser deficit than forecast. Mrs Scott will be looking at the budget in the summer months and the Finance committee will report back to Full Governors in September as to where the school will be financially over the next year.

Mrs Scott updated the Governors that the work has been signed off for the music room by the loss adjusters.

To conclude it was deemed to be a very positive meeting and Mrs Boving-Foster echoed this saying it was great to have Mrs Scott on board and a significantly reduced deficit. There were no further questions or comments.

8. Governor Skills Audit

Mrs Boving-Foster thanked all Governors for taking part in this. A lot of areas were positive but the main area identified to look at is accountability. Within this the skills gaps are identified as:

- Specific education knowledge
- Ability to use data
- Experience of inspections
- Experience of financial, planning and monitoring
- Human Resources

With regards to the financial planning knowledge, Mrs Boving-Foster did not feel this was a cause for concern as she felt that the Governing Board has the right Governors with relevant experience and skills in the right committee.

Human resources with experience in the school sector is something which Mrs Boving-Foster reported as lacking a little. On balance, however, she felt that it is not something which is required too regularly in the Governing Board. Mr Ray said that he had spoken with the school HR provider and they felt that perhaps the school does not have the right level of service with them and thus, he wanted to remind Governors that this is a potential avenue to explore. This was echoed by Mr Airey saying that also the school needs to review the grievance and disciplinary policies though of course at present this has been outweighed by the Covid outbreak. Mrs Boving-Foster agreed that a review needs to take place in this area, particularly with the policies and also the CEFM contract but a clearer picture of the school's economy must come first. When the time comes to look at these things, Mr Bauer offered his support in both areas and could provide some more straightforward policies to adapt. Mr Hansford added that it would be wise if adopting new policies to cross check against the LA's policies or if they have since updated theirs (the rationale that LA policies are approved by the unions). Mr Miller was keen to have a clearer, easier to follow policy. Mr Buckland said that the school is not bound by the LA, it is as Mr Hansford pointed out, that their policies are approved by the unions, but there is no reason to look at other versions and run it past union representatives. **To conclude it was agreed that there is not the necessity to recruit a Governor with specific school HR experience. Action point: initially Mr Bauer will pass some policies onto Mrs Scott to read over the summer breaks and a review to take place in this area once things are more normal in school.**

Mrs Boving-Foster proposed that she would like to recruit a Governor with specific education experience to the Governing Body who is independent of the school. She reminded Governors that there is no limit to the number of Governors the school has. Additionally, the skills audit revealed that due to other commitments, current Governors are unable to offer any more time to do additional everyday items. Dr Jenkins welcomed this suggestion saying it would be good for balance and looking at things from another perspective and wondered if there were any resources available to facilitate this. Mrs Boving-Foster suggested that she might use the NGA which has a tool to help recruit Governors by area and also Mr Worrall may also be able to assist. Mr Buckland said that the LA may have a resource and this is something which will be explored.

Additionally, Mrs Boving-Foster reported that there will be one less staff Governor next year as Mr Martin joins the SLT but said that she would be happy for him to sit in and participate in meetings as part of his development (though of course he would not have voting rights). There were no objections to this. Whilst there is only the requirement for one staff Governor, it is felt that it is beneficial to have two staff Governors and this will be picked up in September.

Mrs Boving-Foster reported her intention that she will have 1:1 meetings with each Governor via Zoom which will take around fifteen minutes.

9. Headteacher's Update (including Health and Safety and Safeguarding Update)

There were no specific health and safety or safeguarding issues to report but as the school is partially open, health and safety measures are in place as per the risk assessments. Mr Buckland was pleased to report that things were running smoothly with pupils, and staff are adhering to the measures in place. With regards to the online learning, there have only been one or two very minor behaviour issues. There were no questions or comments on this.

Mr Miller asked for an update regarding asbestos and the music room to which Mr Buckland replied that asbestos was not an issue in this area. This was re-iterated by Mrs Scott and the aim is to have the music room ready for September.

Mrs Boving-Foster informed Governors that due to circumstances, the SIP is on hold until the new academic year (this is something which would normally be looked at in this meeting).

Mr Buckland reported that there have been about 75-100 Zoom lessons, largely with Year 12 and had asked staff for feedback on how these are going. Additionally there have been pastoral sessions going on, particularly lower down in the school. Feedback from students has been very positive and if there is another lockdown in the next academic year, the school is in a much stronger position. This is also strengthened by the new EduLink system which will be in place in September. However, Mr Buckland said that the decision to have cameras turned off needs to be reviewed as this can prove to be difficult for teachers, for instance in being able to identify who is talking and also in subjects like drama. He added that this must be balanced against any risk though as there have been issues in other schools reported in the national press.

With regards to the school re-opening, Mr Buckland is drafting a letter to be sent out to staff tomorrow which Mrs Boving-Foster and Mr Worrall will be copied into and thereafter there will be a ParentMail issued within the next week. The intention is that school will re-open on Thursday 3rd September to Year 7 and Year 12 (Year 7 will have the discovery day that they have missed and it will also give the incoming Year 12s a chance to have some practice lessons) and the rest of the school will return the following day.

Questions and comments on Mr Buckland's reports were as follows:

- *Has there been provision for those who cannot afford laptops (JR)?* Provided laptops and WiFi connection to those who need it and some of this was funded by the government for vulnerable Year 10 but the school had this in place prior to the funding. Any that have broken have been replaced so as far as the school is aware everyone is able to work online (PB)
- *Does the school conduct exit interviews (JR)?* Yes (PB)
- *Are there any updates on exploring the option of a careers advisor job-share with UCC (JR)?* Not to date but something to think about in order to free up some of Mr Dawson's time

- *With regards to the number of students leaving and not joining the Sixth Form (around 10%) and numbers coming in to the Sixth Form, is this typically what the school would expect (JJ)?* 10 external candidates joining is about what the school normally gets and the number of students staying on is currently higher than normal. As the school only offers A-Levels, those who leave go on to do other courses which are more suitable for them. Also travel can be an issue at Sixth Form level as there is often provision closer to home. Overall, it was reported that the numbers in Sixth Form are incredibly positive (PB)
- *Are the children aware of the grades the school has submitted to the examination boards (PA)?* No not permitted to tell them. It has been nice to be able to inform students that they have a place in the Sixth Form as the school is able to judge if A-Levels are right for them without giving away GCSE grades (PB).
- *Will the Government subsidise any re-sit costs (PA)?* There has been no commitment from the Government but unions are looking at this, as schools simply will not be able to afford it. As a grammar school, it is expected there may be more re-sits than in mainstream schools but what students and parents must consider is that they will have to continue studying until November and in the case of GCSE exams, this is alongside doing their A-Level courses (PB).
- *Do moderators take into account the fact that this is a high achieving school (JR)?* Yes they look at past performance and ability of year group which is felt to be a very strong year group. They will look at the national picture as well. Dr Mawson has worked very hard with Heads of Year to produce realistic grades (PB).

10. Elections

Prior to the meeting, all Governors were invited to put themselves forward for the positions

- Chair of Governors
- Vice Chair of Governors
- Chair of Finance and Pay Committee
- Vice Chair of Finance and Pay Committee
- Chair of Education and Standards Committee
- Vice Chair of Education and Standards Committee

There was only one voluntary candidate per position. The results were as follows:

- **Mrs Boving-Foster unanimously voted as Chair of Governors**
- **Mr Martyn Worrall unanimously voted as Vice Chair of Governors**
- **Mrs Karen Ray unanimously voted as Chair of the Finance and Pay Committee**
- **Mr Justin Ray unanimously voted as Vice Chair of the Finance and Pay Committee**

- **Mr Charles Hansford unanimously voted as Chair of the Education and Standards Committee**
- **Ms Mills unanimously voted as Vice Chair of the Education and Standards Committee**

Mrs Rae said that due to increased work commitments this could be her last year Chairing the Finance Committee. Mr Ray said that this is something which needs to be considered over the next year because whilst he is an accountant, he is not a school's specialist like Mrs Rae. Mrs Rae answered that she would be happy to stay on as an advisor. Mrs Boving-Foster added that there are different roles that Mrs Rae could undertake after next year which would enable the school to retain her knowledge and expertise.

Mr Buckland expressed his thanks to the Governors for their contribution and time given over the past year and the willingness of Chairs and Vice Chairs to carry on in their roles.

11. Meeting Dates

It is proposed that next year all sub-committee meetings will be held via Zoom with Full Governor meetings remaining face to face. The timings and dates of meetings will be discussed with each committee and dates circulated as soon as possible.

12. Notices

Mrs Boving-Foster informed Governors that she has written a letter of thanks to all staff and will also write a note to thank all parents for their support. She also wished her thanks to be noted to Mrs Chapman for all her efforts, eye for detail and that she will be hugely missed.

15. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 6.40pm