

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governor's Education & Standards Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 22nd September 2020 at 5.30p.m via Zoom.

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

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 June 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. Update on the Covid-19 situation

Mr Buckland gave an update as per the three sections below and invited questions and comments from the Governors.

Contingency Plan.

The EduLink system has now been set up across all year groups and all subjects are using this for homework. The Teams programme is also being used by many students to hand work in. Thus, Mr Buckland reported that the school will be in a much stronger position if it closes, with consistent systems in place. Zoom meetings can be started up if children are sent home. Mr Buckland invited feedback from the Governors who have children attending the school. Both Mr Hansford and Mrs Boving-Foster commented that is working well. However, Mrs Boving-Foster said that she did not think arts homework was appearing. **Action point: this will be followed up.**

The only other question was from Mr Bauer who asked if the systems in place would facilitate teaching as well as setting homework should there be another lock-down? Mr Buckland answered that lessons will be taught via Zoom as per the four week timetable that Dr Mawson has worked hard to put in place. Additionally, the school is looking at the scenario where half a group is working from home if lessons can be taught at the same time or separately.

Absence

With regards to staffing levels there are no massive issues presently. The biggest factor is staff having to take time off for a Covid test and wait for results. SLT have discussed this and if there are 10 – 12 members of staff absent, groups of students will have to be sent home. There is the potential to record lessons through Zoom and send home students on a rota basis between Years 8, 9 and 10 but only if staffing is at a critical point. Mr Buckland reported that student attendance has been very strong: week one 97% and week two 96%.

Questions and comments on this section were as follows:

- *Who is teaching if there is a part of a group working from home (JJ)?* Work can be sent home via the systems in place and lessons can be recorded. Would be a lot of work if staff had to teach some of a group in school and some at home. Other schools are doing the same. If a member of staff is sent home the lesson will be covered. Some of the staff who are isolating are able to do some work from home so this is dealt with on a case by case basis (PB).
- *Is there a cut off to send pupils home if a certain proportion is absent (TBF)?* SLT have discussed this and decided if one year group is down to 30% attending then that year group will be sent home as it is not tenable and change the way in which a subject would be taught. However, this figure is moveable as it is at the moment trial and error (PB).

Catch-Up

The Government have said they will award a catch-up premium which totals approximately £55,000 (Years 7 -11) with a very small amount being awarded to Sixth Form. The idea of this fund is for school to spend it in the most appropriate way for students. The school has decided not to test children as this will put them under more stress and so instead the SLT has started to identify the most vulnerable first and now Heads of Departments are also doing the same. Given there is a nominal amount for Sixth Form, Mr Buckland has said that he intends to be inclusive and use any funding right the way through school. The advice states that there will be list of tutors available in mid-October but the school could use its own staff and pay them overtime. The tutors are on a reduced rate and there is an inclusion of mental health tutors.

Questions and comments were as follows:

- *Are there a list of tutors ready to go for when the money comes in (CH)?* This information will be available in October (PB).

- *Sympathetic with the intention to use the fund for the whole school but given the problems that have been encountered with the EFSA want to be sure this is ok to do (TBF). OFSTED have said that they will be making 1200 interim visits across the country and across a range of schools and they will ask what they plans are with this money. Take on the point and will seek advice on this from the EFSA and / or DfE (PB).*
- *Worry with the list of tutors as to how appropriate they will be for this school (MW). There is flexibility and can use own staff if wish to. Advantage of own staff is that they know the children (PB).*
- *In line with the guidance read, need to be transparent with parents on how this money is spent and thus should make them aware the Sixth Form will also benefit from this money (JJ). Mr Buckland agreed with this comment.*
- *Using the school's own staff makes sense but will they feel too stretched and how does this sit with them (TBF)? This will be entirely voluntary and will give staff the opportunity. It will depend entirely on the school's context but the hope is by October things will be a lot more settled (PB).*
- *Are the government doing anything with regards to the exams in 2021 (MB)? Last update by OFQUAL was on 3rd August and made changes to the structure but overall they are just tampering with the edges. For example, in English Literature can drop one of the three topics but English Language remains the same. Exams will not start until 7th June which allows for an extra month of lessons but then this will likely impact on results and progression. At the moment it is a wait and see scenario (PB).*
- *How do the staff feel about the above and what about the mock exams as students have no had time to prepare but their predicted grades could be crucial given this last year (MB). It is a tricky balance but the exams next year will go ahead and so the students will benefit from the practice (PB). Can use the catch-up fund and also must remember that when the school was closed teaching was still taking place, it was just a different style of teaching. Will know better in October what is to be proposed for the summer but this is under the caveat that it might all change (EM).*
- *Have to ensure that the weaker students do not suffer (TBF).*

6. Headteacher's Update

Although this will be covered in more detail in the first Full Governors' meeting Mr Buckland gave a quick results overview. Of the 108 students who took A-Levels, 5 are at Oxbridge, 50 are in other universities (a good spread including the Russell Group), 4 are on gap years, 19 have not been traced yet and the rest are in gainful employment. Overall, Mr Buckland reported he was very happy with this. With regards to Year 11, 12 students have attended a different Sixth Form but Mr Buckland was pleased to report the intake for Year 12 is 126 pupils which is the biggest group in six years and equates to an extra £40,000 worth of income.

The SLT wish to praise the working of the site team, lead by the new Business Manager Mrs Scott for making the school safe and ready due to Covid and also

quickly reacting to staff requests. It was also reported that students have responded very well and there are no major issues to report.

Mr Buckland reported that in line with providing a varied curriculum the school is continuing to use science labs and art classrooms. This does mean more movement and cleaning but he believes this is the right thing to do and to make provision for this an extra day cleaner has been recruited. Mr Buckland added that clubs and activities are starting to run but as yet there are no after school clubs as it would mean the 'bubbles' mixing.

With regards to the vulnerable students settling back in Mr Martin and the new SENCo Mr Munro have ensured that these students have not become too stressed. Additionally he praised Mr Rosa in his role as Head of Year 7.

Mr Buckland made the committee aware of all the changes in staffing since the re-opening / start of the new academic year. He reported that all staff were settling in very well and made particular reference to the new assistant head, Mr Allen, who he said had fallen seamlessly into the role. Mr Munro was also given a special mention, with Mr Martin citing his ability with students and knowledge of outside agencies. Shortlisting for the vacant pastoral role is under way with interviews scheduled for Monday 28th September.

The entrance exam has been pushed back to 17th October due to government measures. Mr Buckland reassured Governors that he has reinforced the equal preference scheme, quoted from the local authority to parents. There have been 240 applicants which is in line with previous year groups.

It is estimated that the cost of Covid to the school will total £70,000 by Easter. The school is paying £700 a week for extra toilet blocks so that the Year 7 bubble have their own. Additionally, the school has lost £20,000 in lettings.

The only question on this item was from Mr Hansford who asked if apart from starting sport, were any other activities such as music starting up? Mr Buckland replied that with regards to music this is not possible as it is difficult to meet the guidance. If the guidance changes this will be re-visited but presently sport lends itself the best. Mr Worth added that there are issues in starting sports clubs up also as used to combine year groups in practices but this cannot happen now so it will have to be on a rota basis.

Date of Next Meeting

November 26th 2020, 5.30pm via Zoom.

Mrs Boving-Foster advised that due to the current climate and guidelines it would be best practice to hold the Full Governing Body meeting on October 15th via Zoom.

Meeting closed at 6.30pm