

Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 10th December 2020 at 5.30pm as a virtual meeting.

Present

Miss R McMann (Clerk)
Mr M Worrall (CoG)
Dr J Jenkins (CoG)
Mr C Hansford (GbS)
Mr P Airey (CoG)
Mr G Miller (P)

Mr P Buckland
Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr J Ray (CoG)
Mr M Bauer (CoG)
Ms J Mills (CoG)
Mrs K Rae (CoG)

SLT present: Dr E Mawson
Mrs J Scott

Visitors: none

11 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 Covid-19 and restrictions in place.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Mr Worth and Mr Shephard (work)

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 on 15th October 2020

It was confirmed that the catch-up premium is intended to be used for Years 7 - 11. Additionally, the date of the Safeguarding Audit is December and not November as per the minutes. **Subject to the above, the minutes were unanimously agreed to be a true record and Mrs Boving-Foster will sign in school as soon as practicable.**

5. Matters Arising

Dr Jenkins reported that she had met with Mr Martin and Mrs Scott regarding how the expenditure of the pupil premium and SEN budgets are reported. Whilst the way in which expenditure is reported has been agreed, it is a different and larger piece of work looking at assurance that the school is getting value for money. Given that this has been a busy term, this will be re-visited next term.

Mr Airey asked if there had been any update in filling vacant Governor posts. Mrs Boving-Foster answered that the staff Governor role is being parked for the moment as there were no volunteers, there is already an experienced staff Governor on board and that staff have enough pressures to deal with at the moment. The Inspiring Governors NGA database will be explored next year.

Mr Bauer asked if there had been any progress on reviewing the Discipline and Grievance policies since he had sent some proforma policies to Mrs Scott. Mr Buckland answered that this was on his radar for the new year. Mr Bauer offered to help in any way that he could.

6. Education and Standards Minutes from the meeting held on 26th November 2020

Mr Hansford confirmed that all Governors had read the minutes and invited questions. There were no questions or comments.

7. Finance and Pay Minutes from the meeting held on 30th November 2020

Mrs Rae presented the minutes stating that the accounts were the central part of the meeting and this will be covered on the next item. A clearer line will be put into the minutes to demonstrate that the use of Catch-up premium was formally approved.

A confidential item arose and this is minuted separately.

8. Year End Accounts

Mrs Boving-Foster introduced this thanking Mrs Scott and the team for a good set of accounts. Mrs Rae presented the findings to the Governing Body and said that the figures had not changed much which is a strong testament to the work of Mrs Scott. As per page 30,

overall there is a loss reported of £114,000. However, this includes adjustments beyond the school's control (depreciation and pension). Mrs Rae explained the balance sheet on page 31 to Governors and detailed the adjustments made to the pension scheme, which had been amended to reflect Covid-19 and this is the same position for many schools. The £2.4 million is guaranteed by the Secretary of State but the school must ensure that it can pay its monthly contributions. To conclude, from an operational point of view, once the above is taken into account, the school is actually in a small surplus.

From a Governance point of view, Mrs Rae said that:

- There is £6 million pounds in assets / fixed assets
- There is cash available to pay bills
- Restrictive funds are positive
- There is £202,000 in unrestricted funds which could be transferred to pay costs which may arise

The deadline for the year-end accounts to reach the EFSA has been extended until 31st January 2021 due to Covid-19.

Mrs Rae went on to go through the Management Letter which overall she felt had very few points and those in there are petty. Thus, she concluded that it was a very clean audit with no regularity issues. The only outstanding issue is the CIF. It was agreed that once the outcome of this is known, there may be a requirement for a short meeting. However, as the timescale is not known this cannot be planned. Mrs Boving-Foster added that there is a meeting on 28th January where any decisions taken via telephone or email can be documented there.

The Governors unanimously approved the year end accounts subject to any changes that may be made due to the decision on CIF funds.

9. Articles of Association

Mrs Boving-Foster provided a context for the update of the Articles stating that it was the right time to do so, particularly as the structure of the Members needs to be reviewed. Currently Mr Buckland is a Member, which is now illegal. Additionally, the majority of Members should be independent of the school. The updates have been taken from a DfE sample and have been validated professionally prior to being sent out to Governors. Governors have the opportunity to now scrutinise these. Once they are agreed by Governors they will be sent to the DfE and the final stage is to get Members' approval. A slide was shown outlining the proposed changes (Appendix 1).

Questions and comments were invited. Mr Worrall recommended that if they had not already done so, that Governors should follow the DfE link in the agenda, as this is very informative. He also added that there are one or two very minor alterations but they were not substantial.

Mr Airey queried who the current members are. Mr Worrall answered that as per Companies House they are: Mrs Susan Thomas, Mr Chris Kirkup, Mrs Eulyth McMorro, Mrs Jayne

Plasom-Scott and Mr Christopher Connelly. He went on to say that new Members are in the pipeline and there is a meeting directly after this one to proceed with this.

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the updated Articles and these will now be sent to the DfE for approval.

10. Extended Pastoral Support

As per the Finance minutes, this was approved in that meeting. Further questions and comments were invited to those who are not on that committee. There were none but it is deemed to be a very positive move for the school.

11. Absence and Well-Being Policy

Mr Buckland informed the Governors that this was updating the current policy and it is taken from the LA, which means the policy is union approved. It is assumed that all Governors have read the previously circulated policy and questions and comments were invited.

Dr Jenkins felt that the first and second bullet point under the principals section should be swapped to make it more supportive to the employee. This was agreed.

Mr Airey said that he was mindful that this policy should fit well with the Discipline and Grievance policy. Mr Buckland said that he would look at this when the Discipline and Grievance policies are updated next year. Mr Buaer expressed his concern that public sector policies are too onerous on the employer but if using to make sure they all tie in together. Mr Buckland said that the advantage of using the LA policies is that they come with union approval but that perhaps next year he could present two versions of the Discipline and Grievance policy for Governors to vote on. Mrs Boving-Foster concluded that the workload of SLT needed to be considered and that presently the first step is to probably adopt the LA policies so that the school is in the right place and then later, when there is more time, look again. Mr Airey said that the new LA policies may well be better.

Subject to the revision suggested by Dr Jenkins, the Governors unanimously agreed to adopt the policy. Miss McMann will make the change and send the policy back to Mr Buckland.

12. Safeguarding Policy

Mrs Boving-Foster informed the Governors that the next three policies on the agenda have been scrutinised and approved in principal in the November Education and Standards meeting, as detailed in the previously circulated minutes. However, Full Governor approval is needed and so any questions will be taken and a vote held on each policy.

There were no questions or comments and the Governors unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

13. Designated Teacher Policy

There were no questions or comments and the Governors unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

14. Equalities Policy

There were no questions or comments and the Governors unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

15. SIP

Due to Covid-19 and the impact on schools, the only change to this document was to incorporate Dr Jenkins' suggestions as per the last minutes. There were no questions or comments.

16. Safeguarding

The Safeguarding audit has taken place today and initial thoughts are that it has gone well. Mr Buckland said that he will await the report and then this will be on the next Education and Standards and Full Governors' agenda.

Mr Ray asked if this audit linked with OFSTED in any way? Mr Buckland answered that if they visit this will save them time as all the information is where when they come and it is a real positive.

17. Health and Safety

Mr Buckland reported that the live Risk Assessment had been circulated to the Finance Committee due to some slight updates (hand dryers are now able to be used and Year 11s are allowed offsite at lunchtime). Mrs Boving-Foster commented that it was good that Governors have sight of this and there is a record of all the changes. Mr Miller as Health and Safety Governor reported that he hopes to be back into school after Christmas.

18. Governor Matters and Training

No Governors have completed any extra training. Mrs Boving-Foster recommended that Governors log onto the School & Academies Show, which is online.

Mrs Boving-Foster gave an overview of the main changes to the Governance Handbook, which include:

- Risk assessments (Governors have good sight of this)
- Governing remotely (this is working well)
- Greater emphasis on board diversity (it is felt that this is a more weak area for this school).
- School security and cyber security (an area to look at further)

On the third point, Mr Ray commented that in a meeting with Mr Dawson looking at careers in school, it is felt that there could be a broader coverage amongst the Governing Body.

19. Headteacher's Report

Mr Buckland confirmed that all had read the report and invited questions and comments. Mrs Boving-Foister queried if the intake of 73 in catchment children versus 87 out of catchment was normal and if the school is reaching enough children from our own catchment. Mr Buckland answered that he would have to check for past figures but the priority for outreach work is catchment schools.

20. Date of Next Meeting

Mrs Boving-Foster gave her thanks to Mr Buckland, SLT and the staff for all their hard work, working tirelessly under the current conditions. Mr Buckland thanked the Governors for their contribution and support, echoed by Mrs Boving-Foster. With regards to the next meeting, there will be the approval of the accounts and looking at the strategic plan and what can be realistically achieved.

The next meeting is 28th January 2021, 5.30pm via Zoom

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.