

Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 15th October 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 P Buckland
Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr J Ray (CoG)
Mr A Worth (S)
Ms J Mills (CoG)
Mrs K Rae (CoG)

SLT present: Dr E Mawson
Mr R Dawson
Mr A Martin
Mrs J Scott

Visitors: none

10 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 Bauer, Mr Shephard and Mr Miller (work 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 on 9th July and the Extraordinary Meeting Held in July 2020

With regards to the meeting held on 9th July, it was agreed that during this academic year the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy will be reviewed. **The minutes were unanimously agreed to be a true record and Mrs Boving-Foster will sign in school as soon as practicable.**

Mrs Boving-Foster queried whether the website had been updated to include some of the information circulated via ParentMail. Mr Buckland answered that this was still to follow up. **The minutes were unanimously agreed to be a true record and Mrs Boving-Foster will sign in school as soon as practicable.**

Mrs Boving-Foster as Chair of Governors will sign any outstanding minutes from sub-committees when in school due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Finance and Pay Minutes from the two meetings held in September 2020

Mrs Rae reported that the first Finance meeting was to agree the budget and emphasised the importance that all Governors are familiar with it. Additionally, salary increases (already included in the budget) were approved at this meeting.

The meeting held on 28th September focussed on the cost of Covid-19 and that some of the figures from this are already included in the budget. Otherwise, this meeting had taken the usual format and Governors were reminded of the upcoming audit. There was a short discussion around the SEN budget and how this was recorded. It was agreed that Mr Martin, Mrs Scott and Dr Jenkins would meet separately to discuss this further.

Overall, it was reported that there is a budget in place with a positive outcome, albeit a very small one and this is set against the uncertainty of Covid-19. There were no questions or comments.

7. Management Accounts to August 31st 2020

Mrs Boving-Foster explained that this item was brought to Full Governors, purely because the accounts to the year-end were not ready in time for the Finance meeting. Mrs Scott reported that the projected loss is £46,000 against the £90,000 that was predicted. She added

that she is working with the auditor, Saint & Co, and that there year-end figure may improve by another £10,000. There were no questions or comments.

8. Education and Standards Report

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

9. Exam Results

Dr Mawson led on this item with a PowerPoint presentation detailing both A-Level and GCSE results, explaining the process behind how grades were awarded. This presentation was made under the caveat that due to circumstances, the data is not comparable to other years.

A-Level

Despite this year group being a viable group, 48% of students were downgraded. It is felt that had they sat their exams, it would have been a better picture and the school followed a rigorous process in submitting grades.

Dr Mawson reported that from a progression point of view, it is a very positive picture: 90% of pupils got their first choice of university, although a couple are deferring by a year in order to achieve this. Additionally, all Oxbridge candidates were successful.

The data has been submitted to ALPS for comparison reasons and this showed that most subjects have followed the same pattern. Going forward, the plan is to raise the profile of mock exams and CAGS is all in place should it need to be used.

GCSE

As with A-Levels Dr Mawson reported that a very rigorous process had been followed. One student got straight 9s. Overall outcomes were higher with 50% of students achieving 9-7 grades against 38% in 2019. Dr Mawson thought that this was very well deserved and again emphasised that the school were very rigorous in working out grades for submission.

The school has used the SISRA tool, which around 1300 other schools are involved with and this gave a progress score of +0.25 (it was +0.27 in 2019). There were not as many in the middle ability range this year and girls made more progress than boys, which is a national issue but both groups came out with a positive progress score.

The numbers starting Sixth Form is brilliant and of the 121 students in Year 12, 107 of those stayed with QEGS. Those who did not stay went on to do vocational courses the school does not offer.

In terms of next steps the school is looking at gaps as a result of lockdown. Some students have done their EPQ early which has been really helpful. There has been an announcement that GCSE exams will be held three weeks later except for one Maths and English paper. However, Dr Mawson warned that this could all change.

On the latter point, Mr Ray queried if the Government had given much guidance? Dr Mawson answered that although there are subject forums there had been no statement and the school is using secure mock exams in case CAGS needs to be utilised again. In response to Mr Worrall's question around mock exams, Dr Mawson answered that students get their mock results in a results day style and this is also reported to parents. However, there is no obligation to share assessment as it is done with some reduced content.

Mrs Boving-Foster gave her thanks to Dr Mawson for taking the time to produce and present this information to Governors.

10. Staff Support

This item was moved up the agenda due to Mr Dawson needing to leave the meeting early. He showed a PowerPoint slide detailing what support there is for staff. He said that a lot of hard work had gone into the practicalities of opening school safely and that staff were appreciative of this. He added that there have been positive things to come out of this that will be kept in place even outside of Covid-19.

Mr Ray commented that one of the outcomes from his stress testing report was a need for more flexible teaching and he felt that this was a positive from Covid-19. Mr Dawson agreed that the use of technology is making life easier in the long-run. The learning of new systems has been challenging but once over that hurdle, inter-activity is increased. For example, the forum in Teams is brilliant.

Mrs Boving-Foster asked if had to pick out a negative, is there one particular dominant issue and can the Governors help in any way? Mr Dawson answered that in the run up to half-term this is fatigue due to having to adapt to new circumstances. He hopes that staff can have a good rest over the half-term week and a lot of things have been taken out of the school calendar in order to ease the workload on staff.

Mrs Boving-Foster said that this pressure staff are feeling is very understandable and that there is a need to keep the staff strong. Dr Mawson pointed out that one of the difficulties is the inability to get together and that it is hard to convey appreciation through electronic messages. Mrs Rae offered words of support that it is the same in every workplace. However, she said that they are looking at different types of staff briefings.

This item was concluded with thanks from the Governing Body and that they are here if needed.

11. Catch-up Premium

It was reported that the school has received £18,000 which is the first of three payments, which is the equivalent of £80 per pupil aged 11-16. The intention is to start using own staff if they wish. Mr Buckland said he had spoken to the Heads in the Carlisle Consortium about using own staff as opposed to the Government list of tutors and also had checked with The Key and this is ok to do. The school has already identified those with pastoral needs.

Mrs Boving-Foster asked if there was any further update on using the money for the whole school? Mt Buckland answered that the Sixth Form will only receive £144 and the intention is to use the money for any student in school who needs it inclusive of Sixth Form students. Dr Jenkins felt that as long as there was a proper evaluation of the use of money that it would protect the school. Dr Mawson said that all plans in place for the school are backed by the EEF.

12. Pastoral Update

Mr Martin in his new role led on this item. He reported that there have been two inset days dedicated to training staff on lockdown problems and how to identify and help these students. Mr Allen gave praise to the new pastoral staff members as they have a big case load and Mr Munro has brought new ideas and knowledge. Additionally, Mr Martin said that there is a new safeguarding pro forma and that the Bursary Policy has been rewritten so that it is more accessible. This has yielded a lot of results. The student voice is being heard as the School Council is operating.

In terms of next steps, a Safeguarding Audit is booked for 10th November. For students that have to self isolate, packs have been produced with useful advice but there is still a lot of work to do.

Questions and comments were as follows

- *Great to hear that everything is under control and well done to the team (JM). The staff have walked into a perfect storm and have done marvelously in extraordinary circumstances (PB)*
- *Does the school feel it is managing the demand? Is there a stigma around asking for help (TBF)?* The difficulty is being able to be proactive but all those that have been identified have been dealt with and form tutors and Heads of Year have been brilliant (AM).
- *Having read the minutes from the School Council it is so great to see that even lower down the school students are being proactive and highlighting things for themselves (JJ).*

Mrs Boving-Foster gave thanks to Mr Martin and the pastoral team.

13. SIP & SEF

Mrs Boving-Foster said after a year of unavoidably being reactive, the strategy will be revisited in the Full Governors' meeting in January 2021. Mr Worrall added that it is the hope that Governors will cover different aspects of the SIP and this will be discussed in the January meeting. This will help with quality assurance. Mr Buckland agreed that this was a good idea.

Mr Buckland went on to say that most targets were not fully met and that they are being carried forward.

Dr Jenkins asked if under welfare the School Council's eco strand could be added in and it was agreed that this could be done.

A note was made to change the date of the new Mental Health Policy to 2021, as opposed to 2020.

Mrs Boving-Foster closed this item saying that it was impressive that the school has a SIP and gave her thanks.

14. Safeguarding

Mr Worrall reported that he is pleased that the Safeguarding Audit has been booked in. He gave his thanks to Mr Allen for the two previously circulated documents, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Things You Need to Know and also the Covid-19 addendum to the policy in light of schools reopening. He emphasised the importance that all Governors keep up-to-date with this, particularly as from January 2021 OFSTED inspections will kick in.

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the Safeguarding Covid-19 addendum.

15. Health and Safety

In the absence of Mr Miller, Mr Buckland said he was very pleased that Mr Miller had taken the time to look around school, give a different perspective, offer help and produce a positive report.

Mr Buckland cited an example of the track and trace protocol being used and said that seating plan had worked and the school was able to respond very quickly. Mrs Scott added that staff feel safe. Mrs Boving-Foster reported that her feedback from children is that they too feel safe and well done to all staff.

16. Governor Matters

Mrs Boving-Foster reported that there have been no applications for the position of Staff Governor, which is no surprise given the current climate. There is still an outstanding position for another Governor to join, preferably someone external to the school with an educational background. Governors were asked to contact Mrs Boving-Foster if they knew of anyone.

Governors were informed that the Articles of Association will be re-drafted to bring them up-to-date and it is hoped that they will be ready for the Full Governors' Meeting in December. Thereafter, they will be sent of the DfE, EFSA and Companies House for approval. Additionally, there is the Annual General Meeting for Members directly after this meeting. The intention of this is to agree the way forward in establishing a Members committee that is in line with best practice (i.e. people external to the Governing Body).

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the Code of Conduct which was previously circulated and remains unchanged from the last update.

17. Headteacher's Update

In addition to the previously circulated report, Mr Buckland added that two appeals for Year 7 and Year 10 admission had been rejected. Additionally a six month challenge to the school's Admissions Policy had been ruled in favour for the school and credit was given to Mrs Denyer and Mr Martin. There are a couple of minor points to addresses including listing every primary school in Cumbria.

There have been 6 temporary exclusions thus far this year, which is higher than expected. However, must look at the context and impact of Covid-19.

Mr Ray queried how many children were due to sit the upcoming entrance test. It was thought to be around 260, but some have had to postpone until the second test date due to having to self-isolate. Dr Jenkins queried if there was a reason why there are more boys than girls who are successful at the test and come to QEGS. Mr Buckland commented that he had noticed this and would see what happens this year. The new test has been in place for four years and given the weight of the maths element has been reduced he would have thought it would have the opposite effect.

Mr Airey commented that it was great that the school had thought about parents evening and conducting it online. Mr Buckland said that there was a cost of £800 for this system but felt that it was a much more effective way of doing it.

18. Date of Next Meeting

10th December, 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm and the chair thanked all for the participation in a long meeting, and hoped that it had brought all up to date with the ongoing work in school during this difficult time.