

Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 28th January 2021 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 A Worth (S)

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)
Mr R Shephard (CoG)

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

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 Covid-19 and restrictions in place.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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 10th December 2020

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record. Mrs Boving-Foster will sign them as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

5. Matters Arising

Mrs Boving-Foster informed Governors that she had not progressed any further with Inspiring Governance as she is waiting until school is operating again. She updated Governors that the Articles of Association had been sent to the DfE for approval and that their response was a request that the school also updates its Funding Agreement. This has been agreed and have asked the DfE to outline the process for doing this. With regards to the question in the previous minutes, it was reported that the number of children coming to school from the catchment area is typical to other years.

6. Items to be minuted separately

There was one update which is minuted as confidential.

7. Year End Accounts

The statutory accounts having previously being circulated will be signed and submitted as qualified. Governors were asked to vote on accepting the accounts.

A vote was taken with 12 votes in favour of the submission of the statutory accounts and 1 against and thus, the accounts will be signed and submitted. The Governor who voted against wished it to be noted that the decision was based on some of the narrative within the accounts as opposed to the figures (as per the confidential item).

8. Three Year Budget

Mrs Scott presented the previously circulated budget stating that she felt it was a positive picture with student numbers increasing. The sheet details an increase in income by around 2% year on year. She added that as the position becomes stronger, she has increased budgets by around 10% at year three.

Mrs Rae commented that with regards to the teachers' pay and pensions grant that this is only guaranteed until March of this year and thereafter, there is a good chance that the same levels will not be awarded. Mrs Scott acknowledged this but said that she had left it in as it

is an unknown at present. Mr Ray commented that this budget gives good visibility for the Governors that the school is a going concern.

Dr Jenkins thanked Mrs Scott for presenting an easy to read and follow through document for non-accounting Governors.

It was unanimously agreed that the school is moving forward as a going concern.

9. Management Accounts to 31st December 2020

Mrs Scott presented the management accounts stating that the school was on course with its finances and looking comfortable. There were no significant variances to report and salaries are online with what has been budgeted.

In response to Mrs Rae's query regarding the furlough grant, Mrs Scott reported that the Government have scrapped this scheme (Job Retention Bonus where can claim £1,000 per furloughed employee). She reported that £5,000 had originally been put into the budget for this although feels it is unlikely that the government will re-instate this. Currently, there are 7 furloughed staff across catering and lettings and the scheme has been extended until the end of April so there may be a bit of money to come back there.

Thanks were given to Mrs Scott for her work.

10. Remote Learning

A link to a presentation by Mr Dawson was sent with the agenda and Mrs Boving-Foster thanked Mr Dawson for doing so. Therefore, as everyone present had seen the presentation, questions and comments were invited:

- *Seeing the presentation prior to the meeting was a good way to do this. Would it be the case that some families are too proud to ask for a laptop and if so, how does the school get round this (MB)?* Fairly certain that there are families balancing devices. The school has approached families and asked with the offer of paying for a device. One family did refuse (RD).
- *How is attendance monitored and what is done if children not attending online lessons (MB)?* All staff can see who is logging on to each lesson (they have to accept each student into the Zoom lesson for example). If there is a repeated problem, this goes through Heads of Departments and a conversation to try and resolve any issues. The only issue is if cameras are turned off, do not necessarily know if the student is there / engaging (RD).
- *It is impressive the distance the school has travelled (MB).*
- *How is the school dealing with the work produced – is there a record of it saved to be able to go back for revision purposes for example (PA)?* Students hand in their

work on Teams and this is all saved. The school is still encouraging pieces of work to be hand written as they will need to do this for exams (RD).

- *Feel there are a few little things to tidy up, for example as a parent would like to see a timetable for online learning and perhaps the policy should state that each subject will have an online lesson once a week as a 'must' (GM).* In principle there should be a live lesson per week but if a teacher was doing four live lessons a day, the quality would drop off. There are still some holes, which the school is working on (RD).
- *The processes in place are a lot better than in the first lockdown (GM).*
- *It is very encouraging to see that the school has come on so far (TBF).*
- *As a duty of care it would be useful to undertake a monitoring exercise and it would be useful to undertake a pupil survey, perhaps the week after half-term in time for the Full Governors' in March (MW).*
- *As a non-parent Governor, cannot see EduLink – is it possible for Governors to have access (JJ)?* There is a lot of data stored on EduLink and are looking at ways around it so that Governors can have some access (RD).

Mrs Boving-Foster gave thanks to Mr Dawson for this item.

11. Mental Health

Mr Martin led on this item, reporting that the school has a good reactive system in place. The number of new people with issues has increased and this covers anxiety, frustration and the feeling of being stuck at home. Mr Martin gave praise to Banardos and Eden Mind and informed Governors that he had sent out information to parents of sources of help in the local area, e-nurses and details of courses parents can attend.

There were no questions on Mr Martin's update. Mrs Boving-Foster concluded by thanking all involved in making things as good as they can be under the circumstances. This is something to keep an eye on, especially if schools are not back on 8th March.

12. Grade Assessment

Dr Mawson reported on this item saying that there was much uncertainty about how grades will be awarded / assessed in light of exams being cancelled for 2021. However, the message for students is that there are still many opportunities to improve.

The previously circulated paper details the outcome of the mock exams versus the students' expected grades and this shows a positive picture. Mock exams went ahead to prepare students and were done as consistently as possible with the actual examination process. The expected grades were not shared with parents, as these were set against old assessment criteria. Mr Worrall commented that the school was very wise to conduct this the way they had and students had performed as well as can be expected.

Dr Mawson went on to give an update on the Catch-up Premium:

- 60 students (maximum allowed) have been enrolled onto the National Tutoring Programme for Maths, English and Science. This lasts for 15 weeks, in groups of up to three people and starts on Monday.
- 1:1 tuition has been purchased for the vulnerable students who need help in more than one subject and there has been a really positive reaction from parents. This will be expanded on after half-term.
- This has been running very smoothly thus far – sessions as running at 5-6pm so as not to interrupt school and as they are online, no-one is singled out.

Mrs Boving-Foster added that as per the Government's announcement, another lump sum will be great. Dr Mawson agreed but added that there are concerns that Sixth Form is not included in this scheme and that there are a number who would benefit from it. However, she added that the Miss Smith is doing a great job as Head of Sixth Form and the school is making use of Free Recovery / charity help for Sixth Forms. **It was concluded that the Sixth Form be looked at in the next meeting.**

13. Safeguarding Audit

Mr Martin led on this item. The previously circulated report showed a lot of positives. There is an action plan (at the back of the document) which Mr Martin is working through as best he can remotely, but some things need to be done when back in school. Questions and comments were invited:

- *Overall there were no alarms or surprises – most of the action plan is re-organising how information is presented (MW).*
- *From a Governing point of view, Miss McMann is collating all Governors certificates and creating a record (MW).*
- *Very happy with the outcome of it (PB).*
- *Would this be deemed positive by OFSTED (JR)? Yes, it will tick a lot of boxes and save them some work (PB).*

Mrs Boving-Foster concluded this thanking all involved in keeping children safe in school.

14. Three Year Strategy

Mr Buckland reported that the context of Covid-19 has seriously impacted what the school can do to work on this and thus, there are a number of things on hold presently. However, there are a number of things that have been done and the following was highlighted:

- Delighted that Mr Martin has become a permanent appointment to the SLT. An advertisement will be placed for the remaining post after half-term as it is felt such an important appointment cannot be made on Zoom and would like student input.

- Admissions is on hold at the moment, but do not need to consult until December. This will be picked up once back in school.
- Progress within pastoral team has been made with a role negotiated for Mr Henderson.
- The Finance department is much more robust thanks to Mrs Scott.
- Mr Colosi has made a very positive impact on the I.T. infrastructure
- New Behaviour Policy is being worked on and hope to have this by Easter.

Overall, the staff are more than at capacity at the moment and thus, day to day basics are the priority.

Mr Worth asked how a new member of the leadership will be identified (i.e. are SLT looking for any particular skills)? Mr Buckland answered that the advert is structured to find the best person that fits with the team. It is deliberately not very specific as the current team are flexible in the roles they perform, there is not a particular skills gap and the importance is someone who will bring fresh ideas and work well with SLT. Mrs Boving-Foster added that she felt what is important is more hands on deck and there is no current lack in quality. Mr Worrall echoed this saying that SLT are at full capacity, and supports the advert to bring in something new.

15. Health and Safety

Mrs Scott reported that the site team are busy during the school closure, conducting low cost improvements. The cleaners are taking the opportunity to deep clean areas.

With regards to lateral flow testing, there are serious concerns with the efficiency of the tests and it was reported to Governors that Eden Heads are taking a joint approach with this. More disposal bins have been bought ready to test students and this is going to be a taxing process as the process is not quick nor pleasant.

16. Head Teacher's Report

As the report has been previously circulated and there were no further updates, Mr Buckland invited questions and comments. It was confirmed that the risk assessments are updated as and when is needed by Mrs Scott in response to a question from Mr Miller. Mr Airey asked if as per the SEN register there are more boys on it that there would be usually? Mr Martin answered that typically girls mask needs more than boys but the numbers can vary. Dr Jenkins added that there are more boys in school.

It was confirmed to Mr Ray that Safeguarding is a standing item on all routine Full Governor agendas. Remote learning is also to be added to the next agenda. Mrs Boving-Foster thanked all Governors and SLT for attending the meeting.

The next agenda will include: remote learning and the Sixth Form.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.