

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Thursday 6th May 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 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)
Mr R Shephard (CoG)

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

Visitors: none

11 Governors in attendance until the end of item 10, and then 10 for the remainder of the meeting

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 Airey and Mr Worth (work related)

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 1st and 4th March 2021

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record from the confidential meeting held on 1st March. Despite the timeframe given, there have been no further updates on this. The reason given was the unavailability of two key EFSA staff members during the Easter holidays. It was noted this is holding the schools plans up with regards to expenditure.

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes were a true record from meeting held on 4th March. Mrs Boving-Foster will sign both sets as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

5. Matters Arising

With regards to the action points, Mrs Boving-Foster was pleased to report that all Governors had submitted their I.D. as per the HSBC request. Mrs Scott added that all the information has been uploaded to HSBC, and that there will be some additional housekeeping to do with other bank accounts the school holds.

6. Minutes from the Education and Standards Committee held April 20th 2021.

Mr Hansford had nothing to add to the previously circulated minutes and welcomed any questions or comments. There were none.

7. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Committee held 19th April 2021.

Mrs Rae gave an overview of the meeting, highlighting that it was essentially a catch-up meeting. One of the main items was looking at the maintenance cycle. Mr Ray commented that a lot of this is down to affordability, which is presently unknown, making it difficult to make any plans. Mr Worrall added that as per the minutes, the Funding Agreements have been sent out to the committee to look at in line with the DfE's request to update it.

8. Incidents of Sexual Character over the Last Three Years, ranging from bullying of a sexual character to police report, including peer-to-peer and staff complaints

Mr Buckland reported that the assemblies had concluded this morning on the subject of sexual harassment and abuse (a copy of these assemblies has been sent out to Governors). The aim is to try and shift behaviours in society. Overall, Mr Buckland felt that the assemblies have been very successful at defining exactly what sexual harassment is and have been careful to emphasise that men can be also be the victim of this. He reported that there

has been police representation in all of these assemblies and that he thought the assemblies were well received. As a result, there have been four new disclosures (1 in Year 7 and 3 in Year 8), and this is deemed to be a good thing as it can be dealt with. Mr Buckland added that often the perpetrators do not realise what they are doing constitutes sexual harassment. Mr Allen, who was credited by Mr Buckland for his work on these assemblies, felt that at times the perpetrators may use ignorance on the topic as an excuse and that these sessions have removed any confusion and sent the message that there is no room for this in school. There was a pause to allow for questions / comments / discussion:

- *Well done on sending such a powerful message – will these be sent to parents (JR)?* Yes in the process of putting together a version for parents to view (PB).
- *Doing the assemblies shows the support is there, will make everything fresher in childrens' minds and make it easier to have conversations (TBF).*
- *Thought the assemblies were very good but was surprised that at the end the students trailed out and missed the feedback from them. Feel that it is very important to hear from the students their suggestions on how this should be handled. Also as suggested in the Education meeting, could get somebody in on their level to talk through a real life experience (MB). **Mrs Boving-Foster said that she agreed on a personal level with the comments, but that this was perhaps more relevant later on in the agenda when Governors discuss what strategy they should take but Mr Buckland wished to answer Mr Bauer's point.*** As a teacher with much experience, disagree that this approach would have worked – the children need time to go away, reflect, chat and come as individuals if they want to report something and this is what has happened. It is on the agenda for the Student Council. Making them stay back to give feedback would give a negative result. The delivery of the assemblies is an operational matter (PB).
- *Thought the assemblies gave a very good impact but wonder what the value was of having the PSCOs there as they did not speak. Perhaps there are other more suited members in the police force, with specific experience in this area who could have attended (GM)?* The purpose of police representation was symbolic. They were asked if they wanted to speak and they declined (PB).
- *Thought the assemblies were really well done and support what Mr Buckland said that children will be uncomfortable in putting their hand up in that forum. The assemblies are a starting point to build up and are not stand alone items. Can see both points of view about the police representation – were the police that attended known in school as this is important (JM)?* Yes they are known in school and have been in on other occasions (PB).
- *Strong impact made and this is a base for interaction and there are forums in the curriculum where it can be discussed, for example, Citizenship (MW).* Would just like to emphasise that this is not a starting point but a process has always been in place since pupils join in Year 7. It is just that nationally it has come to the forefront

and as there was also an incident before Easter, it seemed a good time to re-set and re-focus. It is something which is discussed continually (PB).

- *Very impressed – thought the content was engaging and commend the school for addressing this head on. Feel that Governors need to put some time into a strategy which protects the school and its reputation, giving the message that the school actively seeks this behavior out and deals with it (JJ).*

Mrs Boving-Foster drew the discussion to the close, saying that this item is intended for background information so that Governors can work together with SLT in developing a strategy and helping deliver the important message that there are no excuses for this behaviour.

With regards to the number of incidents logged, Mr Buckland gave an overview from 2018 – 2021. There have been 38 incidents of bullying, 4 of homophobia, 11 cause for concern (sexting) and 14 of sexual abuse. Where necessary these have been reported to the police who then take over the case and decide what action is necessary. He said that there is no access to data on this for other schools so there can be no comparison.

Questions and comments were invited:

- *Do you think these figures could be the tip of the iceberg and they will in fact be higher (JR)?* Would be naïve to think that they are accurate especially as there have been four more incidents reported since the assemblies. However, would hesitate to put a figure on it (PB).
- *Have spent time in other larger schools and they are not as proactive as QEGS and feel that this is something which is massively under reported (MW).* Around three years ago, Mrs Chapman was surprised to be contacted by the police who were worried the school had a serious issue. However, convinced it is because the school reports things to the police, as it should, whereas other schools bury it (PB).
- *Do things like the above trigger an OFSTED visit (JR)?* OFSTED triangulate things (data, parent, student and staff feedback). Feel that the school has a very robust response (PB).

8. What is currently taught / how much time / how is it taught in RSE, PSHE, Citizenship re. sexual harassment etc.

Mr Buckland said that he had nothing to add to the previously circulated report. It is designed to show what happens and the extent of the programme, which is well delivered. He welcomed any queries on the content. Mrs Boving-Foster said that it was good to have this background information as Governors do not see what is taught on a day-to-day basis.

There were no questions or comments on this item.

9. The policies below have all been approved and updated as needed, but are they as good as they can be re. sexism? In relation to Sexism they are all underpinned by DfE's document from 2018 [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#). Separately is also the question re. Staff to Child and Child to Staff sexual harassment.

- a. Behaviour policy
- b. Safeguarding
- c. Anti-bullying
- d. Equal opportunities
- e. RSE

Mrs Boving-Foster suggested that each policy be taken in turn and looked at as per the agenda, starting with the view of SLT on these policies. Mr Buckland felt that all of the policies cover sexism and that a lot of time was spent developing them. These topics are covered outside the policies, which is just as important. Mr Allen, whilst happy to hear any suggestions, agreed with Mr Buckland. There was a note that the Equalities Policy displayed on the website is the old version and this will be rectified as soon as possible.

There was a discussion as to whether it would be useful to look at each policy in turn or; as a whole. Mr Worrall was in favour of looking at them as a whole as he felt they are background documents, not curriculum documents. He felt that, if anything, policies can be cross referenced as opposed to cutting and pasting. Overall, he said he felt comfortable that all issues are covered across the policies. Mr Buckland agreed with Mr Worrall, adding that if the policies are scrutinised for sex / gender, then surely must go through each of the protected characteristics for each policy. Mrs Boving-Foster answered that she is comfortable that the policies cover all legal bases but there seems to be a higher percentage impacted by sexism and thus, do the policies need to take a bit more stance on this or not? The comments from Governors were as follows:

- *Pleasantly surprised at how well covered the policies are. With regards to the Behavior Policy, there are specific comments about if books are mistreated or computers for example, is there an opportunity in there to call out bad behavior (JJ)?*
- *Rewards for supporting a peer and emphasis in the Behavior Policy about moral courage (TBF).*
- *Incredibly important to set a tone in the policies but it is also about changing the mindsets of young people (MB).*
- *Racism is also a topic in the radio too and there are as many racist incidents in school as there as sex based issues (PB).*
- *Leave the policies as they are and address over time – policies will naturally evolve (JR).*
- *The policies in place now are user-friendly. If you start to pack them out with more detail, will end up with a big list and there is a danger something will be left out which will attract more scrutiny (GM).*
- *If want to look at any policy, look at the Behavior Policy, as this is what the children will buy into (JR).*

- *Feel that the Governors are going into operational territory. The Governors are there to ratify the policies, not for them to delve in to. Is The Key used as a resource (KR)?*
Appreciate that perspective. The Key is used and SLT spend hours reading, discussing and consulting students, staff and parents on policies (PB).
- *Agree the policies do a good job. The key one is the anti-bullying one to bring up to date (RS).*

It was unanimously agreed that Governors had considered their duty and all policies are fulfilling their obligations. The Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies will be the next to be reviewed when appropriate in light of the above feedback.

10. Discussion re. strategy re. Sexism, Racism, and Homophobia. To be detailed for next FGB, if agreed to go forward.

Mrs Boving-Foster introduced this, saying that she wanted to develop a strategy which empowers the school via a high level document to tackle these issues. She thought it would have a level of reporting, including surveys to measure the impact. If agreed by the majority, this would be taken further, at a more specific level at the next Full Governors' meeting. The viewpoints of Governors were welcomed and was as follows:

- *Feel it is important to protect the school and its reputation, promoting the message that the school is actively looking for these traits (JJ).*
- *Fully support the school and promote that it is good to come forward in a school that values integrity. Feel that need to look at imaginative ways to deal with these issues / mindsets (MB).*
- *Happy to work with Governors on this. Some of the content described can be found in the school's aims, which is displayed on the website (PB).*
- *A short statement of in*
- *tent is all that is needs documenting (GM).*

In light of the above feedback, Mrs Boving-Foster proposed that a short, powerful document be brought back to Full Governors in July. A vote was taken with 10 votes in favour and 1 against. Thus, this will be re-visited in the next meeting.

Ms Mills left the meeting due to another work commitment.

11. Grades Assessment

Dr Mawson led on this item and in addition to the previously circulated document, added that one of the biggest challenges is that OFQUAL are prone to changing their minds over

process. Additionally, Dr Mawson made Governors aware of the extreme pressure this is putting on staff having additional marking and moderating to do on top of their already full workloads. In terms of the process, there will be an electronic folder and a hard copy for each student. Two subjects will be sampled with 48 hours notice given. Mr Buckland added that staff have responded really well to the workload in a complex process that was given at short notice. He said that Dr Mawson had simplified a difficult system and he felt it was all going well.

Questions and comments were as follows:

- *Does the school have to send a process to the EFSA (JR)?* The school has to submit a policy and make its processes available. They are subject to scrutiny. One advantage this year, is that any appeals against grades can go down as well as up so it will make people think before launching an appeal against a grade (EM).
- *The simplified approach developed will really help – are the DfE recognizing the efforts staff are having to go to in terms of moderating etc (MW)?* There is no acknowledgment that staff are working as hard as they are (PB). In terms of moderating, newer members of staff are being double moderated and SLT are confident that the measures in place are as strong as can be. Support staff have also been a wonderful help (EM).

Mrs Boving-Foster gave her thanks to Dr Mawson and all staff in school, be it teaching or support staff.

12. Safeguarding Audit

Mr Martin explained that he had updated and circulated the action plan to show Governors the progress that has been made, with most items being completed. Alongside this, he attached some items as evidence. In response to a question about the checklist being a live document, Mr Allen answered that it is about to be.

Thanks were given to Mr Martin his time spent on this.

13. Health and Safety

There were no updates on this.

14. Governor Training

Governors reported that they had attended the following courses:

- Both Dr Jenkins and Mrs Rae attended a SEND course

- Mrs Rae also reported that she had attended and EFSA Auditor conference and fed back that requirements have not changed much.
- Mrs Boving-Foster took advantage of the School and Academies Show being an online event and listened to come of the content specifically on sexual harassment.

15. Headteacher's Report

In addition to the previously circulated report, Mr Buckland said he was delighted with the new SLT appointment and thanks to Mrs Boving-Foster and Mr Worrall for their support in the interview process.

There were no further questions of comments.

16. Notices

Mr Ray reported that he had conducted the internal audit, the results of which will be discussed at the next Finance and Pay meeting. Overall, he was pleased to report there were only very minor points and that there is a great team in place.

There was a short discussion that given the Government are easing Covid-19 restrictions, if the July Full Governors' meeting should be held in person. It was agreed that this would be nice and a larger room will be sourced for social distancing purposes. Additionally, there will be provision made for Governors to join virtually if they are still uncomfortable with meeting a group of people.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm