

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Thursday 8th July 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 Buckland
Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr J Ray (CoG)
Mr P Airey (CoG)
Ms J Mills (CoG)
Mr A Worth (S)

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

Visitors: none

9 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 Miller, Mr Bauer and Mrs Rae (work related). Mr Shephard was not present at the meeting.

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 May 2021

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

5. Matters Arising

It was noted that the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy will be updated as soon as it is practicable.

6. Minutes from the Education and Standards Committee held June 2021.

It was agreed prior to the meeting that Governors would read the previously circulated minutes and bring any questions or comments to the meeting in the interests of giving more time to other items. There were no questions or comments.

7. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Committee held June 2021.

As above. There were no questions or comments.

8. Three Year Budget

This would normally be on the Finance agenda but due to the pressures and time spent PCR testing it has come to this meeting, as it needs to be submitted to the EFSA. The budget had been previously circulated with the extensive notes as below:

1. *Income is divided into two boxes, the first box is DFE Revenue Income and this income is guaranteed for the year 2021/22 as the school has now received the funding information from the DFE.*
2. *The second box is revenue that will need to be generated by the school. This much smaller amount of income has been calculated cautiously taking into consideration the data currently available for example the very slow uptake of outside bookings in the current climate.*
3. *Student numbers for each year are included at the top of the income box and shows that the school population continues to grow in years 2021/22 and 2022/23 when capacity will have been reached in Years 7 to 11.*

4. *A detailed line by line explanation of the costs has been included on the assumptions page and has followed the national guidance provided by various sources.*
5. *Increase in headcount for staff have been added to each year in the expenditure section and is also included on the Student Numbers spreadsheet*
6. *Teacher Salaries have not been increased in 2021/22 but a 2% pay increase has been include in Years 2 and 3*
7. *Support Salaries have been increased by 1.5% in all 3 years*
8. *Currently the school has not been advised of any expected pension increases for either staff or the school*
9. *The suggested uplift for pay and prices is 2% and this has been adopted where appropriate in 2021/22. Exceptions to this are some site costs where the school continues to catch up and staff development*
10. *Costs have been uplifted by as much as 10% in 2022/23 and by an average of 3% in 2023/24.*
11. *The school returns a healthy surplus across the 3 Years*

QEGS has put together a sensitive and prudent budget.

Mrs Boving-Foster highlighted that she and Mr Ray had looked at the budget with great depth and scrutiny prior to this meeting and were happy with it. Mr Ray added that in the coming year (2021/22), recruitment is more cost effective as staff lower in the pay scales have been employed and this is followed by an assumption in the budget that in the following two years this cost will perhaps increase as teachers with more experience may well be recruited.

Mr Worth queried the lettings income for 2023 and 2024 at £20,000 and £27,000 respectively, and whether this was a normal figure. Mrs Scott answered that £27,000 is the expected figure on a normal year. However, due to Covid-19 it is a struggle to achieve such figures and thus thought it best to be prudent in the budget.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to accept the budget as circulated with no changes. Governors are happy that it is submitted to the EFSA.

9. Amended and Strengthened Vision

It was noted that after the last meeting, Mr Martin highlighted that all protected characteristics should be incorporated into the school vision and not just sexism and

transgender as discussed in the May Full Governors' meeting. Therefore, additions have been made to the school's vision under point 3 (aims). Mr Buckland was confident that this meets all requirements and invited any questions. Mr Worrall said that he feels that the school has gone about this in the right way, as opposed to amending every single policy – it is a good outcome that strengthens the vision of the school. Mrs Boving-Foster agreed with this approach also saying it strengthens the school.

It was unanimously agreed to accept these inclusions with no changes.

10. SIP & Outline for 2021/22

Mrs Boving-Foster introduced this stating that on a normal year, there would be much more discussion on this; but Covid-19 has impacted on what can be achieved. Therefore, the SLT have given a status update and outlined the priorities for 2021/22. This will be looked at again in the first Full Governors' meeting in October 2021.

Mr Buckland said that although a number of items will be carried over into next term, (for example the Behaviour Policy), a lot of progress has been made despite the circumstances. It was noted that the SLT restructure was a significant achievement in time for next year. The intention is also to integrate Heads of Year and tutors more into academic matters / progress of the students. Questions and comments were as follows:

- *Under section 4b (Student Voice) it would be good to feedback to the students the progress made and do more next year (JJ). Progress has been made in the canteen and there is no single-use plastic anymore (JS). **This will be added in / fed back.***
- *With regards to the Heads of Year integrating more into the academic side of progress, will this increase their workload (AW)? Hopefully this will not be the case as Heads of Year are largely already doing this. The biggest challenge will be with tutors but they are already aware of this and it is not a massive change (PB).*
- *Will making admissions more inclusive be carried over to next year – would like for this to be included so that do not lose sight of this under the caveat that it will be done if there is capacity (TBF)? Will see how things go at the start of the year. Very keen to do this (PB). **Mr Buckland will add this in as per Mrs Boving-Foster's suggestion.***

Mrs Boving-Foster concluded this item by saying she hopes that Governors will monitor certain areas of the SIP when the plan is much clearer. Dr Jenkins added that next year there are plans to complete the SEN self-assessment from the National Association for SEND.

11. I.T Vision

The presentation made by Mr Dawson in the June Education and Standards meeting was circulated to all Governors ahead of this meeting and thus, this is a chance to discuss / ask questions before taking a vote. The questions to Mr Dawson were as follows:

- *Should this go ahead, is there help for those living in blackspots for I.T. / internet connection and are there many struggling (JM)?* Problems are few and far between and look at any individual cases to try and resolve them. The system also has the capacity for students to download everything they need before they leave school (RD).
- *What happens in cases where parents don't pay? What steps will be taken to remedy this (JR)?* Should this be approved, this is something to decide. There are different options – the most cost effective way is to buy the iPads outright, but not all families are in a position to do this. The school could foot the bill at the end of the month and the provider chases any outstanding payments. There is also a company insurance scheme against non-payment. This is all to discuss over the coming months (RD).
- *Preference for an insurance policy to be put in place (JR).* Ethical debate as vast majority will pay and they are incurring the cost for the insurance policy for what will likely be a minority (RD).
- *Ensure that the school does not scare people away with this and that it is clearly explained before (JR).* The advice have been given is to start in primary schools with this to set the expectation (RD).
- *Is 32GB enough memory bearing in mind they will put their own stuff on at home (TBF)?* This will be something to look at if approved when it goes out to tender. It should be enough as the cloud will alleviate a lot of this (RD).
- *There could be some people who are against this, taking the position that they pay their taxes and education is thus meant to be free (JJ).* This could well be the case and it is always a difficult thing to ask for contributions. However, believe that can sell this idea and being prepared for this opinion being voiced is best. Also worth noting that there are a lot of children out of catchment, for example, and parents are willing to pay transport costs to send their child to QEGS (RD).
- *Will the insurance cover screen breakages, as this is a very common way in which phones / tablets get broken (CH)?* During the tender process will ask for rubber cover, which will be the best way to protect the screen. The insurance will also be a swap in and swap out scheme, although it is noted that making claims will cause more paperwork. There will also be a surplus amount of iPads (10%) in school to cover the time taken to get a new one (RD).
- *Presumably there will be exclusions on the insurance (CH)?* Yes, they will have to keep the covers on (RD).
- *With regards to what the children stream at home, will school be applying filters to control this (CH)?* As the iPads will be legally owned by the families, there will be no filters (cannot filter what a child has on their phone for instance) so will be relying on parental responsibility. However, the system means that when the children are in school, all their apps from home are pushed out and they cannot use them. Additionally the children know that their device can be plugged in by school to look

at work, for instance and so this will perhaps deter them. It is expected that there will be more safeguarding issues highlighted (RD).

- *Is the I.T. system in school sufficient to cope with this (CH)?* School is working through a plan to get to where it needs to be. The speed of the internet is fine and not a problem (RD).
- *The hope is to make this system a USP for the school – it will be the second setting in Cumbria to do this but it is happening all over the country. For those who object, the children can be given an iPad in the morning and then leave it in school at the end of the day (PB).*
- *Great move for the school but what happens if the network goes down (PA)?* The school is not going to be paperless – still have exercise books for example. Additionally, there are better contingencies with the servers so if one breaks there is another one which will run (RD).

There being no further questions or comments, the discussion drew to a close. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to adopt Mr Dawson’s proposal. Mr Buckland praised Mr Dawson for the extensive amount of work he has done on this.

12. Admissions Policy

Firstly, Mr Buckland requested the annual approval from the Governors to increase the PAN to 160. **The Governors unanimously agreed to the increase in the PAN to 160.**

This has been updated to reflect legal changes which will come into effect from 1st September 2021 (rules around internationally adopted children and testing moved to once a term for in-year applicants to the school). There were no questions or comments. **The Governors unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.**

Mr Buckland also wished to update Governors that there have been almost 400 applications for the entrance test, which is the most the school has ever had. His congratulations to the outreach team were noted and this was echoed by Mrs Boving-Foster.

13. Health and Safety

As Mr Miller had given his apologies for the meeting, he sent the following update via email:

*“Things are getting looked at again now the Covid situation is improving.
I am quite happy as things are getting sorted - ladders register set up and inspections carried out, damp in the end wall getting done over summer.
Myself and Jane are also going to review the H & S policy over the summer break.
Jane has also started the ball rolling with a County Council inspection after September.”*

There were no further updates, questions or comments.

14. Safeguarding

.Mr Martin reported that alongside Mr Buckland's Headteacher's update, he had attached a Wedge report so that Governors can see where the school is up to. Mental health needs have increased but internal capacity in this area has doubled with some complicated Year 7 cases from September. However, despite the increase in capacity, it is always fully used up with room for more. Dr Jenkins added that in her experience, however much support is commissioned it is always used up and the school is not alone in this feeling.

15. Governor Training

Mrs Boving-Foster informed Governors that Mr Shephard's term of office would be coming to an end on 31st August 2021 and would not be serving another term. This therefore leaves a vacancy on the board. Mr Worrall has used the NGA tool to try and source a new Governor without success. Mrs Boving-Foster asked that if anyone knows of someone with educational or financial experience and may be willing to take up the post to please email her. If after the summer break there are no suggestions, will look to recruit a parent Governor.

Additionally, Mrs Boving-Foster said that she would like to reassemble the OFSTED group, consisting of herself, Dr Jenkins and Mr Worrall. It would be great to have some more Governors in this group and asked anyone else who would like to get involved to email her over the summer break.

16. Headteacher's Report

In addition to the previously circulated report, Mr Buckland had an update regarding Covid-19. At the moment, there will be no bubbles from September and there will be a cycle of whole school testing in September. Mr Buckland asked if any Governors would be able to volunteer to help undertake this. There are concerns over the rising numbers of cases in the Eden Valley and this poses questions over results day. All other schools in the area are planning to go ahead with these and QEGS will also be open but students will be discouraged from coming into school where possible, with results sent via EduLink. However, the support in school will be there should students need it, particularly the A-Level students.

Action point: Mr Buckland to send Miss McMann details regarding the testing in September to circulate to Governors.

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17. Meeting Dates

A draft of the meeting dates had previously been circulated. There is a little tweaking to do with the November Finance meeting to ensure the payroll deadline is met should the Governors agree to any pay progressions as a result of the appraisal process. It was agreed that all being well with Covid-19 that Full Governors' meetings would resume in school,

with sub-committee meetings being held via Zoom or Teams. It was also noted that the Full Governor meetings have an earlier start time in January and July 2022 to look at different needs in the school (this may not be required but the option is there). **Action point: Miss McMann to circulate the finalised dates as soon as these are known.**

At the end of the meeting Mrs Boving-Foster extended her sincere thanks to every staff member for their commitment and dedication to the children of the school. This was seconded by Mr Worrall. Mr Buckland also wished to thank the Governors for their support during a difficult and unusual year.

There were two confidential items to follow and all Governors and SLT were present for this.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm