

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Thursday 14th October 2021 at 5.30pm.**

Present

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

Mr P Buckland
Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)
Mr J Ray (CoG)
Mr M Bauer (CoG)
Mr A Worth (S)

SLT present: Dr E Mawson
Mr A Martin
Mr R Dawson

Members: Mrs G Gravett & Ms J
Venus were present until the end of
item 5.

Visitors: none

10 Governors in attendance until the
end of item 8, 9 until the end of item
9, 7 until the end of item 16 as the staff
Governor was asked to leave due to
the content of the Head's report.

Quorum per article 114 – 6 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 Mr Bauer, Mr Worrall, Mr Ray and Mrs Rae joined via Zoom and that Zoom was used to record part of the meeting as the Clerk left.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Ms Mills (hospital) and Mr Airey (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. Introduction of Members

The Members, appointed in January 2021, introduced themselves to the Governors and the Governors gave round the table introductions.

5. Exam Results and IDSR Information

Dr Mawson presented the results element, adding to the previously circulated document that she felt the results were great, showing really good progression (119 in Sixth Form and most A-Level students got into their first choice university). Moreover, although these results cannot be compared to previous years, she is confident that they would still have been as strong as if they had sat their exams in the normal way. Additionally, she was also pleased to report a reduced number of appeals, showing that parents are confident in staff. Questions and comments on her written report were invited:

- *A really good document, thank you (TBF).*
- *Have any patterns changed with regards to the performances of girls and boys (GM)?* At A-Level there is not so much a gap and at GCSE this is subject dependent but is better than the national average (EM).
- *Is it correct that SEN have done as well as their peers at A-Level but not at GCSE and is there an action plan (JJ)?* Yes and there is a separate action plan for SENCo. However, this needs to be more individual as there are a big range of needs and will differ from year to year (EM).

Mr Buckland went through the previously circulated IDSR document explaining that it is what OFSTED use to review the school. Overall, he felt that this document is an absolute credit to the school and will give inspectors no problems. In response to Mrs Gravett's question about whether an inspection would be likely this year, Mr Buckland said that although there is a huge backlog, they are doing outstanding schools in date order of their last inspection.

Dr Mawson added that one of the biggest worries is for the current A-Level students as they have missed out on the practice and experience of sitting their GCSE exams. Mrs Boving-Foster confirmed with Dr Mawson that data drops will resume in Education and Standards meetings, as well as how the students are coping. Overall, Mrs Boving-Foster felt that it is a very positive document and gave thanks to all staff, especially during these difficult times.

Mrs Gravett and Ms Venus were thanked for taking the time to attend the first part of this meeting and they left.

6. Minutes of the Governors Meeting Held in July 2021

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

7. Matters Arising

The SIP is further down the agenda and there were no other matters arising.

8. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Committee held September 2021

Mrs Rae wished to highlight the following:

- Improved position of the finances with a much better year-end result predicted.
- Ongoing approval of the amounts held in each bank account.
- Work is still ongoing with the Financial Procedures Manual and this will be scheduled for the next Finance meeting in November.

There were no questions or comments.

Mrs Rae left during the meeting

9. SEF

Mr Buckland introduced this saying that whilst OFSTED expect there to be a SEF, there is no model format to present this document. He invited any questions or comments:

- *As per the reference on page 4 to the Governors' understanding the 'sequencing and construction priorities' – need more work on this (TBF). Can do more work on this if Governors feel the need to (PB). **Action point: to add this to the Education and Standards agenda for November.***
- *Should Governors be able to see student names (TBF)? These will be removed (PB).*
- *Feel it covers all the areas that it should and there is a good overlap between this and the SIP and thus, very useful (MW)*
- *Given there are departments under-performing, as identified in Dr Mawson's report, why is this not reflected in the SIP or is this a more general document (TBF)? This is relative as the departments mentioned are still doing better than the national average. Additionally, it has been two years now without any data which makes it difficult to put any context to it, and also there are many things which departments would have liked to have done but haven't been able to due to Covid. However, next*

year will go through and set new targets for the SIP – they need to get a year in school behind them first (PB).

Mr Worrall and Mr Ray left the meeting.

10. SIP

Mr Buckland invited questions and comments to the previously circulated document:

- *How can Governors monitor the progress of this? Although appreciate there is the RAG ratings on each target, something can stay at amber for a long time so how do Governors follow up (TBF)?* Will go back to the process of bringing an updated version to each Full Governors' meeting and Governors can ask questions. Additionally, if Governors want information outside of meetings, they are free to contact the member of SLT leading on the item they wish to query (PB).

The clerk left the meeting and the remainder of the meeting was recorded to facilitate the minutes.

Dr Jenkins presented on the SEND element. It is her intention to send round a survey via Miss McMann. She highlighted that whilst not every Governor needs to be an expert in this area, some knowledge and awareness is needed, especially in making sure that the school is identifying those with needs and taking them into account, including those that move on and off the register. Additionally, a child with a disability (something which has affected them for more than 12 months) should be treated more favourably, as per NASEN advice and the Equalities Act. Mr Worth asked then if a disabled child should be treated more favourably and given an advantage over a child who does not have a disability or are they treated more favourably in order to create a level playing field? Dr Jenkins answered that she would need to look into this. In short, the guidance states that every teacher, leader and Governor is responsible for SEND. Thus, she said that Governors need to:

- Set out the vision and ambitions for the school.
- Think about SEND – policies in place and holding the school to account.
- Overseeing financial performance to show how the school gets value for money.

Action point: Dr Jenkins to send notes and survey Miss McMann to circulate to all Governors to complete and return to Miss McMann. The focus needs to be on what the school does well and what needs to be developed (pages 8-12). This will then be discussed with Mr Munro to devise a Governor action plan by January 2022.

Mrs Boving-Foster closed this section by asking for Governor support with this, as it is a really good initiative.

There being no further questions or comments, a vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to approve the SIP.

11. Focus on SIP through scheduled programme of presentations & Focus on Education through presentations from Heads of Departments.

Mrs Boving-Foster led on these items, saying there are two things she would like the Governing Body to do this year in a bid to get back to normal:

- Meeting Plan which has scheduled points for the year linking to the SIP and looking forward
- A program whereby Heads of Department attend Full Governors meetings for half an hour to get a real feel for what is happening in school. It was noted that Mrs Boving-Foster had spoken to Mr Buckland prior to the meeting and he agrees in principle with this.

The discussion lies particularly with the last point as it would require Governors to come in at 4pm for the presentations as it would be the best method for Heads of Departments. **All Governors present agreed with this approach and that they would be willing to commit to this.**

12. Safeguarding

Mr Allen led on this item referencing the Wedge report that was previously circulated to Governors and that it is a moving snapshot. The headlines are that there are:

- 15 students with early help or statutory interventions
- 2 looked after children
- 1 student on long-term illness
- Number of pupil premium / free school meal students has gone down since last year

Mr Allen reported that the big change in numbers are that there are 51 children getting internal pastoral support and this is growing and thus, the two pastoral support officers are at capacity so the school is having to look at reducing the number of pupils they see or cutting back the number appointments / length of appointments. There are a number of children on waiting lists for NHS / CAMHS and they are thus, are reliant on the internal support from school.

Mr Allen also wished to highlight that there will be a long recovery ahead from the impact of Covid but work is being done to show students access points for support. Mr Buckland added his thanks to Mr Martin for all his work over this half-term as there has been huge stress in this area and a huge number of students needing support. Mrs Boving-Foster echoed this and said that she finds the reports and seeing how they progress over time very useful. **Action point: Miss McMann to set up a file on the OneDrive to store the Wedge reports in one place.**

13. Health and Safety

As link governor for this area, Mr Miller took the lead reporting that as per the circulated minutes there has been a Health and Safety Committee meeting, though he was unable to attend himself. It is standard at these meetings that there is a Covid update and the school is doing well. Other updates included ladder inspections, with any unfit ones being replaced and Mr Miller has asked that accident reporting is discussed at Health and Safety meetings, to ensure that any reportable incidents can be analysed and the school can look for lessons to be learnt from them. Additionally, the Health and Safety policy is in need of updating and work is being done on this. Overall, Mr Miller was pleased to report that things are being raised and discussed and encourages all staff to continue doing this. He finished by saying that work is ongoing for the Health and Safety inspection in May / June 2022.

Mr Worth queried a potential conflict of interest if Mr Miller as a Governor is helping to write / amend the Health and Safety policy when it is his job as a Governor to hold the school to account on such things? Mrs Boving-Foster felt that this was a fair point but as long as Mr Miller maintains an advisory role in this and Mrs Scott produces a new policy then it should be ok. There being no further questions, Mrs Boving-Foster thanked Mr Miller for his time.

14. Governor Matters

Mrs Boving-Foster apologised for the way in which the papers have been drip-fed for this meeting and felt that a better way of getting the material to Governors is needed. In response to a query about there being a drop-box, Mrs Boving-Foster answered that all papers are put onto the OneDrive but have to receive the papers in order for them to be placed on there. Mr Miller suggested that there is a deadline for submission and if it is not met, the item cannot be discussed at the meeting. Mrs Boving-Foster answered that if a more gentle approach does not work in the first instance it could be that there is a cut off date but things do often move and exceptions would have to be made. However, it was established that a lot of Governors are not using the OneDrive, which has been set up for a long-time so there is a quick improvement to be made there.

Mrs Boving-Foster updated the Governors on the progress of appointing a new Governor. A Parentmail has been issued today to see if there is any interest as there has been no success with looking in the wider community.

With regards to the Articles of Association, after a lengthy communication process, the DfE have accepted that the school does not need to update its Funding Agreement. The draft has been submitted and are awaiting the result of this, though there is a long backlog.

Mrs Boving-Foster made Governors aware that the Academies Financial Handbook has been re-named as the Academy Trust Handbook. There have been no major changes but there are some things of note:

- It points to the risk of cyber crime (this is in the school SIP).
- There is a push to regularly have the Governing Board externally reviewed. Thus, Mrs Boving-Foster proposed that the Governing Body runs a normal year with the aim of introducing this in the next academic year.
- The Clerk should now be referred to as ‘Governance Professional’
- Certain documents should be made available for public inspection (the agenda, minutes and associated papers). **Action point: whilst the minutes are available on the website, need to look further into publishing reports sent to Governors and consider concerns about confidentiality.**

The Governor Information Booklet for 2021/22 has been circulated with the following changes:

- Establishment of a Risk and Audit Committee, which meets separately to the Finance and Pay committee three times per year and Mr Buckland has no voting rights on this committee.
- Mr Miller has agreed to be the reserve on the Appeals Committee due to Mr Shephard leaving.
- Staff Committee has been renamed the Staff and Complaints Committee.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the Governor Information Booklet for the year 2021/22.

The Code of Conduct is to be read, signed and returned to Miss McMann. Even though there are no revisions, an agreement to adhere to it is required on an annual basis.

Mrs Boving-Foster said that she was keen to re-start the Governors’ Achievement Award. This goes to a student who has overcome adversity. Mr Buckland reported that it has been allocated to someone this year and will follow up as to who this is.

15. Notices

There were none.

16. Items to be Added to the Next Agenda

- Statutory Accounts
- Financial Procedures Manual

17. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 9th December at 4.00pm. Dr Jenkins asked if there could be more clarity around the end time for meetings. Mrs Boving-Foster acknowledged that meetings do need to be a little quicker. ***Thanks to were given to Mr Worth and Mr Dawson who left the meeting.***

18. Headteacher's Report

Mr Buckland reported that in addition to the previously circulated report, the shortlisting had been completed for the Deputy Head Teacher post. There were only nine applicants (owing to Covid and unusual time for a senior appointment). There are three candidates shortlisted but it was felt by all of the panel that it was not a strong enough field to go ahead with interviews. Thus, it was decided to re-advertise with a new start date of September 2022. In the meantime, middle leaders have been asked if they would like to step-up to take over some of the responsibilities and this will likely to two people. This will be a great development opportunity and there is already a good level of interest in this. Interviews will take place for this after half-term. Additionally, Mr Dawson will also be stepping up as Senior Assistant Head. There will be financial benefits for those stepping up but the school will still save some money.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm