

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Thursday 3rd March 2022 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 N Ruddick (P)

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

SLT present: Mr A Martin
Mr R Dawson
Mrs J Scott

Visitors: none

Governors in attendance: 9 until the
end of item 12, 8 thereafter.

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

*Prior to the standard meeting, there were presentations from the Heads of Department of
Geography, Biology and RE/ Philosophy.*

Round the table introductions were given to introduce the new Governor, Mr Neil Ruddick.

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1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Ms Mills (long-term absence, illness), Mr Bauer,
Mr Airey and Mrs Rae (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. Summary of Areas to Celebrate and Areas of Concern in Head of Department Presentations

Mrs Boving-Foster led on this item, saying that it has been highly useful. The Heads of Department have all shown a big passion for their school subject and from a Governor perspective, it is good to reconnect with the school away from data.

Mrs Boving-Foster highlighted that Covid has created challenges, particularly around exam uncertainty. Even though the Governors, have no ability to change this, it is important for Governors to understand these issues and it is noted how well they have been managed by SLT.

Other issues cited included having to move classrooms, lack of lab space and more time for Heads of Department or extra help / an easier way to manage data.

Other Governor observations were as follows:

- *Remarkable how departments have bounced back. There will always be issues raised but their enthusiasm to get back to normal shows (MW).*
- *As a parent, it is great to see the enthusiasm and focus of Heads of Department (GM).*
- *Impressive that they all know each individual child in school (JJ).*

To conclude, the Governors asked that their feedback on enthusiasm and dedication be passed on to all Heads of Departments. In order to look at some of the concerns, Mr Ray will do a second stress test (it has been two years since the first one) in May / June for the July Full Governors' meeting. A tangible questionnaire to Heads of Departments will form part of this.

5. Minutes from the Meeting Held on 27th January 2022

An update on the action points was given:

- Dr Jenkins has updated the SEND action plan. This is stored on the 'Trustee Assurance Report' section of the OneDrive. Additionally, a suitable online course has been found on the NGA and it is urged that all Governors complete this. **Action point: Miss McMann will circulate details, including the link.**
- Mock OFSTED interviews are ongoing.

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

6. Minutes of the Education and Standards Meeting held in February 2022

As the minutes had been previously circulated, Mr Hansford invited any questions or comments. There were none.

7. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Committee Meeting held in February 2022

Mr Ray gave a brief summary of the previously circulated minutes. There were no further questions or comments.

8. Minutes of the Risk and Audit Committee held in February 2022

It was noted that the Risk Register is on hold, pending a meeting to ascertain if there is a more useful way of presenting this document. There were no questions or comments.

9. Multi Academy Trust – the next step.

A document, written by Mrs Boving-Foster, had been previously circulated outlining her proposed next steps in selecting an appropriate MAT to join. As per the paper, she proposes that West Lakes Academy would be the best fit for QEGS. It is situated in Cumbria, is an outstanding school and a connection with the Cumbria teaching hub. Mrs Boving-Foster said that she believes that this partnership will not only benefit the school but the wider community. Questions and comments were invited:

- *Is this just the start of the process (GM)?* Yes, if accepted it would begin with inviting West Lakes to come and speak to SLT and Governors. There are no commitments and even if this progressed to the next level (due diligence) can still opt out (TBF).
- *Fully support proposal of West Lakes – feel it would work well and a lot of positives (PB).*
- *Is this widely known amongst staff? Need to communicate very carefully and be mindful of the support staff (GM)?* It has been announced that the school is looking at a MAT to staff, prior to the Headteacher's advert going out and so far no concerns reported (PB). There is trust from the support staff but there are some underlying concerns about services being centralised, as has been seen with other MATS (JS).
- *West Lakes is the best fit. During our conversations can get reassurances about any worries and can stop the process at any time. It is a positive step and QEGS can add something to this MAT and it can also give the school wider opportunities (MW).*
- *West Lakes is a good choice – it has a Cumbrian connection, it is not direct competition and also the advantage of the Teaching School Hub (RD).*

There was a discussion as to whether or not it would be beneficial to consider talking to another MAT, arising from a concern of Mr Worth that this is such a big decision. Even if West Lakes is the best fit, there could be elements of another MAT that would like to incorporate for example. Mrs Boving-Foster said that if she felt there were two good matches for QEGS, that she would advocate this but, does not feel there is anything suitable in Cumbria. This was echoed by Mr Worrall, that if there was another good match it would be worth putting the time and effort in. Mr Dawson felt it was worth going through a paper exercise with a list of things the school would like to retain and score these against all MATS in Cumbria. Though Mrs Boving-Foster has already partially done this with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), she was more than happy for this to happen and Mrs Scott volunteered to do this. Mr Ray added that he thought this would be a good idea to make the process more visible. It was also noted that the RSC must approve the MAT.

The discussion drew to a close and Mrs Boving-Foster made the following proposals for Governors to vote on:

- 1. Contact West Lakes Academy to arrange two meetings – one with SLT and one with the Governing Body, ideally for the week commencing the 14th March. It was unanimously agreed to proceed with this.**
- 2. In parallel to the above, research into the Cumbrian MATS not mentioned in the previously circulated document, to ensure that a viable option has not been missed out. It was unanimously agreed that this was a worthwhile activity.**

10. Brief Mental Health Update After Survey

Mr Allen led on this and noted the following from the previously circulated survey:

- 80% response rate. With regards to the 20% that did not complete it the question arises as to whether this is something to be worried about. It is felt that the individuals causing most concern have completed the survey.
- Gender – more girls completed this than boys and were 7% lower in their scores
- An action plan has been formed and in order to improve the response rate, time will be given in I.T. to do this as a task.
- It is important to note that the benchmark for this is pre-Covid times. However, the school will repeat this annually and use this as its own benchmark.

11. Brief update from Staff Welfare Meeting on 1st March

It is felt that the profile of this has been raised, with more staff engaging. Thanks were given to Mr Dawson for raising the profile.

12. Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Committee minutes from January were circulated to all Governors prior to this meeting. Mr Miller was pleased to report that more issues are being raised and

cited various examples. Mr Buckland said that he was very grateful to Mr Miller for his time and expertise.

Mr Miller left the meeting.

13. Safeguarding

Mr Buckland said that there were no specific issues to report. Mr Allen wished to make Governors aware that the current Pastoral Officer has secured employment with Barnados. Whilst this position is being advertised, it is an issue recruiting staff who will stay long-term, which is key for continuity for the students. This is partially due to salary and being employed term-time.

14. SIP

There have been no changes and it is hoped that some action points will be complete by the end of term.

15. Headteacher's Update

In addition to the previously circulated report, Mr Buckland added that Covid figures remain positive with only 4 students absent. In terms of recruitment, interviews for a new English teacher are being held on Tuesday and the field is strong. Additionally, there is one candidate to interview for a Food and Nutritional post.

The next regular meeting will be on 5th May 4.00pm.

Save for a confidential item, the meeting closed at 6.30pm.