

Minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board for Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Wednesday 11th January 2023 at 6.30pm, held as a virtual meeting.

Present

Mrs M Robson (Chair)
Miss R McMann (Clerk)
Mr C Pyle
Rev D Sargent
SLT present: none

Mr D Marchant (Head, Ex-officio)
Mr N Ruddick
Mr M Pannone

Visitors: Nathan Jeremiah, EPI

6 Governors in attendance

Quorum per article 114 – 4 Governors
(one half of the governors holding office rounded up to the nearest whole number)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Mr N Page (family commitment)

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest in the agenda items.

3. Agree the School Vision

Mr Marchant said that this has been a really useful exercise with SLT involved. The Trustees were invited to give their comments prior to the meeting.

There was discussion around specific language and emphasis.

The Trustees unanimously agreed to adopt the school vision.

4. Agree MAT Priorities

Mr Marchant produced an updated version of this document, based on the feedback he had received from the Board.

There was a discussion around the precise wording and order of priorities and whether there should be any non-negotiables. It was decided that it would be simpler to list these solely in bullet point form as the priorities can be reviewed as balanced against the various options in relation to different MATs.

It was agreed there should be a specific point on Governance as this underpins other points regarding autonomy

The Board unanimously agreed to accept the document detailing the MAT priorities and that they are presented in bullet point format.

5. Discuss Parent Letter

A letter sent by a group of parents was circulated prior to the meeting. One of the requests in the letter was to explore the possibility remaining as a SAT. Mrs Robson reported that along with Mr Marchant they had met with the DfE and ESFA to explore options and it was made clear that due to the financial situation there was no alternative other than to enter a MAT. In similar cases experience is that the DfE and ESFA would have forced a merger by now, potentially by issuing a termination notice, and in effect ‘closing’ the school to reopen under a MAT giving trustees no choice and this would remove by default the selective status of the school. As the school is financially healthy (excluding the debt) we are being given the space to find the right partnership. They have accepted that the school needs to consider its options and go through this process with the new Board.

Mr Marchant and Mrs Robson agreed to meet with these parents if they wish to discuss the situation.

6. Agree communications regarding outcome of this meeting

A proposed communication piece was sent by Mr Marchant shortly before the meeting. One point he wished to make clear in this, was that whilst the process will be transparent, the details of the Trusts shortlisted will be confidential. Mr Jeremiah agreed that this is correct as potential partners will insist on this due to commercial sensitivity.

It was suggested that it would be worthwhile adding in details regarding the meeting with the ESFA and this was agreed. Overall, Trustees felt that the tone of the communications was excellent and addresses the majority of concerns.

Subject to referencing the ESFA meeting and Nathan’s input, the Board unanimously agreed to the content of the letter.

7. Dates of future meetings

A document with proposed meeting dates had previously been circulated. It was noted that:

- Mr Marchant proposed that he produces a written Headteacher's report every half term and a verbal report for the meetings in between.
- There is a date in the Easter holidays but as this is a crucial meeting, would like to ensure that Mr Page is able to attend.
- Due to Year 11 Parents' evening, the meeting on 25th January will be moved to 7.00pm.

Subject to checking the date in the Easter holidays, all present agreed in principle to the dates.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.