

**Meeting of Full Governing Body
1st December 2016
Eco Building
6pm**

MINUTES

Governors Present: Julian Benkel, Oliver Cattermole, Jon Dee (Chair), William Deighan, Giovanni Franceschi, Alex Marsh, Ian Rodgers

Officers Present: Teresa Dee (Clerk)

In Attendance: Jo Cassidy

| <u>Agenda item</u> | <u>Action</u> |
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| 1 Introduction | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Welcome and Appointment of Co-opted Governor The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Ian Rodgers to his first meeting as Co-opted Governor. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body confirmed the appointment of Ian Rodgers as Co-opted Governor for a four year term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence received from Judith Ford, Di Francombe, Jess Morris and Rob Reed. c) Declaration of Interests The register of declared interests was circulated for Governors to check their entries and to advise of any amendments. No declarations relating to items on the agenda. | |
| 2 Last Meeting dated 21st September 2016 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Acceptance of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved five pages of minutes from the meeting held on 21st September 2016. The Chair signed the minutes as confirmation of their accuracy. b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda An action relating to the review of the case files of a selection of more vulnerable Students remained outstanding. The Chair advised that he would pick it up on this occasion. | |
| 3 Chair's Update | |
| <p>The Chair provided an update on business that had been conducted on behalf of the Governing Body since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors involved in reviewing two permanent exclusion decisions were thanked for their time and commitment in dealing with them effectively. • A staffing matter had required the detailed involvement of the Chair. • Meetings of Nominations Committee and pay panel and review of school trips reported on later in the meeting. | |
| 4 Headteacher's Report | |
| <p>The Headteacher presented his report to Governors on an assumed read basis highlighting some key points including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within a partnership of five secondary schools Varndean had been successful in its application to be part of a teaching school alliance. During the application process | |

Varndean had been identified as having strong teacher and staff training structures. Whilst Varndean provides support to other schools via partnerships including the secondary chairs group the assessors did not feel that the evidence of direct school support was sufficient for Varndean to become a teaching school outside of the alliance at this stage. It was hoped that the School would achieve individual recognition during 2017. The five schools within the alliance to be called the Pavilion and Downs Teaching Schools Alliance would have access to funding for development and research for all schools and a Limited Company would be required for administration. The Local Authority were still pursuing the setting up of a legal entity for future partnership work across the city and Secondary Heads had met with council school leads regards this. Governors commented that an agile entity built around the genuine strengths of a partnership was preferred.

- A Japanese delegation had visited School to see how ICT was used to support teaching. The feedback had been interesting and highlighted the ethos of the whole child and that teachers were able to develop and use their own plans. The visit was facilitated through Brighton University.
- The recently issued unvalidated RAISE online report had indicated that Varndean School was ahead of the majority of schools for national key attainment and progress. Additionally Fischer Family Trust (FFT) reports had confirmed the School's three year journey of improving results for disadvantaged students. Ian Rodgers advised that as a new Governor he would welcome the opportunity to have an explanation of the data contained within the Headteacher's report.

ACTION - Clerk to liaise with Headteacher's PA to arrange an induction visit for new Governors including an overview explanation of the Headteacher's report and a tour of the School.

TD

Governors commented on student attendance data noting a strong improvement over the past three years (currently 95.7% whole school). Year 11 attendance at 93.7% however was a concern. There was further comment about the exclusion data, as Year 11 to date looked high in comparison to the previous year. The Headteacher reminded Governors that this particular cohort had a history of challenging behaviour. Discussion moved to behaviour in general and the importance of providing clarity to parents on where there are issues of where their children were on the behaviour index and the potential consequences should poor behaviour continue. Governors were reassured to hear that a Deputy Head was overseeing students on a behaviour index of 4 with overall behaviour responsibility in addition to the Head of School.

a) Raising Attainment Plans (RAPs)

Jo Cassidy talked Governors through the individual departmental raising attainment plans. There were questions and discussion around individual departments in particular as follows:

Maths

Maths along with English had moved to a 1 - 9 grading system for GCSE's and the revised standards were conceptually more difficult for Students. The latest data harvest included a mock exam for Year 11 using the new type of exam paper. Outcomes from this had been disappointing and particularly low results were seen when comparing student performance in other comparable subjects. Some students had received an unexpected "U" grade which was thought to be due to the new paper having a cap on the possible lower grades available compared with the old type of paper. A number of activities had been put in place to address the situation including work around the understanding of the new exam requirements with exam style questioning in lessons, some reorganisation of maths groups to enable specific learning needs to be addressed and catch up sessions.

There had been difficulties for the Maths department with standardisation against national standards due to lack of comparators using the new examination format. The department were therefore directed to take a cautious approach with predictions. An external adviser had also been engaged to support the department with standardisation.

Governors asked questions about what other Schools were using to test and what the impact had been on Students of low performance. The Headteacher advised that many Schools were using mock exams but based on old standards and that whilst Students had been shocked with their results they had got back into their learning with the right attitude.

Governors also asked when a clearer view of progress was likely and were advised that further testing in January would provide a more accurate picture of progress. In the meantime lesson by lesson progress checks were being undertaken.

Science

In the past the % of Students taking separate sciences had been higher than national and in the current year there had been a more selective process with Students guided based on their depth of knowledge and given the opportunity to do double science. The % of those doing triple science had also reduced. Some regrouping had taken place with mixed ability classes introduced into double science.

The leadership team still wished to see an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning within the science department and clearer strategies had been drawn up for teachers of the expected learning and pitch of learning supported by the sharing of learning resources.

The quality of data from the department was also being reviewed to see how accurate assessment had been over time and how the department used data to adapt teaching. A series of lesson observations had been undertaken with feedback provided along with an analysis of the RAISE online data.

In response to questions from Governors the School Leaders advised that leadership and management within the department was now working well with the appointment of an Acting Head of Department and that over time and with more of a belief in what was achievable it was expected that underperformance compared with other departments would be addressed.

Geography and History

A member of the intervention team and specialist in English was looking at the work of mid ability Students to identify whether barriers were subject knowledge or ability to demonstrate knowledge before implementing a set of strategies with the Head of Department

Governors noted that there were some percentage and colour coding errors within the raising attainment report i.e. PE that should have been coded green. This led to a question about when a department would be taken off RAP to which the Headteacher responded that departments were kept on RAP for a whole year.

b) Year Group Targets

The Headteacher drew Governors' attention to the year group targets within the Headteacher report. Recent professional advice (DfE and FFT) had been to not rely on Progress 8 as an assessment measure and to use levels of progress instead.

5 School Improvement Item - Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The school improvement focus for the meeting was on quality of teaching, learning and assessment and a summary of progress against the three school targets within the area had been included within the Headteacher's report. These three targets were:

- Quality first teaching ensures outstanding and at least good outcomes for students over time.
- Homework focuses on pre teaching to aide knowledge in the classroom,
- Targeted support focussed on improving individual practice using outstanding practioners.

Governors asked about homework setting and whether it was available for parents to access. In response it was advised that the preparation timetable was uploaded to a system called Varndean Plus where parents could see what had been set. There had been some technical issues with the programme but the feedback that the School had been receiving was improving.

6 Reports and Recommendations

a) Finance Report

Alex Marsh as lead governor for finance provided an overview of his findings following a review of the latest financial outturn position. Governors were reminded that going into the 2016/17 financial year the school carried forward a surplus knowing that reserves would be required to sustain the staffing levels. The risk of an end of year deficit was now looking unlikely due to tight financial controls but in the longer term there would be a challenge to maintain current resource levels and that an impact on teaching resources was likely. The Headteacher advised that he would welcome some focussed discussion at Full Governors on future curriculum planning.

At meeting two of the year it had been planned to have some financial benchmarking reporting but the Department of Education had not released the most recent national financial data so this had not been possible.

- **Insurance**

A sub report on insurance arrangements was provided listing the insurances automatically provided by the Local Authority, additional buy in options and the optional covers purchased by the School for the current year. It was noted that following Governors previous discussions the School had purchased specific annual cover for school trips.

b) School Trips

Alex Marsh also reported on his review of School Trips for the year reminding Governors that the review covered several aspects including health and safety, financial, educational benefit and accessibility to all Students. Varndean’s approach to trips and activities was to cluster them within one enrichment week and within this week there were 10 out of the 11 annual trips planned. The other one was the Iceland trip that had been reviewed by the Chair of Governors separately. Additionally there was a ski trip every other year with the next due in February 2017 having been signed off by Governors last year. Governors were provided with assurance that the trips planning and administration process was robust.

Julian Benkel confirmed that his own experience had been that the trip that he went on had been well run and full of valuable experiences for the Students.

c) Pay Panel

The Chair of Governors confirmed that the pay panel had met and had agreed the pay recommendations and reviewed the pay policy for 2016/17, which was proposed for approval.

- **Pay Policy**

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the pay policy as presented.

7 Other Policies and Documents for Approval

a) Capability of Staff Procedures

The Chair of Governors proposed the re approval of the capability of staff procedures. Governors asked about numbers of staff on capability and were advised that there were none currently and had not been any for some time.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the existing Capability of Staff Procedures without amendment.

b) Safeguarding Policy

The Safeguarding Lead Governor was not able to attend the meeting but had passed on some comments to the Chair of Governors regards the safeguarding policy. These related to training for the lead safeguarding governor.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the Safeguarding Policy subject to updating to include reference to Governor training, standardisation as a Varndean policy and removal of yellow highlighting.

8 Any Other Business

a) Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Head of Individual Learning Support (ILS) had a number of cases that needed Governor consideration and had asked who the lead for SEN was. Whilst Oliver Cattermole had been allocated the duty he expressed a preference for safeguarding if possible. The Chair of Governors would consider the allocation of responsibilities and in the meantime he would review the cases with the Head of ILS.

Meeting ended at 8.02pm

Date of next meeting - 23rd February 2017