

**Meeting of the Full Governing Body
11th July 2012
6pm
Library**

Minutes

Governors Present: Julian Benkel, Richard Beynon, Barbara Cotter, William Deighan, Ray Gold (Chair), Phil Harland, Cathy Johnson, Helen Leigh-Phippard, Richard Lumley, Robbie Mitchell, Paul Offord, Liz Symes

Associate Members Present: Gareth Hughes, Sara Spivey

In attendance: Krissi Carter (Deputy Head), Teresa Carter (Clerk)

Agenda Item

Action

Note - The minutes are recoded in agenda order. Item 6a was taken immediately after 3a.

1 Introduction

- a) **Freedom of Information** - Governors were reminded that minutes from the meeting would be published on the school's website.
- b) **Apologies for Absence** - Apologies for absence received from Anne Cox, Jon Dee, Jon Edgell and Robin Marlin.
- c) **Declaration of Interests** - None

2 Last Meetings dated 28th March, 11th May and 12th June 2012

- a) **Acceptance of Minutes** - The Governing Body reviewed and approved four pages of minutes from the meeting held on 28th March 2012, three pages of minutes from the meeting held on 11th May 2012 and two pages of minutes from the meeting held on 12th June 2012. The Chair signed all minutes as confirmation of their accuracy.
- b) **Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda**
 - **ICT** - A presentation on ICT developments was planned for the September Governing Body meeting.
 - **Raiseonline** - Date for training to be arranged.

3 Main Strategic Items

- a) **Headteacher's Report and School Improvement Plan (SIP)**- The Headteacher presented his report to Governors incorporating updates on progress within the four SIP areas for 2011/12 and the emerging priorities for 2012/13 based on a single aim for all students to make four levels of progress during their time at Varndean. Governors considered the plan and comment was made as follows:

- The re organisation of Varndean on a four schools within a school structure was underway with a consultation on names for each of the four schools. Central teams for the schools would be based at the four corners of Ditchling building.
- The changing history of the Varndean dolphin was shown on powerpoint and a new logo incorporating four dolphins introduced with examples given of how it might be used in branding. The use of the word “High” in Varndean School’s name was considered with a mix of opinions expressed about the message conveyed by the inclusion of “High”. It was left to the leadership team to decide on the issue, as it would involve adopting the full title of the school, which had been lost over time and did not constitute a change in the school’s name. Governors however gave a steer by a majority vote of seven for the inclusion of “High” in the school’s name
- Changes to school uniform to incorporate the new school branding including the Introduction of school ties in four colours to represent each school. There was some concern about uniform stock levels and the cost to families of purchasing new items. Governors were advised that as the uniform was essentially the same there would be a transition period where both logos would be in use until old stock had been used up.
- A staffing update for September 2012 was provided. Governors noted that the number of leavers was the same as the previous year.
- The potential for achievement achievable was the target of four levels of progress. Staff members recognised and were supportive of the aspiration.
- The inconsistency of homework setting in respect of relevance, quantity and feedback remained an issue for Governors and there was concern that it had not been incorporated as a priority. The new teaching standards included marking of books and homework setting and would be used in performance management.
- A video on the work charitable work undertaken by the students under the Children Helping Other Children Smile (CHOCS) scheme was shown to Governors.

7.39pm break

7.52pm meeting continued with items 3a and 4a taken together.

b) Effective Governance and Constitution - The Chair facilitated a self evaluation session during which the Governing Body considered what it did well and what it did not do so well and what areas should have more focus in the future. Following this the Chair provided his vision for a revised constitution with the aim of improving effectiveness. This vision had been discussed and endorsed at the joint chairs strategic meeting and included the following:

Signature.....Date.....

- Working in small groups.
- Governing Body to meet first in the cycle of meetings and to commission work to be undertaken.
- Governing Body to meet twice a term with one meeting focussed on strategic items with break out sessions and one meeting to deal with compliance matters.
- Governing Body to be split into two groups with Associate Members attached with one group responsible for matters relating to pastoral, students and teaching and learning and the other on resources including staffing, finance and buildings.
- Associate members to be invited to attend meetings as appropriate.
- Each group to determine the number of meetings and individuals required in accordance with commissioned business. Thursdays had been reserved in the school calendar for meetings though it was proposed that meetings could take place at any location as long as they were minuted in some way. The Clerk would not necessarily have to be present on all occasions.
- Meetings could be virtual if agreed by the group in advance.
- Action points from meetings to be clearly minuted with timings spread of named individuals allocated to complete tasks.
- Clerk to maintain a log of actions agreed and progress made.
- Four Governors including the Chair, Vice Chair and lead Governors of each group form a strategic committee dealing with Headteacher's review, school trip approval, pay and policy review.

Governors provided feedback on the vision including the following:

- It was suggested that a paper outlining the vision in advance of the meeting would have been useful to enable full consideration to be given.
- There might be pressure on the lead governors in terms of workload.
- Support for the process of the Governing Body as a whole being the driver for the business conducted.
- Concerns about the practicalities of organising meetings. A two week notice period was suggested as a minimum.
- General agreement to a reduction in the size of the Governing Body.

Referring to the new constitution regulations the Chair advised the minimum numbers in each category of Governors from 1st September 2012 and consideration was given to a suitable constitution for Varndean.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed by a vote of nine in favour, to a reduction in total Governors from twenty to twelve with effect from 1st September 2012.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed by a vote of seven in favour, to the following Governing Body constitution including two elected staff governors with effect from 1st September 2012. The final constitution was agreed as:

- Two staff elected Governors
- Two parent elected Governors
- One ex officio Staff Governor being the Headteacher
- One Local Authority Governor
- Six Co-opted Governors

ALL

ACTION - Each Governor to consider their position within the Governing Body and to contact the Chair with their preferences.

4 Governance Items

- a) **Joint Chairs Recommendations for Consideration** - Covered in 3b above
- b) **Training & Development (T &D)** - Governors were asked to advise the T & D Link Governor of any governance related training undertaken. Equalities training was proposed for the second Full Governing Body meeting of the autumn term.

5 Reports from Committees and Documents for Approval - Verbal reports on business conducted at the summer committee meetings was provided with nine policies/documents proposed for approval. Governors commented that the home school policy was weighted towards the responsibilities of parents and that more regarding the setting of homework should be included within the school's part of the agreement.

ACTION - Suggestions for amendments to the home school agreement to be sent to Sara Spivey.

RB JB
by end
of
term

- a) **Resources Committee Meeting 20th June 2012**
 - Accessibility Plan
 - Charging Policy
 - Governors Allowances
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Capability Procedures (New LA model)
 - Sick Absence Management Policy (New LA model)
- b) **Quality & Standards Committee Meetings 12th June 2012**
- c) **Student Management Committee Meeting 21st May 2012**
 - Home School Policy
 - Nutritional Standards
 - Safeguarding Policy

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the nine policies and documents listed above in 5a, 5b and 5c.

6 Any Other Business

- a) **Argus Article** - Governors were advised that a racist incident had occurred within school and had been dealt with in accordance with approved procedures. The Argus had reported the incident in a way that that was misleading and exaggerated leading to public concern and comment. The school responded with a complaint to the Argus and as a result the comments section to the article was removed. Local Mosaic officers had also complained to the Argus about the misrepresentation of the school in the article. Governors were supportive of the action taken by the school in challenging the Argus on this occasion.
- b) **Enrichment Week** - The staff work and efforts during a successful enrichment week were acknowledged.

Meeting ended at 9.25pm

Date of next meeting 20th September 2012