

Meeting of Full Governing Body
20th May 2021
6pm via Zoom

MINUTES

Governors:	Shelley Baker, Julian Benkel, Simon Bowes, Jon Dee, Giovanni Franceschi, Alex Marsh (Chair), Hope McAdam, Emma McCrea, Ian Rodgers, Emma Warde-Robinson
Officers:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
Senior Leadership Team:	Vicky Anstiss, Lynn Hill, Gareth Hughes, Andy Roberts

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a) Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome and congratulations to Shelley Baker as newly appointed Headteacher.</p> <p>b) Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence from Judith Ford.</p> <p>c) Declaration of Interests The declarations register was circulated. Governors were asked to consider their individual declarations to ensure up to date and complete. There were no declarations relating to items on the agenda.</p>	
2	<p>Last Meetings dated 4th March 2021 and 27th April 2021</p> <p>a) Acceptance of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved seven pages of minutes from the meeting held on 4th March and one page from the meeting held on 27th April.</p> <p>b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda All actions arising from previous meetings had been completed.</p>	
3	<p>Chair's Update The Chair provided an update on business conducted on behalf of the Governing Body and matters arising since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement of Headteacher - Governors recorded their gratitude to William Deighan for 12 years of service as the Headteacher and wished him the best for his retirement. An extensive recruitment process had been led by the selection panel supported by the clerk; they were thanked from the comprehensive procedure over the past couple of months. There had been a lot of interest both nationally and internationally testament to the strength and reputation that the school had built over the years. of the school. Gareth Hughes was thanked for his contribution in doing an exceptional job in supporting the school as Acting Headteacher over an incredibly difficult year. Student admissions numbers - Engagement with the Local Authority over the published admission numbers (PAN) for secondary schools and specifically the appeals process for the students that had been unable to secure a place in their preferred school. In the longer term the Local Authority were looking at school catchment areas and PANs across the city. Permanent exclusion - A decision had been made to permanent exclude a student recently, a governors disciplinary committee had been convened to review the decision. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent governor election -Recruitment process underway to fill the one parent governor vacancy. It was hoped this process would be completed in time for the new governor to attend the July meeting. • As it was the Chair’s last meeting as Chair of Governors the opportunity was taken to reflect on his four years in the post, to recognise the good relationship between the governing body and senior leadership team and to acknowledge the strength and experience of the Governing Body. 	
4	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>The Headteacher introduced this item by first thanking the Chair of Governors for his support over the past few weeks since her appointment and playing a video that was presented by Varndean school leaders at the national challenge partners conference. This presentation had been focussed on the successful smaller schools within a school model. It was very well received at the conference. It was noted that the students featured in the video had come up with the words to describe their school experience themselves.</p> <p>School leaders provided verbal updates of information additional to the written headteacher’s report that was taken on an assumed read basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 11 would be leaving school the following week; it had been an extraordinary year for them having had exams cancelled replaced by teaching assessments. They had coped very well with the pressure of change at last notice. A prom was being planned for them on the 2nd of July to celebrate their end of time at Varndean. • A four-day enrichment programme was being developed for the whole school community enabling all students to have a day trip towards the end of the academic year. • The process of transitioning year 6 was underway following confirmation of places to families in March. Advice on the transition process had been provided to families via an online workshop. It would not be possible to provide a summer school under the national initiative due to the extensive building works at the school , however a taster day would be possible with students meeting their peer group , their tutors and familiarise themselves with the school grounds. • The school would be running a “go big, be awesome” project, a series of webinars to set students up with transition activities and further opportunities to engage with their form tutors. • Students numbers for year 7 in September had settled at around 300 following some movement in and out after initial allocation of places. Maximum capacity would be 310 , being 31 students in each form group. There were 39 admission appeals for Varndean currently going through a process with outcomes expected on 9th June. • Year 11 teachers had been involved in a great deal of assessment and moderation in the absence of exams. Staff had been given time to do this by cancelling some of the planned meetings. The appeals process could bring further demands on teachers time with pressure on them to work over the end of the the summer holiday following release of centre assessed grades to families. • There were ongoing concerns with safeguarding due to the open school site, governors commitment to improve this issue was acknowledged. Two sacks of glass had been collected from the playing fields after just one weekend, this was a concern for student safety. • Mask wearing had been retained in communal areas at school, which was against DfE guidance, leading to communication from a parent in objection. Once year 11 had left and there was less congestion in corridors and the canteen the situation would be reviewed alongside local data on covid cases in the city. Staff and students would be allowed to continue to wear masks in lessons if they preferred, students had been compliant with mask wearing in corridors. <p><u>Governors comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting an increase on the numbers of physical assaults on staff with previous years, was there a reason for this? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the increase in fixed term exclusions compared to previous three years largely a result of students finding it hard to adapt following covid lockdowns? • Did the school have an update on the system of assessments being used for year 11? • What weighting did mini assessments have on final gradings? • Student attendance data looked encouraging compared to previous years. <p><u>Responses to governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been some reclassifications of the recorded assaults on staff. The level of students with lower boundaries had increased with a number not able to make correct choices, taking a physical approach against students and staff. The school was managing these by ensuring that a proportionate response was taken and that any particular difficulties that those students had were being supported. Pastorally the school was a few more weeks in past lockdown and following the early enthusiasm for return the effects of the lockdown for some was starting to show as learning demands increased. The ILS department and school bases were working hard and looking for short term interventions for students. Nationally, it was likely that there had been an increase in terms of antisocial behaviour or dysregulation within school. • Covid lockdowns had impacted on exclusion data, additionally wait times for assessment in terms of special educational needs (SEN) was having an impact. Families were getting frustrated having to wait for external services, both social services and CAHMS were under pressure. • GCSE gradings were being decided by teacher assessment taking the form of evidence from student workbooks, previous assessments and mini assessments with teacher support introduced in class from March. These mini assessments were due to finish the next week and would be followed by staff marking and moderation within their teams. All students would be ranked in an order, with reference to a grade criterion to ascertain final grades. • Weightings of assessments on grades were dependent on each department. Some departments had coursework and others had prior assessments. There had been an open process to develop the method of assessment for each department. • School leaders were not satisfied with attendance levels and were going to input efforts to support students that were finding it difficult to attend school and were in the persistent absence group. Varndean's data on attendance was however looking good against available national and local school data. <p>ACTION - Governors requested an update at the next meeting on the school plans for improving attendance of persistently absent students.</p>	SBa/VA
5	<p>School Improvement Plan - Update on Vision</p> <p>There had been further development of the schools vision following the session with Governors, there was a community approach to the vision sharing with students for their feedback and roll out to families planned for the second part of term. The latest version of the vision was shared with Governors on screen.</p>	
6	<p>Financial Control</p> <p>The Business Manager and finance group provided governors with an update on business conducted at the meeting held on 7th May and presented documents for either noting or approval. Notes from the group meeting had been circulated.</p> <p>a) Final Outturn Position 2020/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial strategy for the school was to remain tight on costs and to build funds for investing into the school running with reserves of around £400k over the coming three years to invest in delivery of the school vision and strategy. • At the end of financial year to end March 2021 the school ended in a very healthy financial situation with over £1mill in reserves due to the impact of covid on the procurement process and availability of contractors in to complete planned school buildings improvement budgeted at almost £700k. The projects would be completed 	

	<p>within the current financial year and were therefore committed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of the committed expenditure for school expansion and development was shared with governors on screen. <p>b) Proposed Budget 2021/22 The budget for 2021/22 was proposed to governors for approval alongside the multiyear budget for noting of impact of the financial strategy on future years.</p> <p><u>Questions and comments from governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there sufficient funds available to ring fence for improvement to site security? • As priority the reception and gates were current projects underway to improve security. <p><u>Responses to governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In future years funds had been ringfenced within an expansion cost centre which could be used for further improvements to site security. • Reception area at the entrance to school was nearing completion and phase one and two of the security fencing had been completed. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved a budget for 2021/22 of £8,745,341 against an available budget of £9,202,624 (including uncommitted surplus of £323k) with an in-year surplus of £133,470 and carry forward into 2022/23 of £457,283.</p> <p>It was noted that kitchen development was planned for the summer holiday, six quotes had been received with a summary provided to governors with a note of Catercraft as the preferred supplier. Expenditure on the kitchen had previously been agreed by Governors as part of the capital expenditure projects within the budget setting process.</p> <p>c) Scheme of Delegation The scheme of delegation had been updated under item 3.17 to clarify the segregation control. That was the only amendment. Finance group proposed it for approval with that one amendment.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the scheme of delegation as presented.</p>	
7	<p>School Infrastructure</p> <p>a) Buildings Expansion Group The buildings expansion group provided an update on business conducted at the meeting of 7th May. The notes from the meeting had been circulated. Additionally, a verbal update was provided on more recent progress regards the building works and site security issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The canteen was a critical part of the school expansion plan with completion scheduled for 21st August thereby providing very little scope for slippage before start of the new school year. An up-to-date plan had been requested from the contractors as without it there were difficulties in monitoring progress. A new Gantt chart had since been received which provided some comfort that work was on schedule. Full monitoring meetings had been scheduled and there was timely and regular communication with the contractors • Local residents known to the school had been contacted about contractor communication following their commitment to foster good relationships with the community. Residents confirmed that communication had been limited to date. Whilst not an issue currently it was a commitment that the contractors might need reminding about. • Main risk factor was the delivery of the steels for the superstructure due for delivery by crane over half term. • Some intrusion into the running of the school as the work developed , good relationships with the site team who had been responsive to requests to schedule works in a way that least impacted on the school operation. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase three security fencing plans brought forward with delivery area gates on order. The health and safety governor had visited school site to review two issues on site security being the impact of young people using the school grounds at the weekends and evenings and members of the public using the playing fields as access during lesson time. Securing the site fully would be a challenge in terms of financial commitment and potential opposition from the local community if access to amenities was restricted. It was proposed that the buildings group considered some longer-term solutions to the issues whilst pushing the Local Authority to come up with some ideas on improving security across the estate. The access gates that had been installed were of a design that enabled young people to climb over easily, a redesign was being explored. The schools behaviour policy covered Varndean students in the community and if identified on CCTV as engaging in antisocial behaviour that would be addressed in school. <p>ACTION - Buildings group discussion item of wider site security at its next meeting.</p>	IR/GH
8	<p>Policies and Other Documents for Approval</p> <p>a) Behaviour Principles Written Statement The written statement on behaviour was not available , however the behaviour policy was presented with five amendments summarised on the front page for governors to note.</p> <p>ACTION - The existing behaviour principles written statement to be reviewed by lead governor and school for behaviour to come back for approval at a future meeting.</p> <p>b) Code of Conduct for Staff The code of conduct for staff based on the Local Authority model document was presented for approval.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the code of conduct for staff.</p> <p>c) Complaints Policy Item carried forward to the next meeting as further work was required to review the local authority model and whether it would work in practice based on experience of dealing with complaints.</p>	EWR/VA
9	<p>Governance</p> <p>a) Election of Chair & Vice Chair Non governors were not present at the meeting for this item. The Clerk chaired the meeting for this agenda item and confirmed that the following nominations had been received for the position of Chair and Vice Chair of Governors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Rodgers as Chair of Governors Julian Benkel, Emma Warde-Robinson, and Emma McCrea as Vice Chair of Governors <p>During the election process the nominated people left the meeting whilst a vote was taken by direct message to the clerk. Julian Benkel withdrew his nomination prior to the final vote as it was noted that the standing orders prevented him from standing for reappointment for a third term except in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body unanimously agreed to elect Ian Rodgers as Chair of Governors and Emma Warde-Robinson and Emma McCrea as Co Vice Chairs of Governors. All appointments were for two years until the final meeting of 2021/22</p> <p>The outgoing Chair of Governors thanked both Julian Benkel and Ian Rodgers for supporting him in the role of Vice Chair and offered his congratulations and support to the newly appointed Chairs and Vice Chairs.</p>	

	<p>The incoming Chair of Governors thanked Alex Marsh on behalf of the governing body for his contribution as Chair of Governors over an eventful four-year term.</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Large Expansion Purchases</p> <p>Governors considered what if any additional authorisation was required for large purchase items previously agreed as part of the budget. It was agreed that authority was delegated to the school to decide on preferred suppliers, though the finance group would be available for support with decision making as required.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 7.40pm Next meeting - 8th July 2021</p>	