

**Meeting of Full Governing Body**  
**8<sup>th</sup> July 2021**  
**6pm**  
**Via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

<b>Governors Present:</b>	Shelley Baker, Julian Benkel, Simon Bowes, Jon Dee, Judith Ford, Alex Marsh, Hope McAdam, Emma McCrea, Ian Rodgers (Chair), Emma Warde-Robinson
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Vicky Anstiss, Lynn Hill, Gareth Hughes, Andy Roberts

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
1	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>a) Welcome</b> The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome.</p> <p><b>b) Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies for absence received from Giovanni Franceschi.</p> <p><b>c) Declaration of Interests</b> The declarations register had been circulated within meeting papers, there were no amendments and no specific declarations relating to items on the agenda.</p>	
2	<p><b>Last Meetings dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021</b></p> <p><b>a) Acceptance of Minutes</b> The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved five pages of minutes from the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021.</p> <p><b>b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance - Two year groups identified for particular attention with focus on pupil premium and persistently absent students (PAS). Around 60 students identified followed by letters to families encouraging good attendance. Lucky dip prizes for those achieving 100% attendance over the rest of the academic year. Improvement in attendance was around 20% with some students that had just dipped into PAS category coming back out again. Feedback received from families had been generally supportive of the use of incentives for good attendance. Enrichment week historically sees a dip in attendance. Also looking at the lower attending students coming from primary school to set early expectations and support with removing any barriers to attendance.</li> <li>Site security - Governor walk round site with Deputy Head to look at potential solutions to improve site security. Additional cameras, improved signage, and redesign of gates to discourage climbing to be implemented in a first phase. The second phase would be looking at the possibility for installation of additional security fencing to join up the school perimeter with current fencing around the hard courts. Third phase would be fencing up a larger area of the field which would be expensive and likely subject to objection by residents. The local authority had been made aware of the proposals with an indication that financial support would be required. It was hoped that the full three phases would not be required as lock down eased enabling those currently meeting up on the school site to meet in each other's homes. Governors were reminded that any large investment on security would need to go through finance group and supported by the Headteacher before any recommendation made to the Governing Body for approval.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour Principles Written Statement - Item deferred until the behaviour policy had been reviewed and updated to reflect where the school was in terms of behaviour for students with special educational needs.</li> <li>The Governors Disciplinary Committee (GDC) had considered a permanent exclusion decision in response to a physical assault on a member of staff. Legal advice had been sought on matters around disability and equality in advance of the GDC meeting to support the decision-making process and to ensure that fair and due process had been followed. The decision to permanently exclude the student had been upheld.</li> </ul>	
3	<p><b>Chair's Update</b></p> <p>a) <b>Headteacher Appraisal</b></p> <p>A decision had been made to bring forward the process for setting of the Headteacher's objectives ready for a September start. The Headteacher Appraisal Panel would therefore need to be appointed before the first autumn term meeting.</p> <p>The Chair had prepared a paper with recommendations to appoint the Chair and Vice Chairs as the Headteacher Appraisal Panel and that any recommendations on Headteacher pay would be approved by a separate Pay Panel. Experienced Governors offered support to the Appraisal Panel with the process for appraisal.</p> <p><b>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed to appoint Ian Rodgers, Emma Warde-Robinson and Emma McCrea as the Headteacher Appraisal Panel and that panel would make recommendations on pay to the Pay Panel for approval</b></p> <p>The Chair updated Governors on a pre consultation underway by the Local Authority to seek views on school admission numbers that Governors had been advised. The Chair and the Clerk had attended separate online meetings with council officers. Noted from the meetings was the difficulty faced of reducing the admission numbers of any school that had a tendency for over subscription such as Varndean and the challenge of reaching a consensus on how catchment areas could be re organised.</p>	
4	<p><b>Headteacher's Report</b></p> <p>The Headteacher presented her report to Governors on an assumed read basis highlighting some key items and providing further updates since the report had been written.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Varndean student had won the One Show writing competition.</li> <li>Teacher assessment process had been completed; students had performed well. Data would be shared once the moderation process had been finalised.</li> <li>Newly appointed senior student leadership team in place.</li> <li>COVID remained the biggest challenge for the school adversely affecting plans for enrichment opportunities. Year 10 were currently working remotely, and all coach trips had been cancelled under advice from public health to avoid further self-isolation over the summer holidays.</li> <li>An adapted transition provision had included an invitation to all year six students to come into school after the school day for a taster tour.</li> <li>There were concerns over the number of students with special educational needs (SEN) joining the school from September. There were seven students with an educational and health care plan (EHCP) allocated to the school originally with further applications for unplaced children across the city. From these applications a further four students had been allocated a place at Varndean with a potential further one bringing total EHCP students arriving to twelve many of which who had high level of needs. There were five EHCP students leaving the school. Overall, the school would have 50 EHCP students in 2021/22 which in percentage terms took the school above the national average for a maintained school. The complexity of needs did present difficulties for teaching within mainstream classrooms. The school did not tend to withdraw students for their whole curriculum preferring a model of inclusion within class.</li> <li>Year 7 student numbers had gone up to 314 following 14 successful appeals for admission,</li> </ul>	

	<p>this had since reduced to 309 due to withdrawn places. On average tutor groups would be over 30 the most the school had ever had.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department for Education (DfE) had released its school COVID guidance for September. Whilst school leaders were pleased that there would be some return to normality there was concern about the implementation of all DfE guidance. It was expected that schools would disband their bubbles and staggered timings and that there would be no contact tracing or isolation or use of face coverings. In addition, it was expected that all school activities including assemblies would be reintroduced. The schools would need to have an outbreak plan in place alongside control measures relating to cleaning, hygiene, and sanitising as part of general practice. Students would be expected to have two tests before returning to school in the autumn with the school delivering the tests through an in-school testing site. Lateral flow testing would continue through September. A remote education plan would also be required in case an outbreak occurred.</li> <li>• A summary of complaints received during the year along with samples of the many compliments had been included within meeting papers. Governors were asked whether the reporting was useful going forward. Governors felt that the data on complaints was useful as an indicator that something may not be right. It was noted that complaint numbers remained low and that most received had been around covid expectations.</li> </ul> <p><u>Governor questions and comments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there extra funding attached to the students arriving with EHCPs? What might the impact be on finances now the school was over the national average for SEND?</li> <li>• Was there something that Governors could do to support the parity of allocation of students with EHCPs across the city schools?</li> <li>• On the core data there were 8 physical assaults on staff recorded, what type of assaults were these?</li> </ul> <p><u>Responses to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school was about 50% higher than the national average for SEND students. The EHCP students sometimes came with top up funding between £2k and £6k dependent on their level of need. This extra money would support the interventions needed. The teaching of students separate from their peers was difficult philosophically for the school as part of what Varndean was about and was good at was the integrating of students into the school community through the school bases. A separate unit within the school for SEND students was not something the school felt comfortable with , there were also challenges regards space to deliver what the children needed. In a class of 32 students with a few students needing one to one support operating in the classroom space would be challenging with the number of people needing accommodating.</li> <li>• The final picture for allocation of students was ever changing due to pressures across the Local Authority. There might be a need for Governors to support the school’s position around the need for a fairer process. There was work around looking at parental expectations for SEND which Governors could support with.</li> <li>• There were a range of assaults on staff with the most serious being a kick to a staff members leg causing bruising. The sanctions ranged from internal inclusions to permanent exclusion. The school maintained that staff needed to be protected and take incidents very seriously.</li> </ul>	
5	<p><b>School Improvement Plan (SIP) - School Vision &amp; SIP Headlines for 2021/22</b></p> <p>The Headteacher provided an update on the strands being developed as part of the schools longer term vision. This presentation covered in detail what had been achieved so far and what the next steps were within each of the each of ten strands making up the vision. The strands of the schools visions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive teaching</li> <li>• Protective pastoral care</li> <li>• Research led professional development</li> <li>• Perceptive professionals</li> </ul>	

- Active partnerships
- 5 caring schools
- All different all equal
- The highest standards
- An exciting, demanding, and relevant curriculum
- Leading resources

In terms of the school improvement headlines for 2021/22 the following were highlighted to Governors.

- Introduce new department review process
- Embed an ambitious curriculum for all students
- Further articulate responsiveness in the classroom and celebrate examples of World Class teaching
- Induct (NQTs) ECTs into Varndean following the new ECF
- CPD Pathways for all departments and staff
- Introduce a small school review process
- New Pupil Premium strategy
- New SEND strategy
- Improved behaviour strategy with a focus on reducing exclusions/maintaining high standards
- Develop a tutor time programme to address recovery, equalities, and community
- Further develop attendance strategy
- World Class Literacy Strategy further developed
- Equalities strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Establish a World Class Partnership vision
- Leadership at all levels is further developed
- Establish a 'One Staff' strategy

Questions and comments from Governors

- The ambition of the presentation was clear, there was a lot of information which would need time to go through for Governors to get a better sense of the ambition and what the school was hoping to introduce.
- Had the school access to funding needed to implement the school improvement strategy beyond that already incorporated into budget?

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- The school improvement plan for 2021/22 would be developed to include some milestones and expected impact to come back in more detail to Governors in September.
- The digital strategy would likely be a big piece of work , as that developed and different options were explored there might be a need for funding to support development.

6	<p><b>Financial Control</b></p> <p><b>a) Budget Monitoring</b></p> <p>Governors had received the budget monitoring report to end of May 2021 (month 2). The finance lead governor advised that there had not been a lot of change on the original budget set being early in the financial year and asked for an update on expected timeframes for spending on the allocated funds towards school expansion and development. Governors were provided with an update summarised here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security fencing phase 1 and 2 completed.</li> <li>• Kitchen works had proved too large a job to guarantee that they would be completed during summer. There had around the link with the Local Authority and PFI provider and a big delay with works and equipment from the supplier. There was concern that insufficient labour would be available to complete the project. The school did not want to risk having a kitchen that could not be used for the</li> </ul>
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	<p>coming year it was decided to focus on the installation of a large freezer room to free up the several current freezer areas to open up the kitchen area. New fryers and one of the proposed three new ovens to also be installed. The second phase of kitchen works along with the canopies would be completed the following year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reception works had been completed apart from the entrance. Attendance staff were working from it with the reception team moving into area over the summer.</li> <li>• The main gate works would be brought forward in the overall project ready for September.</li> <li>• The Wi-Fi upgrade was on schedule with the IT team in the process of securing quotes for best value.</li> <li>• Phase three security fencing on the Ditchling Road entrances had been split in two with the car park gates rescheduled to the end of the project to avoid potential for damage on new gates arising from contractor traffic. A lorry had damaged the delivery gate entrance so that part would need to be replaced.</li> <li>• The canopies and food pods had been pushed back into the next summer as there were mobile classrooms that needed to be removed first.</li> </ul> <p><u>Governors comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would the delays lead to some of the committed £500k not being actually spent in the current financial year?</li> <li>• Would it be an issue carrying over the unspent budgets?</li> </ul> <p><u>Responses to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was likely that not all the allocated funds would be spent until the following year.</li> <li>• The allocated money is ring fenced for the same projects so there should be no concerns from Local Authority team. There was a risk that prices may go up by the time the works are completed.</li> </ul>	
7	<p><b>School Infrastructure</b></p> <p><b>a) Buildings Expansion - Update</b> Covered off in discussions under 6a.</p> <p><b>b) Health &amp; Safety - Update</b> The Governor with responsibility for health and safety advised that he had received the annual report from the site manager and that there was very little to report to Governors and that there had been no reportable accidents during the period covered by the report. He did advise that the asbestos in the kitchen area had been removed safely during a school holiday as part of building works.</p> <p>Governors were further advised that the Local Authority had queried the number of accidents reports sent over. A meeting was being held the following week to go through what the expectations on reporting were as there had been indications that almost all accidents would require reporting potentially creating a significant amount of additional work for the school team.</p>	
8	<p><b>Policies and Other Documents for Approval</b></p> <p><b>a) Complaints Policy</b> Following a review of the complaints policy and a comparison with the model policy it had felt that the current school policy provided a better mechanism for clarifying complaints, flexibility of investigation and providing the school with more opportunity for resolution before involving governors. There were some amendments proposed including a process for specific complaints about misconduct of the Headteacher and complaints about an individual governor. There was discussion about whether the DfE would deal with complaints as suggested by stage 5 of the process as experience had been those complainants contacting the DfE had</p>	

	<p>not had their complaints dealt with.</p> <p><b>ACTION - Ensure that correct signposting to DfE included within the complaints policy.</b></p> <p><b>AGREEMENT - Subject to the suggested amendments the Full Governing Body approved the complaints policy.</b></p> <p><b>b) Health and Safety Policy</b> The health and safety policy was presented to governors for annual approval in line with Local Authority requirements. There were no amendments proposed.</p> <p><b>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the health and safety policy as presented.</b></p>	TD
9	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p><b>a) Virtual Meetings and Policy</b> Governors considered the existing virtual meetings policy and whether it was still suitable once physical meetings were held. Governors felt that as the policy was written it allowed individual governors to attend meetings virtually however the overall preference was for meetings to be entirely face to face or virtual.</p> <p><b>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the Governors' virtual attendance policy without amendment.</b></p>	
10	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>a) Governor Engagement</b> The Chair advised that a governance structure and work plan was being considered for the following year to would provide more opportunities for governor involvement in development of school policies and procedures. This might include workshop type meetings between the formal business meetings.</p> <p><b>b) Governance Evaluation</b> The Chair proposed a review of governance effectiveness in the autumn term. Several tools for the review were being considered to ensure the most appropriate format used for Varndean governance.</p> <p><b>c) Governors Responsibilities</b> Review of the lead roles for the start of the year to ensure that correct priority areas being covered.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 8pm Date of next meeting - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021</p>	