

**Meeting of Full Governing Body
30th September 2021
6pm in the School Library**

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Shelley Baker, Julian Benkel, Simon Bowes, Jon Dee, Judith Ford, Dulani Kulasinghe, Emma McCrea, Ian Rodgers (Chair), Emma Warde-Robinson
Officers Present:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
On Attendance:	Vicky Anstiss, Lynn Hill, Gareth Hughes, Sandra Knight, Andy Roberts

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a) Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome particularly to Dulani Kulasinghe as newly elected parent governor.</p> <p>b) Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence received from Giovanni Franceschi, Alex Marsh and Hope McAdam.</p> <p>c) Declaration of Interests Declaration register circulated at the meeting. There were no declarations relating to agenda items. Governors were reminded to complete an annual declaration every 12 months</p>	
2	<p>Last Meetings dated 8th July 2021</p> <p>a) Acceptance of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved six pages of minutes from the meeting held on 8th July 2021.</p> <p>b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complaints policy finalised and published. ● New signage installation underway, some benefits over the summer with less severe anti-social behaviour. Additional CCTV on order. ● Statement of behaviour principles updated to link better with the behaviour policy whilst retaining general principles. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the statement of behaviour principles as presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Requirements for health and safety incident reporting had been clarified with the Local Authority. 	
3	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>The Chair reported on actions taken on behalf of the Governing Body since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Photocopier contract - An issue had arisen over the tender process for replacement photocopiers due to misleading information being provided by the sales team. There 	

	<p>was a risk that the dispute could result in legal action, legal advice had been sought and steps were underway to resolve it through other means. In the meantime two photocopiers had been sourced elsewhere. The finance group had been kept updated and consulted throughout the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher’s appraisal process had been brought forward to the summer term and completed by the Chair and Vice Chairs so that early objectives could be set. It was proposed that the schools adviser for the appraisal process be changed. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the appointment of Dave Cole as the school’s adviser for the Headteacher’s appraisal process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence had been received from People’s Union of Britain opposing onsite vaccination at the school. Since responding in line with legal advice a “notice of opportunity to cure” notification had been received addressed to all governors. Governors were reminded that they acted as a corporate body and as such protected from personal liability and that by following government guidance on vaccination could not be found to be negligent in providing a venue for the vaccination programme. A reply would be sent to the most recent letter, again following legal advice. The school had also received a number of similar letters. <p>ACTION - Correspondence with the People’s Union of Britain to be shared with governors via the shared drive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative agreement had been in place with the Partnership in Leadership and Learning (PiLL) group of schools for a number of years which enabled sharing of Governors for panels. An approach had been received to renew the agreement. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed to renew the school’s collaborative agreement within the PiLL group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a permanent exclusion decision review, the Governors who had formed the disciplinary committee had met with school leaders to review process, the information provided to governors and contents of the exclusion letters. It was noted that the Local Authority (LA) had provided guidance to schools on exclusion. The Headteacher advised that exclusion would likely come up at a future meeting as part of a wider school strategy. <p>ACTION - LA guidance on exclusion to be shared with Governors (JD & JB) for information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter received from a parent on a potential exclusion under the complaints procedure that the Chair had dealt with. The substance of the exclusion would need to be considered under the exclusion process should it reach a permanent exclusion decision. 	<p>TD</p> <p>TD</p>
4	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>The Headteacher presented her report to Governors in a slightly modified format to that previously used. The following points were highlighted:</p>	

- There had been a positive start to the school year with an almost back to normal and full offer with excitement amongst students and staff despite some ongoing challenges.
- School leaders had been mindful of taking feedback from staff on the revisions to covid measures and their own personal feelings about being back in school.
- The extra-curricular offer had been established supporting a community feel about the school, around 80 clubs being run by staff in their own time.
- The building works had created a few issues but generally the improvements had gone well and were looking good.
- Covid cases increasing, a few more than other schools at the current time, possibly due to out of school transmission and having started back slightly earlier in the year. There had been 8 cases amongst staff with the majority tracked back to family connections. On a ten day rolling basis there were 92 students with covid the day before reducing to 56 on the current day. Students were regularly testing under the “keep covid out” campaign.
- Staff absence was being affected by Covid isolation and testing, with plans to close year groups if shortages made staying fully open unfeasible. Currently getting by with the use of supply which would likely impact on school budget.
- Other challenges included two anti vax protests outside of school with about 8/10 protestors approaching students in Ditchling Road, causing some concern amongst the parent body. Students themselves provided some challenge to the protestors questioning the accuracy of their information.
- Very successful open evening with positive testimonials from governors who were present. An open morning had been held earlier in the day with two more to follow.
- Enrichment day scheduled for 22nd October to offer various external activities.
- There had been just ten appeals against GCSE teacher assessed grades demonstrating a satisfaction amongst student population.
- The school had been invited as part of the Citizens UK project to join a team meeting with the NHS commissioning group. Alongside other schools, universities, churches, and charities Varndean students were part of a team presenting with a series of requests around mental health services. Return visit with NHS attending a school assembly. Parents would be able to attend the assembly remotely.
- Seven looked after students currently on school roll, a governor link had been included with the student progress link role.
- Students with education and health care plans had risen to 51 from the 21 four years ago. 91 children with ASC compared to 32 in 2018.
- Fixed term exclusions had been renamed suspensions following national guidance.
- Reduction being seen in internal exclusions and fixed term exclusions with lifting of covid restrictions and rules creating a more relaxed atmosphere around school.
- Student progress data presented in a streamlined approach following feedback from Governors, largely around progress 8 score over a period of time.
- In depth analysis included on the 2021 key stage 4 results with comparison to previous three years. Overall picture was positive, with very few appeals.
- When compared to national figures the school was broadly in line having some grade inflation at grades 7 and above within foundation subjects. Core subjects of maths, English and science were more consistent with the exception of maths at grade 5 due to the nature of the assessment process that made the higher grades slightly more accessible for a wider range of students.

- The integrity of the results was something that the school could be confident in. Students had benefited from a less exam driven approach and adjustments that the exam boards had made to the assessment process for the more practical subjects.
- The grades achieved reflected the hard work of staff, and students willingness and determination to catch up when back in school.

Comment and questions from Governors

- The % of staff days lost through absence had reduced on the previous year, was covid not included in data?
- Were the protests about the school being a vaccination centre?
- Was the increase in children with special educational needs (SEN) something happening at other schools?
- Governors would be interested in the financial implication of an increasing SEN cohort.
- The percentage of persistently absent students appeared high in some groups, was that due to covid?
- Results for SEND children appeared to be very good, would the assessment process have impacted here?
- Was a dip in grades expected in the current year?
- The impact of covid disruption was over a longer term, not just the years where adjustments to assessment and gradings were being made.
- Outcomes for English for free school meals, pupil premium and boys groups looked like they needed attention.
- In current year 11 there was a slight downturn on SEND and pupil premium groups.
- The creative media % of grades four and above looked low at 58% in comparison to other subjects.

Responses to Governor comments and questions

- Covid absence could not be recorded as sickness absence for staff as absence management procedure could not apply to covid. Covid absences however were included in student absence data from September 2021
- Protests were against vaccines in general and had been attempts to persuade young people to not consent.
- Varndean School was an oversubscribed school and as such children with SEN were given priority for admission. Other oversubscribed schools were in a similar position regards their ratio of SEN students.
- Being quite near the start of the year had impacted on the absence data, a student could have had ten days off for covid and been flagged as a persistently absent student in terms of their % absence year to date.
- The assessment process was more accessible for children with SEND. The outcomes were reflective of good practice to ensure that individuals were supported.
- Once the information released earlier in the day about a hybrid model of assessment had been digested, the likely impact on outcomes would be clearer for 2021/22. There was an expectation that the outcomes in the core subjects would be consistent. Staff had created reliable assessment processes and were aiming for similar outcomes in the current year. Students had returned to school with good attitudes, they were attending well and working hard. The current year 11 had a lot of disruption due to covid with year 8 being their last full year.
- The pupil premium students had found lockdown the hardest, the school had put in place targeted interventions to get these students engaged.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data for current year 11 was based on the latest round of assessments early in the school year. • There were a few subjects where there were concerns which would be analysed over the next couple of weeks. 	
5	<p>School Improvement Plan (SIP)</p> <p>a) School Priorities for 2021-22 The school improvement priorities were listed within the Headteacher’s report to Governors. Within the priorities were a number of strategies that would be developed and reported on at Full Governing Body meetings. A number of activities with milestones had been identified and listed.</p> <p><u>Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the key activities for monitoring have a timeline? • How long was a learning cycle? At the end of each could the link governor do an overview of what was achieved? • As a new Headteacher were there any aspects of the school improvement plan where there was an interest in moving a bit faster to achieve objectives? <p><u>Response to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activities listed related to learning cycle one, there would be more for each learning cycle. • The learning cycles were nine weeks long, data is collected at the end of each to inform progress. • The pupil premium group was of particular interest , ensuring that those students leave with as good a set of results as their peers. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the school improvement plan for 2021-22 as presented</p> <p>b) Equalities Strategy The lead governor for equalities introduced this item providing an update on monitoring activities including discussions around the school’s equality strategy. The main aims of the equality strategy were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce gaps in attainment, conduct and attendance between students with protected characteristics in terms of equality. • To teach and train students, staff and governors about the principles and practice of equality, diversity, and anti-discrimination. • Develop the quality and use of equality monitoring and data collection. <p>At a meeting earlier in the week the school and governor leads for equality had discussed other aspects to incorporate within the strategy including staff equality, parent engagement, accessibility and specific governor involvement. The reporting of discriminatory incidents was also discussed and noted that these were included within the Headteacher’s report.</p> <p>Recommended actions were appointment of a new link governor and to carry out an equality learning walk.</p>	

	<p><u>Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much overlap was there of students across English as an additional language (EAL) group? <p><u>Responses to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was some overlap into the EAL group but mainly the first languages (other than English) were Spanish or Portuguese. <p>Governors agreed that the template format for lead governor reporting was appropriate with the addition of a section on the impact that Governors had made.</p>	
6	<p>Financial Control</p> <p>a) Budget Monitoring The Director of Finance and Operations presented the latest budget monitoring report (August 2021).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School financial position still healthy with a slightly increased projected surplus due to additional covid related grants. Supply costs were significant in line with expectations. Support staff pay offer currently at 1.75% , rejected by unions and not yet included within the budget projections. Building costs included the fencing at the front of school and the start of kitchen works. The reception works had been completed but not yet accounted for. £13k refund received for the ski and Azores trips via the insurance policy. Year 11 prom had been subsidised at a cost of £1700. <p><u>Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had any provision been made for the photocopier dispute? When would staff salaries come into effect? <p><u>Response to Governor comments and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some provision had been included within the photocopier cost centre to cover legal costs. Support staff salary increase would be backdated to April 2021 and should there be a teaching increase this would be from September 2021. The budget agreed by Governors did not include the increases. 	
7	<p>Other Reports and Recommendations - Including Policies</p> <p>None</p>	
8	<p>Governance</p> <p>a) Instrument of Government The Full Governing Body reviewed the instrument of government. There was a discussion about whether two elected parent governors was sufficient representation of parents. It was noted that within the co-opted governor group there were current, previous, and potentially future parents. 12 governors were considered appropriate for the current governance structure. No changes required to the instrument of government.</p> <p>b) Governor Structure and Responsibilities</p>	

	<p>The Chair advised Governors of the process for review of the governance structure. The individual allocations were finalised with every Governor taking on an area of responsibility. There would in addition be a nominations committee, finance group and pay panel and Headteacher review panel.</p> <p>ACTION - The annual agenda plan to be developed to include reporting from link governors .</p> <p>c) Code of Conduct</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body agreed to adopt the revised National Governors Association code of conduct.</p> <p>d) Skills Audit The skills audit was in a revised format with all Governors asked to complete and submit a form to the clerk. The Nominations Committee would have responsibility for analysing the outcomes from the skills audit.</p>	TD/IR
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Antisocial Behaviour There had been contact from a local action group to discuss anti-social behaviour in the local parks who were keen for parent governors from Varndean to attend an upcoming meeting.</p> <p>b) Governors Training Session Virtual session scheduled for 19th October 2021.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 7.56pm Date of next meeting 25th November 2021</p>	