



**Meeting of Full Governing Body
25th November 2021
6pm in the School Library**

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Shelley Baker, Simon Bowes, Jon Dee, Judith Ford, Giovanni Franceschi, Alex Marsh, Hope McAdam, Ian Rodgers (Chair),
Officers Present:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
In Attendance:	Vicky Anstiss, Lynn Hill, Gareth Hughes, Elise James, Sandra Knights, John Lamb, Andy Roberts

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Action</u>
	Note - Items 6a & b and 7a were moved up the agenda to after item 2, the minutes are recorded in original agenda order.	
1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a) Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome, particularly to Elise James and John lamb who were attending their first Governing Body meeting. Round the table introductions were made.</p> <p>b) Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence received from Julian Benkel, Dulani Kulasinghe, Emma McCrea, and Emma Warde-Robinson. The clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>c) Declaration of Interests The governors' declarations register had been circulated with meeting papers.</p>	
2	<p>Last Meetings dated 30th September 2021</p> <p>a) Acceptance of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved six pages of minutes from the meeting held on 30th September, the Chair signed the minutes as confirmation of their accuracy.</p> <p>b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopier - Legal dispute ongoing. • Vaccinations - the anti vax protestors did not disrupt vaccination day. The school were part of an NHS trial where parents and students could take part to provide an understanding of why they had chosen to have the vaccine. • Building work - On schedule with handover imminent. Governors welcome to come and see the works. 	
3	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>The Chair provided an update on business conducted and communication on behalf of the Governing Body since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concern had been raised by a parent of a student that had been assaulted. The situation had been resolved and an escalation to a complaint was unlikely. 	

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority had published a consultation on school admission arrangements for 2023/24. Reductions to pupil admission numbers (PAN) at several primary schools were being proposed. In time the reductions in primary places might impact on Varndean places in year 7. • Secondary Chairs meeting attended: discussion topics had included recovery premium funding, the school’s monitoring grant and Ofsted preparedness. • Ofsted would be looking at schools that have a three year key stage 4 which Varndean had. The rationale at Varndean for this was strong with students being directed to take a humanities subject. The staffing model was based on a three year model. • Challenge Partners had visited earlier in the day with the Chair taking part in a questioning session similar to the experience under an Ofsted inspection. 	
4	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>The Chair introduced this item referring to a paper that had been circulated outlining the outcomes from discussions on the format of the Headteacher’s report. The report in future would be a live document with embedded links to other documents to provide governors with additional data and more detailed reporting. As the report was becoming a more active document the school chrome books would not be available for Governors’ use in future as they did not provide full functionality. Governors’ own devices could be set up by the IT team to access WI-FI if required. Governors’ thoughts and input on the format and content of the Headteacher’s report was welcomed.</p> <p>The Headteacher presented her report to governors updating on the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First preferences - for September 2022 admissions were up on previous year. Governors asked that staff were made aware of their delight at seeing this reflection of how highly the school was regarded in the local community due to the continued progress in school and the successful open evening. There had also been four successful open mornings. • Ofsted criteria - tab within the report, showing how the school measured up to the main areas used by Ofsted to judge a school. Inspections were likely for schools that had not been inspected since September 2017. Schools that had been inspected had shared some of the areas that had been a focus for Ofsted. • Citizens UK - Students had been working alongside other schools, churches, and community organisations with Varndean students participating in a workshop. Contributions from the workshop together with data collected from school were collated and turned into a series of asks which were then presented by students to key decision makers in the area of mental health including the NHS Trust. Several representatives including local MPs, NHS Trust and local council attended a live broadcast school assembly resulting in all decision makers signing up to the asks and to come back in a year’s time to see how they had moved forward. The whole event had been a positive collaboration. A further group was being established to look at environmental issues through the Citizens UK programme: governors were invited to participate in this group. • Enrichment day - the last day before the half term to give students the opportunity to have a day away from school on a variety of trips. Normal enrichment week planned for July, including travel abroad. • Covid mitigations - vaccinations completed successfully with no disruption from anti vax groups. Covid cases were currently low at around 20 in school. Mask wearing was to be reintroduced in communal areas following recommendations from the Local Authority. • Staff absence - quite high and providing challenges. Some covid related and some related to external training. Work being done to support staff members and checking in on their wellbeing. 	

- Exams 2022 - link in report on how exams would be operating: most were as normal except for some changes to topic work.
- School improvement strategies - link in report to demonstrate progress against priorities in more details.
- Student data - updated from learning cycle one and looking positive especially around pupil premium.

Governor comments and questions

- Was there any sense of what student attendance would look like without the impact of covid?
- What was the level of attendance within the free school meals (FSM) group?
- In line with a local primary school had the number of free school meal children increased?
- Behaviour points had reduced, was this due to a change in reporting system?

Response to Governor comment and questions

- Current attendance was at 92.2% , with covid absences removed that would be 93.55% still below that normally seen possibly due to additional factors arising from covid lockdowns, i.e., mental health. There was also a cautious approach being taken by families with cold symptoms just on case they were covid. Brighton and Hove data for the week ending 19th November showed attendance at 86.6% across city secondary schools.
- The attendance gap for free school meal students was 3.2%, very similar to previous years. The SEN gap was smaller than usual at 2.1%.
- It was anticipated that FSM students had increased as more families were in need following job losses and the impact of covid.
- There was a calmer feel around the school, particularly in lessons. A new system had been introduced in terms of the coding of behaviour incidents into one of three areas being: teaching and learning, self- regulation, and conduct. Additional processes such as triage + had helped to identify students at risk of exclusion with additional actions taken to reduce exclusions also impacting on the number of behaviour points issued. Challenge Partners had been very complimentary about student behaviour. There were some challenges in year 9 , a group that seemed to be a tricky one across several secondary schools possibly as a result of the two lockdowns having affected them more, taking time to get used to routines.

5	<p>School Improvement Plan (SIP) - Curriculum</p> <p>Gareth Hughes presented a curriculum statement document to Governors noting the significance of curriculum as part of the governors responsibility as emphasised by the School Partnership Adviser during a meeting that she had held with Governors. The intention of the presentation was to provide Governors with an introduction to the curriculum, the rationale around key decisions relating to it, monitoring and evaluation and three areas identified for development.</p> <p>The overall aim was to create a curriculum that was ambitious for all students. A curriculum that was coherent and well sequenced so that students could build knowledge and skills to progress and that it was appropriately adapted to meet the needs of students with SEND.</p> <p>One previous key decision had been to move to a three year key stage 4 to provide greater depth , greater opportunity, and time to prepare for GCSE exam courses in order to improve outcomes for students. A challenge had come from Ofsted about why schools were still operating a three year key stage 4 stating that opportunities should be taken in key stage 3. Discussions had taken place on</p>
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this point in 2019 with the school identifying that from the improving outcomes being seen the model appeared to be a strong one. This decision was supported by Governors at the time who felt that stability was the right thing for the school at the time. The model was tested by the School Partnership Adviser, and she was satisfied that it was the right thing for the school. School leaders view was still that the key stage 4 allowed for greater depth and time leading to greater progress at key stage 4 for students both within core and foundation subjects. They also considered students to be well prepared for key stage 4 by the end of year 8. The student cohort generally had wide-reaching perspectives about the world, had well informed opinions about things happening locally, nationally, and internationally and as a result were ready to get on with their key stage 4 courses. The extra year in key stage 4 allowed the school to go beyond the limitations of the GCSE specifications in many cases to prepare students well for their next steps. The school's improving outcomes over the past three years supported that view.

The national curriculum in key stage 3 had been audited with school leaders confident that it was being covered well with no significant gaps within the framework and that students had the maturity to make good decisions in year 8 about their subject options.

Governor comments and questions

- Were school leaders aware of any schools graded as outstanding that were operating a three year key stage 4 model?
- What were other schools in the Local Authority doing with key stage 4?
- Whilst there was some sympathy in providing the wider curriculum for longer at stage 3 the argument that the school was able to go deeper than just the exam was a good argument and one that governors could back with data showing that students from Varndean succeed better at Varndean on leaving.
- Was the steer from Ofsted part of the government's drive for technology subjects.
- Can it be demonstrated that Varndean's curriculum is broader than at other schools.
- Seeing the school going from strength to strength on a trajectory second to none it seemed a bit extreme to consider a change just because Ofsted had changed its criteria.
- How do school leaders assess that there is appropriate sequencing of the curriculum for each subject?
- Is there any attempt to get cross subject sequencing?

Response to Governor comment and questions

- There were some schools that had been able to demonstrate an outstanding curriculum with a three year key stage 4 model, however whether Ofsted would support a school's view would be dependent on individual inspectors' perspectives and viewpoints. The evidence base might be to look at numbers of students doing particular subjects at year 9, the Ebacc subject uptake had moved in recent years from around 30% to 70%.
- Some schools had moved to a hybrid model, this had implications for the staffing structure in addition the choices for students. Additional opportunities could be provided through the extra-curricular activities.
- With two years the school just has time to follow the specifications, the additional time enables enrichment, time to look at wider issues and exploration. There was a broad curriculum with large numbers taking language sand humanities as well as arts subjects.
- Partly it was due to a perception that schools were spending three years going through GCSE and teaching to a test. When looking at the school's English curriculum it can be seen that GCSE is not started until the end of year 9.
- An easier argument is to demonstrate that the curriculum provides the breadth and richness that Varndean students have.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an example, there were things that might be done in science where students needed to have a specific mathematical knowledge to complete. There was a healthy dialogue between middle team leaders to align the subjects and to ensure students were able to apply knowledge correctly to each subject. There had also been some cross phase work through the PiLL partnership so that heads of department understood better what was happening in primary classrooms and at college level. Workshops were happening in a few weeks to focus on what children coming through to secondary school had not been able to do due to covid disruption. The cross phase knowledge was important in terms of building the curriculum for the five years from year 7 to 11. There was a strong emphasis on the head of departments to plan the curriculum to justify the choices made for the curriculum. Additional line managers were expected to know about the curriculum of their subjects and to be able to provide challenge in terms of implementation and intent. It was clear in classrooms when children were doing something that they had not been prepared well enough for. A main piece of work in a department review was to reach a conclusion about how secure the curriculum sequencing was to deliver the intent of the department. <p>Governors were in general persuaded by the arguments to continue to support a three year key stage 4, believing it was the best model for Varndean students.</p> <p>ACTION - Governors were invited into school to find out more about the curriculum and to talk to students about their experience of key stage 4.</p> <p>ACTION - Departments to be requested to capture the ways in which they were using the extra year to extend beyond the framework to support Governors decision further.</p> <p>ACTION - Governors to review student books to see sequencing , a sample of books to a meeting.</p> <p>The Lead Governor for curriculum advised that in spring term the monitoring would be on the curriculum provision for SEN students. The school improvement plan included strategies to ensure the curriculum was ambitious for all groups of students, including SEND and pupil premium.</p> <p>The Lead Governor for careers advised that she was interested in how the curriculum linked to careers learning and would be attending the options events to find out a bit more.</p>	<p>Govs</p> <p>GH</p> <p>Govs</p>
6	<p>Financial Control</p> <p>a) Budget Monitoring Report</p> <p>The finance group provided an update on school budget position for months 5 & 6, September, and October.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key priority to hold firm on the finances and stay broadly within budget whilst delivering on the capital works. A large amount , just under £700k had been allocated in the budget for the capital programme. Some of this had progressed but there were challenges in getting all projects started and contractors procured. A large carried forward figure into 2022/23 financial year was likely. The budget was being managed well and in line with the strategy, challenges on staffing from pressures of COVID had not adversely impacted greatly on overall position. Financial risks around funding formula changes ruling out any flexibility around long term staff changes until position clearer. 	

	<p>b) Finance Group Terms of Reference Governors were advised of some minor updates around meeting and reporting frequency to the terms of reference for the finance group. They were recommended for approval.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the Finance Group Term of Reference as proposed.</p>	
7	<p>Other Reports</p> <p>a) Pay Panel Governors were advised that the pay panel had met, considered, and approved the recommendations for teacher pay progression along with the pay and appraisal policies.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - Following recommendation from the Pay Panel the Full Governing Body approved both the Pay and Appraisal Policies.</p> <p>6.15pm - Lynn Hill left the meeting.</p> <p>b) Safeguarding Confirmation was received that the lead governor for safeguarding had reviewed the single central register , the safeguarding audit and the safeguarding policy, the policy was recommended for approval.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the safeguarding policy as presented. This included the statement for dealing with allegations of abuse (8c below).</p> <p>A link governor for children in care was recommended, this was taken up by Gianni Franceschi as part of his special educational needs link role.</p> <p>Vicki Anstiss was thanked for her significant contribution to the school over a period of time in the role of lead safeguarding officer at the school in addition to her role as Deputy Head and Head of School.</p>	
8	<p>Other Policies and Documents for Approval</p> <p>a) Staff Code of Conduct A revised staff code of conduct in line with the Local Authority model document was presented for approval.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the staff code of conduct as presented.</p> <p>b) Early Careers Teaching (ECT) Policy The ECT policy had been drafted to replace the newly qualified teacher policy and in line with the Local Authority model. It was presented for approval.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the Early Years Teaching Policy as presented.</p> <p>c) Statement for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Covered in 7b above</p>	
9	Governance	

	<p>a) Governors Handbook A handbook for governors had been drafted for Governors comment. The purpose of the handbook was to provide information for new governors as part of the induction process. The handbook was a work in progress with further links to be added.</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>a) Digital Strategy Alex Marsh expressed an interest in connecting with the new approach to digital learning.</p> <p>b) School Uniform Revised guidance issued that was statutory requiring schools to make school uniform affordable and to facilitate the exchange of second hand uniforms. The school had started to review the current uniform policy, this had led to a proposed change in the blazer colour to bring the cost down and the removal of some branded items. Uniforms were provided to families struggling with cost and smarter uniforms were used for second hand supply of uniforms. There was a suggestion of providing ties to all students, the finance group would give this some consideration.</p> <p>Meeting ended 8pm Date of next meeting - 24th February 2022</p>	