



**Meeting of Full Governing Body
24th February 2022
6pm in the School Library & Via Zoom**

MINUTES

Governors Present:	Shelley Baker, Julian Benkel, Simon Bowes, Jon Dee, Giovanni Franceschi, Dulani Kulasinghe (via zoom), Alex Marsh, Hope McAdam, Emma McCrea, Ian Rodgers (Chair),
Officers Present:	Teresa Dee (Clerk)
In Attendance:	Lynn Hill (item 5), Abi Holder (item 4a), Gareth Hughes, Andy Roberts (item 4b), Sam Whiteman (item 4d)

	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a) Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome.</p> <p>b) Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence received from Judith Ford and Emma Warde-Robinson and for late arrival from Dulani Kulasinghe.</p> <p>c) Declaration of Interests The declarations register had been included within the meeting document pack. There were no declarations relating to items on the agenda.</p>	
2	<p>Last Meetings dated 25th November 2021</p> <p>a) Acceptance of Minutes The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved seven pages of minutes from the meeting held on 25th November 2021.</p> <p>b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation still open for Governors to visit and meet with students to discuss their experience of key stage 4. Set of questions available from school leaders for this. • Examples of books from the pupil premium and special educational needs and disability groups were available at the meeting for Governors to look through for evidence of patterns of learning, improvement, and challenge. • Progress regarding the photocopier contract was minimal: some changes had been suggested to the contract that the supplier had sent. • Delivery of the second vaccination at Varndean had triggered some further anti vaccination correspondence. This had been uploaded to google drive for governors to access. • Building works were officially complete with a few minor snagging issues. • Challenge Partners had submitted their findings: generally the school came out in a positive light with senior leaders reassured that the areas previously identified for focus were correct. 	

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school uniform review resulted in an adjustment to allow white socks. Further research being undertaken to identify ways that overall cost could be reduced, i.e., using a standard colour for blazers. <p>6.14pm - Dulani Kulasinghe arrived at the meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>The Chair of Governors provided an update on activities and business conducted on behalf of the Governing Body since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Show - 160 students had participated in the school show. Those Governors that had attended commented on what a fantastic event it was and how good it was to see so much participation. A claim had been made against the Governing Body following a decision to uphold a permanent exclusion. A group of governors had been involved in drafting a response on behalf of the Governing Body to be submitted by 28th February. The tribunal hearing was set for a date in May to which governor representatives would attend. It was proposed that legal counsel be appointed to support during the hearing. <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the submission of the response to the claim by the Chair of Governors and to the appointment of legal counsel for the hearing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email received the previous evening from the Local Authority proposing that the school take an additional ten students into year 7 in September 2022, bringing the total intake to 310. There would be no requirement to take students in through appeals unless there were admission dropouts. The Headteacher advised that a further email had been received confirming that the Local Authority had made a decision to admit the further ten students to Varndean, the communication was therefore for noting by Governors. The schools that were part of the Partnership in Leadership and Learning were revising the collaboration agreement between them. The draft received had elements that were too broad and could expose the Governing Body at Varndean to risks that were outside of the school remit. A revised document would be sent out to all the schools as an invitation to form a collaboration enabling a joint committee or panel to be formed for a specific purpose. A temporary safeguarding lead governor was requested. Giovanni Franceschi agreed to take on the responsibility having already completed the required training. 	
4	<p>School Improvement Plan (SIP) - Pastoral Care & Wellbeing</p> <p>a) Small School Review</p> <p>Abi Holder presented the senior leadership team report on pastoral care and wellbeing: small school report highlighting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small school review started by looking at how consistency across the five small schools could be built in, the areas of success, the pastoral education that happens within the school structure and the demands on young people. A pilot was run initially broken down into four stages as seen in the strategy. The review would start with each small school going through its individual data to build an improvement plan based on the key performance indicators (KPI). The reviewing team would work with the school base team to look at data and identify areas of success and for development. Review activities included talking to students, attending assemblies, and learning walks 	

spending time in the school base and joining tutor time. The quality of the pastoral education would be evaluated throughout the process with a focus on the disadvantaged and special educational needs groups of students.

- Student voice plays a key role in finding out what the smaller school means to them and what improvements they would want to see.
- Triage: an internal support structure had been developed in response to the initial findings from the first review. This would drive consistency of interventions to support the most vulnerable students.
- Other strategies that fed into pastoral care and well-being included pupil premium, attendance, and behaviour. School leaders also had their own timetable of continuing professional development and school leader briefing.

Comment and questions from governors

- Lennox school being new would not have a full school cohort, were there differences in the dynamics within that school?
- How do KPIs work for the smaller schools?
- Was there competition between the schools?
- Was there a collective identity for each school?

Response to governor comment and questions

- Lennox school included just years 7 and 8. They had struggled a bit without role models which was something that was being looked at. The school leader having a greater capacity had been able to build close relationships with some very good pupil premium practice developed.
- Each smaller school has its own set of KPI data, the overall data was broken down by smaller schools.
- Constructive competition was a big part of the smaller school structure. Each was unique but collectively they made up Varndean. There was a level of competition between school leaders in addition to the students.
- The students did see the schools as having a separate identity, that was part of the assembly messaging. Consistent messaging was required but each assembly was shaped slightly differently.

b) Behaviour

Andy Roberts presented the senior leadership team report on rewards, behaviour and culture highlighting the following points.

- In the current year culture had been added as a priority in this area of school development, centred around kindness across Varndean School.
- Behaviour at school had improved quite significantly in terms of suspensions and internal seclusions.
- At the beginning of the year recoding of behaviour points had been introduced on internal systems creating a wider range categorised into either self-regulation, conduct and teaching and learning.
- School bases had worked hard addressing issues, making contact with families to help the young people to rest and move forward. This had significantly impacted on the number of repeat offenders.
- Behaviour tracker used as a tool by each smaller school, covering the range of interventions that were put in place at each point. This tied in with weekly triage plus sessions where heads of school report on their higher tariff students, the

support in place and to be put in place and measuring of the impact of that support.

- A weekly conduct tracker goes out to school bases so they can monitor behaviour with the addition of staff feedback and student voice.
- Team around the child had been introduced at the end of last year. Within this each school base chooses three students each half term to present on leading to a particular focus, such as vulnerable year 7 students coming from primary, pupil premium and SEND. Feedback to staff teams follows to provide information that might impact on the student's learning.
- Staff have a range of training across the year, including maybo, safeguarding , immersion, trans toolkit and motivational interviewing.
- The equalities team have an integral role when it comes to prejudice based incidents, supporting the victim and families.
- A golden ticket system had been introduced to reward a particularly good piece of work. A draw takes place at the end of each term.
- There was a period of transition for year 6 to 7 starting with discussions with the primary teachers to get as much information as possible with 10/12 children identified as potentially needing additional support on transition. School bases were available to support any students finding it difficult to settle.

Comment and questions from governors

- What had impact of covid restrictions been on behaviour ?

Response to governor comment and questions

- It was more during unstructured time that behaviour incidents were occurring where year groups were segregated creating more intense situations. The social and emotional impact had been underestimated; children had made different friendship groups causing difficulties for some students.

c) Wellbeing

The Headteacher provided a verbal update on staff wellbeing including the following points.

- A staff wellbeing charter had been put together outlining the principles on how staff are supported.
- Staff are supported through their continuing professional development programme.
- Workloads are continually monitored.
- There was close work with the union representatives in school.
- The environment was looked at to ensure that it was fit for purpose professionally.
- There was a good internal system in place where staff could support and talk to people about any concerns.
- Wellbeing group meet half termly and actioned a lot of things quite quickly from staff feedback.
- A piece of work on positive work life balance was underway, looking at ways to encourage staff to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.
- Staff are signposted to wellbeing initiatives in the weekly bulletin.
- The department of education have introduced a well-being charter which the school had signed up to, the principles of which matched those created by the school.

Comment and questions from governors

- Was there a wellbeing link governor?
- Are staff surveyed?
- If you don't do surveys, how do you gauge stress levels and wellbeing?
- The requirement to be accountable for staff wellbeing was likely to grow, with data being collected from the school.
- The headteacher report had been revised to include some data as an indicator of wellbeing, this was an area for development.
- Different people behaved differently under stress, some reacting positively and not getting anxious about it.
- Consistent questions over a period of time would enable trends to be seen.
- Does the school do exit interviews?

Response to governor comments and questions

- There was a lead governor that covered wellbeing within their responsibilities.
- Staff had been surveyed quite a bit during covid with the outcomes feeding back to the wellbeing group led by the staff governor. Historically there had been fuller staff surveys with a set of questions that had been used for a while. Post covid this might be introduced as an alternative to focussing on particular covid related issues.
- School leaders were visible around the school talking to staff, encouraging conversations. Other sources of data such as staff absence were available. A report on days lost to stress could be provided to governors.
- It was important to know the amount of stress in an organisation as a test of the reliance of the organisation and the capacity to deal with the amount of stress particularly that related to absence as seen in January.
- The absence management policy was geared up for dealing with stress with quicker referrals to occupational health and undertaking of stress risk assessment for individuals.
- Exit interviews are offered and typically undertaken by members of leadership.

d) Attendance

Sam Whiteman presented the senior leadership team report on the attendance improvement strategy, highlighting the following points:

- The accountability and daily staff communication was looked at with new systems introduced to make easier for attendance team.
- There had previously been over 50 students on a reduced timetable, this had been reduced to 28 in the past six weeks.
- Improvement in persistently absent students (attendance below 90%), however pupil premium students had not improved in this area. A pupil premium attendance plan was being rolled out alongside an absent student intervention programme.
- Occasions of late arrival to class had reduced from around 600 to 400 a week with a target of 200.
- On the whole attendance was starting to improve following significant covid related absence.
- New attendance letters to be used from spring term.
- The team were looking at students that had become persistently absent post covid and putting in interventions.
- Attendance reward system "first steps to success" had started.
- The national average for attendance was 89%, Varndean School was at just over 90%

attendance.

The Headteacher added that the school was held in high regard locally for attendance and that the data did include the covid related absences.

Governor comment and questions

- The attendance data in the headteachers report shows a drop of in attendance up to the half term as covid absences now included when they had not the previous year.
- Can subsets be created within the data?

Response to governor comment and questions.

- The school team were looking at the students with below 90% attendance to find out why attendance was low so that interventions could be put in place and/or barriers to attendance removed.

5 Financial Control

The finance group had met twice since the last full governing body meeting, notes from the meetings were included within the document pack circulated to governors.

a) Budget Monitoring Report

The Director of Finance and Operations presented a finance report to governors alongside the budget monitoring spreadsheet to the end of December 2021.

- The school was in a healthy financial position with an improvement on the projected carry forward position.
- Supply costs budget had been set at a higher figure than anticipated at the time of setting the budget. It had however been fully needed and potentially might be an overspent budget by the end of the financial year.
- Some income lower due to a reduction in lettings , though this situation was starting to pick up with Saturday lettings returning.
- Planned spending included the building works some of which had been completed with others such as the canopies and food court being carried forward as ringfenced works for the following year.
- Money had been set aside for the kitchen refit; the quotes were coming in £20k higher than expected.
- The finance group had agreed that the capital spend would be on IT hardware.
- Support staff pay increment had been proposed at 1.75% but rejected.
- The council were consulting on proposals to address the living wage, the impact of which would be around £12.5k though this did not include any knock on effect on other pay scales.

Governors discussed the financial risk of reducing student numbers in the city and were conscious of not committing to ongoing expenditure through salary costs longer term. It was further noted that financial pressure was possible through an increase in teachers' salary and minimum starting salaries. The consensus was that the Governing Body and school leaders were satisfied with the staffing structure with the published admission numbers but an increase to 310 a year would likely need further investment in staffing. The budget setting discussions would cover staffing and leaderships structures along with capital expenditure plans.

	<p>b) Schools Financial Value Standard The finance group proposed the schools financial value standard (SFVS) return for approval and submission.</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the SFVS return for 2022 , the chair signed the return as confirmation.</p>	
6	<p>Headteacher's Report The Headteacher presented her report to governors on an assumed read basis highlighting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many opportunities to bring the community back into school life with successful school show winter music concert and options evenings. • Enrichment week would be back to normal in the current year with a wide range of activities on offer. • Students had just returned from the Azores, the first residential trip since covid and a ski trip was being planned with 230 applicants for 90 places. • New music teacher and performing arts technician , both settling in well. • There had been a visit from the school's partnership adviser, a visit report would be circulated to governors. • A special facility in the city had been judged as inadequate by Ofsted leading to a request to schools to take back students that had been placed there. There was also a restriction on another provision on what they were able to provide putting additional pressure on schools with managing the students in high need of social and emotional support in house. • Current year 11 progress tracking included the second set of mock exams, the progress 8 score was sitting at -0.01 a much better position than in previous years at the same point in the school year. Results outcome similar to 2019 were expected across the majority of the cohort. <p><u>Comments and questions from Governors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prejudiced incidents recorded were quite a bit higher than the same time last year. • On the graphs there was a slight decrease after cycle one, why was that? • There had been limited data coming to governors to enable monitoring of other year groups aside from year 11. A new tab had been included within the report for attitude to learning and reading age data . This enabled a comparison between pupil premium and no pupil premium but not overall progress. Data was required to give governors a feel of how children's learning was progressing in each of the other four year groups compared with previous year groups. • Should governors be able to see the intensified focus on prior middle attaining and disadvantaged middle attaining students? <p><u>Response to governor comment and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a strong equalities team looking at how prejudiced behaviour was recorded. Follow up restorative conversations were held with time in the resolution room. Consideration was being given to structuring reporting under protected characteristics. • There was a slight decline from learning cycle one to learning cycle 2 as cycle 2 coincided quite close to the mock exams so that teachers had harder data that they could base their judgements on. • The data provided was a first step, reading age provided an indication of ability of the cohort. End of year testing was being considered in English , maths and science with data 	

	<p>provided to governors of outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That data was available and could be brought back next time. There was a challenge as no key stage 2 data was available. Looking at the books made available at the meeting was part of the process. <p>ACTION - Further develop data reporting to for years 7,8,9 and 10 to enable governors to monitor progress.</p>	GH
7	<p>Other Reports</p> <p>a) Three Year Key Stage 4 A paper had been provided in response to a request from governors to review and document the rationale behind the school’s decision around a three year key stage 4 curriculum. Governors were satisfied that the curriculum at Varndean was both wide ranging and varied. The Headteacher advised that the school were looking at ways that all students in key stage 4 could access a foreign language with those not ready for a GCSE taking a certificate.</p> <p>b) External Partnerships The governor lead for external partnerships presented her report to governors covering three areas of responsibility.</p> <p><u>Careers/work experience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings held with the school lead for careers, there were lots of opportunities for young people to take part in careers events. A Varndean careers roadmap document had been made available on the shared drive to provide governors with an understanding of what the careers journey looks like for students. An evaluation of the careers programme is completed annually, ranking it against the Gatsby benchmarks. Outcomes were positive except work experience as some of the external support on risk assessment had been removed. Other ways of looking at providing work experience were being explored. 50% of years 9 10 and 11 were doing the DofE award which involved some element of volunteering experience. Smaller programmes of work experience for pupil premium students was suggested. <p><u>School trips</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were a number of a number of residential trips lined up, requiring governors’ approval in terms of health and safety and financial risk. There was comment about cancelled trips and a preference to use companies that had honoured their commitments during covid. The trips had been booked with previous providers that had conducted their own risk assessments for the activities. The school uses Evolve , a system for planning trips that has risk assessment built in. <p>AGREEMENT/ ACTION - Risk assessment process to be checked by link governor. Financial and insurance aspects of school trips to be reported to the finance group for consideration with delegated authority to approve the trips.</p> <p><u>Partnerships and stakeholder engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school had a partnership vision that had been shared. This identified the opportunities for collaboration with local and international partners. Varndean were very active in a number of partnerships often taking a lead role, 	

	<p>such as the Challenge Partner hub.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of the strategy was around how the school could bring back the community, supporting others and gaining expertise post covid. <p>c) Safeguarding: Annual Review Item postponed, due to absence of safeguarding lead governor.</p>	
8	<p>Other Policies and Documents for Approval</p> <p>a) Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School</p> <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the children with health needs who cannot attend school policy as presented (annual review and approval).</p>	
9	<p>Governance</p> <p>a) Nominations Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference <p>AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the Nominations Committee terms of reference as presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governor Evaluation, Recruitment & Development - Update The skills audit had been completed with a summary of outcomes provided in the meeting papers. There were two areas noted where individual governors had marked themselves quite low being finance and how the governing body meets its legal obligations. Governors were invited to attend a finance group meeting to strengthen their knowledge and understanding in that area. There was a link to training on legal obligations within the skills audit summary. <p>A schedule of training available through governor support and links to additional training sources had been provided within the papers . Governors were encouraged to update their BEEM training record should they undertake any governance training outside of that provided by governor support.</p> <p>A parent governor election would be run during the half term as Simon Bowes' term of office was due to expire in March.</p>	
10	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None</p> <p>Meeting ended at 8.23pm Date of next meeting - 12th May 2022</p>	