

**Meeting of Full Governing Body
17th March 2016
Eco Building
6pm**

MINUTES

Governors Present: Maggie Barradell, Oliver Cattermole, Jon Dee (Chair), William Deighan, Judith Ford, Giovanni Franceschi, Jess Morris, Rob Reed

Officers Present: Teresa Carter (Clerk)

In Attendance: Simon Davies

Agenda item

Action

1 Introduction

a) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Julian Benkel and Richard Lumley. Rob Reed was welcomed to the meeting and later under item 3 was appointed as a Co-opted Governor.

b) Declaration of Interests

- Maggie Barradell declared that she was a member of the council's working party that had been looking at alternatives for secondary school admissions and catchment areas.
- Rob Reed as Head of Hove Park declared a possible conflict of interest in any discussions about catchment area changes.

2 Last Meeting dated 28th January 2016

a) Acceptance of Minutes

The Full Governing Body reviewed and approved four pages of minutes from the meeting held on 28th January 2016. The Chair signed them as confirmation of their accuracy.

b) Matters Arising not Included Elsewhere on Agenda

The list of actions arising from previous meetings was reviewed and updates provided.

- The Business Manager was reviewing the current arrangements for schools trips insurance.
- There was a query on why an action on staff surveys had been closed. Governors were advised the matter raised had been addressed sufficiently.
- Pupil premium report not due until next meeting.

3 Chair's Update

The Chair advised that following consultation with the Nominations Committee he was proposing the appointment of Rob Reed as a Co-opted Governor.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the appointment of Rob Reed as a Co-opted Governors for a term of four years.

Other governance activities that the Chair had been involved in since the last meeting included discussions regarding the format of the Headteacher's report and attendance at the annual school show. He was pleased to report that following last year's show and Governor recommendation sound quality had been improved with the purchase of a new sound system.

4 Headteacher's Report

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

Two additional agenda items on current strategic issues affecting the school longer term were incorporated within the Headteacher's report.

Secondary Admissions and Proposals for Change of Catchment Areas

An engagement exercise regards secondary admissions and catchment areas had just been released by the Local Authority and were considered a priority strategic item for the Full Governing Body's consideration, as the proposals would significantly impact on Varndean School's demographic cohort. Governors had been provided with several documents directly from the Local Authority including a map of three potential catchment arrangements. At the meeting a deprivation map of Brighton and Hove was tabled. Governors noted that this map showed several areas considered as being within 10% most deprived areas in the country and that all proposed catchment areas for Varndean would sweep across several of these areas. The three catchment options were considered by Governors which raised initial concerns around the following issues:

- There was a sense from the consultation that the views of Headteachers and Governors had been represented and consulted. Whilst there were a few representatives on the working group they had not sought opinion from their colleagues and had been restricted from feeding back any information. Proper representation of the views of Headteachers who knew their local communities well was considered essential but unfortunately had not happened.
- Where the catchments were wide spread geographically local families might have to travel some way from their homes and past several schools before reaching their allocated school.
- Dorothy Stringer and Varndean cohorts had become similar since the shared catchment area. All three models had the schools in separate catchments with potentially different cohorts once again.
- Option C suggested equality through the free school meals eligibility measure but when it was compared it to the deprivation map this showed a different picture.
- Whilst it was appreciated that the working group had tried to address the lack of social mobility free school meals was not an effective measure of real deprivation as for many that were eligible it was a temporary situation following life changes such as loss of job or family separations.
- All presented models for Varndean were inequitable.
- The engagement exercise was limited to asking for a tick for one of the three options this made it difficult to make meaningful comment.
- The suggestion of setting a quota for a % of free school meals in all schools would potentially result in currently undersubscribed schools losing more students.
- Headteachers did not necessarily agree with one of the arguments put forward that there would be insufficient places for all students unless the catchments changed.
- The increase in student numbers was a temporary bulge and if a new school was opened, in time some schools might be left heavily under subscribed and at risk of closure. Also public money would have been lost in building the new school.
- Currently the Varndean/Stringer area was the most at risk of not catching so had consideration been given to placing the new school within this catchment and leaving the rest as they were?
- Transport arrangements were inadequate for two of the models and current data suggested that those students with the greatest travelling distance had worse educational outcomes. It was also difficult for them to access out of school activities.

WD/JD

ACTION - Further research and discussion on admissions and catchment areas with a view to formulating a joint Governing Body response.

Government notification that all mainstream schools to become academies

Governors were aware of the recent announcement in the budget and were in agreement that they would prefer to be in control of the process to becoming an academy. Discussions within the local authority schools on the issue were at an early stage.

Headteacher's Report

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

The main report was presented on an assumed read basis with some key points highlighted as follows:

School Events and Successes

- Varndean School had become an independent assessment centre for DoE. Alison Browning was congratulated for this achievement and for the lovely awards evening.
- The Little Shop of Horrors show was very well reviewed and as always was an inclusive community event. Governors in attendance had been impressed with the quality of the performance and the interval refreshments produced by year 10 BTEC students.
- The Brilliant Club was proving to be a popular and successful programme.

Data

- A data report on student progress in all year groups was presented colour coded in red to highlight areas of concern. The current year 10 progress appeared to contain inaccurate data but as the Headteacher explained this was due to a problem with the national data measures and was reflecting across other schools in their data.
- In the current year 11 there was a high number of maths grade D predictions and additional support in the form of external tutors, Saturday schools and a reorganisation of sets had been used to boost maths progress. There appeared to be a narrowing of the gap in maths as a result of previous intervention work for pupil premium eligible students.
- Governors asked why the school had found itself in difficulties with maths and were advised that it was harder to keep the quality of teaching high in maths due to higher turnover in staff and problems with recruitment of more experienced teachers of maths. The strongest teachers were still having to be put into year 11

School Improvement Item - Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare

Establishment of practice such that personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding for all students and whole school attendance above 95.1%.

Simon Davies presented the meeting's school improvement report first focussing on the data areas within the Headteacher's report relating to behaviour incidents and sanction, attendance and punctuality.

- Student attendance at 95.2% for the year to date an improvement on previous years whole school and national average. Year 10 was lower than all other year groups at 93.7%. This trend for year 10 was also reflected in the persistently absent (PAP) data (those with less than 85% attendance). Pap attendance 21% for year 10 compared with 10.9% for whole school.
- Behaviour exclusion data also revealed that again year 10 were the year group causing the most concern. Interventions including alternative provisions, after school learning, support plans, behaviour contracts, mentoring and managed moves had been put in place for key students in year 10 to raise expectations and avoid external exclusions.

The next part of the "deep dive" report was around assessment of progress against school improvement priorities relating to personal development, behaviour and welfare. A separate detailed written report had been circulated in advance. From the written and verbal reporting Governors were able to identify what actions had been taken to implement individual improvement plan items and what the impact had been. The following areas were covered in detail:

- Persistently absent pupils
- Lateness in tutor time
- Internal and external truancy
- E Safety
- Data safety
- Radicalisation and other similar issues
- Staff PREVENT duty
- Low level disruption

- Hard to reach young people and their personal development
- Reduce students returning to A2A
- Lateness, uniform and readiness for learning

Trends identified were that whole school attendance was well above last year and one of the highest in the city, PAPs were improved on last year using the previous threshold, exclusions had reduced 23% on last year though fixed term exclusions were likely to be higher due to heightened expectations and tightening up on behaviour especially in Year 10 and reduction in bullying and racist incidents.

Further work would be focussed on improvement in the following areas:

- Clarify and simplify the behaviour policy.
- Restorative justice training
- Potential attachment training
- Alternative provision for high tariff students
- Changing A2A structure to have two separate hubs one supportive and one behavioural.

Following the “Deep Dive” presentation Governors asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Were staff members were noting a difference in behaviour around school? The staff Governor confirmed that it felt different in the morning and that fewer students were hanging about after the bell and those that were had more sense of urgency than before. There was still low level disruption in some areas but with two staff on call there was more back up on hand if required.
- How did the school measure low level disruption? SIMS was used as a recording tool and from this it was easy to pick up patterns of behaviour by the school bases.
- Were there any rooms in the school where more problems in behaviour were seen? And how accurate was the recording? There were no problem areas regards location and logging was fairly consistent.
- Were lunchtime privileges for year 11 only and how were their coming and goings logged? There was reassurance that only year 11 students were allowed to go off site at lunchtime and they had to earn the privilege to do so by meeting set criteria. When they had done so a pass with their name and photo would be issued and they would be required to log put and back in again.
- How were the various initiative drives being kept fresh and relevant for students? Whilst a challenge for staff the initiatives remained effective by hard work and persistence supported by close relationships and the personal touch.
- What action was being taken for regular late students and those that rather not come in at all than be late? The response was that later arrivers would be given 45 minute detentions to compensate for lost time. For those not attending action plans would be drawn up in consultation with the parents and students and some may have a support plan or have attendance incorporated within their contracts.
- There was comment about the aggressive tone of the letters for persistently absent students and the school advised that the Local Authority template was being used.
- A governor expressed the view that the cost of school uniform at Varndean appeared to be higher than other schools. Whilst advising that the School had a long- established policy of subsidising uniform in cases of hardship the comparative cost would be looked into.

ACTION - Review the cost of uniform and benchmark against that being charged by other local schools. Report back to Governors.

- Were the trends seen for the current year 10 group the same when they were in year 9? The data for previous years was available that that year 10 were the last of the old type of cohort and that year 7, 8 and 9 had much more mixed backgrounds.
- Were the school utilising fines for attendance issues and was it effective? The school was implementing Local Authority policy but it was not clear if fines were related to

improvements in attendance.

- What additional changes were being made to the A2A centre? Currently morning sessions are for anxiety issues and after school were more for behaviour issues. The plan was to separate the facility into two hubs available throughout the day.
- Was there a menu of options for behaviour interventions? There was a range of internal and external interventions such as RUOK.
- How are interventions allocated? These were allocated through referral of which there were many. There were 6/7 children in A2A and 1 or 2 in after school learning most days.
- There was a rise in disability/SEN incidents recorded, what did these relate to? These were mainly around the use of particular words that were creeping into children's language. The numbers recorded were relatively small.
- How are the positive trends seen communicated to parents and students? The school assemblies have an achievement section on a weekly basis and achievement points are allocated with publication of each school's outcome on the website. Individual emails are sent to parents and carers to highlight how well their children have done.

7.34pm - Giovanni Franceschi left the meeting.

5 Reports and Recommendations

a) Finance Report

The Chair presented the financial report summarising as follows:

- A new Business Manager was in place following the retirement of Andrew Stephenson.
- The projected year end financial position was in surplus but after that all reserves would have been used up. Governors would need to look at ways of balancing the budget from 2016/17, as they would not be allowed to operate with an underlying long term deficit. This would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting. Governors asked about the expected increase in staffing costs and were advised that the school was already paying the minimum wage and increases in both pension and national insurance costs. There had been a deliberate overstaffing when the school restructured to drive standards up and it was always known that the time to trim staffing costs would arrive. The group sizes were generous at Varndean so there was some flexibility to bring them in line with other schools. Reductions would be made by a stricter stance on replacement of staff when they left.

b) Nominations Committee Update - Recruitment

The Clerk advised that three potential Co-opted Governors were meeting with members of the Nominations Committee the following week.

6 Other Policies and Documents for Approval

The Full Governing Body received recommendations for the approval of five policies and documents.

AGREEMENT - The Full Governing Body approved the following documents as presented subject to the replacement of staff names with job titles where possible:

- Accessibility plan and statement
- Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff
- Updated child protection/safeguarding policy
- Replacement staff discipline procedures based on the Local Authority model
- Appendix to the existing complaints policy for dealing with persistent complainers in line with Department of Education recommendations.

7 Any Other Business

a) Raising Attainment Plans

Governors acknowledged receipt of update raising attainment plans.

Meeting ended at 8pm

Date of next meeting - 9th June 2016