

## FULL GOVERNORS BOARD MEETING 2021/2022

| Meeting Minutes             |                             |                           |                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Date                        | Wednesday 28 September 2022 | Time and Location         | 15.30 PPA Room |
| Attendees                   | Initials                    | Attendees                 | Initials       |
| Di Hunt (Chair)             | DH                          | Jim McMahon               | JMc            |
| Clare Brittain (Vice Chair) | CBr                         | John Godley               | JG             |
| Judith Ward                 | JW                          | Tom Freestone             | TF             |
| Anra Kennedy                | AK                          | Clem Leneghan             | CL             |
| Colin Brace                 | CB                          | Sam Kashmiri              | SK             |
| Mark Wignall                | MW                          | Matt Ashdown (for item 6) | MA             |
| Sophia Hunnisett            | SHu                         | Chris Karley (Clerk)      | CK             |
| Eva Field                   | EF                          |                           |                |

| Apologies  | Initials |
|------------|----------|
| Sue Hatton | SHa      |
| Kate Kenny | KK       |

|    | Agenda                                                                        | Led by   |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1  | Welcome and Apologies for Absence                                             | Chair    |
| 2  | Declaration of Interest                                                       | Chair    |
| 3  | Minutes of Last Meeting                                                       | Chair    |
| 4  | Matters Arising                                                               | Chair    |
| 5  | Urgent Matters                                                                | MW       |
| 6  | GCSE Results                                                                  | MA       |
| 7  | Register of Business Interest & Governors' Code of Conduct                    | Chair    |
| 8  | Instrument of Government                                                      | Chair    |
| 9  | Safeguarding and Child Protection                                             | Chair    |
| 10 | Budget Monitoring / Delegation of Financial Powers                            | MW/Chair |
| 11 | School Development Plan                                                       | MW       |
| 12 | Federation Update                                                             | MW/Chair |
| 13 | Head's Report                                                                 | MW       |
| 14 | Chair's Update                                                                | Chair    |
| 15 | Governor Development Plan                                                     | Chair    |
| 16 | School Website Information                                                    | JW       |
| 17 | Chairs of Committee Reports – Items arising from Committee minutes            | Chair    |
| 18 | Lead Governor, Governor Visits / Link Department Feedback, Training Link, DSA | Chair    |
| 19 | AOB                                                                           | Chair    |
| 20 | Dates of Future Meetings                                                      | Chair    |

| Item no. | Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Action | Due Date |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| 1        | <b>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologies were received from SHa and KK</li> <li>Welcome to MA for Item 6</li> </ul> The Board expressed its thanks to Emma Bates, former Clerk to the Governors, for all her hard work and support. |        |          |

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| 2     | <b>Declaration of Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                    |                                      |
| 3 & 4 | <p><b>Minutes of Last Meetings &amp; Matters Arising – 22 June 2022</b></p> <p><b>Items 4 &amp; 5 - Minutes of Last Meetings &amp; Matters Arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The staff survey results are not yet available.</li> <li>The number of GDPR Policies has not yet been reduced, although the Chair has touched base with Jamie Chandler.</li> </ul> <p><b>Item 6 - Urgent matters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dispute with ESS relating to the break in its contract (arising from the move to Bromcom) has been partially resolved. Any liability will be much smaller than originally thought.</li> </ul> <p><b>Item 12 - Safeguarding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The safeguarding audit report is still in draft form. Graham Odlin will present the report to the next Full Governors Board meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Item 15 – Policy reviews</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The wellbeing of pupils and staff will be discussed at POW and SLL sub-committee meetings respectively.</li> </ul> <p>The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 June 2022 were agreed to be a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.</p> | GO<br><br>JW<br>AK | 30.11.22<br><br>19.10.22<br>12.10.22 |
| 5     | <b>Urgent Matters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                      |
| 6     | <p><b>GCSE results</b></p> <p>MA spoke to a PowerPoint presentation containing a detailed analysis of the results. A copy has been filed with the minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A brief video of results day, recorded with the pupils' consent, illustrated the positive atmosphere.</li> <li>While full national benchmarks are not yet available the analysis available to date is very encouraging. One Downlands pupil achieved 12+ GCSE Grade 9s; only 13 pupils did so in the whole of England and Wales.</li> <li>The percentage of 4+grades awarded was 87% compared to 73% nationally with the average grade rising from 5.2 to 5.7.</li> <li>A bounce had been expected since the last pre-pandemic set of results, but the school had outperformed the national increase, often substantially.</li> <li>The gender gap had narrowed to 2%.</li> <li>Most departments not meeting Performance to Target (PTT) thresholds still improved significantly. The two that did not were skewed to an extent by low pupil numbers.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                           |                    |                                      |

Diana M. Hunt

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q - Are comparisons possible with comparable local schools?</b></li> <li>• Not yet – they will be published later.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Do parents have access to the detailed analysis of results?</b></li> <li>• No.</li> </ul> <p>The Governors congratulated the staff and pupils on the good GCSE results.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |  |
| 7 | <p><b>Register of Business Interest &amp; Governors' Code of Conduct</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those Register of Business Interest forms not already sent by email were completed manually and returned to CK for filing.</li> <li>• All Governors confirmed that they had read the Code of Conduct and were aware of the points that had been added.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Is adherence to the Code used for the annual review of Governors' performance?</b></li> <li>• Governors' performance is reviewed collectively rather than individually. Performance is assessed against the Governors' Development Plan and at the strategy meeting held in May annually.</li> <li>• It was noted that every Governor carries responsibility for the role as a whole and does not act as a representative of parents or staff etc.</li> </ul> <p>The Code of Conduct was unanimously adopted.</p>                                                                                                        |  |  |
| 8 | <p><b>Instrument of Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair explained that the Instrument must now be reviewed annually to confirm that the composition of the Board is appropriate and that its membership does not need to be increased or decreased.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Are more Governors needed as members each carry several responsibilities, and several reach the end of their terms soon?</b></li> <li>• The Chair noted that membership was reduced from 20 to 15 in 2015 in line with WSCC guidelines.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Can Associate Governors be appointed in case of need?</b></li> <li>• The Chair confirmed that this could be discussed to cover specific roles requiring particular expertise. This would not require a change to the Instrument.</li> <li>• <b>What is the difference between a full and an associate Governor?</b></li> <li>• Associate Governors do not have voting rights.</li> </ul> <p>The Instrument of Government was agreed as it stands.</p> |  |  |

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| 9  | <b>Safeguarding &amp; Child Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Single Central Record has been checked. The Chair read out an update that had been provided by Graham Odlin.</li> <li>The Chair invited Governors to comment on the summary of changes in KCSIE 2022 that had recently been circulated.</li> <li><b>Q – Should Governors read the whole KCSIE document or just the summary?</b></li> <li>The whole document initially, but thereafter the summaries of changes.</li> <li><b>Q – Is the safeguarding training on Key available yet?</b></li> <li>No. The Chair will advise Governors when it becomes available.</li> <li><b>Q – Has the move to Bromcom raised any data security concerns?</b></li> <li>This data is not on Bromcom, but on a separate system which has not changed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |
| 10 | <b>Budget monitoring / Delegation of Financial Powers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MW spoke to the August 2022 Governors' summary financial report. A copy has been filed with the minutes.</li> <li>The overall financial picture is challenging, and Bromcom is not yet working properly.</li> <li>The budget for teaching staff is currently on track but higher casual supply costs incurred during the pandemic have rolled over into this financial year. It has not yet been possible to recruit a cover supervisor. Winter will add to the pressure on this budget.</li> <li>Utility bills are lagging so the impact of price increases is not yet seen. Gas and electricity prices were fixed some months ago and the budget had been increased in anticipation of rising costs but in the longer term energy costs will be extremely challenging. At its current level the Government cap only saves the school £3k.</li> <li>Reserves stand at £130k.</li> <li>A flat pay increase for 50 support staff will cost up to £100k. The teachers' 5% pay award will cost £200k p.a. of which £100k will be incurred in this financial year. It is likely that in the next financial year the school will need to draw on reserves and the accumulation fund, which had been earmarked for refurbished science labs, to fund this, hence the challenging outlook.</li> <li><b>Q – Will the Government fund any of the pay rise?</b></li> <li>Some, but schools had been told to prepare for 2% rather than 5%.</li> </ul> |  |  |

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q – can saving be made from the £20k apprenticeship levy?</b></li> <li>• No, all large schools and businesses must contribute to this national scheme.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Why the increase in mid-day supervision costs?</b></li> <li>• This is a Bromcom error.</li> <li>• <b>Q - Should the all-weather sports pitch be funded from the accumulation fund?</b></li> <li>• No, the sinking fund is used for this.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Should the school make savings this year to prepare for next?</b></li> <li>• Energy savings are being considered, and the extra headcount will help.</li> </ul> <p>The Governors asked that their thanks be passed on to Sue Jones for all her work in preparing the financial reports, especially given the Bromcom problems.</p> <p>The new Delegation of Powers includes some very minor changes. The Governors agreed that the Chair could sign and circulate the new version.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                     |  |
| 11 | <p><b>School Development Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The starting point for the SDP is the School Evaluation Form, drawn up following the June planning day to identify strengths and development areas. It is ready for presentation to Ofsted when the time comes.</li> <li>• The 12 month Plan is ambitious so no 3 year Plan has been drawn up yet. Progress is monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Why do overall vision and values, which the Governors need to agree, not appear in the Plan?</b></li> <li>• The SDP is a more strategic document. However MW agreed that the Plan should be amended to fit more explicitly with the vision and values, which have not changed.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Is the Plan achievable?</b></li> <li>• It was agreed by the SLT, who also have responsibility for its execution, so yes.</li> <li>• <b>Q - The term ‘diversity’ is used in the Plan, would ‘inclusion’ or ‘equity’ be more appropriate?</b></li> <li>• Agreed, it will be changed.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Would Ofsted expect a longer term Plan?</b></li> <li>• Ofsted does not set out what form the Plan should take.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Would the SEF go to Ofsted too?</b></li> <li>• Yes.</li> </ul> | <p>MW</p> <p>MW</p> |  |

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q - Is the use of the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'pupil premium' interchangeable?</b></li> <li>• This was discussed when the Plan was drawn up and there was a case for either term. SLT will reconsider the use of these terms and bring the issue back to the FGB.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | MW                   | 30.11.22 |
| 12 | <p><b>Federation Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair provided this update.</li> <li>• Meetings of Heads and Heads/Chairs had taken place. The Federation was becoming less 'soft' with the production of a Development Plan, which will be circulated. Collaboration includes joint inset days, peer to peer Deputy Head reviews and senior leadership coaching. Training to become a coach will be offered to 3 or 4 staff members with coaches having cross-school roles.</li> <li>• A Government White Paper mandates that all schools are to become Academies by 2030. A presentation to all Federation governing boards takes place on 17 Nov where options and the way forward will be discussed. All were encouraged to attend. WSCC will provide more information by half term.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>DH</p> <p>All</p> | 17.11.22 |
| 13 | <p><b>Headteacher's Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A copy of the Headteacher's report was circulated prior to the meeting and is filed with the minutes.</li> <li>• Both students and staff remain excellent to work with.</li> <li>• <b>Covid</b> – no cases have been reported to date this term, but this will come as we move into winter.</li> <li>• <b>Staffing</b> – a number had left at the end of the previous academic year for various reasons and the job market is now very competitive. The school is adhering to the WSCC evaluation of grades but will review all job descriptions for support staff. More use is being made of networks for recruitment from the local community. Interviews are coming up for several roles.</li> <li>• No applicants had come forward for teaching assistants, cover supervisors or a site officer. This is common to most schools.</li> <li>• Claire Davies has been taking staff wellbeing forward. Every effort continues to be made to make the school an attractive place to work. Initiatives include the provision of Benenden healthcare including mental health support (initially funded from the Exam Board refund), fortnightly bilateral meetings between line management and staff, and focussing on communication.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Can Benenden be funded in future years?</b></li> <li>• Yes, as the cost is modest, but it will be reviewed in two years.</li> <li>• <b>Q – has there been feedback from staff on how useful health cover is?</b></li> <li>• It is very early to form a view but there is very positive early anecdotal evidence.</li> </ul> |                      |          |

Diana M. Hunt

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q – how is the school evaluating progress with wellbeing?</b></li> <li>• The delayed staff survey will be issued shortly.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian students</b> – the seven students are integrating well.</li> <li>• <b>Consultation evenings</b> – there are differing staff and parent views on the merits of online vs. in person consultation evenings, with around 60% in favour of online. Both will continue and the appropriate balance is now being discussed.</li> <li>• <b>Learning walks</b> - these are now recorded on a new system, Blue Sky, which works with the appraisal system. They have reverted to the pre-Covid approach.</li> <li>• <b>Q – which Governors should attend the forthcoming Open Evening?</b></li> <li>• The Chair and Vice Chair.</li> <li>• <b>Student Council</b> – remains an active and productive forum. It had prompted the purchase of new laptops for students.</li> <li>• <b>DSA</b> – the parent / teachers' group had raised £30k which will be used to refurbish the middle courtyard.</li> <li>• <b>Buildings</b> – discussion with the LA continues on the bulge class building work, more clarity is needed on what the school will receive in practice.</li> <li>• <b>Bromcom</b> – roll out has not gone well as some core packages including homework and finance are not working. While it will be a good system eventually, in the short term it has raised significant challenges. The recovery plan includes a dedicated Bromcom team to support the WSCC contract.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Will any of the cost be refunded?</b></li> <li>• It appears not.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Is it already used in other schools?</b></li> <li>• Yes, but predominantly in primary.</li> <li>• <b>Q – Could homework be suspended in the interest of student wellbeing?</b></li> <li>• Homework is too important to suspend, but it is hoped that a solution for homework might be in place by 7 October.</li> <li>• <b>Q - Are Bromcom adequately resourced?</b></li> <li>• As they have a vested interest in solving the problems, it is assumed so.</li> <li>• <b>Q - Are there any legal compliance / GDPR issues?</b></li> <li>• None have come up so far. Jamie Chandler is responsible for both GDPR and Bromcom which should help to identify any issues, but MW will speak to him to see whether he needs support.</li> <li>• <b>Other questions:</b></li> <li>• <b>Q - Are plans to extend school hours proceeding?</b></li> <li>• Yes – consultation is taking place on whether hours should be 8.30 to 15.00 or 8.45 to 15.15. The new hours will take effect from next September.</li> </ul> | MW | asap |
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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Q - Are there implications from this for staffing costs?</b></li> <li>• Not for teaching staff, but TAs are paid hourly so there might a marginal impact.</li> </ul> <p>MW was thanked for his report</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |  |
| 14 | <b>Chair's Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair reminded Governors that once agendas had been sent out for FGB and sub-committee meetings, they should look on Teams a week before the meeting to access all the supporting documentation.</li> <li>• The Chair also reminded Governors that when a pupil is subject to a short term suspension, representations can be made to the Governing Body by the parent. This had happened recently, for the first time in the Chair's experience. She had therefore approached WSCC for advice, particularly as many of the issues raised were operational. The Chair will advise Governors should a panel be needed.</li> </ul> |  |  |
| 15 | <b>Governor Development Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governors agreed that the Plan was very clear. The Chair thanked CB and JW for their work in drawing up the Plan.</li> <li>• The Governors' Handbook had been used as the starting point, and the Plan was then checked against Ofsted requirements.</li> <li>• Governors were happy to adopt the Plan as the final version.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |  |
| 16 | <b>School Website Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks were expressed to JW and Laura Bryant for their work on the website.</li> <li>• The last pages outstanding (Careers) have now been completed, and other have already been updated in advance.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |  |
| 17 | <b>Chairs of Committee reports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, as no Committees had yet met this term.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |  |
| 18 | <b>Lead Governor, Governor visits / Link Department feedback, Training Link, DSA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JG had completed a Science curriculum visit which had gone very well.</li> <li>• A list of dates for exam meetings was due out that day.</li> <li>• The DSA had met the previous evening and enjoyed a successful meeting.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |  |
| 19 | <b>Any Other Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |  |
| 20 | <b>Date of next meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 15.30 in the PPA Room</li> <li>• Meeting closed at 18.00</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |  |

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*Diana M. Hunt*