

Full Governing Board Meeting 2022/23

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 25 January 2023	Time and Location	3.30 pm PPA Meeting Room
Attendees	Initials	Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)	DH	Sam Kashmiri	SK
Colin Brace	CB	Anra Kennedy	AK
Clare Brittain (Vice Chair)	CBr	Clem Leneghan	CL
Richard Donovan	RD	Mark Longley	ML
Eva Field	EF	Judith Ward	JW
Tom Freestone	TF	Mark Wignall	MW
John Godley	JG	Noel Buckley (for Item 6)	NB
Sue Hatton	SHa	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK
Sophia Hunnisett	SHu		

Apologies	Initials
None	

	Agenda	Led by
1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	Chair
3	Minutes of Last Meeting – 30 November 2022	Chair
4	Matters Arising	Chair
5	Urgent Matters	Chair
6	ROCKS Update	NB
7	SDP/SEF Update	MW
8	Headteacher's Report	MW
9	Chair's Report	Chair
10	Safeguarding & Child Protection Update	SHa
11	Budget Monitoring Update	MW
12	Governor Development Plan	Chair
13	Policy Reviews: • Freedom of Information • GDPR • Privacy Notice – Staff, Governors & Volunteers • Privacy Notice – Pupils & Parents • Protection of Children's Biometric Information • Digital Acceptable Use	Chair
14	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	Chair
15	Reports:	Chair

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	• Lead Governor visits • Link Governor visits • School website information • Governor training • DSA	
16	AOB	Chair
17	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 22 March 2023	Chair

Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 3.30 p.m.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence • DH welcomed the new Co-opted Governors (RD & ML) to their first FGB meeting. DH also welcomed Noel Buckley for Agenda item 6. • There were no apologies for absence.		
2.	Declarations of Interest • None		
3.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 30 November 2022 • The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 30 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
4.	Matters Arising Item 6 – GDPR update • The GDPR Policy would be reviewed at this meeting under Agenda Item 13. Item 7 – Pupil Premium Strategic Plan • Q – Has the Breakfast Club started yet? • MW advised that the new Pupil Premium Support Officer will start at 8.00 a.m. daily and will be responsible for starting up the Breakfast Club. Item 10/11 Ofsted Inspection Feedback and Headteacher's Report • DH will bring up the letter to Mr Wagstaff under Agenda item 9. • Student groups will be invited to the next FGB.	CK	

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	Item 13 Ratification of Policies - DH has made all the necessary changes to Policies to refer to Bromcom instead of SIMS. - CBr advised that she, Matt Ashdown and Vicky Cornish were to review the SEND Policy on 26 January, and that it would be discussed at the Pupil Outcomes & Wellbeing Committee on 8 February. Item 14 Election of new Co-opted Governors - DH and CBr had completed all meetings and arrangements for DBS The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2022 were agreed to be correct and will be signed by the Chair.		
5.	Urgent Matters None		
6.	ROCKS update - NB spoke to a presentation. - ROCKS is the acronym for the five elements of the school's character education initiative, which aims to prepare pupils successfully for the world when they leave (Resilience, Optimistic, Community, Kindness, Self-aware). - It is the basis for the new achievements points system, and more than 30,000 points have been awarded to date. More than 3,000 ROCKS postcards were sent home last term. - Points awarded are analysed by year group and by each of the five initiatives. Kindness had scored lowest so will be the focus for this term. - Character award badges are given to pupils who display all five ROCKS elements. Sanctions are linked to failure to demonstrate ROCKS elements. - The 'House' structure is being retained but will be rebranded as a 'Communities' structure. Extra-curricular involvement has improved as a result of this initiative, especially amongst SEND and PP students. - School visits to France are planned as part of the initiative. Q – Does recognition of extra-curricular engagement extend to activities outside of school? - The data analysed to date only includes in-school activities but the plan is to introduce a 'Curriculum Passport' to recognise external activities. Q – Has the school considered linking the France visit to Hassocks' twinned town (Montmirail)?		

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	- This will be considered and could work very well as the school has existing links with the twinning association. Q – Does consistency in awarding achievement points remain a challenge? - It should improve as 15 characteristics have been reduced to five. Q – Noting the steady reduction in awarding points from Year 7 to Year 11, are there checks and balances to ensure that quieter pupils are not overlooked? - Individual lowest point earners are analysed and the reasons investigated, and support strategies are now being considered. PP data is also analysed. Q – Who is discussing character expectations with pupils? - A document is being drafted setting out expectations which will be made available to pupils. Some expectations are repeated in more than one element. Q – What has unlocked the marked improvements seen in SEND/PP engagement? - A key driver has been innovative and fun activities introduced by the Head of Sports for less athletically gifted pupils. Q – The School Council has suggested a Freshers' Week – could this tie in with Communities? - This has been discussed and the school hopes to do so. Q – Are there opportunities for peers to nominate pupils for points? - This is being considered, especially for 'Kindness'. Q – Has the balance of achievement points between girls and boys changed? - Awards to girls remain higher but there has been no further analysis of this yet. The Governors congratulated NB on the very successful roll-out of this initiative. MW commented that consistency in awarding points was now much better, and that this was down to NB's leadership as he had brought the rest of the staff along with him. NB left the meeting at 4.15 p.m.		
7.	SDP/SEF update - MW advised that changes to the Self Evaluation Form, which were not extensive, reflected Ofsted's findings. It is a three year plan with annual progress reviews. - The School Development Plan has been redrafted with reference to ROCKS. It covers the most important strategic areas, not every area for development. Q – Are the documents dated correctly? - No, they will be corrected. Q – What is 'Wave 1', referred to in these documents?	MW	22.03.23

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	- It refers to what is happening in the classroom. Q - In the SEF retention of learning is mentioned frequently but there is less reference to skills. Should this imbalance be addressed? - This reflects Ofsted's emphasis. Governors recognised that this is an operational area but discussed the importance of skills. MW explained that the end points imply both knowledge and skills. AK will continue the discussion at a future Curriculum meeting. Q – With reference to 'community', can this be linked to behaviours outside of school too? - It is hoped that Curriculum Passports will pick this up. Attendance is the priority for lower performing pupils, then engagement. The France trip should help with engagement. Q – Should the SDP include a 'review' column as the long list of tasks will develop over time? - It is reviewed annually, and lines are added or removed as appropriate. MW proposed that reviews are track-changed to enable Governors to identify any changes. Q – What is the process for review? - This is reflected in the SEF, which is reviewed annually in May. Q – Should the front page of the SDP include the dates of the latest and next review, as is done with school policies? - Agreed. Q – What does the phrase 'ambitious alternative pathway for 5% mean? - These are the alternative activities for those students who benefit from a practical rather than an academic pathway, e.g. Forest Walks.	AK	22.03.23
		MW	31.05.23
8.	Headteacher's Report MW spoke to the report attached to these minutes. - Staff absences have jumped again with two or three on long term sick leave. - Several support staff left at the year end and recruitment is very competitive. Outreach to the local community has been successful. - DBS check delays continue to be challenging. - Wellbeing days for staff have proved to be popular, and Benenden Health benefits have helped staff to be able to return to work more quickly after illness. New support structures have also been effective. - Interim appraisals are being conducted now with final appraisals in July. Q – Has the end of the Government support scheme impacted the school's Ukrainian pupils? - Not yet.		

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	- Governors now see the minutes from the School Council. All students have a voice at the Council through an escalation process. Discussions have been going well at the termly meetings. - The PTA raised £30k last year which will pay for the Year 11 common room refurbishment. This will double up as a classroom for dance / drama. - Tenders for work on the bulge class building will go out soon. Work will include the addition of some parking spaces, some of which will have EV chargers. There will also be new toilet blocks and if costs can be contained there might be some s106 funding remaining. Q – does reference to ‘planning’ mean that permission has not been granted yet? - No, planning permission has been received. - MW has been assured by local councillor Kirsty Lord that, even with the new housing, pupil numbers are expected to fall in coming years. When the intake reverts from 270 to 240 the school should still be able to accommodate its whole catchment area. 45 of the 75 teaching staff are members of the NEU and therefore might strike on the four announced dates. Decisions on opening will be taken one day at a time but the school will definitely open for mock exams on March 2nd. SK joined the meeting at 4.40 p.m. - DH confirmed that the Governors’ Finance & Buildings Committee meeting would go ahead on 1 February. Q – If the school closes will students be given work to do? - They will be signposted to online resources. Q – Could Year 11 and vulnerable students be accommodated if the rest of the school closes? - The school might not be able to ensure that it will be safe to do so, in which case they would be better off at home. - The Year 11 consultation evening went very well indeed, and MW is keen to resume face to face evenings for all other year groups. - A lot of preparation is being done for the lockdown drill on 8 February. Students and parents will be made aware, including vulnerable students in particular. Q – Should the term ‘lockdown’ be changed given its new post-pandemic meaning? - No, as the drill is modelled on WSCC policy.		
9.	Chair’s update DH shared the response from WSCC’s Assistant Director Education & Skills to her questions on future expected intake for the school. He does not expect to need further places at Downlands as the		

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	school age population is expected to fall from 2024 to 2033. No further bulge classes are therefore expected. • The Discipline Committee had met as a pupil had been suspended for more than 15 days in the Autumn term. It had concluded that the school had acted in accordance with its Policies. • A Federation meeting had been held that morning. Governing Boards were encouraged to support each other, and in that context Oathall had asked whether any Governors from other schools were able to attend a future Permanent Exclusion Panel. • DH reminded Governors to respond to recent requests to complete the Skills Audit, KCSIE reading and Safeguarding training. In-school Safeguarding training would hopefully resume soon. • As the terms of six co-opted Governors expire on 3 June 2023 DH and CBr are meeting to set out a timetable for elections. A special meeting for this purpose was planned for the nine continuing Governors on 25 May, the day after the Governors' strategy meeting. DH requested that those Governors whose terms expire advise her whether they plan to stand for re-election and to provide a short election statement. • DH and CK had obtained guidance from WSCC on the retention of documents given the need to create space in the school office. Whist WSCC recommends that Committee minutes are retained in hard copy for six years, only FGB minutes must be retained in this way (in perpetuity). DH therefore asked Governors to vote on whether they were content for all other minutes to be retained in soft copy on a separate hard drive. • Q – Is a hard drive reliable enough if that is the only copy? • Copies will also continue to be retained in iCloud through Teams. • The Board voted unanimously to hold Committee meeting minutes in soft copy only. • DH thanked all the Governors for completing their school visits in the Autumn term and encouraged them to arrange Spring term visits as soon as possible through the respective Heads of Department.	CB, CBr, SHa, AK, CL, JW	asap
10.	Safeguarding & Child Protection update • SHa reported that her meeting with Graham Odlin (GO) had been further deferred due to staff sickness but they were trying to fix a date now. • Q – Can a meeting be arranged directly with the Head of Department? • Yes, SHa will do so. • GO has confirmed that all correct measures are being taken with staff who are still awaiting DBS checks. • The level of needs, and therefore pressure on SEND, is still growing.	SH	22.03.23

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11.	Budget Monitoring Update - MW advised that teaching and support staff costs will exceed budget due to the pay award not being full funded, and the support staff award being backdated. This will be covered from reserves. - Electricity costs rose hugely in October but with savings it is hoped to keep within the budget. - The marketing budget is likely to be fully spent as work has started on updating the pictures displayed around the school and a new video will be produced. - There is more demand for free school meals post-pandemic and this budget could come under pressure for the first time. £40k has been received from insurance following the flooding incident which has funded the Reception refurbishment. Q – Is the Science block refurbishment still planned? - Yes, funded from savings made elsewhere. Q – Might the Government reconsider whether to fully fund the pay award? £140k additional funding has been received but for this year only. Q – Is the position sustainable? - The overall budget looks OK at present with a further £150k to be received for the extra 30 students in next year's intake, but there are many imponderables. The Government has previously recognised pay rises when setting future budgets. SHa left the meeting at 5.35 p.m.		
12.	Governor Development Plan - DH invited comment on the Governors Development Plan. All were content to continue with the Plan as it stands. Q – Does filling statutory panels remain a problem? - Yes, but these are very rare.		
13.	Policy reviews - DH advised that following an audit last year all the Policies to be reviewed at the meeting had been rewritten by Jamie Chandler (Assistant Headteacher). Freedom of Information - The document is not quite finalised as costings are still be added. Q – Should a fax number still be included? - No, this will be removed. Q - Given the decision on document retention, will Committee papers still be available if requested? - Yes, as they will be stored in soft copy.		

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	○ The Board agreed to adopt the Policy subject to its finalisation. • GDPR ○ As this is not a statutory policy it has been separated from the two Privacy Notices. ○ Q – Should the one month time allowed for response in section 7 exclude school holidays? ○ DH will check this with Jamie Chandler. ○ Q – Should reference to a named individual be removed and be replaced with a generic email address? ○ No, this is helpful so the Policy will be changed if the staff member changes. There is no generic email address at present. EF left the meeting at 5.40 p.m. ○ The Board agreed to adopt the Policy subject to a small number of typing corrections. • Privacy Notice – Staff, Governors & Volunteers • Privacy Notice – Pupils & Parents ○ Q – Should reference to videos of pupils also include photos? ○ Agreed. ○ Q – Is reference made to the independent Data Protection Officer consist with other policies? ○ DH will check this with Jamie Chandler. ○ The Board agreed to adopt the Policies subject to a small number of typing corrections. • Protection of Children’s Biometric Information ○ Q – How is biometric data stored? ○ MW agreed to find this out. ○ The Board agreed to adopt the Policy subject to a satisfactory answer to the above question. • Digital Acceptable Use ○ This Policy is still being finalised and will be brought to the next meeting.	DH	22.03.23
		DH	22.03.23
		MW	22.03.23
		CK	22.03.23
14.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes • No reports as the F&B and POW Committees meet over the next two weeks. • The SLL Committee met on 18 January but AK (Chair) was not present.		
15.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, School Website, Governor Training & DSA	CL	22.03.23

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	- CL will be meeting Matt Ashdown this term. He suggested that a presentation be given on provisions for disadvantaged pupils at the next FGB. - CBr noted the pressures on SEND. She will be meeting Matt Ashdown and Vicky Cornish on 26 January to discuss the SEND Policy. - JW is waiting to hear from WSCC with answers to her questions regarding the website, as the checklist was unclear. She will report back to the next FGB.	JW	22.03.23
16.	Any Other Business None		
17.	Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 22 March 2023 The meeting closed at 5.55 p.m.		