

Full Governing Board Meeting 2022/23

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 22 March 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
Richard Donovan	RD	Mark Longley	ML
Eva Field	EF	Judith Ward	JW
John Godley	JG	Mark Wignall	MW
Sue Hatton	SHa	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK

Apologies	Initials
Clare Brittain (Vice Chair)	CBr
Tom Freestone	TF
Sophia Hunnisett	SHu
Clem Leneghan	CL

	Agenda	Led by
1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	Chair
3	Minutes of Last Meeting – 25 January 2023	Chair
4	Matters Arising	Chair
5	Urgent Matters	Chair
6	Presentation by Head Prefects	Pupils
7	Budget Monitoring Update	MW
8	Safeguarding & Child Protection Update	DH/SHa
9	Disadvantaged Pupils Presentation/Update	-
10	Headteacher's Report	MW
11	Chair's Report	Chair
12	Policy Reviews: - Abusive Parents/Carers Policy - Complaints Procedure - Designated Teacher Policy (Ratification Only) - Discipline & Student Behaviour Policy (Ratification Only) - Teachers & School Leaders Pay Policy (Ratification Only) - Managing Serial & Unreasonable Complaints Policy	Chair
13	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	AK/JW
14	Reports: Lead Governor visits	Chair

Dianna Hunt

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	• Link Governor visits • School website information • Governor training • DSA	
15	AOB	Chair
17	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 24 May 2023 (Strategy Meeting)	Chair

Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 3.35 p.m.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence • Apologies for absence were received and accepted from CBr, TF, SHu and CL.		
2.	Declarations of Interest • None		
3.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 25 January 2023 • The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 25 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
6.	Presentation by Head Prefects This item was moved up the agenda in order to allow the Head Prefects to leave the meeting as soon as their presentation was over. • Amelia and Emma, the new Head Prefects, spoke to a presentation on the role of prefects at the school. • Their roles provide a new sense of responsibility and experience of leadership which will be useful in their future careers. The application and interview process to become a prefect is also helpful in this respect. They also train other prefects and evaluate what in the role is going well and what could improve. • They are required to set a good example and support students in need. Other duties include the supervision of queues and out of bounds areas. • There are four prefect roles – Duty Prefect, Year 7 Prefect, and Senior and Executive Prefects. • Q – What do they do if students tell them something that raises worries or concerns? • They can speak to Miss Skelton or other members of staff, or other prefects can speak to the senior prefects.		

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	• Q – How do they deal with prefects who do not fulfil their duties? • There is a ‘three strikes’ system, escalating from discussion of the reasons to a detention or removal from the team of prefects. • Q – How long do prefects stay in post? • For one year following their appointment. • Q – How do they make time for participation in clubs etc. as well? • The application process makes it clear that they should ensure that they can do so before applying for the role. • Q – Do they enjoy the role? • Yes. Amelia and Emma left the meeting. • MW explained that prefects’ training was based on that provided to staff. • Q – How well has transition from Head Boy and Head Girl to Head Prefects gone? • It has worked as they now appoint the two best candidates regardless of gender. Both have been girls in two years out of five but in other years there has been a mix. • Q – Do other pupils respond well to prefects? • Yes, if the prefects follow their training. • Q – Has there been any more thought to allowing prefects to wear blue jumpers, as year 11 students do? • Not, the issue has not been raised again. • Q – How does the school ensure that prefects’ mental wellbeing is not impacted by the additional pressures? • They effectively have a line manager in Mrs Skelton, with whom they have regular meetings. • Q - What is the ratio of boys to girls in the whole school population? • Almost exactly 50:50. There are plenty of male prefects, with one in one of the four senior roles.		
1.	Apologies for Absence (continued) • DH advised that CBr (Vice Chair) had suffered a broken shoulder so would be unavailable for Governor duties for some time. • TF had resigned due to the pressure of work commitments. An election for a new Parent Governor would be held next term. • Q – Will DH need extra support in the absence of the Vice Chair? • DH will see how matters develop; CBr might be able to ease back into some duties before too long.		
4.	Matters Arising Item 4 – Matters arising		

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	- The Head Prefects' attendance at this meeting was in response to the action point under this item. Item 7 – SDP/SEF update - MW confirmed that the SDP and SEF were correctly dated, and that the review date had been added as suggested. - AK had attended the final part of her curriculum training and the curriculum meeting takes place on 29 March. Item 9 – Chair's update - DH would provide an update on the election of Co-opted Governors under Item 11 of this meeting. Item 10 – Safeguarding & Child Protection update - SH is still arranging a date for her meeting with Graham Odlin (GO). Item 13 – Policy reviews - DH has made the agreed amendments to the GDPR and Privacy Notice – Pupils & Parents. - MW advised that pupils' biometric data is stored on a secure partitioned drive. - The Digital Acceptable Use Policy is not yet finalised. Item 15 – Lead Governor visits - The presentation on provisions for disadvantaged pupils will not be given at this meeting as CL has not been able to attend. - JW has now received the necessary answers from WSCC regarding the website.		
5.	Urgent Matters None		
7.	Budget Monitoring update - MW explained that the Teaching Staff budget will be exceeded before the financial year end as it had allowed for only a 3% pay rise while the actual award was 5%, and the difference was not funded. - There is now likely to be a further pay settlement above the existing level, but it is not yet known whether it will also have to be funded from the existing budget. - The Casual Supply budget has already been exceeded as staff absences due to illness remain high. - Ancillary Staff costs are on budget despite the pay rise as there are still unfilled posts. Some TAs have moved into pastoral support roles but it is difficult to backfill the resultant vacancies.		

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	• Structural Maintenance is over budget as the school has been able to undertake more improvements in-house. • The Gas budget has not been exceeded as the contract is not up for renewal until 2024. It is hoped that costs will have come down again by then. • Electricity costs have risen but due to savings that have been made it might come in close to budget. • The Examinations budget has been exceeded but this is due to paying for next year's exams in advance. • Marketing expenditure has resumed post-pandemic and will include updating the pictures on the walls of the school and producing a new school video. • Benenden healthcare for staff had been funded out of the SDP budget. It will continue for a further year and then be reviewed. • Expenditure from the Projects budget will take place over the summer. • Overall expenditure for the year will be almost exactly on budget, which will represent the successful navigation of a tricky year. • Q – Is there a compensating benefit from having carried out more structural improvement in-house? • Yes, this is reflected in the Projects budget. • Q – Was more money allocated to schools in the Government's recent budget? • Yes, for last year's pay rise, but not for higher energy costs. The Governors asked that MW pass on to Sue Jones their thanks for continuing to prepare the budget information so helpfully through the difficult Bromcom rollout.		
8.	Safeguarding & Child Protection update • DH advised that she had completed the most recent Single Central Record check. Overall the result was fine but she has raised the following questions: ○ Should the stored information be backed up onto a Cloud based system? ○ Should a third member of the SLT have access, rather than only MW and GO? • SHa advised that she had had no response from GO yet regarding their meeting. • She also noted that she had been challenged when entering the school building, which showed that staff were aware of this safeguarding practice.		
9.	Disadvantaged Pupils presentation / update This item was held over to the next meeting in CL's absence.		

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10.	Headteacher's Report MW spoke to the report attached to these minutes. • He had been interviewed on local radio on the issue of school attendance and had highlighted the post-pandemic challenges. Attendance at Downlands stands at 92.8% compared to 95% pre-pandemic; the current figure is 90.8% nationally. • The school has seen the lack of resilience in pupils experienced everywhere but benefits from supportive parents. • Absences of disadvantaged students are huge nationally, and 30% at Downlands. This has a massive impact on students. • Q – Is this expected to ebb over time? • Not quickly, and in fact this year is proving to be worse than last. It has impacted attitudes as well as attendance and is seen especially in Year 10. • Q – Has the school changed how it deals with persistent absences? • There is rigorous monitoring for every child with a series of letters escalating in tone. Jo Cobb visits the homes of Pupil Premium students. • A big new issue is Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Fixed penalties levied on parents can make things worse in these cases. The school recommends a fine but it is decided upon and levied by WSCC. There are new processes around EBSA on which staff are now being trained. • Nine pupils are currently having to be set work to do at home on their doctors' instructions. • Q – Is behaviour improving overall in the school as a side effect of these absences? • No, as there is still a large number of students who do not want to be in class and who are struggling to catch up. Suspensions have gone up as the school is holding the line on behaviour standards. • Q – Do suspended students treat that time as a holiday? • Not usually, suspensions remain unwelcome and their parents are normally displeased. • The Federation now needs some administrative support and an advertisement has gone out for an 8 hour a week post. The Federation is discussing its future as new opportunities for co-operation are identified but there is no will to go down the academisation route. The national split between academies and grant maintained schools is around 50:50. Any change of Government is not now expected to result in a push for further academisation.		
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	• They are open to expanding the Federation from four to six schools if approached by schools with similar values, potentially including primary schools as associate members. • They are also considering a harder Federation, which could have an impact on governance structures. • The School Council has met and while major issues have not been raised it provides a useful insight into pupils' concerns, which have included areas around catering, uniforms and the toilets. • Q – Who takes forward actions from the Council? • It can vary – issues are assigned according to who is responsible for that area. • Character Development initiatives continue to progress. These include access to residential trips and theatre visits to build a range of experiences, especially for those who might not otherwise have access to them. Behaviour is being aligned to ROCKS from next term, with an emphasis what to do to show the right behaviours. • Q (on buildings) – Does WSCC take decisions on building projects? • Yes, they run the tenders for most projects. • Q – How can the balance of s106 funding remaining be accessed? • It can be checked online by searching the school's name but it can be difficult to track down. • The school will have a full intake of 270 for the next school year including some pupils from Burgess Hill. It should still be able to accommodate all who apply for a place when the intake reverts to 240. • There is a parents' meeting next Thursday when MW will speak about behaviour and ROCKS. • The recent strikes have highlighted issues that help to explain why not enough teachers are coming into the profession. Bursaries have not been wholly effective. • Year 11 mock exams have taken place and went well.		
11.	Chair's update • As part of the Federation initiative DH and CB had sat on a permanent exclusions panel at Oathall Community College. It is proposed that this becomes regular practice for Governors' panels held in the four schools. • Recent school productions had been very good, with particular praise for the Dance Show. • DH will arrange to circulate the minutes of the latest School Council meeting. • Two complaints are under discussion currently, but it is hoped that neither might proceed to the panel stage.	DH	22.04.23

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	DH noted that a Governors' co-option meeting would be held on 10 May. AK and JW had decided to stand down when their terms expire, but currently the others were planning to put their names forward again. There have been five expressions of interest from potential new Governors to date.		
12.	Policy reviews Abusive Parents/Carers Policy - It was noted that the term 'Parents/Carers' should be used consistently throughout the Policy. Q – Should the term 'Guardians' be used instead? - No, as other Policies use the term 'Parents/Carers'. Q – Should abuse directed at Governors also be explicitly mentioned in the Policy? - It was agreed that reference to the 'school community' was sufficient. - The Board agreed to adopt the Policy. Complaints Procedure Q – Should the penultimate paragraph on p2 read "Governors have no power..." for clarity? - Agreed. Q – Should the penultimate paragraph on p5 read "must" use the Complaints Form rather than "preferably". - It was discussed whether this would be inclusive for those who might have writing difficulties, and whether verbal complaints should be accepted at least for the initial approach. The submission could possibly be voice recorded. The Procedure does allow for concerns to be raised verbally and suggests seeking help if needed. It was agreed that the existing wording was appropriate for a formal complaint. - Suggestions were made to make the headings clearer, and to move the Withdrawal paragraph to a more logical position in the Procedure. - The Board agreed to adopt the Procedure subject to the above amendments. Designated Teacher Policy (Ratification Only) - The Board agreed to ratify the Policy. Discipline & Student Behaviour Policy (Ratification Only) - This is still being reviewed by Jamie Chandler but should be completed soon. - Meanwhile the Board agreed to ratify the Policy as it stands pending completion of that review. Teachers & School Leaders Pay Policy (Ratification Only) - This Policy reflects the WSCC model with slight alterations in the appraisal section. - The Board agreed to ratify the Policy.	DH	22.04.23

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	• Managing Serial & Unreasonable Complaints Policy ○ The Board agreed to adopt the Policy.		
13.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes • AK referred Governors to the minutes of the SLL Committee on 8 March, highlighting the discussion on the seriousness of recruitment challenges. MW noted that it would be normal to expect a few staff resignations in the summer term. • Q – Is the recruitment issue pay related? • MW responded that it was not entirely so; pay has increased for the lower grades but not further up the scale, so attrition is seen after a few years' service. Workload and stress are bigger issues. • Q – Post pandemic, is the lack of job flexibility for teachers compared to other professions an issue? • Possibly, and the degree of accountability is a tough challenge, heightened when involved with children.		
14.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, School Website, Governor Training & DSA • AK noted that her curriculum visits were coming up and that her training had been completed. • There were no other reports.		
15.	Any Other Business • CK noted that a small number of Governors had not yet returned their Skills Audit. He would recirculate the pro forma for ease of reference.	CK	29.03.23
16.	Date of Next Meetings • Wednesday 10 May 2023 (Co-option Meeting) • Wednesday 24 May 2023 (Strategy Meeting) • DH noted that the new co-opted Governors elected at the 10 May meeting would be invited to the Strategy Meeting on 24 May. • There would also be 20 minutes' GDPR training before the Strategy Meeting. The meeting closed at 5.30 p.m.		

