

Full Governing Board Meeting 2023/24

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 29 November 2023	Time and Location	3.30 p.m. PPA Room
Attendees	Initials	Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)	DH	Sam Kashmiri	SK
Linda Anderson	LA	Mark Longley	ML
Clare Brittain	CBr	Diana Marsland	DM
Richard Donovan	RD	Kimberley Nelson	KN
Eva Field	EF	Lydia Paynter	LP
John Godley	JG	Mark Wignall	MW
Sue Hatton	SHa	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK

Apologies	Initials
Colin Brace	CB
Sophia Hunnisett	SHu

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 27 September 2023	Chair
4.	Matters Arising	Chair
5.	Urgent Matters	Chair
6.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan	-
7.	GDPR update	-
8.	Financial update	MW
9.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
10.	Headteacher's Report	MW
11.	School Uniform	MW
12.	Chair's Report	Chair
13.	Associate Member	Chair
14.	Policy Reviews: • Early Career Framework Policy • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy • SEND Policy • Staff Disciplinary Policy	Chair
15.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	RD/EF
16.	Reports: • Lead Governor visits • Link Governor visits • Governor training • DSA	Chair
17.	AOB	Chair

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18.	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 15.30	Chair
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Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 3.30 p.m.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from and accepted for CB and SHu . SK had advised that she would not be able to join the meeting until 3.50 p.m.		
2.	Declaration of Interest None		
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 27 September 2023 The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 27 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
4.	Matters Arising Item 7 – Register of Business Interest & Governors’ Code of Conduct - CK confirmed that he had arranged for the Governors’ Code of Conduct to appear on the school’s website. Item 15 – Associate Member: possible co-option - DH advised that she would update the Board under item 13 on the agenda. Item 16 – Policy reviews: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy - CK advised that this would be presented for ratification under item 14 on the agenda. - DH advised that she had discussed with Graham Odlin how pupils would be asked what they wanted from a child protection system. He has agreed that the question would be an agenda item at future Student Focus meetings.		
5.	Urgent Matters None		
6.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan DH advised that as Matt Ashdown was not able to join this meeting this item would be held over to the next FGB meeting on 24 January 2024.	CK	24.01.24
7.	GDPR Update DH advised that as Claire Davies was not able to join this meeting this item would also be held over to the next FGB meeting on 24 January 2024.	CK	24.01.24

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8.	Financial update - MW advised that Salary Costs were largely on track. Support and SEND staff had been awarded a £1,925 flat pay rise, backdated to April. - Gas costs were under budget but Electricity costs were over budget; it is possible that Energy costs would come out slightly over budget overall. The school hopes to negotiate energy bills down in January, to take effect from September. - Projects currently show as overspent due to reimbursements not yet having been received from WSCC. It will come out as close to zero. He would like to refurbish the remaining Science labs at a cost of up to £200k but needed to be careful in light of funding uncertainty. - The school will receive an additional £150k next year due to the increase in pupil numbers £20k has been added to the Sinking Fund for the eventual replacement of the AstroTurf pitch. He also noted that Cathy would be leaving Freedom Leisure after running the Sports centre for many years. - Overall expenditure is largely on track. Q – Will pupil numbers reduce next year? - MW explained that the Year 7 intake is due to reduce from 270 to 240 but WSCC has asked the school to admit 248. This is feasible as the actual intake is likely to fall back to 240 as a number of withdrawals are usually seen before the school year starts. Q – Is funding for Pupil Premium+ and adopted children included in the budget? - Yes, the school is receiving this but it is recorded in the separate Income Statement.		
9.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update - DH is meeting Graham Odlin monthly. The new DBS checks are going well; Governors should ignore the first email that they receive from WSCC in this context, but respond to the second. - DH thanked all Governors for completing their National College safeguarding training. - Safeguarding needs in the school are growing which is a matter of concern. One pupil is on a Child Protection Plan. - The school might need more Governors to complete Prevent training. CBr and EF confirmed that they had completed it some time ago but would be willing to update. SK joined the meeting at 3.50 p.m. - DH noted that the number of complaints from parents continued at a higher level than seen before. Q – Is there a pattern to these complaints? - MW noted that they are received from both sides of several issues, e.g. strictness, uniform. It is a national issue post-pandemic with parents now wishing to complain through formal channels. This was changing the role of Headteachers. MW had spoken on this at a national level as it is consuming so much time.		

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	- The school follows the WSCC model complaints policy, and MW had spoken to them yesterday to discuss whether the process could be made less time consuming. WSCC advised that they follow DfE guidance. MW has therefore asked Unions to co-operate on this issue, one aim being to change timescales to close down some complaints earlier. Q – What has been the rate of increase in formal complaints? - Pre-pandemic it was one or two per year; recently it has been 10-15 per term. Q – Were they dealt with informally before? - Yes, but the issue now seems to be a desire to complain rather than engage in a constructive dialogue. MW thanked those Governors who served on the increasing number of panels. Q – What % of complaints were upheld? - Some had been dealt with by an apology if the school had clearly got something wrong, and also by an improvement in or clarification of procedures. No Stage 2 complaints had been upheld as in each case the School was found to have followed its policies correctly. If complainants remain dissatisfied, they can approach the DFE. Q – Could the school change its policy, e.g. to make another staff member responsible for dealing with complaints? - The existing policy states that initial concerns can be dealt with by another member of staff. Q – Is it anyone's role to act as a liaison point for parents? - PSOs carry out that role very well. Q – Could a meeting with the Head be offered as an alternative? - This might encourage more complaints. Some schools offer drop-in sessions but MW was unsure whether this was a good idea. - A lack of resilience and a sense of empowerment have contributed to the issue. MW also encourages more openness from staff and there are several avenues for them to express their concerns, e.g. 'Staff Matters'.		
10.	Headteacher's Report MW spoke to the report that is filed with these minutes. - MW highlighted the growing number of students who do not come into school but accessed blended learning online. There is no WSCC capacity to fund more students, so any more would have to be funded by the school. The cost is £10k per term and is likely to grow further. - The school still uses a fixed penalty for parents initially for unauthorised absences, which is often effective. Q – How many pupils access blended learning? 15-20 at present. Q – Are such pupils on CAMHS? - Some might be on the waiting list but it is a long process. The seven school PSOs fulfil a social work type of function for some parents. Q – Will there be a cut-off point for more blended learning pupils? - No, funds will need to be redirected from other students. This will have an impact of Progress 8, for which the school is accountable.		

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	• It is a challenge to get parents into the school to discuss the issue. • ROCKS has been designed to counter the lack of resilience that gives rise to this issue. • There had been a big increase in suspensions this term but the school will maintain its high expectations of pupils. Where it is found to be ineffective, they will use a range of other interventions including mentoring and timetable adjustments where possible. This will be raised at the next POW Committee. • Recruitment of teaching staff is still a struggle although the school does better than most. The position is OK at present but it is difficult to recruit a new Spanish teacher. • The challenges are similar for support staff, with one RLC and three TA vacancies. • Q – Has the school introduced a retention strategy for teaching staff? • Yes, and the school benefits from its good reputation. Despite wider behavioural issues, behaviour remains good in class. • Recruitment from agencies takes place but the school has to pay them 15% of the applicable salary. They are looking at alternatives. • The new toilet buildings are excellent, and the new Science lab, Computing room and car park are all good. • The new modular classrooms are disappointing, as was the process for their procurement. MW will meet WSCC next week to discuss this. It was noted that despite misgivings WSCC's contract with F&G had been renewed. • The mock exams had gone very well. • The Pupil Admission Number had proved to be very accurate at 1,256. Many pupils still want to come to Downlands from the wider area. • The school's Progress 8 score was +0.52 which was very encouraging. Pupil Premium was only slightly over the national average but had been impacted by a small number of pupils. There was negative progress in Spanish so extra support is being given. High attainers in Maths are getting back on track. • Q – Are there any issues in Computing? • The scores were +0.2/+0.3. They are looking to achieve +0.6 so any disappointment is the impact of the high standards sought. Very good adjustments are being made to the curriculum. • The Federation has developed a Development Plan (filed with these minutes) with four key priorities: Professional Development; School to School Reviews; Leadership Coaching; and Developing Federation Administration. • Q – Is there a pooling system for staff vacancies? • It has been discussed, but funding is not pooled. Federation vacancies are advertised. • On Character Development, 245 pupils attended the Year 7 camp. Many pupils are getting trips abroad, and all are doing West End theatre and museum trips. • Pupils and parents have generally adapted well to the new school timings which are now in line with OFSTED's expectations. • The Christmas Fayre raised £3,571 on the day, and c£6k in total.	CK	21.02.24
11.	School uniform • MW advised that 30 parents had attended the Forum on school uniform in September, and several others had sent emails.		

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	- The school is largely in line with the new law on uniform, including the guidelines for governing boards. - The school has high expectations across the board, including uniforms, and this is reinforced by including even the smaller details. - The parents raised issues of comfort, affordability and flexibility. - Conclusions so far include looking at ways of reducing the cost but input has been limited so the school will go for a wider consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Parents will be advised before Christmas of how the issue will be progressed. Q – Will there be an impact if the law changes to restrict the number of branded items to three? - The school is not far from that, but further clarification is needed. They will also ensure that retailers are giving parents the right message. - DH proposed setting up a small working party of Governors to consider the conclusions of the consultation. Uniform will be added to the agenda for the January FGB meeting and a date arranged for the working party to meet.	CK	24.01.24
12.	Chair's report - DH had attended the School Council on Monday. It was a very good meeting and the students were very articulate. Issues such as mirrors in the toilets and catering come up regularly, and changes are made as a result. School Council minutes will be shared as soon as DH receives them. - There was a good discussion at the latest Federation meeting, including a Chairs of Governing Boards discussion. - DH reminded all Governors to read the changes to KCSIE 2023 and to sign the record when they had done so. - DH noted that only five Departmental visits had been made to date this term, although several more exam meetings had taken place. All Link Governors were asked to make Departmental visits in the Spring Term, and to let DH know if they experienced difficulty arranging it.		
13.	Associate Member - DH advised that before making the appointment agreed at the previous FGB meeting, the FGB needed to vote on the appropriate term of office, the Committees on which he would sit, and whether he should have voting rights. - It was suggested that his initial term should run through to the end of the following (2024/25) school year, but thereafter he should be subject to annual re-appointment. This was agreed. - It was suggested that he should sit on the Finance & Buildings Committee and be invited to attend the FGB meetings. This was agreed. - It was suggested that he should have voting rights on the F&B Committee, but not at FGB meetings. This was agreed. - It was also agreed that his appointment should be effective from 1 January 2024.		

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14.	Policy reviews • Early Career Framework Policy ○ The FGB agreed to ratify the Policy which had been previously approved by the SLL Committee. • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy ○ Q – Should specific reference be made to adjustments reflecting religious custom? ○ It was agreed that this would impact the Discipline & Student Behaviour Policy rather than this Policy, and that the D&SB Policy should therefore be brought back to the next POW Committee for discussion. ○ Q – Why is misogyny not listed in the glossary? ○ The reference point for this list is the Equality Act 2010, which does not include misogyny. If the school was to depart from the list recognised in the Equalities Act it would also need to consider adding many other terms. ○ Subject to amending the term ‘Governing Body’ to ‘Governing Board’ and transposing the text into Downlands’ standard format, the FGB agreed to ratify the Policy which had been previously approved by the POW Committee and SLL Committee. • SEND Policy ○ The FGB agreed to ratify the Policy which had been previously approved by the POW Committee. • Staff Disciplinary Policy ○ The FGB agreed to ratify the Policy which had been previously approved by the SLL Committee.	CK	21.02.24
15.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes • There was no feedback from the most recent Committees.		
16.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits • CBR reported on her recent SEND visit. She had noted the increase in numbers and the lack of space in the Learning Suite. • There had been an increase in out-of-area applications reflecting the good reputation of the Department. Vicky Cornish was concerned that they might not be able to meet all their specific needs. The school is working closely with WSCC. Space and funding are both issues. SK noted that the Library was now being used as a SEND overflow space. • DH advised that she had contacted the Dyson Foundation to enquire whether they might be able to assist in funding new Science labs, but she had not yet received a response. • RD advised that he would be attending a Curriculum meeting before Christmas.		

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	Training - All Governors confirmed that they had completed the online Safeguarding training course. - DH requested that she be copied into all emails to JG confirming that training had been completed. - CBr and SHa had completed Pupil Voice training. It had been very useful in identifying ways of obtaining pupils' opinions and boosting pupil engagement. - Q – Should Pupil Voice be added to the Governors' monitoring plan? - MW suggested that the right forum for this might be the Teaching & Learning Group, through their annual presentation to the POW Committee. - CBr advised that she was also due to attend Vision training. - DH advised that she would undertake Reconstitution training next week. - Governors were encouraged to provide feedback on training, especially if certain courses were recommended. DSA - KN advised that the DSA had successfully recruited three new committee members. Use of an online volunteering form had been helpful. - They are on track to raise a similar amount of funding to last year (£11k), with £7k raised to date. They will provide funding for Character Passport activities, and possibly some for moving the long jump pit. - They still need to recruit someone with finance experience to act as Treasurer.		
17.	Any Other Business None		
18.	Date of Next Meetings - The next FGB meeting will be on Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 3.30 p.m. in the PPA Room. - SHa advised that she would have to give her apologies for the next meeting. The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.		