

Full Governing Board Meeting 2023/24

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 24 January 2024	Time and Location	3.30 p.m. PPA Room
Attendees	Initials	Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)	DH	Sophia Hunnisett	SHu
Linda Anderson	LA	Andrew Hunter	AH
Matt Ashdown (for MW)	MA	Sam Kashmiri	SK
Colin Brace	CB	Diana Marsland	DM
Clare Brittain	CBr	Kimberley Nelson	KN
Eva Field	EF	Lydia Paynter	LP
John Godley	JG	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK

Apologies	Initials
Sue Hatton	SHa
Mark Longley	ML
Mark Wignall	MW

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 29 November 2023	Chair
4.	Matters Arising	Chair
5.	Urgent Matters	Chair
6.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan	MA
7.	GDPR update	Chair
8.	Reconstitution	Chair
9.	Financial update	MA
10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
11.	School uniform	Chair
12.	Headteacher's Report	MA
13.	Chair's Report	Chair
14.	Policy Reviews: - Freedom of Information Policy - GDPR Policy - GDPR Staff Guidance Policy - Privacy Notice – Staff, Governors & Volunteers - Privacy Notice – Pupils & Parents - Digital Systems Policy	Chair
15.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	CBr/EF
16.	Reports: - Lead Governor visits - Link Governor visits - Governor training	Chair

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	• DSA	
17.	AOB	Chair
18.	Date of next meeting: • Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 15.30	Chair

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 ML, MW and SHa. Claire Davies, who was due to have presented item 7, had also sent her apologies. • DH welcomed AH as a new Associate Governor. • MA was deputising for the Headteacher at the meeting.		
2.	Declaration of Interest • None		
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 29 November 2023 • The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 29 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
4.	Matters Arising • Item 6 - Pupil Premium Strategic Plan ○ CK confirmed that this would be covered under item 6 on the agenda. • Item 7 – GDPR update ○ CK confirmed that DH would cover this under item 7 on the agenda. • Item 10 – Headteacher’s report ○ CK confirmed that suspensions would be discussed at the next POW Committee on 21.02.24. • Item 11 – School uniform ○ DH confirmed that a Governors’ working party had been established. • Item 14 – Policy reviews ○ CK confirmed that the Discipline & Student Behaviour Policy would be reviewed at the next POW Committee on 21.02.24.		
5.	Urgent Matters • DH advised that, following Richard Donovan’s resignation as a Co-opted Governor, AH had confirmed his willingness to step up his role from an Associate Governor to fill the resultant vacancy. He would remain a member of the Finance & Building Committee. • As Governors had agreed to this appointment by email prior to the meeting, AH was welcomed as a Co-opted Governor with immediate effect.		

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6.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan - MA spoke to the three year strategy paper filed with these minutes. - Objectives are broadly the same, covering attendance, behaviour and achievement. - The percentage of PP students at Downlands is 8%, well below the national average of 20%. Such a small percentage could lead to PP students feeling isolated. - The key principles of the strategy are quality teaching, equity of provision, a sense of community and broader opportunities for personal growth and wellbeing. - The key challenges are literacy, underperformance, behaviour and absence. - Intended outcomes of the strategy are improved literacy and improved levels of performance. Relative PP performance last year was -0.4 against -0.5 nationally, but this year is trending closer to 0. - New priorities for this year are adaptative teaching, for which the school was graded outstanding after a WSCC visit; the mentoring project; PP passports, in addition to SEND passports; Action your Potential, which involves one to one tutoring; a new PSO role with a focus on attendance; the Breakfast Club, which starts in a few weeks; and meetings to discuss specific pupil needs. - As at the end of the last school year PP performance was predicted to be -0.17. PP attendance is just above the national average. PP students account for 14% of behavioural issues. Q – How is the finance received for PP students audited, and why is no PP+ funding recorded? - The school has to rely on parents coming forward unless PP students are transferred in from primary schools. Q – Are parents aware of this? - More could probably be done, and the new PSO role might help with this. Extra funding is received for adopted children, but MA agreed to check how this is accounted for. He will also review the website as the information provided on this subject could be more helpful. Q – Are other students aware of who is in the PP cohort? - The school tries not to openly differentiate but it can be a difficult area. Q – How does avoiding differentiation work with the Breakfast Club? - Attendance will be by invitation only, and will include some non-PP students.	MA	20.03.24
7.	GDPR update - DH relayed information provided by CD. - All staff received GDPR update training last September. - Any Freedom of Information, data breach or SAR requests are referred to Roger Simmons (RS), the Data Protection Officer. - An updated list of “dos and don’ts” has been prepared. - RS will undertake GDPR training for staff and Governors every three years.		
8.	Reconstitution DH advised that with increasing demands on the Governing Board it remained difficult to fill all the required roles. Most Governors had little capacity to take on additional responsibilities. Governors were asked for their views on		

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	reconstituting the Board to increase membership from 15 to 18, with one more parent governor and two more co-opted governors. • Q – Was there scope to reduce the number of sub-committees? • Some Boards operated without sub-committees, but this increased the burden on the whole Board. • A greater problem was the number of Lead Governors now required. A replacement for RD as Curriculum Lead was still needed, and DH was also covering the Safeguarding Lead role herself as no other experienced Governors were available. • Q - Were there disadvantages to having a larger Board? • It should not produce a lot of extra work. Smaller boards in general can be more effective but this was not necessarily the case for a Governing Board. • Q – What committees are legally required? • Only the Full Board. • Q – Could fewer new papers be presented at meetings, with all papers being provided beforehand? • This was done where possible, but the presentations were very useful as they connected Governors to the work of the school. • EF proposed that the Board be reconstituted with a membership of 18 with effect from 01.03.24 and that all terms office remained at 4 years. • CBr seconded this proposal. • The Governors voted by a show of hands and agreed unanimously that the Board should be reconstituted as proposed. • DH advised that a new Instrument of Government should now be drafted and submitted to WSCC.	DH/CK	14.02.24
9.	Financial update • MA spoke to the financial update filed with these minutes. • The budget should be 75% spent at this stage; MA highlighted the areas where spending is above that. • Teaching Staff is marginally over budget as it includes charges for alternative provision. • Ancillary fees are over budget due to the need to pay agency fees for the recruitment of new staff members. • Electricity costs are materially over budget; Sue Jones is investigating this. • Water services are over budget due to a price rise. • Marketing is over budget as this is a cyclical cost, and many materials have recently been renewed. • The school has topped up the free school meals budget to fund break time snacks as well as main meals. • The significant overspend on Projects will be corrected when reimbursement is received from WSCC; this is expected soon. • Overall this means a slight excess over budget, with 79% spent.		
10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update • DH shared an email update from Graham Odlin.		

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	60 open concerns have been raised since the start of the Spring term, and 259 since the start of the school year, although many of these have been low level concerns. Q – Is this the number of issues raised, or the number of pupils involved? - It is issues raised, and individual pupils could be the subject of several concerns. - There has been a rapid rise in home safeguarding visits. - Two Prevent issues have been raised and these are in the hands of the police. - DBS checks are now coming back although the process is still taking a long time. - The level of referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub is much higher.		
11.	School uniform - The Governors' working party met for the first time last week to discuss the way forward. A parental and pupil survey will be conducted and the next steps considered in light of the results. The anonymous questionnaire system is currently being tested. The survey will be sent out by the Governors and the school together. - A review of the other Federation schools' uniforms policies suggests that Downlands' policy could be clearer. - The three goals will be to control the cost, achieve comfort and improve communication. Q – Would it be helpful to have fewer but clearer rules? - Yes, that is the aim. - The survey will also cover some other issues. Q – How are members of the working party chosen? - It is comprised of the Chairs of committees. Q – Have the survey questions been drafted using advice on how the questions should be phrased? - Not specifically as it is a very simple survey with ample space for additional comments.		
12.	Headteacher's Report MA spoke to MW's report filed with these minutes. - MA observed that other schools are interested in what Downlands is doing. - A big backlog has built up in arranging blended learning as the demand has risen from three or four pupils to 13. The picture is similar across the county. The school is considering whether it is feasible to bring service provision in-house, but this would be difficult. Q – Will there still be a cap on numbers if it is brought in-house? - It should be seen as part of the broader attendance strategy, to be used when other efforts have not worked. The aim is to facilitate pupils coming back into school, which does not happen currently. - Suspensions are running at 8.9% (% of days lost), which is high for the school but average for the county. - There is a good field of candidates for the Maths vacancy, which is unusual. A new Site Manager has been appointed.		

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	- Mock exam results are looking quite positive, with Triple Science and Maths high ability looking slightly better. - While the aim is still an intake of 240, it could be closer to the 248 requested by WSCC as pupils dropping out might be replaced. Q – Is the school addressing Progress 8 imbalances between different cohorts of pupils? - Not specifically, but mock exams are used to focus on underachieving cohorts (e.g. boys compared to girls). Q – At the recent parents’ evening were the three options pathways made clearer? - Yes, they were crystal clear and the booklet wording has been changed too. There have been no complaints raised.		
13.	Chair’s report - DH asked that Governors let her know if DBS checks are not completed within the next two to three weeks. - The Headteacher’s performance management went well. He had met his objectives for 2022/23 and new objectives were set for the current school year. It had been agreed that he should be raised by one point on the leadership pay scale. - A Stage 2 Complaint Panel had been held. The school had apologised at Stage 1 for a mistake that had been made but the parents had remained worried about safeguarding issues and sought reassurance that Governors were aware and that proper controls were in place. The Panel had been able to provide this reassurance. - A new Stage 1 Complaint has been submitted to the Headteacher. - A Federation meeting will be held at Imberhorne School on 25.01.24. - The school has 59 policy documents which is high in comparison with other schools. Only 29 are statutory. It is likely that some need not come to Governors for review. - The Governors agreed to set up a working party to consider whether there was scope to reduce the number of policies coming to Governors. DH, DM, JG, CK and Simon Adams will join the working party, which will meet within the next few weeks. Q – How many are WSCC model policies? - Thirteen. Q - Why does the school have so many extra policies? - This is historic, they have grown over time and never been culled. Some are helpful to support the implementation of school practice.	DH/CK	31.03.24
14.	Policy reviews DH explained that the policies to be considered had been reviewed by CD and RS and amended where applicable. Freedom of Information Policy - It was agreed that all the related policies being considered should be cross-referenced on the face sheet. - The policy was approved.		

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	• GDPR Policy ○ The policy was approved. • GDPR Staff Guidance Policy ○ It was agreed that this policy did not need to come to Governors for review. • Privacy Notice – Staff, Governors & Volunteers ○ The notice was approved. • Privacy Notice – Pupils & Parents ○ The notice was approved. • Digital Systems Policy ○ Q – As this is a detailed policy, is staff understanding of it sufficient? ○ This is difficult to gauge, especially as it has replaced several other policies. It would be best introduced at induction. ○ It was agreed that CD should be asked how staff were made aware of the detail of this policy. ○ Q – The last paragraph of p20 refers to the document as a letter rather than a policy, and mentions a form that is not included. ○ This will be raised with CD. ○ The policy was approved subject to the correction sought.	CD	20.03.24
15.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes • There were no items to report since the previous FGB meeting.		
16.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits – Lead Governors • SEND – CBr held a very positive meeting with the lead TA for autism. Neurodiversity needs are still increasing. She had also met with Vicky Cornish and Liz Matthews, the lead teacher for adaptive teaching. LM only has one hour per week allocated to this work, which is not enough, so hopefully this can be increased. • Q – How is her time spent? • Developing passports, training staff and fielding questions from staff. • Inclusion - EF advised that she had been involved in preparing the PP Strategy. • Curriculum - DH advised that the post of Curriculum Lead still needed to be filled. • Safeguarding – DH has held the monthly meeting. Much of the issues discussed are confidential. EBSA cases continue to increase and safeguarding involvement is now expected, with the school maintaining safeguarding responsibility for pupils not in school. • Q – How is this achieved? • Through risk assessments and parents' agreement to the measures put in place. Visits – Link Governors • PE & Dance – LP had met with Sean Holt and learned that data was being used well to improve performance. • Diversity – LP is meeting Simon Adams to discuss impact assessments on existing policies in light of the new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.		

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	• Modern languages – LA concluded from her visit that the team is now pulling together well. The two Early Careers Teachers are very impressive. • Design Technology – DM had completed an introductory visit. Staff from Textiles had been absent. • Creative Arts – EF had visited and noted that adaptive teaching was strong. SHu left the meeting at 5.35 p.m. Training • JG noted that a lot of training had been completed. Finance training in particular was recommended. No new date had yet been arranged for Complaints training. DSA • KN noted that this was a quieter term, but the school play and the Spring concert were taking place soon.		
17.	Any Other Business • CBr advised Governors that she would not put her name forward again for election as Vice-Chair of the Board at the end of this school year. This was because she did not plan to become Chair in the future, and it would be useful to have a Vice-Chair who could step up to the role of Chair if the need arose.		
18.	Date of Next Meetings • The next FGB meeting will be on Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 3.30 p.m. in the PPA Room. The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.		

Sara M. Hunt