

Full Governing Board Meeting 2023/24

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 3 July 2024	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
Colin Brace	CB	Diana Marsland	DM
Clare Brittain	CBr	Kimberley Nelson	KN
Eva Field	EF	Jake Terrill	JT
John Godley	JG	Mark Wignall	MW
Andrew Hunter	AH	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK

Apologies	Initials
Sue Hatton	SH
Ben King	BK
Lydia Paynter	LP

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Election of Chair & Vice Chair	CK
4.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 20 March 2024	Chair
5.	Matters Arising	Chair
6.	Urgent Matters	Chair
7.	Headteacher's Report	MW
8.	Chair's Report	Chair
9.	Budget Monitoring update	MW
10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
11.	Possible Co-opted Governor	Chair
12.	Agree Committee membership	Chair
13.	Agree Link Roles	Chair
14.	Policy Reviews: - Children with Health Needs Policy (ratification) - Governors' Allowances Policy - Governors' Visits Policy - Provider Access Policy (ratification) - Uniform Policy	Chair
15.	Review Governor Timeline	Chair
16.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	CB/EF/LA
17.	Reports: - Lead Governor visits - Link Governor visits - School Website Information	Chair

Diana Hatton

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	- Governor training - DSA	
18.	AOB	Chair
19.	Date of next meeting: - Governors' get-together on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 6.00 p.m. - Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 4.00 p.m. (preceded by Governor/Staff social at 3.15 p.m. in the Schering Suite)	-

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 SH, BK and LP.		
2.	Declaration of Interest None		
3.	Election of Chair & Vice Chair CK took the Chair for this agenda item only. - DH advised that she would be willing to stand again as Chair of the Governing Board for a further 12 months. No other nominations were received. DH was unanimously elected. - CBR confirmed that she would not be standing again as Vice Chair of the Governing Board. As no other nominations were received it was agreed that CK should check the process for the ongoing functioning of the Board in the absence of a Vice Chair. DH expressed her disappointment that no nominations had been received. - Q – Might a Governor be more willing to self-nominate if the Vice Chair was not expected to automatically take on the role of Chair when DH steps down? - DH explained that it would be very difficult to take on the role of Chair without experience as Vice Chair. - CBR offered to speak further to anyone who might still be interested in the role.	CK	10.07.24
4.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 20 March 2024 The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 20 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		

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5.	Matters Arising • Item 10 – Headteacher’s report ○ CK explained that the presentation by Jamie Chandler on alternative provision would be added to the next FGB meeting agenda given the length of the agenda for this meeting. ○ MW advised that suspensions data would in future refer to the number of pupils to avoid confusion. ○ DH advised that the WSCC report on the modular building project had now been received and would be discussed at next week’s FAB Committee. • Item 14 – Visits – Lead Governors ○ DH advised that discussion of a possible Federation-wide training for Governors on attendance had been deferred to the Autumn Term. ○ DH confirmed that DM had taken on the role of Curriculum Lead.	CK	18.09.24
6.	Urgent Matters • None		
7.	Headteacher’s Report MW spoke to the report filed with these minutes. • Suspensions are up 75% nationally since the pandemic. The school aims to reduce the number next year, and there have still been no permanent exclusions since 2017. • Q – What is typically the cause of a suspension? • It has become refusal to co-operate, including refusal to attend lessons when in school. In such cases lessons still run smoothly but a lot of SLT time is spent on those pupils not in lessons. The school needs to find alternatives to suspension for less extreme cases. • The Government’s discontinuation of the SLP scheme had resulted in three redundancies but one of these, Laura Bryant, has been appointed as Lead Receptionist. • The staff member appointed to provide maternity cover in Reception has not yet been able to start work as her DBS clearance has still not come through. • Three internal applications have been received for the second-in-charge in Modern Languages. • Most staff are happy with the new dress code that was recently introduced. • MW hoped that the WSCC report on the modular building project would prove helpful to other schools embarking on similar projects. He would propose that some amendments be suggested to WSCC at next week’s FAB Committee. • GCSEs have gone very well with all Year 11 students attending for the examinations. • MW expressed his thanks to the PTA, and KN in particular, for a very successful summer fayre. KN noted that it had raised £5,300 before expenses, and that the prize draw had already raised £2,000. • The intake in September has returned to 240 having been raised to 248 at WSCC’s request. There is a suggestion that demand for places might grow if VAT is levied		

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	on private school fees, but against that there has been a fall in the total number of children in the area. • The latest Character Day was very successful. The PTA funded up to 75% of the cost for pupil premium. The Character Passport is being reviewed to build in even more opportunities. • Planning days are being held with middle and senior leaders to decide how to move the school forward next year. • The new SEND parents' forum is strategically important, and it is hoped that it will improve parents' understanding of what a secondary school can provide. There has been dialogue with parents, including a survey, before the forum meets. • Q – Is there a way of managing parents' expectations early on? • It is difficult before the parents have any experience of the school but it is covered during the new parents' evening. • Q – Are there any common themes to the parents' concerns? • Parents often do not understand the resource constraints, and that it is only possible to offer a certain amount of support in-school, mainly adaptive teaching. • Q – Is there demand for changing the behaviour criteria for SEND pupils? • Not really, the reasonable adjustments made should help the pupils to behave. • Q – Do the specific adjustments come from the school or from parents' requests? • Parents, and pupils too, are involved in the preparation of the pupil passport. • Q – What does the pupil passport look like? • MW agreed to share an anonymised copy with Governors at the next FGB. • Q – Is any more funding for SEND likely? • Schools have been losing funding in real terms. They are trying to get more from WSCC for EHCP pupils by setting out to them the extent of the costs involved in practice. There is more demand for EHCPs than is possible to provide, and it takes a long time to obtain one. • Q – Does the EHCP specify the provision to be made? • Yes, and it is a statutory document, although some adaptation might be possible in practice. Private assessments are also a problem as they create expectations that things can be fixed overnight. • Q – Would further transparency with parents help? • Yes, and the forum should contribute to this. • Q – Is it true to say that not all SEND pupils have behavioural issues and vice versa? • Many behavioural issues have a SEND root cause. More will be done on the links between SEND and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) next year. • Within the Federation there has been a high turnover of Heads and a Chair of Governors recently but this has not changed its strength or direction. A successful joint Inset day was held. Next year joint SSAT leadership training is planned and coaching is growing further. There has been no student angle to the Federation yet but plans are being made for a joint dance show, sports event, orchestra and public speaking event.	MW	18.09.24
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8.	Chair's report - DH asked whether the joint Federation training led by Jackie Gatenby (WSCC) had been helpful. Governors agreed that it had. - DH and MW had attended a consultation with WSCC on Federations, Academies etc. where they presented on Downland's Federation links. WSCC seemed to accept that the model was working well and seemed happy to refer to it as a 'soft Federation'. - Q – What had been their reservations? - Originally this might have been political but attitudes seem different now. - Q – What percentage of WSCC schools are academies? - Around 50% of secondary schools are in academies but the figure is far lower for primary schools. - The Policies working party had completed its task and the number had been reduced from 59 to 38. - DH thanked Governors for their response to the recent email regarding the acceptance of legal advice from WSCC on a complaint issue. - A Governor's Discipline Panel will meet on 8 July and will need to meet again at the start of the Autumn term. CBr thanked DH for all the responsibilities that she takes on, sometimes in very trying circumstances. - Q – Is the load amongst Governors spread evenly, especially for extra panels etc? - It is not the same people every time, and an additional panel member who is new to the process is usually included for training purposes.		
9.	Budget Monitoring update - MW explained that as it was only a few weeks into the financial year it was rather early to comment on trends. - Spending on Casual Support was high as a bundle of resource had been bought in advance. - Electricity is high as there was a lag in receipt of Jan/Feb bills which were paid in the current financial year as a result. The rate received on renewal of the contract was not quite as good as had been hoped. - The Examinations budget is almost fully spent as this annual cost has already been borne. - An eye is being kept on Supervision costs. This will be switched to a claims process when supervision is actually provided rather than being paid automatically. - Regrettably the school will probably have to end the Benenden Healthcare scheme, although it might be possible to continue to offer it to staff on a paid basis. - Q – Are Free School Meals funded? - Yes. Historically the meals were not all claimed which left a surplus to be used elsewhere, but there is a bigger take up now. - DH asked that thanks be passed on to Sue Jones for all her work on the accounts.		

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10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update - DH advised that she was still meeting Graham Odlin (GO) monthly, and would be meeting his successor Kate Stoddart (KS) on 9 July. - DBS delays continue. At the latest meeting the SCR was not up-to-date due to staff sickness but it is now getting back on track. - Q – Will there be a good DSL handover between the two? - No more than a day will be possible, but the DSL at Oathall will mentor KS in a good example of Federation co-operation.		
11.	Possible Co-opted Governor - DH, CBr and CB had met with a possible candidate to fill one of the two vacant co-opted Governor positions. His CV was strong but they had not been able to get a clear understanding of his motivation for applying to be a Governor at Downlands. - The applicant was not elected as a Co-opted Governor. Ck will advise him accordingly.	CK	17.07.24
12.	Agree Committee membership Finance & Buildings: - CB agreed to continue as Chair - JG agreed to continue as Vice Chair - CBr is leaving the Committee. - BK had previously agreed to join the Committee. - The terms of reference were agreed for a further year, subject to the removal of those policies that will no longer need to be approved by Governors. Pupil Outcomes & Wellbeing: - EF agreed to continue as Chair - CBr agreed to become Vice Chair - KN agreed to join the Committee - GO would leave the Committee on his retirement to be replaced by KS. - The terms of reference were agreed for a further year, subject to the removal of those policies that will no longer need to be approved by Governors. Staffing, Learning & Leadership: - LA agreed to continue as Chair - ML agreed to continue as Vice Chair - The terms of reference were agreed for a further year, subject to the removal of those policies that will no longer need to be approved by Governors. Challenge & Development Group - CBr is leaving the Committee - LA had previously agreed to join the Committee - The terms of reference were agreed for a further year.		
13.	Agree Lead & Link roles		

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	- It had previously been agreed that LA would be the Attendance Lead Governor and DM the Curriculum Lead Governor. - The following Link roles were agreed, with other roles remaining unchanged: - EF to become Humanities Link - CBr to take on the new role of RLC Link - BK to become Computing Link - AH to become Creative Arts link - CB to become PE & Dance link		
14.	Policy reviews Children with Health Needs Policy (ratification). - It was agreed that reference to 'Achievement Leaders' should be amended to 'Heads of Year'. - It was agreed that where GO is named the 'DSL' title should be substituted. - Similarly where Ellie Evans is named the 'Head of Pupil Entitlement' title should be substituted. - Subject to these alterations the policy was ratified. Governors' Allowances Policy - The policy was approved subject to the front sheet being updated. Governors' Visits Policy - DH explained that this policy needed to be rewritten and slimmed down. She recommended that this be held over until the Autumn term. LA & CBr agreed to work on the policy meanwhile. - Approval of the policy was therefore deferred. Provider Access Policy (ratification) - The policy was ratified. Uniform Policy - It was agreed that 'Model' should be deleted from the front sheet. - DH explained that a panel would be added to the front sheet stating that the policy had been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). This would also be added to a small number of other policies as they came up for review. Q – Is the main change to allow shorts in summer? - There was no policy document before, but this was one of the main outcomes of the consultation. Skorts will no longer be part of the uniform. There is also a change to the PE kit, requiring fewer items with logos. - It was agreed that 'In extreme cases' should be removed from para 5.4. Q – Will base layers be allowed? - MW will discuss this. White vests might be allowed in the Autumn/Spring term. - It was agreed that the policy should be reviewed every two years, and this should be consistent throughout the document.	LA/CBr	31.08.24

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	The policy was approved subject to the above amendments, but it should not be posted on the school's website until a letter had gone out to parents/carers.		
15.	Review Governor Timeline DH advised that this would be sent out as soon as possible now that Committee membership had been agreed.		
16.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes - LA reported that the SLL Committee had received a great presentation from the Teaching & Learning Pupil Voice Group. - CBR reported that the POW Committee had also benefitted from excellent presentations by the pupils' Eco Club and Global Ambassadors.		
17.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits – Lead Governors - No updates apart from the recently circulated reports. Visits – Link Governors - No updates apart from the recently circulated reports. School Website Information - DM advised that the website was maintained very well. There were several policies in which GO's name was used so these should be amended to 'DSL' when he retires. - It is possible that policies could be better located on the website, but this work is dependent on resources being available to complete it. Governor Training - No update DSA - Covered under item 7 above.		
18.	Any Other Business DH expressed her great thanks to CBr for her constant support as Vice Chair of the Governing Board for the past nine years.		
19.	Date of Next Meetings - Governors' get-together on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 6.00 p.m. at The Bull in Ditchling. - Next full FGB meeting on Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 4.00 p.m. (preceded by Governor/Staff social at 3.15 p.m. in the Schering Suite). The meeting closed at 5.50 p.m.		