

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 18 September 2024	Time and Location	4.00 p.m. PPA Room
Attendees	Initials	Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)	DH	Andrew Hunter	AH
Simon Adams (item 4 only)	SA	Mark Longley	ML
Linda Anderson	LA	Diana Marsland	DM
Matt Ashdown (item 3 only)	MA	Kimberley Nelson	KN
Colin Brace	CB	Lydia Paynter	LP
Clare Brittain	CB	Jake Terrill	JT
Eva Field	EF	Mark Wignall	MW
John Godley	JG	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK

Apologies	Initials
Sue Hatton	SH
Sam Kashmiri	SK
Ben King	BK

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Pupil GSCE results analysis	MA
4.	Policies – Equality Impact Assessments	SA
5.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 3 July 2024	Chair
6.	Matters Arising	Chair
7.	Urgent Matters / Vice Chair Vacancy	Chair
8.	Register of Business Interests & Governors' Code of Conduct	Chair
9.	Instrument of Government	Chair
10.	Co-opted Governor Election	Chair
11.	Budget Monitoring & Delegation of Financial Powers	MW
12.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
13.	School Development Plan Agreement	MW
14.	Headteacher's Report	MW
15.	Chair's update	Chair
16.	Policy Reviews: - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy - Governors' Visits Policy - Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy	Chair
17.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	CB/EF/LA
18.	Reports: - Lead Governor visits - Link Governor visits - School Website Information	Chair

Di Hunt

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	- Governor training - DSA	
19.	AOB	Chair
20.	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 3.30 p.m.	-

Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 4.00 p.m.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from and accepted for SH, SK and BK.		
2.	Declaration of Interest None		
3.	Pupil GSCE results analysis (MA) - The official figures and fine detail will be available in October. MA presented early figures received from FFT. The school monitors pupil progress rather than attainment. - The results have exceeded those attained pre-Covid despite last year's Year 11 being one of the most impacted by lockdown. This is across the board and in every subject, adding +0.5 to grades against the national average and placing Downlands in the top 17% of schools. - Looking across the last three years, low achieving pupils added +0.43, middle achieving +0.66 and high achieving +0.46. SEND pupils added +0.25. Pupil Premium recorded -0.23 but this was against a national average of -0.47. - There will be no Progress 8 figures for the next two years as these year groups did not sit SATS, due to Covid. - Q – Is this a like for like comparison to other schools, and does it include grammar schools? - Yes, FFT analysis takes this into account. - Q – Are the results shared with parents? - Yes, through Information Evenings and, when official, in the newsletter. - Q – Does the school share its attainment figures too? - Yes, in the newsletter this half term. - Q – Why are middle achieving pupils so successful? - There is not a bespoke strategy for this group, but the good strategies for other groups work for everyone. - The Chair passed on the Governors' congratulations to all staff and pupils for the excellent results. - MA left the meeting.		

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Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

4.	Policies – Equality Impact Assessments (SA) - SA reminded Governors of the school's aim to welcome minority groups in a school that was generally not very diverse. Equaliteach is used to help to achieve this goal, and there are now only two indicators to complete to achieve the silver award. - The EDI policy is now in place, and this includes the need to adjust other policies where necessary to ensure consistency. The recent Policies Working Group identified five policies that would be affected: - Attendance - Careers Guidance - Discipline & Student Behaviour - RSHE - Uniform - There will be an impact when Governors review these policies as an Equality Impact Assessment will need to be completed, and this might identify necessary changes to the policy. - LP offered to help Committees when these policies came up for review in her capacity as Diversity link governor. - Q – Is EDI training for governors available from the National College? - No, only for staff. However, LP offered to circulate helpful WSCC papers on the subject. - SA left the meeting.	LP	16.10.24
5.	Minutes of Last Meeting – 3 July 2024 The minutes of the FGB meeting held on 3 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
6.	Matters Arising Item 3 – Election of Chair & Vice Chair - DH explained that the alternatives for the vacant Vice Chair role would be discussed under Item 5. Item 5 – Matters arising - CK advised that due to the length of this meeting's agenda the alternative provision presentation by Jamie Chandler had been deferred again. MW explained that given the change in her duties, Claire Davies would be better placed to give this presentation but it should be deferred to the Spring Term. Item 7 – Headteacher's report - MW talked the Governors through an anonymised copy of the Pupil Passport used for SEND students. The pupil is involved in writing the passport, which is then entered onto Bromcom. - Q – How often is it reviewed? - Usually annually but sometimes more frequently if behaviour deteriorates rapidly. - Q – Do the parents see it? - In most cases the parents would be involved in writing it. Item 11 – Possible Co-opted Governor	CK	05.03.25

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	○ CK confirmed that he had written to the unsuccessful applicant. ● Item 14 – Policy reviews ○ DH explained that the new Governors' Visits Policy would be discussed under Item 16.		
7.	Urgent Matters / Vice Chair vacancy ● AH thanked CBr for circulating the job description for the Vice Chair. This was helpful but it illustrated how difficult it could be for a relatively new Governor, or one with a full time job, to fill the role. ● DH acknowledged that this was a difficulty that all schools faced but it remained a legal requirement to appoint a Vice Chair. It might be necessary to approach WSCC or the other Federation schools to seek an external candidate. She had received an external offer that day but an internal candidate was preferable. ● As an alternative, splitting or rotating the role were both possible. ● Q – Would it be possible to redistribute some of the responsibilities, such as Committee attendance, to reduce the size of the role? ● DH and CBr thought this might be possible, but availability was a key requirement. ● EF, JG and CB all indicated a willingness to share the role without a commitment at this stage to take over as Chair at some point in the future. LA also indicated that she could take on more responsibilities. ● It was proposed, and carried, that EF, JG and CB would act jointly as Vice Chair and agreed that they would meet to discuss how the responsibilities could be shared in practice.	EF/JG/CB	18.09.24
8.	Register of Business Interests & Governors' Code of Conduct ● CK advised that several Governors still needed to complete the Register of Business Interest form. Hard copies were distributed to facilitate prompt completion. ● The Governors approved the adoption of the NGA model Code of Conduct for maintained school governing bodies. DH signed the Code of Conduct accordingly. ● CK would arrange for the Governors' Code of Conduct to appear on the school's website.	CK	09.10.24
9.	Instrument of Government ● The Board agreed to re-adopt the Instrument of Government as it stands.		
10.	Co-opted Governor Election ● DH notified the meeting that EF had resigned as a Parent Governor that day. She was prepared to stand for election as a Co-opted Governor to fill one of the remaining vacancies. ● EF left the meeting. The Board unanimously elected her as a Co-opted Governor for a term of four years with immediate effect. EF re-joined the meeting. ● DH explained that the school would now arrange for the election of a Parent Governor to fill the resultant vacancy.		

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	- DH and other Governors had recently met a candidate to fill the remaining Co-opted vacancy. JG noted that she was a very strong candidate with HR experience, as long as she would have time to fulfil the role. She was self-employed which might provide some flexibility. - CB agreed, and felt that she had given due thought to her capacity to fulfil the role. - DH explained that while the candidate was an existing Chair of Governors at another school, she would re-assess that role when her term ends next year. - The candidate was unanimously elected to fill the remaining Co-opted Governor vacancy. - Q – What is the process for electing a new Parent Governor? - The school will send a letter to all parents / carers next week. Candidates will require two nominations and have 10 days to respond. If an election is required the subsequent process takes at least two weeks.		
11.	Budget Monitoring & Delegation of Financial Powers - MW explained that Casual Supply was ahead of budget as the school had bought 50 days' cover in advance. - Structural Maintenance was over budget as the team had completed a lot of work, but this is expected to normalise over the year. - Water Services had seen a big increase in the tariff, and might remain over budget. - The Examinations budget was almost fully spent, but the school has paid for the full year in advance. - The Supervision budget was expected to come back into line. - Overall, there were no significant budget concerns at this stage. - Q – Has Benenden Health cover been discontinued? - Yes, this ends in October. The cost had risen to £30k which could not be justified, even though it had been of use. Staff can still continue to subscribe personally. They were aware that cover is ending. - DH asked that Sue Jones be thanked for all her work on the budget. - DH advised that there were no changes to the Delegation of Financial Powers since last year. The Board unanimously agreed that the Chair could sign the Delegation for a further year on its behalf.		
12.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update - DH had met with the Kate Stodart, the new Assistant Head with safeguarding responsibility, who was settling in well and putting several new initiatives in place. A report of her introductory meeting had been circulated. - All Governors were encouraged to complete the National College safeguarding training as soon as possible. If this raises any questions, Governors were asked to raise them with DH and she would discuss them with Kate.		
13.	School Development Plan Agreement - MW explained that work on the Self Evaluation Form, which is based on the Ofsted framework, had started after Easter and had been reviewed by SLT in June. - The SDP was based on the school's vision, and ROCKS runs through it all.		

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	- The 'Monitoring' column was primarily for Governors. - MW meets SLT regularly to monitor progress against the Plan, and meetings are held with the Governors' Challenge & Development Group towards the end of each term to present data and evidence. - The current Plan runs through to 2026. - MW highlighted the major themes that run through the SDP. - Q – How have Learning Walks changed? - They now reflect the new T&L Policy, and the main aim is to gain assurance that it is being consistently applied. There are five Learning Walks per full-time teacher each year. These are not now announced. They aim to identify one area for development. - Q – Are the staff nervous about the new approach? - Some are, but as they will be more frequent the stakes will be lower each time, and most staff prefer this. - Q – Is the SDP shared with parents? - Yes, it is on the school website and is highlighted in the newsletter.		
14.	Headteacher's Report MW spoke to the report filed with these minutes. - The year has started well. The school is now more used to dealing with post-pandemic issues and is getting better at doing so, e.g. allowing pupils to re-set when they become agitated. - One aim is to use suspensions less frequently as they do not work well. - The new Family Support Worker is now in post from 8.00-11.00 each day and she will be starting the breakfast club soon. Part of her role will be to home visit persistent absentees which will hopefully improve attendance figures. - Two new Cover Supervisors are being recruited. - The school has received a quote for improving audio visual facilities in the hall, and work will start soon with funding from the DSA. - Noel Buckley spearheaded a successful push to increase positive ROCKS points, which rose to 123k last year. The school's target of 1:5 negative: positive points was achieved. - Under the Character Passport 503 pupils attended residential visits last year including 20 pupil premium. 100% of pupil premium attended theatre visits in London. 58% of pupil premium joined the Year 9 trip to France, and the school aims to increase this figure. - Q – Does the school help with costs? - Yes, up to 75% funded by the DSA. 100% of pupils attended work experience which is an outstanding result. - A first aid course has been added to the Passport at parents' request. - The site has never looked better thanks to the very capable and dedicated team. WSCC is funding repair to the Science roof, with a temporary fix soon to be followed by a permanent repair next summer. - The school has 1,250 pupils on roll at present, which is seven student short due to late withdrawals.		
15.	Chair's update		

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	- DH thanked the Complaint Panel that had sat on 17 September. - The first Federation meeting of the school year will be on 3 October. - Volunteers were sought for information evenings, and Governors were asked to email CK if they were able to go onto the rota. - Governors were reminded to arrange visits to their linked Departments. - Q – Is it possible to make these annual visits if the Department prefers that? - Yes - Q – Should visits be deferred until a new Governor's DBS checks are complete? - It would not be impossible to go ahead as the Governor would not be able to be left alone during the visit. MW noted that escorted visitors who were not DBS checked were not unusual. - DH asked that Governors check their emails regularly and respond when required.		
16.	Policy reviews Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy - Q – Appendix 2 is currently blank, should this be completed? - It was agreed that this should be checked by Simon Adams; the policy could then be finalised at the SLL Committee on 9 October. - It was also suggested that 'Curriculum' should be added to page 2. - Q – Does the Staff Behaviour at Work Policy still exist? - Yes, but it now sits with the HR Officer. - The Board approved the policy subject to finalisation at the SLL Committee. Governors' Visits Policy - This had changed materially following a review by CBr and LA. - It was agreed that the new pro forma appended to the policy should be added to Teams. - The Board approved the policy. Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy - Q – Does the policy include anything about safeguarding children who are being educated at home? - This is included in a booklet that staff receive, but this is not reviewed by Governors. - The Board approved the policy.	CK	02.10.24
		CK	02.10.24
17.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes None as no Committees had yet met in this school year.		
18.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits – Lead Governors - DH had completed a Safeguarding Lead visit as reported under item 12. - No others as yet in this school year. Visits – Link Governors - None as yet in this school year.		

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

	School Website Information - DM advised that she had completed the audit, and the website is in good shape. - The list of policies might be regrouped to make it more user friendly, and a couple of errors with links needed to be corrected. Governor Training - As noted earlier some still need to complete Safeguarding Training. - JG advised that Governors should look at the National Governance Association website to ensure that training is kept up to date. DSA - The 'meet the DSA' event on 9 September had been well attended and 22 new members had signed up. £21k had been raised for the school last year, with Gift Aid still to be added. - The DSA quiz night (8 November) and Christmas Fayre (30 November) were the next events.		
19.	Any Other Business - DH sought volunteers to fill the gaps in the programme of exam meetings. - CK advised that he would shortly be circulating the annual Skills Audit for completion.	CK	09.10.24
20.	Date of Next Meetings Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 3.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.		

DMH