

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 29 November 2018

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

		Present
Headteacher	Mr Sam White (HT)	✓
LA	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	✓
Parent	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
Staff	Mr Richard Whitenstall (RWH)	✓
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	x
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	x
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE) Vice chair	✓
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	x
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) Chair	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	x
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
Co-opted	Ms Pandora Kay-Kreizman (PKK)	x
	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
ASSOCIATE		
	Mr Abdi Ahmed (AAH)	x

ATTENDING

Mr Mathew Scott (MSC) **Assistant head**
Ms Lucy Strike (LST) **Head of English faculty**
Ms Lorna Damms (LDA) **Head of English department**
Mr Frank Difusco (FDI) **English teacher**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

FMI welcomed everyone to this FGB meeting, which began at 4.31pm, following a tour of the new performing arts block. She particularly welcomed LDA, FDI and LST, who were to present to the FGB. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RAU, LEM, OHA, PKK and DMO. CGE had apologised for a late arrival. There were no apologies from AAH. A quorum was present. There were no declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in respect of any items on this agenda. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers had been circulated in advance.

2. Presentation by William Ellis School English Department

2.1 FMI again welcomed LDA, FDI and LST, who had tabled a number of documents, and invited them to present to governors.

2.2 LST drew governors' attention to a green slip on which were printed three paragraphs of what students at the end of Y9 should be able to do. In summary, they were to read a wide range of texts; write coherently, imaginatively and confidently; and listen with discrimination.

2.3 Department practice aimed to be inclusive, providing rich opportunities for students to participate and develop into secure readers, writers and speakers through a distinct KS3 curriculum rather than a diluted run-up to the GCSEs.

2.4 However, the department did not stand still. Every year it developed the curriculum.

[MSC joined the meeting with apologies at 4.34pm.]

2.5 LDA agreed that the department was forward looking, as evidenced by its continuing partnership with University College London's Institute of Education.

2.6 She summarised 2018's GCSE results, which had had some unanticipated disappointments but also weaknesses – for example overall attainment of grades 4-9 – which had been anticipated and addressed.

2.7 She urged governors to “take the long view”, pointing out that 2017's English GCSE attainment score had been 82 per cent, matching that of Acland Burghley.

2.8 LST guided governors through the two 2018 English papers which had been tabled, on language and literature.

[RCO joined the meeting with apologies at 4.39pm.]

2.9 After reviewing students' papers that had been returned, and the exam board OCR's Active Results site, the department had drawn a series of conclusions.

2.10 Students did not cope well with unseen texts, either non-fiction or fiction. They were often not flexible enough readers to recognise how writers shaped text. Too few students were technically adept, for instance in composition and editing.

2.11 To address these weaknesses, the department was planning routine writing practice, double English lessons at KS4 and a practical briefing before each exam.

2.12 Clearly there was an issue with students' exam technique and how they navigated through exams. More than ten per cent of students – 13 – had attempted questions on a text that they hadn't been taught, despite coaching on exam paper context. Ironically, some had done quite well.

2.13 Despite numerous mock exams, 15 students had not attempted Part B of the literature paper, on poetry, automatically losing 20 marks.

2.14 Having gone through actual exam insert booklets returned to the school, the lack of annotation and underlining was alarming: the majority could be reused internally for mocks etc: notes, circling and underlining were minimal.

2.15 FMI thanked LDA and LST for their presentation and asked for comments and questions, of which she asked the first.

2.16 **Must students take both English literature and language papers [FMI]?** MSC answered this question: they had to take both if their best result was to be double-counted for the Progress 8 metric. The runner-up grade was counted in the open element of Progress 8, if it was one of the three best open element grades available.

2.17 KDU thought there were deficiencies in the exam papers themselves, which were not clear.

2.18 What could the school do to boost progress [FMI]? FDI highlighted a lack of a reading culture at the school, partly because it was a boys' school.

2.19 Could the curriculum be adapted to cater for that [RWH]? FDI thought that the KS3 curriculum was already tailored appropriately, and very diverse. LDA pointed out that it was difficult to anticipate what students would enjoy.

2.20 FDI thought that students were aware of how much their lack of reading affected their progress, but were simply not prepared to do anything about it.

2.21 Reading was not necessarily instantly satisfying like maths, where the answer to a question was instantly either right or wrong.

2.22 Writing was a similar challenge. A recent work scrutiny of the exercise books of Y11 boys who were not making sufficient progress found that very few other subjects demanded extended writing, except lists. Their writing was also fact-heavy, rather than critically engaged. This did not support boys' writing in English.

2.23 Was effective use of English encouraged in other subjects [FMI]? HT thought it was, although some teachers sacrificed accuracy in English for their subject's facts.

2.24 How could the school encourage students to read and write outside subject areas [KDU]? HT thought that that was the key issue.

2.25 Were the boys working hard enough [FMI]? LST pointed out that the department was taking a more rigorous approach to homework, for instance by simply not accepting poor quality work. The boys were aware that they needed to work harder.

2.26 Could parents encourage their children to read [GGO]? SJE, as a parent governor, noted that it was very difficult to get a 15-year-old boy to read. The last resort was turning off the internet.

2.27 Could the boys be encouraged to read current affairs and newspapers articles, given that even sports reporting encouraged English skills [KDU]? LDA replied that, among others, Y8's non-fiction unit already included a strong current affairs aspect. LST noted that, with no paid librarian, the library was not congenial for study during break times. Someone had to push for whole-school literacy.

2.28 Was part of the issue that the school's senior staff had a background in science [FMI]? HT admitted that there was a history of this. FDI noted that some teachers were not confident marking students' work for literacy.

[MSC left the meeting at 5.07pm.]

2.29 ISH thought that the English department's resources were too academic and intellectual. SSK suggested a literacy morning or evening for parents.

2.30 Had members of the English department spoken to their counterparts at Camden School for Girls, the only other Camden school to teach the same syllabus [ISH]? LST confirmed that they had, but could perhaps consider reviving discussions.

2.31 FMI thanked LST, LDA and FDI for attending, and asked HT to ensure a follow-up presentation, perhaps in the spring term, after the mock exams.

ACTION Item 2.31 HT to ensure follow-up presentation by English department in 2019.

[LST, LDA and FDI left, CGE joined, and MSC returned to the meeting at 5.13pm.]

2.32 FMI asked for governors' comments and questions.

2.33 KDU thought that the English papers set by OCR – the examination board favoured by the school – were highly academic. Teachers should focus on their

students securing the best grades in English to enable onward progression rather than being concerned with the breadth and philosophy of the syllabus.

2.34 GGO agreed that governors should not condemn the English department for what was to be hoped was a temporary blip in results. But there was clearly a massive shortfall in exam preparation. Whole-school literacy was clearly important in encouraging the boys to celebrate reading.

2.35 SJE was shocked that restrictions on photocopying meant that boys had not had full papers in their mocks.

2.36 Had anyone the capacity to take on the role of literacy co-ordinator [GGO]? HT pointed out that governors constantly encouraged him to reduce numbers of posts.

2.37 Given parent concerns about English, what could be done to raise the profile of literacy and promote a culture of reading [FMI]? HT thought this was a valid question: literacy and reading had fallen victim to a focus on subject teams preparing for all the changes with the new specifications at GCSE and A level. RCO suggested volunteer readers.

2.38 Surely the challenge was fairly straightforward: could the school learn from elsewhere [CGE]? HT noted that English teachers from Acland Burghley had visited to advise the school. English staff at William Ellis were working incredibly hard but he was worried about their excessive and extensive marking, and whether this effort was having the necessary impact.

2.39 How comfortable and confident did HT feel in encouraging whole-school literacy [ISH]? The problem with whole-school actions was that they were always "someone else's responsibility". But he saw no reason why, for instance, the English department should not train other teachers to promote literacy.

ACTION Item 2.39 HT to consider commissioning training from English department for other teachers on promoting literacy.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 11 October 2018 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

4. Appoint additional member of Personnel and Resources Committee

Governors **AGREED** to appoint SJE to the Personnel and Resources Committee.

5. Receive reports from committees

5.1 School Improvement Committee LEM, who chairs this committee, having given apologies, GGO, who is vice chair, reported that the committee had met on 8 November 2018. It had discussed whether, in the light of Progress 8 figures, the curriculum was serving students, as well as exam preparation, the new study area, action tutoring, the spending of the Pupil Premium grant, and risk subjects.

5.2 Pay Committee JWO, as a member of this committee, reported that it had met on 14 November 2018. Over some two-and-a-half hours, the committee had reviewed HT's recommendations for performance-related pay progression. It had ultimately accepted all recommendations, for upgrades in pay for 14 teachers, although the pay of none had risen by more than one pay grade. The committee had noted the plethora of teachers' scales and grades and how little HT was able to consider the available budget when addressing teachers' pay. HT agreed that pay was not a lever for change, as most teachers were at the top of their pay scale.

5.3 Resources Committee RAU, who chairs this committee, having given apologies, JWO, who is vice chair, reported that the committee had met on 15 November 2018. It had considered how to address the next financial year's looming in-year deficit, with no carry-forward as a cushion, and an excellent list of fundraising ideas compiled by SSK.

6. Approve statutory policies and other documents previously reviewed at committee

6.1 Capability Policy This, like the following two documents, had been reviewed at the Resources Committee meeting on 15 November 2018. The Capability Policy and Capability Procedures were both statutory documents which had to be approved by the FGB. Governors **AGREED** the Capability Policy.

6.2 Capability Procedures Governors **AGREED** the Capability Procedures.

6.3 Health and Safety Policy Governors **AGREED** the Health and Safety Policy.

7. Receive headteacher's report, including staffing update

7.1 HT noted that, from 2020-2021, the DfE intended to change the way capital funding for the school was allocated – currently, through Camden.

7.2 In future, the choice for governors was either to opt for something called the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) or the School Conditions Allocations (SCA).

7.3 Typically, only a third of bids to the CIF were successful. The average successful bid was £300k.

7.4 The alternative was to join at least four other voluntary-aided (VA) schools to receive an SCA allocation, which the schools would then decide how to share.

7.5 William Ellis had been approached to join five other VA schools, one of which was Camden School for Girls. Three were selective. Did that matter? If this were an option, William Ellis would have to express interest by the end of the following week.

7.6 HT pointed out that joining a group of VA schools looked like a more straightforward way of receiving capital funding, which would be guaranteed annually through an SCA allocation. A single school bidding to the CIF looked higher risk and more administratively burdensome. He asked for questions.

7.7 Had the other schools opted in to the group [ISH]? HT thought that they had.

7.8 Governors **AGREED** to ask HT to send an expression of interest in becoming part of the suggested group to receive a collective SCA allocation.

7.8 FMI thanked HT and asked for any further questions about his report.

7.9 How was attendance [ISH]? It was showing sustained improvement.

8. Reschedule 19 January 2019 FGB meeting

FMI noted that as governors would not be holding a joint meeting with the governors of Parliament Hill School, there was no longer any need to schedule January's FGB on a Saturday. HT to circulate alternative dates.

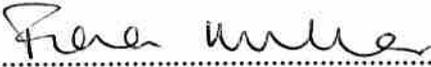
ACTION Item 8 HT to circulate potential alternative dates for January FGB meeting.

9. Any other business

FMI noted that, given the likely sensitive nature of the discussion on succession and strategic planning, and following on from discussion at the previous FGB, she would be taking this item in Part 2 of the meeting.

Next scheduled meeting: TBA¹

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, FMI thanked all present for attending and closed this part of the meeting at 5.58pm. Confidential items followed.

Signed.....  18 January 2019

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION Item 2.31 HT to ensure follow-up presentation by English department in 2019.

ACTION Item 2.39 HT to consider commissioning training from English department for other teachers on promoting literacy.

ACTION Item 8 HT to circulate potential alternative dates for January FGB meeting.

¹ Subsequently agreed as Friday 18 January 2019, 9.30am-noon, followed by lunch.