

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 4 July 2019

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Mr Sam White (SWH)	✓
LA	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	x
Parent	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	✓
Staff	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JME)	x
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	x
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGO) Vice chair	✓
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) Chair	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	x
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
ATTENDING		
	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO) Deputy head	
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) Assistant head	
	Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) Assistant head	
	Ms Gixy Vettiankal (GVE) Head of maths	
	Ms Elizabeth Lawson (ELA) Maths teacher	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) Clerk	

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

FMI welcomed everyone to this meeting of William Ellis School's Governing Body, which began at 5.04pm. She particularly welcomed STA, as the new parent governor, and GVE and ELA, who were to present to the Governing Body. For their benefit, all present introduced themselves. Apologies for absence were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RAU, JME and DMO. OHA and SSK had apologised for a late arrival. There were no apologies from GGO. A quorum was present. FMI noted that Abdi Ahmed had resigned as an associate of the Governing Body; she thanked him for his support over the years. 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. Receive presentation on maths curriculum

2.1 FMI welcomed GVE and ELA again and invited them to present on the school's maths curriculum, which they did as follows.

2.2 GVE explained that there were seven teachers in the department, one of them part-time and two of them NQTs. One of the department's strengths was that there had been little turnover over the last few years.

[LEM joined the meeting with apologies at 5.09pm.]

2.3 Setting in the department was effective, partly because there was plenty of movement between sets following regular assessments. GCSE results for 2018 had been good, with a Progress 8 score of +0.09. The school was well above the national average in several grades, and had seen the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students narrow over each of the past four years. However, the performance of white British Pupil Premium students had been disappointing.

2.4 At A level, the department's ALPS score (another measure of progress) had been a disappointing 7. Predictions were generally good due to rigorous assessments.

2.5 Predicted Progress 8 scores for 2019 were all positive, with a negligible gap between students in receipt of the Pupil Premium and those who were not.

2.6 As governors knew, there had recently been changes in the maths curriculum, for a number of reasons. Low prior attainers had not made good progress by Y11. Poor memory and retention had hindered progress across the board. And a clear focus on key concepts in maths, particularly at KS3, had been lacking.

2.7 Three years' worth of initiatives had improved the curriculum. KS3 content had been slimmed down, so that students were confident about key concepts by the end of Y8. A consultant had been helping to boost memory and retention. Teaching and learning groups supported poor learners. And a "spiral" curriculum revisited themes and topics regularly, with increasing complexity.

2.8 As a result, outcomes had been good. Work was reviewed in every lesson. Presentation and working out had improved. Interventions were more focused. Every lesson involved peer- and self-assessment. Progress 8 was positive.

2.9 Students now enjoyed maths. They could see their progress year by year. This was evidenced by the numbers taking up A level maths. Those who did not do A level maths did a course called maths studies.

2.10 GVE handed over to ELA, who explained that the department had for several years run a small maths teaching and learning group for disadvantaged Years 7 and 8 students, including those who had arrived at the school with prior low attainment.

2.11 The group had built confidence in maths and reduced anxiety about it, both of which had had a knock-on effect on behaviour. This year's nine Y8 students in the group were all on track to make sufficient or better progress.

2.12 ELA tabled an example of "spiral" curriculum, in this case tracking the teaching of area and volume from Years 7 to 11. In the page-long summary, the word "recall" recurred frequently: the basics were referenced every year to improve memory and retention.

[SSK joined the meeting at 5.23pm.]

2.13 FMI thanked GVE and ELA for their presentation and called for questions, of which she asked the first. Unless otherwise indicated, they were answered by GVE.

2.14 **Were recent Ofsted comments criticising apparent discrepancies between the teaching of two Y9 classes justified [FMI]?** GVE thought not.

2.14.1 The teaching had been in line with the spiral curriculum and its ethos of revisiting topics. IJO said that NQTs were being encouraged to articulate how lessons reflected coherent progress from Y7 to Y11, which they clearly did.

2.15 How did the department cater for those boys not heading for grade 4 or 5 at GCSE [LEM]? For some students, a grade 3 was a good pass. Any student getting a grade 3 would retake the exam; any student getting a grade 2 would undertake a functional skills course. ELA said that even low-achieving students still enjoyed maths and regularly attended Saturday booster classes.

2.16 How were newer staff coping with the new maths curriculum [ISH]? All staff were rigorously schooled in the new curriculum.

2.17 How did students cope when they were moved to a lower set [CGE]? ELA pointed out that struggling students found it stressful if they fell behind. The vast majority saw the value of being in the right set and were not embarrassed to change sets. Everyone covered the same topics. Students in the second, lower, set often achieved grade 9s.

2.18 SWH thought that the culture of the maths department had improved to cope with this. Whatever their skill or experience, teachers were spread across all the sets.

2.19 LEM urged senior leaders to ensure that the talents and challenges of lower-aged students and those in receipt of free school meals were recognised. Teachers tended to underestimate the variation within a group.

2.20 The maths department had addressed the concerns of governors admirably and was now possibly the most effective department in the school, so what could its leaders pass on to other departments [FMI]? GVE thought the department was fortunate in that it had a generous allocation of lesson time in which it could repeatedly address issues of retention and memory. SWH thought that stripping out less crucial topics at KS3 had been key; other departments could learn from that.

2.21 Could other departments report equally coherently and briefly to governors [CGE]? SWH thought the maths department had an advantage, given the subject, but that all departments could learn from it.

2.22 Could other departments host booster sessions outside school hours, like the maths department [LEM]? ELA reported that the English department had launched a similar initiative; however, student interest had been low. ISH thought that students were inspired when a strong department team worked coherently together.

2.23 FMI thanked GVE and ELA again for their very impressive presentation, and for answering questions.

[GVE and ELA and MSC left, and OHA and BLA joined, the meeting at 5.43pm.]

3. Receive report on English from governor group

3.1 FMI thanked RCO, ISH and SSK for conducting their focus group on English.

3.2 ISH explained that the group had interviewed 24 students in mixed (Years 7 to 10) focus groups. The boys varied from those who clearly loved reading to those who claimed that reading didn't interest them, who found reading "boring", who "didn't have the attention span to read", or who didn't "like being forced to read."

3.3 Some read only comics, or graphic novels. Few used the school library. Interestingly, all said that they had read throughout their time at primary school. One boy mentioned that he didn't read at all outside school, even though his mother was a keen reader and often took him with her to the library.

- 3.4** Several students liked the “freedom to be creative” that the English curriculum offered. All seemed happy with the books and plays they were studying. They liked to role play characters from the texts, and open discussions.
- 3.5** They gave numerous examples of how members of the English department supported them, including supplying booklets on set texts and revision packs, and pushing them to read more difficult texts. One student mentioned that his form tutor encouraged the class to read books for pleasure.
- 3.6** They liked teacher feedback, particularly targeted prompting to encourage boys to think how they could improve their work. But it had to be specific and directed, rather than more open-ended questions like “how could this read better?”.
- 3.7** The governors' group had made a series of recommendations, including building on primary school reading habits, a “ten best” reading list, more group reading, specific and focused marking, and an improved library.
- 3.8** FMI thanked ISH and called for questions, of which she asked the first.
- 3.9 Could spending on the library make a difference [FMI]?** SWH said there were some management resources available, but throughout the day the library was a multi-use space. Students played cards and chess – which was to be encouraged – and used the computers to complete their homework; there was none of the traditional hushed silence. He had discussed with the English department the potential for staffing a classroom as a quiet reading space.
- 3.10 Could reading appeal to boys [FMI]?** ISH thought that they needed prompting. A key reading lead – perhaps the form tutor or English teacher – should keep on top of what boys were reading and encourage them to read further.
- 3.11** SSK suggested a series of talks by visiting authors and journalists. KDU thought students should be encouraged to read widely: autobiographies, such as that by the goalkeeper Peter Crouch, could be easy to read and gripping, with many references to childhood. Reading lists sent the message that there were good and bad books: instead, boys should be encouraged to read anything and everything.
- 3.12 Did the boys accept that reading could be good for them, or pleasurable [SJE]?** ISH thought that they liked the creativity and freedom and openness which they experienced in English and especially drama, but in no other subject.
- 3.13** IJO reported a plan to recruit someone – not a tutor themselves – to lead tutor interventions in reading. The aim would be to get Years 7 and 8 reading widely.
- 3.14 Could visiting speakers be a living example of how English applied in the world beyond school [STA]?** Governors agreed. SWH said that such a programme needed managing; that took resources. It was not straightforward. One offer by a willing journalist to visit and speak had taken three months to organise. The careers strategy would bring in external speakers. Understandably, the English department had been asked to focus on the forthcoming GCSEs after last year's results.
- 3.15 Were English texts not free online, and could e-books encourage reading [OHA]?** SWH noted that many departmental texts were online but they were not free. E-books needed a reading device.
- 3.16 How many teachers loved reading [KDU]?** SWH reported on previous initiatives, including teachers' favourite books now and when they were young, and “guess the teacher from the book” quizzes.
- 3.17** FMI thanked the governors concerned again for their report and asked about the proposed governor inquiry into Y11 boys' “near-exclusion” experiences.
- 3.18** IJO reported that the boys concerned were so positive about their GCSE experience that it seemed unfair to dwell on how they were so nearly excluded. A discussion about their successful transition to Y12 would yield the same results.

4. Receive headteacher's report

FMI noted that – with the exception of short sections on staffing, resources, risk areas, context and events – much of SWH's regular report to governors on this occasion analysed implementation of the 2018-19 School Development Plan. She asked him to move straight to this self-evaluation, which he did.

5. Receive summary self-evaluation

5.1 SWH reminded governors that the 2018-19 School Development Plan had had a number of areas of focus, with ten areas of action under three broader headings:

- Teaching that enables excellent learning
- Pastoral care which supports excellent learning and personal development
- Leadership at all levels that supports excellent learning.

5.2 In his analysis of the plan's success or otherwise, he had mirrored the Ofsted framework's current formula: intent, implementation and impact. In presenting his report now, he focused mainly on impact. One key development had been the – partially successful – delegation of SWH responsibilities to other school leaders.

5.3 **Teaching that enables excellent learning** Students were more able to self-reflect on their own behaviour for learning, supporting a greater **growth mindset culture**. **Learning beyond the classroom** had improved as more students completed homework: IJO noted that it was now set with the expectation that it was done, with a system to chase it, and it was done on wider technological platforms, although these – like phones – were not always the most appropriate.

5.3.1 FMI asked SWH to report back on whether Office 365 was successfully enabling those students who were using it to share resources and support for homework.

ACTION Item 5.3.1 SWH to report back on success or otherwise of Office 365.

5.3.2 Good process had been made in **curriculum and assessment**; parents were hopefully now noting a different, more rounded quality of report about their sons.

5.3.3 **Oracy** was progressing. An oracy curriculum was now well-established in Y7; all Y7 students delivered a final, five-minute end-of-year speech. All students used oracy routinely in modern foreign languages, English and drama, and with varying frequency elsewhere, to build their learning.

5.4 **Pastoral care that supports excellent learning** A Camden review had noted the school's well-planned **PSHE** (personal, social and health education) programme, which was well taught and engaged students well: visiting Ofsted inspectors (for a pilot inspection) had also commented positively.

5.4.1 A **careers and tutorial programme** was work in progress: a key next step would be to gather students' views on tutorials, trips, etc. **Attendance** had improved but needed to improve further: one good aspect was that the number of persistent absentees had fallen. Punctuality could also improve.

5.5 Leadership at all levels that secures excellent learning With more than 90 per cent of Years 7 and 9, and 80 per cent of Y8 students attending camp at the school's outdoor activity centre, The Mill, **outdoor learning** was booming. Engagement with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme was also good.

5.5.1 Thanks to a focus on **disciplined enquiry** by teachers, students were taught by teachers who are using novel approaches to improve their teaching, many involving listening, and responding, to student views. A more robust, systematic, efficient and responsive **self-evaluation** system which engaged all adults and students in school improvement was in the process of being set up.

5.6 FMI thanked SWH for his summary, noting that much of his analysis was familiar to governors from committee meetings. She called for questions, of which she asked the first.

5.7 Should the self-evaluation highlight the school's aims [FMI]? SWH noted that these headed up the School Development Plan.

5.8 Was SWH confident about the judgements in the self-evaluation [FMI]? Yes, although there were 31 areas for development in four main areas: reading and writing, barriers to learning, teachers' own self-evaluation, and resource allocation.

5.9 In which area was the school closest to outstanding [SJE]? Personal development; the school would be putting itself forward as a centre of excellence for this if it was accepted as a member of the national schools' peer-reviewing Challenge Partners programme.

5.10 Was there enough resource to develop this area further [STA]? As a source of pride and motivation for the school, it would keep the roll buoyant, with the resulting financial benefits. FMI thought that the school did not make enough of its strengths in music and other areas: IJO agreed this could help market the school.

5.11 FMI urged all governors to read and familiarise themselves with the new Ofsted framework. SWH reminded governors that he had previously circulated the school's own RAG-rated (red, amber, green) version, but he would do so again.

ACTION Item 5.11 *All governors to familiarise themselves with the new Ofsted framework; SWH to circulate school's RAG-rated version.*

5.12 FMI thanked SWH for answering questions and invited governors to email any further questions directly to him.

ACTION Item 5.12 *Governors with any further questions to email SWH.*

6. Receive outline School Development Plan 2019-20

6.1 SWH explained that this was an early draft of the 2019-20 School Development Plan, on which he would welcome governors' comments. It aimed to sum up succinctly the school's strengths and weaknesses for staff and governors, and identify clearly how to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses.

6.2 SWH highlighted how the key performance indicators aligned with the new Ofsted framework, and how the success criteria were student-focused, with measurable outcomes.

6.3 FMI thanked SWH for his introduction and asked for comments.

6.4 Tutor continuity LEM stressed the beneficial effect of the bond that developed when tutors remained with a year group throughout Years 7 to 11. IJO pointed out that students were only allocated a new tutor if their old tutor left the school. By Camden standards, William Ellis's turnover was low. It was unusual for students to have two or more tutors.

6.4.1 There could be an issue of how the school supported new tutors taking over from a predecessor. SWH stressed that, particularly in Y11, those new tutors were chosen to be those who were the most skilled.

6.5 Vision and values FMI thought that the School Development Plan did not make enough of the original vision of the school's founder, William Ellis. The school's values and vision were closely tied to his, and were what made the school unique.

6.5.1 STA agreed that those values still resonated today; how the school acted on them was significant. They should not be overshadowed by "datafication".

6.6 SWH thanked governors and promised to return with the next iteration of the School Development Plan, which he stressed was an evolving document.

7. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2019 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record of the meeting. FMI to sign them after the meeting. There were no matters arising which had not been addressed as part of the current agenda. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

8. Any other business

8.1 Confidential minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising Given that no discussion of this item was anticipated or forthcoming, the confidential minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2019 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record of the meeting. FMI to sign them after the meeting. There were no matters arising.

8.2 Rahilla Chughtai SWH reported that Rahilla Chughtai, head of the biology department, was retiring at the end of the academic year after 34 years of service to the school. Governors were welcome to attend a celebratory event on the last day of term, Tuesday 23 July 2019.

ACTION Item 8.2 *All governors to consider attending celebratory event to mark the retirement of Rahilla Chughtai on 23 July 2019.*


8.3 Fundraising KDU enquired about the potential for sponsorship by a wealthy organisation, such as the City of London Corporation. FMI noted that other schools benefited from the sale of property. Some academy chains employed professional fundraisers. SSK did a tremendous job, but perhaps that could be a way to go.

8.4 The Mill OHA reported that The Mill had received planning permission to erect a barn in order to host large-scale outdoor events under cover. However, a condition was that it could not be hired out for commercial purposes, such as weddings.

8.4.1 It now only remained to raise the £150k necessary to build the barn, perhaps employing the services of a professional fundraiser. SSK had started drafting a spreadsheet of charities and other organisations to approach for contributions.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 3 October 2019

There being no further business or confidential items, FMI thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 6.46pm.

Signed..........

3 October 2019

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION Item 5.3.1 **SWH to report back on success or otherwise of Office 365.**

ACTION Item 5.11 **All governors to familiarise themselves with the new Ofsted framework; SWH to circulate school's RAG-rated version.**

ACTION Item 5.12 **Governors with any further questions to email SWH.**

ACTION Item 8.2 **All governors to consider attending celebratory event to mark the retirement of Rahilla Chughtai on 23 July 2019.**