

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 3 October 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 (JMN)	✓
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGO) Vice chair	✓
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	x
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) Chair	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓

ATTENDING

Mr Tom Edwards (TED) **Head of history and politics**
Mr Sel Pomeye (SPO) **Head of geography**
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 5pm sharp. She particularly welcomed TED and – in his absence – SPO, who were to present to the Governing Body. Apologies for absence were received from, and permission for absence granted to, GGO and OHA. RAU apologised for an early departure. 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. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 4 July 2019 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them after the meeting. There was one matter arising which was not to be addressed as part of the current agenda.

2.2 Item 5.3.1 TED reported back on progress with Office 365. The system was effective, and being used. The real test would be using it for homework. SWH added that all Y7 teachers were committed to uploading homework to the system by the end of the week.

2.3 All three other actions had been fulfilled.

[JMN, SPO and ISH joined the meeting with apologies at 5.03pm.]

3. Curriculum content and coherence

3.1 FMI reminded governors the two presentations to follow were the first in a rolling programme in the context of the new Ofsted framework, which particularly emphasised curriculum. She invited TED to present on the teaching of history.

3.2 Presentation on history and politics TED pointed out that the departmental teams were a diverse crew with vast experience and a multitude of whole-school responsibilities: all were "true believers" in the importance of their subject(s). Three of the members of his history team had been heads of history before. Between them, the team taught history at KS3, GCSE and A level, and politics at A level.

[RAU and CGE joined the meeting with apologies at 5.05pm.]

3.2.1 In the last couple of years, the number of William Ellis students entered for history GCSE had rocketed. At 110 entries, it had become the third largest single subject in the school, with the aim of creating "citizens of the world".

[STA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.10pm.]

3.2.2 TED summarised the history curriculum at William Ellis, which ranged from specific periods such as the Norman and medieval, to concepts such as source evaluation, criteria for significance, and change over time. Establishing "first order" concepts, such as the difference between a battle and a war, was a priority.

3.2.3 Everything was revisited annually in order to build links and reinforce knowledge in advance of students' taking the GCSE exam.

3.2.4 As elsewhere in the school, literacy was a challenge, particularly the extended essay writing demanded by new exam specifications. There was a correlation between lack of extended writing skills and poor GCSE results. Students' lack of cultural capital was also evident, especially in A level politics – many students had little political knowledge. Staff sought strategies to address both. Ways had to be found to improve the speed, fluency and coherence of students' writing.

3.2.5 The big change in the GCSE course had come in 2016, when coursework was scrapped and content increased enormously. Where there had previously been nine different forms of question (e.g. "how useful is it to...", "do you agree that...") there were now 17. There were two papers, of two hours each.

3.2.6 While increasing numbers were taking the GCSE course, they had found the exam tougher, and not enough were achieving a "pass" of grade 4. Of those who took the exam, 44 per cent were below target grades.

3.2.7 The biggest disappointment had been in those students achieving a grade 7 or above – 21 per cent, compared with 2017 GCSE results, when 43 per cent of entrants had achieved an A or A*. The teachers had not changed. The exam had.

3.2.8 In addition, 75 per cent of the students had scored zero in at least one question: many on three, four or five. Not finishing the exam paper was not unusual. The content covered was vast, so if students missed a lesson or two, they floundered.

3.2.9 At A level, no students were targeted to achieve the equivalent of A or A* in politics, but five in history. At this level, the teaching of the history of China was a "unique selling point" for the school.

3.2.10 With its focus on learning behaviours, literacy and curriculum planning, the department's priorities aligned with those of the School Development Plan.

3.2.11 FMI thanked TED for his presentation, and asked for questions, which he answered as follows.

3.2.12 Should more time be devoted to the GCSE course [LEM]? The struggle was not to teach the curriculum, but to embed it. Exam skills were the lens through which content was taught in lessons. But ways of learning out of class had to be found. There would have to be a good reason to extend the GCSE course to three years.

3.2.13 How did teachers cope with the halving of students receiving top grades [KDU]? Staff had been adept at easing students over grade boundaries – turning grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 into grade 5s, and grade 5s into 6s and 7s. This had been possible due to clear criteria about the skills and knowledge required at each grade. With the reformed GCSEs, this was no longer the case. Grades were awarded to specific percentages of students nationally, based on the profile of the national cohort's KS2 scores. Because of this methodology, even if educational standards improved, grades would not increase.

3.2.14 Did students receive enough exam preparation [LEM]? Virtually every lesson had an exam question built into it. Content was often cut to get to the exam question.

3.2.15 Was the drive to transform homework worth it [CGE]? It was worth trying, encouraging students to revisit, "pre-teach", or prepare.

3.2.16 Were those students who struggled with literacy skills well advised to take history [SJE]? Ways were found to support them. What else would they take? Last year some boys were not suited to taking it. Results were worse this year because six students, for various reasons, got U grades.

3.2.17 What was their impact on others taking the exam [SJE]? They were not disruptive; they just sat the exam out.

3.2.18 What grades had the six received when they took the mock exams [KDU]? The same.

3.2.19 Are steps currently in place to make a difference to future results [SWH]? Yes, the three themes of the current School Development Plan (curriculum, learning behaviours and literacy), as well as those of previous plans, were there to improve learning and skills from the start of KS3, but these changes were still working their way through the system. In the short term, students could be withdrawn from subjects in which they were unlikely to get a grade, so that they could concentrate on their remaining subjects.

3.2.20 Was extended writing taught at KS3 [LEM]? Yes, each term an assessment was based on extended writing.

3.2.21 Did the department have enough resources [ISH]? Textbooks were provided for Y7 students, but the department would like them for every year group, to help boost literacy. In practice, teachers relied on photocopying.

3.2.22 FMI thanked TED for his presentation, and for answering questions. A number of questions remained. Were too many boys doing history because the school could not offer them anything else? And was it right to offer everyone access to history, or rather to focus on better results? If six boys had written nothing in last term's GCSE exams, perhaps it would have been better for the school if they had not sat the exam.

[TED left the meeting at 5.39pm.]

3.3 Presentation on geography SPO pointed out that geography was unique among the subjects taught at William Ellis in that it was both a natural and a social science; it was multi-disciplined, requiring skills in literacy, numeracy and science; it brought the "real world" into the classroom, and took students out of the classroom, on field trips; and it addressed the social and environmental challenges faced by society.

3.3.1 However, where the department had previously had four permanent geography teachers, it was now down to two, supplemented by two teachers teaching elements of geography. This hindered collaboration and the development of pedagogy.

3.3.2 GCSE results had been disappointing. In 2018, the predicted P8 had been -0.48; in fact, it had been -1.20. A P8 of -0.28 had been predicted this year for the 54 pupils sitting the GCSE exam: in fact, it had been -1.18. This was a cause for reflection.

3.3.3 Disadvantaged/Pupil Premium students had the lowest (-1.49) P8; prior-middle-attaining students had done worst (-1.32) among prior-attaining students; and white British disadvantaged students had scored worst (-2.16) among all groups. Conversely, SEND students had made more progress (up to -0.75) than other groups.

3.3.4 Exams analysis – including the fact that increased grade boundaries meant 16 students would have got at least a grade higher last year – highlighted the need for changes in the school's geography curriculum.

3.3.5 The key area was students' ability to produce sustained writing over the course of a 90-minute exam on a range of topics, requiring diverse skills. KS3 would be key in building the confidence to tackle long-form writing, with topics chosen to enhance academic success at KS4.

3.3.6 Among the planned changes at KS3 were a focus on extended writing; the use of KS4 "command words" ("examine", "assess", "evaluate", "suggest", etc); and the use of "spaced learning", regularly revisiting core ideas. A focus on literacy, curriculum and learning behaviours mirrored that of the School Development Plan.

3.3.7 FMI thanked SPO for his presentation, and asked for questions, which SPO answered as follows.

3.3.8 How could the department address both extended writing and greater content [JWO]? It would be a challenge, but a focus from Y7 would help, with an acceptance that literacy was not solely the responsibility of the English department.

3.3.9 Could students master the range of skills needed [ISH]? Many core skills were necessary but that was not where students were losing most marks.

3.3.10 CGE commented KS3 now seemed to be there simply to prepare for KS4.

3.3.11 Could students formulate their answers to exam questions verbally [KDU]? They could articulate their knowledge, but not necessarily in a well-structured way.

3.3.12 JMN urged inter-departmental support – for instance, climate change taught in PHSE lessons, or a geography topic chosen as the subject of a languages project.

3.3.13 Who would oversee that [FMI]? SWH thought that this had not been a priority while teachers and departments grappled with curriculum change. With a period of stability, and once teachers had clarified what they were doing in their own departments, more cross-curricular discussions could take place.

3.3.14 Did students value homework [SJE]? SPO thought they remained to be convinced of its value, particularly the more disadvantaged students who would benefit from it most.

3.3.15 FMI thanked SPO for his presentation, and for answering questions.

[SPO left the meeting at 6.10pm.]

4. Appoint members and chairs of committees, and delegate review of committee terms of reference to committees

4.1 FMI proposed that committee membership should remain largely as currently. Until January 2020, Stuart Taylor would attend the first two of the following committees as an observer in order to gauge which was the best fit for him.

4.2 School Improvement Committee Members were **AGREED** as:

- Ronke Coote
- Karen Dunnell
- Lee Elliot-Major
- Conor Gearty
- Georgia Gould
- Fiona Millar
- Imogen Sharp
- Selina Skipwith
- Sam White.

4.2.1 FMI nominated LEM to remain as chair, and GGO as vice chair, of this committee. As chair, she required no seconder. Governors **AGREED**. Advisers to be deputy head Izzy Jones and assistant head Matthew Scott.

4.3 Personnel and Resources Committee Members were **AGREED** as:

- Richard Ault
- Karen Dunnell
- Omar Harmon
- Sophie Jenkins
- Fiona Millar
- Selina Skipwith
- Sam White
- Jonny Woolf.

4.3.1 FMI nominated RAU to remain as chair, and JWO as vice chair, of this committee: governors **AGREED**. Advisers to be assistant head Bernie Lane, director of operations Mandy Seeburn and finance manager Debbie Smith.

4.4 Pay Committee Members were **AGREED** as:

- Richard Ault
- Karen Dunnell
- Jonny Woolf.

4.4.1 Members of the committee to appoint a chair.

4.5 Headteacher's Performance Review Panel Members were **AGREED** as:

- Conor Gearty
- Georgia Gould
- Fiona Millar

4.5.1 Members of the committee to appoint a chair.

4.6 Delegate review of committee terms of reference Governors **AGREED** to delegate review of each committee's terms of reference to the committees themselves, on the understanding that the FGB would be asked ultimately to agree them.

5. Review key governance documents

5.1 Instrument of government Governors **AGREED** the Instrument of Government dated 1 December 2017 as fit for continued purpose.

5.2 Governor qualification Governors, having reviewed this list, confirmed that none was disqualified from holding office. Absent governors to inform FMI if they consider that they may be disqualified from holding office as a governor.

ACTION Item 5.2 *GGO and OHA to inform FMI if they consider that they may be disqualified from holding office as a governor.*

5.3 FGB standing orders Governors **AGREED** the FGB standing orders as circulated.

5.4 Governors' Code of Conduct Governors **AGREED** collectively and individually to abide by the Code of Conduct as circulated. They further **AGREED** that the Code of Conduct should apply to absent governors. Chair to sign on governors' behalf at end of meeting.

ACTION Item 5.4 *GGO and OHA to note that they are bound by the governors' Code of Conduct.*

5.5 Governors' annual declaration of interests MHU noted that all governors except GGO had now completed an annual declaration of interests for 2019-20; she should do so.

ACTION Item 5.5 *GGO to complete an annual declaration of interests, as circulated with the FGB papers, and forward to MHU.*

5.6 FGB annual work plan Governors **AGREED** the FGB and committee annual work plan.

5.7 Governors' meeting dates 2019-20 Governors **AGREED** these dates.

5.8 Governors attendance report 2018-19 Governors noted this document.

5.9 Naming governors in minutes Governors **AGREED** that they should be named in minutes as a matter of course, with the right for their name to be redacted on request.

5.10 Approving policies Governors **AGREED** that, on the principle of subsidiarity, all policies should be approved at committee if possible, or by an individual or the headteacher if guidance permitted and the committee wished.

6. Receive headteacher's report

6.1 FMI invited SWH to present his report, which he did as follows, selectively.

6.2 Exam results SWH noted that the governors' School Improvement Committee which met on 12 September 2019 had reviewed KS4 and KS5 results in detail.

6.2.1 At **KS4**, attainment was strong compared with that of boys in Camden and nationally. English had improved markedly, although results were down on predictions in maths and geography. This year there had been some marked increases in the marks required to achieve certain grades.

6.2.2 In terms of progress, a neutral P8 score had been predicted this year, but failed to materialise, despite better than predicted outcomes in English. This was largely due to below-average outcomes in maths and EBacc subjects.

6.2.3 The school's "open element" P8 score was predicted to be poor compared to nationally because the curriculum led to many EBacc subjects counting in the open element – EBacc subjects were typically graded lower than many other qualifications found in the open element.

6.2.4 The percentage of eligible students who entered a full EBacc was 85 per cent, significantly higher than the average for boys in England (29.6 per cent). Many students took eight EBacc subjects, which meant that several of them ended up being counted in the open element of P8.

6.2.5 FMI noted that Camden accepted that William Ellis's curriculum was disadvantaging the school in terms of its P8 score. The school's P8 could be zero if it offered a greater range of non-EBacc subjects, but its curriculum was markedly different from other schools' and its relatively small size gave it less scope to introduce more breadth.

6.2.6 SWH agreed: only Maria Fidelis catholic co-educational school in Kings Cross, another small school, offered a similar curriculum. Both had strong philosophies.

6.2.7 On the practical side, extra support was planned for the geography department, and there were similar plans for PE and computing.

6.2.8 Results at **KS5** were pleasing, particularly the progress and results of some low-prior-attaining students, who had gone on to good destinations.

6.2.9 More work needed to be done to increase the number of A level grades at C or above. There were two U grades, one for a vulnerable student who achieved two higher grades in other subjects. More needed to be done to support students entering for the Extended Project Qualification. Predictions could also improve.

6.3 Subject leader presentations SWH reminded governors that the history and geography presentations preceding his report had been the first of a series scheduled at FGB over the school year, in order to support governors' understanding of the school's curriculum. He highlighted nine areas which presentations should clarify, and which could guide governors' questions to subject leaders in future.

6.4 School Development Plan SWH was pleased that both TED's history presentation and SPO's geography presentation had referenced this crucial document.

6.5 Staffing This was complete in all departments, with the exception of science, where a post had proved difficult to fill, and physics, following an unfortunate and expected vacancy. SWH and assistant head Matthew Scott had taken on some teaching of the latter. KDU noted, and all present agreed, that the welcome drinks for new staff, which had been attended by a number of governors, had gone well.

6.6 Camden risk scorecard SWH reported that he and FMI had recently attended the school's annual Camden standards meeting to review exam results and discuss standards, learning and management, and teaching and learning.

6.6.1 To aid discussion, a new – and confidential – risk scorecard had been developed, to be revised termly. William Ellis had been RAG (red, amber, green)-rated red for its lack of reserves, but there was inconsistency between the scorecard criteria and other Camden guidance, which said that schools should not hold large reserves. The school's funding should be used to educate the students at the school.

6.7 FMI thanked SWH for his report and asked for questions, of which there were three, all about the risk scorecard.

6.8 Were student exclusions particularly low [DMO]? Yes, they were markedly low.

6.9 Why specifically was the potential for a lower Ofsted grading considered an amber risk [DMO]? Because of the school's low P8 measure.

6.10 Why was students' mental health considered an amber risk [DMO]? SWH did not know exactly but thought it could be that the school did not have the Healthy School Award, partly because it was unable to offer food technology qualification. This was in hand.

7. Any other business

Parental complaint and response SWH tabled a letter from a parent, which contained both general and particular criticisms – the latter with regard to her son's education. He also tabled one of two letters sent in response, from him and FMI, dealing with the general criticisms. All governors present read both documents with close scrutiny before returning them.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 5 December 2019

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 6.34pm. RAU left at this point. FMI gave JMN permission to stay for the first section of Part 2 of the meeting, until confidential staffing issues were discussed.

Signed.......... 5 December 2019

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION **Item 5.2** **GGO and OHA** to inform FMI if they consider that they may be disqualified from holding office as a governor.

ACTION **Item 5.4** **GGO and OHA** to note that they are bound by the governors' Code of Conduct.

ACTION **Item 5.5** **GGO** to complete an annual declaration of interests, as circulated with the FGB papers, and forward to MHU.

