

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 14 May 2020

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Mr Sam White (SWH)	✓
LA	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	✓
Parent	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	✓
Staff	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	✓
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	x
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE) 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		
	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO) Deputy head	
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) Assistant head	
	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 5.01pm by video conference, in line with government advice on social distancing in the current coronavirus pandemic. Apologies for absence were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RAU and OHA. No other apologies were necessary, as all other governors were, or would be, present, and thus a quorum. 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 30 January 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them at a later date. Matters arising follow.

2.2 Item 2.2 SJE and STA apologised that, given the current crisis, they had not yet had an opportunity to discuss the recommendations of their student focus group report directly with IJO but would do so; SJE apologised that she had not yet anonymised the student focus group report reviewed at the previous (30 January 2020) meeting and forwarded it to MHU for GovernorHub but would do so.

ACTION Item 2.2 *SJE and STA to discuss the recommendations of their student focus group report directly with IJO; SJE to anonymise student focus group report and forward to MHU for him to upload to GovernorHub.*

2.3 Item 5.8 Given the current crisis, BLA had been unable to organise a parents' consultation meeting on the school's proposed new Relationships and Sex Education Policy, so GGO, DMO and STA had been unable to attend.

3. Approve 2020-21 budget

3.1 SWH noted that the version of the 2020-21 budget circulated to governors was the iteration which had been recommended for their approval by members of the Personnel and Resources Committee a week earlier.

3.2 The school had ended 2019-20 in a better position than originally projected – with a carry-forward of £71k rather than the original £21k, largely due to two last-minute grants from Camden.

3.3 Despite that, the 2020-21 budget predicted an in-year deficit of £23k, partly due to the cost of temporary senior leadership roles and a mentoring team.

3.4 The budget was extremely tight. Every budget line had been reduced as much as possible. However, the budget included most items needed by the school.

3.5 FMI thanked RCO for submitting questions in advance; SWH answered as follows.

3.6 How is Y7 recruitment [RCO]? September 2020 was full, with 130 pupils and a waiting list.

3.7 Have there been savings from the school's partial closure [RCO]? Yes, reductions in catering, energy and supply staff bills had yielded a saving of some £6k a month. However, those savings would evaporate as bills rose – in the case of cleaning, to much higher levels – once the school opened up further.

3.8 Governors **AGREED** the 2020-21 budget.

4. Approve SFVS

4.1 FMI explained that the Schools Financial Value Standard was an annual audit of the school's financial probity and effectiveness. SWH replied to the single question.

4.2 Why is there a question mark in the comments on arrangements to guard against fraud and theft [RCO]? That should be removed; the school exercised due diligence.

4.3 Governors **AGREED** the SFVS. DSM to forward to Camden.

ACTION Item 4.3 *DSM to delete Q25 query in SFVS and forward to Camden.*

5. Allocate governor to committee

FMI reminded governors that STA had attended both committees as an observer. Governors **AGREED** that STA should become a member of the Personnel and Resources Committee. They also **AGREED** to appoint him as link governor for mental health and wellbeing.

6. Receive committee reports and agree terms of reference

6.1 School Improvement Committee LEM, who chairs this committee, reported that, since the FGB last meeting, it had met on 5 March 2020 (minutes circulated) and 30 April 2020 (draft minutes circulated). The latter meeting had received reports on free school meals, home learning, safeguarding and assessing students' course grades.

6.1.1 SWH added that live lessons had been cautiously trialled with Y10, with a positive response: around 90 per cent of Y10 students had attended. The initiative could be extend to Y12 and priority groups.

6.1.2 He had held a meeting with the 80 or so staff that day by video conference to discuss the needs of students when they returned to school and how the school and staff could best adapt, perhaps using the trauma-informed practice framework.

[GGO joined the meeting with apologies at 5.17pm.]

6.2 Personnel and Resources Committee RAU, who chairs this committee, having given apologies, JWO, who is vice chair, reported that, since the last FGB meeting, it had met on 12 March (minutes circulated) and 7 May 2020 (minutes not yet available). The latter meeting had discussed similar issues (from different angles) to the School Improvement Committee, but also 2019-20 outturns and the 2020-21 budget.

7. Approve policies and other documents

7.1 FMI noted that all four policies scheduled for approval had been reviewed at committee but, as statutory documents, had to be approved by the FGB.

7.2 Pay Policy Governors **AGREED** the Pay Policy.

7.3 Accessibility Plan Governors **AGREED** the Accessibility Plan.

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

7.5 Charging and Remissions Policy Governors **AGREED** the Charging and Remissions Policy.

8. Update on plans to return to school post-Covid-19

8.1 FMI noted that the school had received an enormous amount of advice and guidance on a further return to school post Covid-19, including excellent briefings from Camden.

8.2 Government guidance was detailed, but every school's needs were different. Governors would be held accountable for getting things right, including managing risk. A short EGM could be needed to agree arrangements after the half term break.

8.3 SWH confirmed that the health and safety aspects of a return to school had to be signed off by governors. There were obvious benefits to getting children back into school in some form and it made sense to start with Years 10 and 12.

8.4 Government guidance on a return was in line with advice from school leaders and professional associations, which was not wholly the case with primary schools.

8.5 There was clearly huge concern about health and safety, and how to encourage social distancing in a school setting. These concerns rather eclipsed teaching and learning. He would be drafting a detailed risk assessment, painfully aware that headteachers were personally accountable for health and safety.

8.6 FMI invited IJO to present on the school's proposals on the practicality of a return, which she did as follows, for Y10 and Y12 separately.

8.7 Y10 IJO called up a working paper on governors' screens on the proposed phased expansion of face-to-face provision from 1 June 2020, stressing that this was work in progress which had been discussed in depth with the Y10 teaching team.

8.7.1 The proposal was for Y10 students to attend by tutor group for one day a week, for contact with their tutors and for live online lessons with their subject teachers. The core curriculum would be addressed on paper – as on the days students were not in school. In school, they would access the same online content as at home, but with an added structure and routine, promoting wellbeing.

8.7.2 Students attending regularly would no longer receive a phone call from their tutor, as had happened up to now.

8.7.3 A very small number of students living with clinically-vulnerable family members were expected not to come into school, and a wider group of families would no doubt have concerns about hygiene and health.

8.7.4 Until those families could be persuaded to send their children to school, the students would continue to receive phone calls and would be expected to complete paper-based work and live online lessons.

8.7.5 Staff were working hard to bring “priority” (vulnerable) Years 10 and 12 students into school for one-to-one meetings and to participate in live lessons in school, preferably for all or most days.

8.7.6 From 1 June 2020, the Y10 tutor team would begin calling parents and students to enquire about their attitude to face-to-face provision, in order to meet students' needs.

8.7.7 Questions had been raised about the potentially raised risks to minority ethnic staff of a return to school. These risks had not been apparent in March.

8.7.8 The expectation was that as society opened up, there would be more sickness and absence to manage, either due to staff or members of their households falling ill. At school, various hygiene and safety practices would be encouraged.

8.8 Y12 There were fewer details here. The outline plan for was for sixth formers to have face-to-face time with their subject teachers, but still in small groups and not in every subject. Online provision had been effective so far.

8.8.1 The school was liaising with its LaSWAP sixth form consortium partners Acland Burghley, La Sainte Union and Parliament Hill schools to share best practice.

8.8.2 SWH added that the LaSWAP headteachers were keen to work as a group, mirroring best practice and provision in a co-ordinated approach. Sixth form tuition would be course-specific, with some teacher contact at a safe level.

8.8.3 There was clear guidance that there was no need for any personal protective equipment (PPE) in the average school setting, although there were specific circumstances where PPE should be worn, and it would need to be supplied for those circumstances. Wearing of masks was inappropriate for various reasons of hygiene and safety. Handwashing was crucial, to prevent cross-contamination.

8.9 FMI thanked IJO and SWH for their summaries and called for questions, which SWH and IJO answered as follows.

8.10 Is the wearing of masks inappropriate for staff or students or both, and what if parents insist that their children wear them [JMN]? Before lockdown, students had been asked to remove masks and gloves because they carried hygiene risks and encouraged a false sense of security. Social distancing was more important.

8.11 Does the return of some Y10 students for just one day a week make a huge difference [KDU]? The original vision had been for more students to attend, but the advice had been to rigorously restrict contact and not to be too ambitious. The aim was to start manageably small and build on provision. Part of the point was to get students used to coming in to school. Many had not left their households for eight weeks. The Association of School and College Leaders had spoken of "progress reviews", setting objectives for the following week, rather than teaching sessions.

8.12 If boys are simply coming to school to sit at a computer, as they can at home, what is the point [ISH]? One reason to come in was to bring in paper copies of work completed at home. Another was to motivate students and reassure parents that the process was in train. For hard-to-reach students it was particularly worthwhile.

8.12.1 Boys were more likely to attend in small groups than as a result of a blanket summons. The aim was to build a sense that they had received an individualised invitation, that there was value in being here, and that it was a privilege to attend.

8.13 Does online learning mean live lessons on screen, pre-recorded lessons, or being set research projects, or all three [ISH]? For Y10, it was all of those things.

8.14 Given the diversity of staff's household responsibilities, how could the school take these into account in allocating duties, so as to minimise resentment [CGE]? School leaders were conscious of the potential for resentment among staff, while appreciating the contribution of everyone in the team. Those without irksome home responsibilities were in school, but returned home to make phone calls to students and their families. Those who needed to take public transport, or had young children, or were carers for elderly relatives, remained at home but played their part.

8.15 Could staff be assured that governors and senior leaders are aware of and appreciate staff's significant efforts, and should staff receive mental health first aid training to help support returning students [STA]? FMI to write message of appreciation to staff; SWH to ensure that it is uploaded to website. SWH said that mental health was an aspect of the trauma-informed practice framework in which staff would be trained. STA to brief SWH and IJO on wider mental health training.

ACTION *Item 8.15* *FMI to write message of appreciation to staff for their efforts during the Covid-19 crisis; SWH to ensure it is uploaded to website; STA to brief SWH and IJO on appropriate mental health training.*

8.16 Could paper-based packages of work sent to students be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope for ease of return [ISH]? In theory, yes; in practice, but putting the work together to get it out was challenging enough, without acting as a clearing house for returns.

8.17 Should the school survey Y10 students on how they propose to get to school [SSK]? That was scheduled for tutors' next phone call.

8.18 Should Y10 parents be surveyed about whether they will let their children attend [FMI]? That would be done from 1 June. It was easy to forget that the school was actually open now – 1 June would see it expanding provision.

8.19 What if teachers refuse to return to work, citing safety concerns [FMI]? Improved communications between the Department for Educational (DfE) and NEU (National Education Union) would help here. Relations in Camden were very positive, and the hope was to be able to manage teachers' anxieties and find a way forward.

8.20 Will exams take place next year [LEM]? No information on that was yet available. The school recognised that this could be a source of anxiety.

8.21 Could internal exams help to set Y12 grades [ISH]? The original hope had been to launch some form of structured assessment by the end of the summer term, but UCAS, which co-ordinated applications to higher and further education, had not moved the deadline for schools' submission of proposed grades.

8.22 SJE stressed the importance of all staff answering consistently when responding to parental concerns – for instance, that the school committed to ensuring students were reasonably safe, rather than *guaranteeing* their safety, which was impossible.

8.23 Similarly, LEM urged the school to ensure that all tutors were consistent in the support they offered to students across the school.

8.24 Governors praised the enormous efforts which had clearly been invested by senior leaders and staff into restoring some semblance of normality in educational provision, and **AGREED** the plans for a post-Covid-19 return to school in principle.

9. Update for arrangements for school leadership in 2020-21

IJO summarised this paper, after congratulating BLA on his appointment to deputy head (one-year contract). The four acting associate headteachers who had also been appointed would take on defined roles, which given the circumstances would be kept under review. The seven unsuccessful but enormously enthusiastic candidates had come up with some excellent ideas on which the school hoped to draw. The critical importance of the school's cadre of excellent middle leaders had been highlighted by the challenges of the last few weeks. There were no questions.

10. Discuss Governing Body succession planning

10.1 FMI thanked ISH, KDU and DMO for their thorough work framing proposals for the future leadership and membership of the school's Governing Body. The changes were profound, but necessary. FMI asked ISH to introduce them.

10.2 ISH explained that huge pending changes in Governing Body membership – notably the departure of SWH as headteacher, FMI and CGE as chair and vice chair of governors, and LEM and RAU as chairs of the governors' committees – had prompted the working group's deliberations.

10.3 Their work had been informed by the need for continuity; knowledge and experience of the school; and the skills audit that all governors had helpfully completed. FMI had been kept informed of their thinking throughout.

10.4 The skills audit had shown some gaps in the Governing Body's expertise and knowledge. Recruitment of at least one governor, if not more, would help here.

10.5 FMI thanked ISH, KDU and DMO again for their work. She had discussed the roles with all governors who they had proposed to fill them, particularly SSK as chair of governors, and all were committed to playing their part.

10.6 She was certain that the Governing Body remained in good hands but would be around to offer support as necessary. CGE echoed her confidence and praised the exemplary process of succession planning.

10.7 FMI added that it was very strange that, due to the coronavirus epidemic, SWH was leaving the school when there was so little of the school to say goodbye to. CGE was also stepping back after too many years to count. She proposed that both return in the autumn term, particularly – in SWH's case – for the boys' sake, to say goodbye properly.

10.8 Governors echoed FMI's thanks to the working group and **AGREED** its proposals.

11. Any other business

11.1 Confidential minutes of the previous meeting Given that no discussion of the confidential minutes of the meeting of 30 January 2020 was anticipated or forthcoming, governors **AGREED** them as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign at a later date. There were no matters arising. Both actions – on the future of the Governing Body and appointing a consultant headteacher – had been fulfilled.

11.2 Confidential minutes of the EGM of 24 February 2020 Given that no discussion of the confidential minutes of the extraordinary general meeting of 24 February 2020 was anticipated or forthcoming, governors **AGREED** them as a full and accurate record of the meeting. FMI to sign at a later date. There were no matters arising. Both actions – on collaborating with other schools and the acting headteacher role – had been fulfilled.

11.3 School journey refunds SWH reported that two imminent school journeys, both of the modern foreign languages (MFL) department to Germany, had of necessity, given the current crisis, been cancelled.

11.3.1 Substantial sums were involved, for which the travel company concerned had offered a credit note. However, families had paid large sums for their boys' places on the trips – up to £585, according to JMN – and a credit note was of no use to them. If the travel company would not stump up, perhaps the school should.

11.3.2 The risk to the school in paying back parents' money – averting any understandable resentment if it did not – was that there was a chance it may not get it back. The company claimed it had no capital to repay all bookings. A credit note would be valid until January 2021, when a full cash refund would be offered.

11.3.3 KDU argued that the school was legally entitled to a full cash refund. A credit note at current values may not cover the full cost of trips in future. The school should press for a full refund. DMO agreed: credit was the company's preferred option, not the school's. FMI suggested consulting Camden's lawyers.

ACTION *Item 11.3.3* **SWH** to ensure school pursues refund for German trips.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 2 July 2020, potentially at The Mill (if so, time TBC)¹

¹ In the event, given the continuing coronavirus pandemic, this meeting was scheduled to take place on this date by video conference at the usual time of 5pm.

There being no further business, FMI thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 6.32pm.

Signed..... Date.....

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION **Item 2.2** **SJE** and **STA** to discuss the recommendations of their student focus group report directly with IJO; **SJE** to anonymise student focus group report and forward to MHU for him to upload to GovernorHub.

ACTION **Item 4.3** **DSM** to delete Q25 query in SFVS and forward to Camden.

ACTION **Item 8.15** **FMI** to write message of appreciation to staff for their efforts during the Covid-19 crisis; **SWH** to ensure it is uploaded to website; **STA** to brief SWH and IJO on appropriate mental health training.

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