

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 18 June 2020

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Mr Sam White (SWH)	✓
LA	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	x
Parent	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	x
Staff	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	x
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE) Vice chair	x
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) Chair	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	x
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓

ATTENDING

Ms Izzy Jones (IJO) **Deputy head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

FMI welcomed everyone to this extraordinary general meeting of William Ellis School's Governing Body, which began at 5.03pm 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, CGE, GGO, STA and JWO. LEM and JMN had apologised for a late arrival. A quorum was present. There were no declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in respect of any items on this agenda. The single paper (for item 4) had been circulated in advance.

2. Receive report on resources aspects of wider opening

2.1 SWH explained that school had now more widely opened. Apart from the continuing “mini-WES” provision – for vulnerable children and those of key workers – it had that week welcomed an additional 15 Y10 and 15 Y12 students.

2.2 In the run up to this wider opening, a risk assessment, of which governors had reviewed a first draft, had been finalised. This had included some resources implications, mostly for additional cleaning of the school and cleaning materials.

2.3 The school had an adequate supply of the latter – personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectant wipes, antiviral hand gel, etc. – and they were not big cost items. Specific areas of the school designated for use were cleaned daily.

2.4 There were sufficient staff to meet the needs of all students currently attending, but it was tight.

2.5 The school was spending within budget: indeed, costs were lower than if it were fully open. So far, cost savings had run about £6k a month.

2.6 However, future resource implications were not rosy, with lower income and demands on spending that included means of remote (home) access for students.

2.7 FMI thanked SWH for his summary and called for questions, which he answered as follows.

2.8 What additional expenses might staff working from home need to claim [DMO]?

For several years the school had provided teachers with laptops, which were fully compatible with online learning software. The cost of phone calls had not been raised. SWH was aware of no other relevant expenses.

2.9 What expenditure on IT is likely [RAU]? The school was likely to continue with the current blended learning – in school and at home – for at least autumn term 2020, and possibly into 2021. That would require more IT provision, both in school, and for individual students, who would need a personal keyboard device and access to the internet. Camden and London Grid for Learning were exploring options.

2.10 Would the initiative include home broadband access for students [RAU]? The hope was that Camden would provide a solution here.

2.11 Is current provision relatively slight – 15 students from each of two year groups and mini-WES – because of a shortage of teachers [KDU]? It was more a question of balancing teaching online and in school. Timetabling both was complex.

2.12 How many students need IT provision, either hardware or broadband [ISH]? The school was not entirely sure.

[JMN joined the meeting at 5.16pm.]

2.13 It was becoming clear now that students didn't necessarily have effective devices, though they thought they had. Laptops might not be able to access current online resources because they were too old, for instance. The ideal would be to get every student back into school by Christmas to audit their IT capability.

2.14 FMI noted that Camden had calculated that 3,000 students in the borough had no effective device, and 2,000 students had no access to broadband.

2.15 IJO agreed that it was students who theoretically had hardware – which turned out to be inappropriate or faulty – who were the challenge. Those who had nothing had been loaned school laptops.

2.16 This crisis ought to revolutionise students' learning: are we anywhere near ensuring that every secondary student is issued with a tablet [KDU]? SWH thought keyboard devices like laptops were preferable, but did not know how long universal provision would take. Timescales for such initiatives were usually lengthy. Standardisation was an issue.

2.16.1 He envisaged three-tier provision of devices. Most students would buy or lease devices. Disadvantaged students would be subsidised. Those in receipt of free school meals would receive them free, although they may pay a deposit.

2.17 In the long term, what are the educational advantages of all students having access to a device at home [SJE]? The crisis had underlined that online learning could be effective in many areas, and that blended schooling was the way forward. Home and independent learning were more secure if every child had a laptop. It was always the school's vision that every student would have their own device.

2.18 Do we know how much it would cost [FMI]? IJO answered this question. Handing over a laptop to a student for five years was effectively giving it to them: on return, its value would be minimal. Charging for a device would give students a sense of the device's value, for which they would hopefully then take responsibility. The question of ongoing costs was problematic.

2.18.1 Ensuring all students had a device to use at home was only an initial aspiration. Once students brought them in to school, costs would plummet, because textbooks and everything but residual IT would become redundant.

2.19 Are other schools having similar conversations [ISH]? SWH confirmed that fellow members of the LaSWAP sixth form consortium, Camden (on behalf of all its schools) and LGfL (London Grid for Learning) were all exploring the issue.

2.20 FMI thanked SWH again for his report, and him and IJO for answering questions.

3. Receive report on educational aspects of wider opening

3.1 SWH summarised the first four days of wider onsite provision, which consisted of three strands.

3.2 Mini-WES Some 20-30 Years 7-10 disadvantaged – otherwise known as priority or identified students – children, and those of key workers, continued to attend from 9am to 3pm for a mixed diet of individual working, subject specialist support and PE.

3.3 Y10 Since Monday, 15 students from each of the five Y10 forms had been invited to attend one day a week. That day's attendance had been disappointing, but previously 75-85 per cent of invited students had come through the school gates. The previous day had seen 100 per cent attendance.

3.3.1 Their day in school began at 10am with a PE lesson and ended at 2.45pm. The morning continued with three live lessons if the appropriate subject teacher was in attendance: if not, an English teacher was always on site to give an English lesson. Lunch and a meeting with their form tutor completed their school day.

3.4 Y12 The day for these LaSWAP students began at 11am and consisted of one two-hour lesson a week in each subject, delivered on site or live online, or alternatively delivered on site and recorded for those who did not attend in person.

3.4.1 Tutorials took place on Monday, with four option blocks taking up a day a week. Attendance was less transparent as students from four schools were involved. Standard provision was for three classes of 21 students, each led by three teachers.

3.5 IJO added that, for all strands of provision, contact ratios in class were far lower than those required even for a school trip, which created its own problems. Increasing in-school provision without reducing social distancing would mean bringing more teachers into school and fewer teachers available for online support.

3.6 FMI thanked SWH for his introduction and called for questions, of which she asked the first.

3.7 What is the plan over the longer term [FMI]? SWH wanted all students to attend school at least once before the end of term. This should be possible: during the previous week Y11 students had attended efficiently to pick up work. One-to-one meetings would probably consist of a progress review and an offer of any support necessary for continued work online.

[LEM joined the meeting at 5.36pm.]

3.8 FMI noted the LEM had been co-author of a paper submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) proposing a National Tutoring Service. The government looked to be taking on some of its proposals.

3.9 LEM thought that one government initiative might include an extra £50-100m nationwide for schools to buy private or charitable tutoring. The sums involved were not huge, and safeguarding, standards and equitable distribution could be issues, but if the initiative took off there would be opportunities for William Ellis to benefit.

3.10 Is the idea of a summer school realistic [FMI]? SWH pointed out that William Ellis usually held a summer school for September's Y7 intake in the first two weeks of summer; it made more sense now, if it went ahead, to hold it in August. However, enthusiasm among families was low. After-school tuition could be a better option.

3.11 LEM worried that tutoring, although valuable, could only offer some extra support to some students. Even when social distancing eased, many parents would remain afraid to send their children to school.

3.12 SWH added that the school already worked with one reputable tutoring organisation, but elsewhere quality assurance could be an issue unless organisations had robust training schemes in place. The education charity Action Tutoring did an excellent job but there were cowboys in the field.

3.13 What about so-called Nightingale (temporary) Schools [RCO]? LEM pointed out that the limiting factor was numbers of teachers.

3.14 Were NQTs a good source for tutoring [JMN]? This had been proposed in the paper that LEM had co-authored. He would circulate it.

ACTION *Item 3.14* **LEM** to circulate paper on National Tutoring Service.

3.15 FMI thanked all concerned for the contributions.

4. Review actions to educate re racism and promote equality, diversity and inclusion

4.1 SWH highlighted data on achievement, progress, attendance and exclusions analysed by ethnicity for the two academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19.

4.2 The exclusions and attendance data had been drawn from reports to the School Improvement Committee. The data on attainment and progress had not been presented in this way before, with disadvantage presented alongside ethnicity. However, the sample size was small, and potentially skewed by individual results.

4.3 The partial closure of the school due to the coronavirus pandemic had led to the cancellation of a planned day of staff training in diversity, equality and inclusion.

4.4 The idea of the training was partly to inform redrafting of the school's equality and diversity statement. This was based on a Camden template but quite bland. It needed work customising in light of the current Black Lives Matter campaign.

4.5 Among staff, conscious bias appeared to be largely absent. This left unconscious bias and structural racism, which were to have been addressed in the cancelled training, with opportunities for teachers to reflect on their assumptions and attitudes.

4.6 A recent quick review of diversity within subjects in the curriculum had suggested that it was extensive in subjects such as drama and PHSE, but less so in English. History dealt with diversity but its coverage could be expanded.

4.7 FMI thanked SWH for his opening remarks and called for questions, of which she asked the first, and which SWH answered as follows.

4.8 Returning to the research, are there really no black Caribbean disadvantaged boys at the school [FMI]? This data dates back to 2018 and 2019. In 2018, there were 24 students for whom the school possessed no ethnicity data, 17 of them in Y8 alone. That is a significant proportion. Confusingly, the category of "white and any other ethnic background" might incorporate black Caribbean pupils.

4.9 Should we be concerned about ethnicity within the exclusion data [FMI]? SWH pointed out that September 2019 had seen the introduction of a new Behaviour Policy with a scale of consequences, ending in exclusion. However, the school routinely excluded students for just half a day: other schools excluded for up to five.

4.10 Could PSHCE (personal, social, health, citizenship and economic) lessons help to identify and counter racist micro-aggression, and did the school have a role in supporting children in how to keep safe, for instance if they were subject to policy stop and search [SJE]? IJO answered this question.

4.10.1 An excellent session on stop and search for all Y11s, led by police, had recently included such issues as the boys' rights, and the questions they should ask. Students had responded positively that the school hoped to repeat the session.

4.10.2 Racist micro-aggression would be the topic of tutorial lessons this week. This was difficult to cover online, for various reasons. JMN agreed: online, privacy was not guaranteed, and there was a risk of contradiction from other family members.

4.11 KDU pointed out that although unconscious bias was difficult to root out, it did appear that Bame (black, Asian and minority ethnic) pupils were not being disadvantaged educationally, if only because white British disadvantaged boys did so very, very badly in comparison. She was reassured by this.

4.12 SWH noted that the reason black African Somali and black African Congolese boys had been differentiated was because previously they had been top of the of exclusions and lowest in attainment. Exclusions had now fallen and attainment risen.

4.13 More generally, disadvantage clearly had a significant impact, and the record of white British disadvantaged students was of particular concern.

4.14 On staff diversity, as monitored by the Staffing and Resources Committee, SWH thought that this had improved over the years. IJO noted that two Bame members of staff had voluntarily opened up discussions about the increased risk from Covid-19 for Bame individuals. This could be further explored in the school and curriculum.

4.15 She warned that the school should carefully consider how to allocate this school year's remaining five hours of staff training.

5. Any other business

There was no other business.

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

There being no further business, FMI thanked all present for attending and brought the meeting to a close at 6.18pm.

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

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTION ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION *Item 3.14* **LEM** to circulate paper on National Tutoring Service.