

# WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



## MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 2 July 2020

### MINUTES

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GOVERNORS		Present
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Sam White (SWH)	✓
<b>LA</b>	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	✓
<b>Parent</b>	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	✓
<b>Staff</b>	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	✓
<b>Foundation</b>	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE) <b>Vice chair</b>	✓
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) <b>Chair</b>	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
<b>Co-opted</b>	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
<b>ATTENDING</b>		
	Ms Sue Higgins (SUH) <b>Observer</b>	
	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO) <b>Deputy head</b>	
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) <b>Assistant head</b>	
	Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) <b>Assistant head</b>	
	Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) <b>Director of sixth form</b>	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) <b>Clerk</b>	

### 1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

FMI welcomed everyone to this 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. She particularly welcomed SUH, as an observer and consultant headteacher-designate. CGE had apologised for a late arrival. 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. All papers had been circulated in advance.

## 2. Review 2020-21 School Development Plan

**2.1** FMI thanked IJO for her presentation on the draft 2020-21 School Development Plan and asked her to introduce it, which she did as follows.

**2.2** IJO thanked SWH for being so constructive and supportive of continuity in helping to develop this School Development Plan for 2020-21, which she and SUH had drafted in consultation with the school's forthcoming (2020-21) leadership team.

**2.3** The aim had been to draft an actionable, coherent and ambitious plan, which had been conceived as though the school was fully operational – as it would be in time. It was easier to scale down from a comprehensive plan than scale up from a partial plan.

**[ISH joined the meeting with apologies at 5.06pm.]**

**2.4** It would be continually adapted to circumstances, and implementation plans continually developed throughout the year.

**2.5** The last time the school had been operating “as normal” had been in February 2020, during the peer-review assessment of the Challenge Partners organisation. Its resulting report had highlighted such “even better ifs” (EBIs) as consistency of provision; assessment and feedback; rewards and sanctions; and raising outcomes for all students, but particularly disadvantaged ones.

**2.6** Then the Covid-19 pandemic had struck, and most students were out of school. The School Development Plan took into account the challenges they would face on return, and the emotional baggage they would carry, but also some positives.

**2.7** The draft plan drew a lot on educational consultant Barry Carpenter's work on a “recovery curriculum”, with its five “levers of recovery”: investing in relationships, engaging with community, co-constructing a transparent curriculum, metacognition (skills for learning) and giving students the physical, mental and emotional space to absorb what had happened in the past few months. This last would be supported by staff training in so-called “trauma-informed” practice.

**2.8** IJO highlighted slides in her presentation which outlined the three key objectives of the School Development Plan. Each focused strongly on the needs of disadvantaged students. Key performance indicators (KPIs) would be progressively achieved over three years. The key objectives were:

- **Literacy** This included skilled teaching of reading and writing, enabling students to read and write complex texts confidently in all subjects. Struggling students received targeted interventions.
- **Curriculum and assessment** All students experienced a curriculum in each subject that communicated high expectations of students as learners, developed their cultural capital and prepared them to be responsible, global citizens in a democratic society.
- **Relationships and engagement** Staff, students and parents worked collaboratively and transparently to empower students to achieve their full potential.

**2.9** IJO noted that the motto Rather Use than Fame was still useful in the context of the school's 21st century student population: students varied enormously in their initial reading age, access to digital technology, and diversity of background.

**2.10** Becoming a centre of excellence in boys' education involved:

- Pride in being a boys' school.
- Student empowerment and leadership.
- Promoting mental and physical health.
- Honest, caring and robust relationships.

**2.11** Finally, IJO referenced a series of over-arching KPIs of progress and attainment, none of which would be achieved without excellence in the school's three key objectives: literacy, curriculum and assessment, and relationships and engagement.

**2.12** SUH added that the four keys to developing excellence in boys' education would be touchstones for the school's leaders, and through them, all staff.

**2.13** On the practical side, team plans would have clear and transparent objectives, with milestones, so that members of the team could hold each other to account, and governors could support and challenge senior leaders more easily.

**2.14** FMI thanked IJO for her presentation and SUH for her remarks, and called for questions and comments, which she took in a group, but which are here disaggregated for ease of reference. IJO and SUH answered the questions.

**2.15 Is this plan not too broad brush, and how easy will it be to adapt if circumstances change [KDU]?** IJO noted that – in line with governors' requests – she had not presented all the operational detail behind the broad brush strokes. Behind each slide was a flexible, adaptable implementation plan which could be tailored as necessary, for instance to facilitate wholesale reintroduction of home learning.

**2.16 How will you ensure consistency of provision, without too much variation from teacher to teacher [LEM ]?** IJO referred to a favourite maxim of hers, by business guru Keith Cunningham: "Ordinary actions consistently done achieve extraordinary results". She wanted all senior and middle leaders – particularly those new to the school – to develop and practice their line management skills week in, week out, having robust conversations with their staff when necessary. IJO welcomed an offer from LEM to share recent research on student feedback and engagement.

**ACTION** *Item 2.16* **LEM** to share recent research on student engagement with IJO.

**2.17** SUH noted that new managers often found line management difficult. Challenging and supporting and holding staff to account beyond a manager's own specialist area could be daunting. It had to be a priority development area.

**2.18 How will you ensure that BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) issues are not shoehorned into a single annual "black history" month but are implicit throughout the curriculum, rather than viewed as an anomaly [STA]?** IJO thought the plan had tried to address this by offering a curriculum which developed cultural capital: serving students through an enabling, rich curriculum was a moral compulsion. A curriculum consisting only of dead white men lay in the past. Staff were also keen to avoid a model of black history which only referenced oppression and slavery.

**2.19** GGO reported that Camden BAME students to whom she had spoken thought that a focus on slavery sold them short. Although they had found lockdown an opportunity for growth, learning and reflection, they spoke a lot about its trauma, and addressing it. They keenly felt a lack of access to learning, such as tutoring.

**2.20 Is the curriculum right for the boys [FMI]?** SUH thought that William Ellis, like every secondary school, was having to revisit its curriculum with fresh eyes. It was important for any comprehensive school to diversify beyond a purely academic curriculum.

**2.21** FMI thanked IJO again for her report, and her and SUH for answering questions.

### 3. Receive headteacher's report

**3.1** FMI thanked SWH for his report and invited him to introduce it, which he did as follows. First, he noted that IJO had digested that day's government guidance on reopening schools to all pupils in September 2020 with admirable focus.

**3.2** The response of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) to the guidance had been quite positive, although clearly serious questions remained.

**3.3** His own report dealt mainly with the government's proposed catch-up programme, including funding of tutoring, as well as centre-assessed grades.

**3.4 Tutoring** A National Tutoring Programme, drawing on £350m of government funding, had been proposed by, among others, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), as part of a Covid-19 catch-up programme.

**3.4.1** The proposal felt robust, but there was some concern about how it would be implemented nationally. William Ellis had worked for a number of years with the educational charity Action Tutoring, which had promised to prioritise the school.

**3.4.2** However, some of the boys needed an enhanced level of support. Accessing quality tutoring for students who were most in need had been challenging in the past. That said, many boys were surprisingly concerned about the learning they had missed. The school risked underestimating an element of personal ambition.

**3.4.3** FMI thanked SWH and called for comments and questions on tutoring.

**3.4.4** LEM observed that EEF, of which he is a trustee, worried about how a National Tutoring Programme might be implemented, despite having proposed it. Using the video conferencing service's chat function, he added: "It's not clear yet what constraints will accompany this 'extra' money for catch-up. Mixed messages...!"

**3.4.5** KDU worried that too many of the school's students might need tutoring, when evidence showed it worked best one – or two – to one. Teachers could also find themselves under stress, balancing class work, tutoring, and using technology more.

**3.4.6** GGO reported young people's appreciation of one-to-one support from teachers, and the value of setting goals and feedback to enhance motivation.

**3.4.7 Could the school's staff be paid to tutor [FMI]?** IJO thought it was already asking a lot for them to do the job that they were currently paid to do. To expect them contribute more was ambitious. They should not be the school's first port of call.

**3.4.8** SUH referred back to the 2005-08's national Closing the Gap initiative, which had offered clear evidence that one-to-one tutoring and interventions could close the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. She wondered whether alumni of William Ellis or LaSWAP could be encouraged to step in as tutors. Many currently attended university in London, so were local.

**3.4.9 Is there a mismatch between the enormous challenge of enabling students to catch up on learning lost, and the School Development Plan, which is based very much on business as usual [ISH]?** IJO rejected this. The School Development Plan envisaged that students, especially disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), were well served by and attended intervention and catch-up work, and that they were "equipped with the physical resources needed to learn successfully in the 2020s" – i.e. digital technology.

**3.4.10** Additionally, trauma-informed schooling would ensure that all teachers used strategies that were emotionally intelligent and engaged. The plan was heavily influenced by Carpenter's five "levers of recovery" (as in paragraph 2.7). Objectives would be flexible.

**3.4.11** The plan's approach was to recognise that there were things that the school could not control. It focused on what could be controlled.

**3.4.12** FMI cited a number of contributions to the debate through the conferencing service's chat function, including:

- We might benefit from thinking through what material and tech-based provision we could aim to have in place alongside more “regular” staffing / tutoring provision... [STA]
- Any mentoring possibilities for older [William Ellis] boys [DMO]?
- I think [SUH's] idea about accessing alumni of William Ellis / LaSWAP is good. However, how are we going to be able to resource accessing / training / managing this population to be effective and sustainable as a group of “assistant tutors” [STA]?
- I would like to add to [SUH's] point that there are lots of organisations that aim at promoting uptake at higher education level, and they offer free “mentors” to schools e.g. Routes into Languages for modern foreign languages [JMN].

**3.4.13** SWH pointed out that funding tutoring was problematic: the government's promised £650m for headteachers' discretionary spending resulted in a per-student allocation of less than £100. Financial constraints were considerable.

**3.4.14** William Ellis, like many Camden schools, viewed the potential of IT to support catch-up very seriously. Camden-sourced devices were cheap, at just £139 for a basic unit. This was affordable, with some parental support, though the time frame for sourcing and distributing devices was tight.

**3.4.15** FMI identified a need to find efficiencies elsewhere to free up funds to invest in narrowing the digital divide. RAU warned that reserves were severely limited, and that the computers on offer from Camden were cheap because they were Cloud-based, which meant they had to be connected to the internet in order to access the software to operate. That could be problematic in many students' homes.

**3.4.16** SSK noted that the school's parents' association, WESPA, had already raised £2k towards a £30k laptop appeal. SWH reported that he would be meeting fellow heads of the LaSWAP sixth form consortium on the following day (2 July 2020) to discuss potentially funding a joint business unit. Efficiencies like that could release funds to invest in narrowing the digital divide and catching up with learning.

**3.5 Centre-assessed grades** SWH reminded governors that, following the cancellation of 2020 exams, exam centres like William Ellis and LaSWAP had been asked to assess and propose grades for Y10 and Y12 students.

**3.5.1** He acknowledged a risk of schools nationally overestimating grades, but William Ellis had worked hard to moderate KS4 grades and, with fellow LaSWAP schools, KS5 grades. The process of challenge from colleagues involved in the latter had been particularly useful, although despite that, it looked as if LaSWAP would be predicting positively compared to previous years.

**3.5.2** To some extent that was inevitable: predictions could not take into account particular students' anomalous disappointments. They had to assume that everything would go well for every student. That was not always the case.

**3.5.3** He did not know how the examinations regulator Ofqual would cope with an “exams centre” that consisted of a consortium of schools like LaSWAP. Students were taught in four schools – four different exam centres – with differing histories of adding value to student learning. That could provide the basis for challenge if necessary.

**3.5.4** At KS4, William Ellis was predicting a positive P8 (a weighted measure of progress) which was unprecedentedly positive, partly due to this year's atypical Y11. The school had always expected impressive results because the cohort was one of high prior attainment, with a highly positive attitude to their learning. He worried that Ofqual's adjustments could depress results and deny boys the grades they deserved.

**[CGE joined the meeting at 6.08pm.]**

**3.5.5** FMI warned that although the current Y7 roll was looking healthy, some parents could be swayed by journalists' rosy accounts of private schools' efforts to engage students in lockdown. The school needed to counter that with a positive message.

**3.5.6** She read out a number of contributions through the chat function, including:

- Every school I've seen has produced average higher predicted grades than previous years – expectation is that they will be pushed down by Ofqual [LEM]
- Universities will be accepting students with lower grades this year for 2020 entry: happy to help with clearing advice [DMO]
- I agree with [FMI's] remark re the positive message we need to offer publicly re grade predictions and the efforts that staff and students are making to sustain or achieve positive grade outcomes. Maybe we need to consider a planned i.e. strategic schedule of communications in this regard [STA]?
- You will be able to challenge as a school – sadly boys are likely to be disadvantaged as [they are] more likely to leave [revision] to the last minute [LEM]!
- At KS5, there was a very robust challenge to those who tried to disadvantage WES students [FWI]!

**3.5.7** FMI thanked SWH and called for comments and questions.

**3.5.8 Will Ofqual take into account school improvement over the past three years [ISH]?** SWH thought that school improvement and student attitude would not be taken into account. The school would want to see how Ofqual's pledge that "no student will be disadvantaged" was enacted in practice.

**3.5.9 Will offering retakes be an option [FMI]?** SWH pointed out that a full exam series for Years 11 and 13 would be seriously disruptive. It would not be the same process. No school could replicate the same conditions of build-up and support, and for that reason would discourage retakes. Additionally, the advantages for students were unclear. University entry would be easier this year. LaSWAP and other sixth form centres were unlikely to reject KS4 students who turned up with imperfect grades.

**3.5.10** KDU pointed out that only the pushiest parents would seek retakes; they should be discouraged. IJO advised that government guidance did not allow schools to deny retakes to students, though it was not clear who paid exam fees.

**3.5.11** SWH thanked FWI, MSC and all others who had so rigorously identified the school's and LaSWAP's centre-assessed grades at KS4 and KS5. Moderating the latter in particular had demonstrated the strength of the LaSWAP consortium.

## 4. Receive committee reports

**4.1** FMI paid tribute to the work of LEM and RAU, chairs of the School Improvement and Personnel & Resources committees respectively, over the years. Both were retiring from the roles, although staying on as governors. Both had done an excellent job, leaving big shoes to fill for SJE and KDU respectively. GGO, as vice chair of the School Improvement Committee, was also retiring from the role.

**4.2** FMI invited LEM and RAU to report, including any final words as committee chair.

**4.3 School Improvement Committee** LEM reported that, due to the pandemic, the committee had not met since the previous (14 May 2020) FGB meeting. Chairing it had been an honour; he paid tribute to CGE as his predecessor, and some impressive staff team work. He looked forward to becoming a “backbencher”.

**4.4 Personnel and Resources Committee** RAU reported that his committee had also not met since the previous (14 May 2020) FGB meeting, for the same reason. However, draft minutes of the previous (and previously-reported) meeting of 7 May 2020 had been circulated. He praised SWH's stewardship of the school's finances, ably supported by an excellent finance team. The school's first break-even budget for several years had been a notable triumph. Uncertainty was a given in school funding but he hoped that the school would continue in rude health financially.

## 5. Agree governor dates for 2020-21

Governors **AGREED** the meeting dates for the school year of 2020-21.

## 6. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

**6.1** The minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them at a later date. There was one matter arising.

**6.2 Item 11.3.3** SWH reported that the school had been refunded most of the money paid for its student trips to Germany. Governors welcomed this.

**6.3** All other actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

## 7. Minutes of the EGM of 1 June 2020 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them at a later date. There were no matters arising. Both actions – to amend a questionnaire for families to account for multi-generational households, and to amend a risk assessment in light of governor comments – had been fulfilled.

## 8. Minutes of the EGM of 18 June 2020 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 18 June 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them at a later date. There were no matters arising. The single action – for LEM to circulate a paper on a proposed National Tutoring Service – had been fulfilled.

## **9. Bid farewells**

**9.1 FMI** This was FMI's last meeting as chair. She had enjoyed working with governor colleagues and school staff and looked forward to staying on to the end of her term as a governor until May 2021 to support her successor, who would be appointed at the next (15 October 2020) FGB meeting. Governors thanked her for her tremendous contribution to the Governing Body and the school.

**9.2 CGE** FMI noted that this was CGE's last meeting as a governor. Over many years he had occupied virtually every post of responsibility as a governor, and been a stalwart and hard-working purveyor of good sense in support of the school. Echoed by governors, she wished him well in his "retirement".

**9.3 SWH** FMI noted that this was also SWH's final FGB as headteacher of the school. There would be a higher profile farewell for him, with speeches and presentations, in the autumn term.

**9.3.1** Meanwhile, FMI recalled that SWH had taken over as headteacher, nearly ten years previously, at a difficult time in the life of the school. He had calmed things, rebuilt staff morale and restored the school's distinctive identity.

**9.3.2** Under his leadership, William Ellis School had thrived, to the enormous benefit of the students. He would be a hard act to follow. She thanked him for all he had done. He would be missed more than he knew.

**9.3.3** SWH thought it rather unreal that his final FGB meeting should take place by video conference. Given that a farewell event would follow in the autumn, he would limit his remarks at this time, but he would like to take a photograph of the gallery of governors on his screen – which he did.

**9.3.4** This was the right time for him to go. Working with the Governing Body had been a rewarding experience. William Ellis's governors were a wonderful – and formidable – group. They had been incredibly supportive and dedicated. He knew headteachers who had fractious relationships with their governors and who dreaded meetings. That had never been his experience at William Ellis.

**9.3.5** FMI had been right to recall some challenging times when he first arrived. After a first few calm days, there had been a series of serious incidents. Could he make it through the first month? The first term? The first year? And then ten years had flown by...

**9.3.6** The school was now physically much improved, and the atmosphere was much improved, too. That was of huge credit to governors, who had been key to the enormous amount that had been achieved.

**9.3.7** SWH singled out FMI as "a brick and a star". She was amazingly dedicated and supportive, and her time commitment to the school had been huge. She had brought in a tremendous range of governors, each of whom tirelessly played their part in making the Governing Body productive, useful and supportive, while also holding him and his senior staff to account effectively. SWH concluded:

"I love William Ellis. It is a wonderful school and institution, and I am really positive about its future. The new senior leadership team has enthusiasm and energy, and under IJO will do a really good job next year. Thank you."

**9.3.8** Governors applauded.



**10. Any other business**

There was no other business.

**Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 15 October 2020 at 5pm**

There being no further business, FMI thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 6.35pm.

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

**Selina Skipwith**  
**Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School**

**ACTION ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES**

**ACTION**    **Item 2.16**    *LEM to share recent research on student engagement with IJO.*