

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 15 October 2020

MINUTES

GOVERNOR		Present
Acting headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	x
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	x
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	x
	Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (SSK)	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO) Vice chair	✓
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSI) Chair	✓
Local authority	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	✓
Parent	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	✓
Staff	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	x
ASSOCIATES¹	Ms Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓
	Mr Rob Yurchesyn (RYU)	✓

ATTENDING

Ms Sue Higgins (SUH) **Consultant headteacher**
Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Acting deputy head**
Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) **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 5.05pm by video conference, in line with government advice on social distancing in the current coronavirus pandemic. She particularly welcomed DNE as the new Foundation governor, and NSI and RYU, as prospective associates of the Governing Body. For their benefit, all introduced themselves.

¹ Both as of item 12.1.

[SUH and MSC joined the meeting with apologies during this exercise.]

Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RCO, KDU and LEM. DMO apologised for an early departure. GGO 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. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers had been circulated in advance. During the course of the meeting several governors randomly dropped out of, and returned to, it.

2. Appoint chair and vice chair

2.1 Appoint chair MHU, as clerk, took the chair and reported that ISH had nominated SSK as chair. There being no other nominations, and SSK having indicated that she was willing to stand, MHU declared her chair.

2.2 Appoint vice chair SSK took the chair and noted that ISH had also nominated DMO as vice chair. There being no other nominations, and DMO having indicated that he was willing to stand, SSK declared him vice chair.

3. Receive attendance report re impact of Covid

3.1 SSK thanked BLA for his report and invited him to introduce it.

3.2 Attendance at the start of term had been, at 95 per cent, a pleasing vote of confidence by families in the school's health security measures. However, that figure had subsequently fallen slightly, to the current 90 per cent or so.

3.3 It was the first time in years that the school had equalled the national average for attendance. Neither was there any great disparity between the attendance of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

3.4 The figures did not show those students officially isolating – losing, so far this term, 1,000 school days – or those who had been kept at home by parents. Two students had been sent home after testing positive for the virus, resulting in 120 Y9 boys also being sent home to self-isolate on the first day of term.

3.5 Of greatest concern were five students who had not attended for a single day. Three sets of parents had threatened to take their sons off roll and home-school them. In cases like this, a tough line could end up creating greater safeguarding issues than otherwise. There was a balance to be struck.

3.6 Tracking and tracing now took only an hour or so, but the challenge was how to encourage as many students as possible to keep coming in to school. Parents had been largely positive. Staff had worked hard to liaise with families and encourage students to attend. The quality of communications had been excellent.

3.7 SSK thanked BLA again and called for questions, which BLA answered as follows.

3.8 How many students are not attending because their family is shielding [OHA]?

Official shielding ceased on 1 August, so not to attend was a personal choice. One family had cited an adult's poor health, but their concerns would not have met the threshold for shielding. In this case, the family's relationship with the school was fragile and a safeguarding referral would be inappropriate.

[RAU joined the meeting with apologies at 5.27pm.]

3.9 Are students isolating at home provided with work to do [ISH]? Yes, although not online, as the priority was to teach those children who were in school. The challenge was to plug the gaps in children's education when they returned from isolating.

3.10 IJO add that teachers' attendance was also an issue, for all the same reasons. A lot of agency cover was needed to ensure that lessons remained of high quality.

4. Receive safeguarding update, including updated KCSiE

4.1 SSK thanked BLA for his report and invited him to introduce it, which he did as follows.

4.2 Safeguarding – physical, emotional, psychological and the safeguarding of children's future – had never been more important than in this year. It was the responsibility of all staff. Training in trauma-informed practice, to inform the managing of the fragile ecosystem of relationships in the school, had begun.

4.3 BLA noted the few material changes to the new (September 2020) edition of the Department for Educational's (DfE's) *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, including more emphasis on liaising with the police; on mental health provision and inter-agency working; and on social media and online safety. Governors formally noted the document.

4.4 MHU reminded governors to check the tick box on GovernorHub to confirm that they had read the document.

ACTION Item 4.4 *All governors to check tick box on GovernorHub to confirm that they have read the September 2020 edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education.*

4.5 SSK thanked BLA again for his report and called for questions, of which she asked the first two, and which BLA answered as follows.

4.6 Has there been any follow-up at William Ellis following the incident in which 17 students at neighbouring La Sainte Union school were taken to hospital after eating cannabis-laced sweets [SSK]? No specific further concerns had arisen. The school's drugs education programme continued throughout the year.

4.7 What will the introduction of tiering – different health security measures for different areas of the country – mean for safeguarding [SSK]? BLA was still struggling to unpick the potential measures but could see the pattern of attendance only going one way.

4.8 If trauma-informed practice is so crucial to students' wellbeing, should governors be briefed on its theory and practice [ISH]? BLA replied that he was more than happy to provide such a briefing.

ACTION Item 4.8 *SSK, IJO and BLA to liaise on potential briefing for governors on the theory and practice of trauma-informed practice.*

5. Receive acting headteacher's report

5.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report and invited her to introduce it, which she did as follows, apologising for its late delivery. She concentrated on two areas: Y11 (last year's Y10) and the School Development Plan.

5.2 Y11 This year were of concern because of the learning time they missed in 2019-20 due to the partial closure of the school. All students had attended for a different day a week in the second half of summer term, but attendance, although better than many other schools, failed to reach even 80 per cent, for a variety of reasons.

5.2.1 The autumn term had started with a re-introduction and acclimatisation for them, to solidify the learning attempted during lockdown. Tracking their progress used the Progress 8 (P8 – a measure of progress using a basket of weighted subjects) co-efficient for 2019, as there was no equivalent for 2020.

[GGO joined the meeting at 5.44pm.]

5.2.2 The measure was still useful in evaluating the relative performance of different groups. There were gaps between the progress of middle prior attaining students and their peers, and between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

5.2.3 However, overall P8, and the disadvantaged gap, were more positive than they had been this time last year.

5.2.4 The year group had returned to school with positive attitudes and engaged in their learning. Assessments had been hit by the sending home of 17 boys to isolate.

5.2.5 IJO highlighted the Y11 restart plans in her report, including a very positive face-to-face parents' evening, attended by 68 per cent of parents. Many had subsequently been complimentary about the guidance their sons had received.

5.2.6 One important change due to be re-introduced the following week was morning registration for Y11, as well as in the afternoon. This was because staggered starts and finishes to the day, in order not to overcrowd buses, had meant too little time for pastoral support. The Y11 day would now start at 8.35am.

5.2.7 Also in the restart plans were adjustments to the assessment calendar, with March mock exams. If centre-assessed grades had to be submitted in 2021, assessments had to be rigorous.

5.2.8 MSC added that the just-published provisional timetable for 2021 exams was crammed, with two subjects on one day in several instances.

5.3 Focus areas of the School Development Plan This comprised the second part of IJO's report.

5.3.1 The section on **relationships and engagement** included training on trauma-informed provision, two sessions of which had already taken place. The subject would be rehearsed in more detail at the next (19 November 2020) meeting of the governors' School Improvement Committee.

5.3.2 There was a balance to be struck between trauma-informed supportive practice and high standards of behaviour and wellbeing. Students needed to be clear about the consequences of poor behaviour. Trauma-informed practice didn't mean a reduction in standards of behaviour, because that would mean disenfranchising students who struggled the most with boundaries.

5.3.3 The school had re-established a facility for students – the Seclusion and Reflection Centre – as an alternative to short, fixed-term exclusions, principally for those students whose families would be unlikely to support them in the independent work required in the event of a fixed-term exclusion. Exclusions and sanctions were a last resort: better to raise students' aspirations and recognise their strengths.

5.3.4 Work on **literacy** had been the focus of a recent professional development day, which would be followed up by senior leaders' visits to lessons to assess the use of the strategies shared. Literacy was also the focus of the teachers' forthcoming project-based research and development programme.

5.3.5 Under the heading of **curriculum and assessment**, IJO shared on screen a document summarising various actions on remote learning, including distribution of 30 DfE-sourced laptops. More laptops would be arriving soon from Camden. Y11 travel and tourism students would be trialling bringing school laptops in from home.

5.3.6 Homework set on Microsoft Teams had been accessed by 85 per cent of students this term, compared with fewer than 50 per cent previously. All departments now used MS Teams. A majority of Y11 preferred to access work on MS Teams rather than paper. There was no evidence that, when isolating, live lessons alone boosted learning. Students had said that a mixture of formats – MS Teams, paper and some recorded or live video content – supported them better.

5.3.7 Student recruitment into Y12 from Y11 had been very pleasing. William Ellis's was the highest retention rate among the LaSWAP sixth form consortium's four schools, and better than 2019-20. Of more concern were vacancies in Y7. The October census had logged 112 out of 130 places filled. After the 31 October 2020 deadline for 2021 applications, the task would be to ensure prospective Y7s didn't drift away.

5.4 SSK thanked IJO for her report and called for questions, which IJO answered as follows.

5.5 How is home learning likely to develop post-Covid [DNE]? MS Teams was used by 85 per cent of students as a whole, not just those isolating at home. That shift to the day-to-day use of MS Teams as a virtual environment was clearly here to stay.

5.6 On tiers – of which the DfE had four, compared with three generally – IJO added that the biggest change was likely to be compulsory masks in communal areas.

5.7 Has a contingency plan on learning from home been shared with parents [SSK]? Not yet, because the school was keen not to suggest that the school might be closing, or create any ambiguity about the need to attend school. The focus had been on how to use MS Teams currently. That was one reason why the school had pushed its use for all students, even while in school.

5.8 The school had received no clarity on whether the forthcoming half term break would be one week or – acting as a “circuit breaker” – two. Setting up provision for disadvantaged groups for the second week alone would be a huge challenge.

5.9 SSK thought that consistent, Camden-wide expectations of digital home learning would be welcome. IJO said that was the point of Camden's Digital Learning Hub.

5.10 MSC pointed out that a “circuit-breaking” fortnight would hit autumn exams.

6. Receive report on raising Pupil Premium attainment

6.1 SSK thanked MSC and SUH for their report and invited them to introduce it.

6.2 SUH pointed out that improving the progress and attainment – and experience generally – of disadvantaged students at the school was an explicit part of the school's School Development Plan.

6.3 However, teacher assessments to inform this year's centre-assessed grades had apparently exacerbated the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, widening it from a P8 of around -0.5 previously to -0.78.

6.4 As a result, IJO had asked her and the school's Camden Professional Partner, Rob Robson (RRO), with key governors and senior leaders, to conduct a series of enquiry visits, aimed at redesigning the school's Pupil Premium strategy and objectives.

6.5 The visits would be structured around key questions:

- Who are the disadvantaged boys at WES?
- What are the most common barriers to success for these boys?
- What do disadvantaged boys and their work have to tell us about their experiences of school from Y7 through to the sixth form?
- What helps them thrive, and how can we create the right conditions for their success?

6.6 Unfortunately, the first enquiry visit had had to be postponed. It would now take place shortly after the half term break.

6.7 MSC promised a summary review outlining new strategies for the governors' next (19 November 2020) School Improvement Committee meeting.

6.8 IJO noted that, firstly, SUH and RRO had been asked to review teaching and learning and curriculum provision through the work of department teams, and middle managers' responsibilities for, and knowledge and understanding of, it.

6.9 Middle managers were key. Tight curriculum planning developed by the English department for Y11 was an excellent template.

6.10 Secondly, the 55 to 60 per cent of the school's disadvantaged students were too many to consider as a single group. Their diversity and experience would be explored by Student Voice exercises, similar to the precise research conducted by SJE and STA almost exactly a year earlier, of which SUH and RRO had had sight.

6.11 SSK offered further help with Student Voice research from governors as required.

6.12 SUH added that the enquiry would give middle leaders the opportunity to rehearse conversations about the curriculum and develop their confidence.

7. Agree curriculum risk areas and teams

7.1 IJO listed the risk subjects for which she proposed review by focus (improvement) teams in 2020-21:

- **KS4** English, modern foreign languages, computing, economics and business
- **KS5** Computing, German, maths (a focus area across LaSWAP).

7.2 The reasons for focus varied from new or temporary staff to concerns about teaching and assessment.

7.3 Previously subject leads had presented to the School Improvement Committee. Presentations this year would focus on the School Development Plan, with opportunities for subject leaders to address governors through SUH and RRO's work.

7.4 SSK thanked IJO for her summary and called for questions, of which there was one, which IJO answered as follows.

7.5 How are the new Y7 settling in [SJE]? Well, given all the disruption, although it had taken a few weeks due to the cancellation of various orientation and induction activities. One positive outcome of the pandemic had been the success of split breaks and lunchtimes for key stages 3 and 4, resulting in less crowded playgrounds, corridors and sports facilities. Y7 boys had settled positively into their lessons. Of more concern were a number of Y8 boys, who had not settled in.

[DMO left the meeting at 6.30pm.]

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

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

- Ronke Coote
- Karen Dunnell
- Lee Elliot-Major
- Georgia Gould
- Sophie Jenkins
- Izzy Jones
- Fiona Millar
- Imogen Sharp
- Selina Skipwith.

8.1.1 SSK nominated SJE to remain as chair, and RCO as vice chair, of this committee. There being no other nominations, governors **AGREED**. Advisers are BLA and MSC. DNE, NSI and RYU to observe a meeting before deciding whether to join.

ACTION *Item 8.1.1* **DNE, NSI and RYU** to observe a School Improvement Committee meeting before deciding whether to join.

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

- Richard Ault
- Karen Dunnell
- Omar Harmon
- Sophie Jenkins
- Izzy Jones
- Fiona Millar
- Selina Skipwith
- Stuart Taylor
- Jonny Woolf.

8.2.1 SSK nominated KDU to remain as chair, and JWO as vice chair, of this committee. There being no other nominations, governors **AGREED**. Advisers to be BLA, director of operations Mandy Seeburn and finance manager Debbie Smith. DNE, NSI and RYU to observe a meeting before deciding whether to join.

ACTION *Item 8.2.1* **DNE, NSI and RYU** to observe a Personnel and Resources Committee meeting before deciding whether to join.

8.3 Pay Committee Members of this committee were **AGREED** as:

- Richard Ault
- Karen Dunnell
- Jonny Woolf.

8.3.1 Members of the committee to appoint chair.

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

- Sophie Jenkins
- Fiona Millar
- Selina Skipwith.

8.4.1 Members of the committee to appoint chair.

8.5 Admissions Committee Members were **AGREED** as:

- Fiona Millar
- Selina Skipwith.

8.5.1 Members of the committee to appoint chair.

8.6 Governors **AGREED** to delegate review of committee terms of reference to committees, on the understanding that they would return to the FGB for final approval.

ACTION *Item 8.6* **MHU** to ensure that agreed committee terms of reference return to FGB for approval.

9. Review key governance documents

9.1 Instrument of Government Governors **AGREED** the Instrument of Government which came into effect on 1 December 2017 as fit for continued purpose.

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

ACTION *Item 9.2* **RCO, KDU, LEM, JMN and DMO** to inform chair if they consider that they may be disqualified from holding office as a governor.

9.3 FGB Standing Orders Governors **AGREED** the FGB standing orders as circulated.

9.4 Code of Conduct Governors **AGREED** collectively and individually to abide by the Code of Conduct as circulated. Governors not present to be equally bound.

ACTION *Item 9.4* **RCO, KDU, LEM, JMN and DMO** to note that they are bound by the Governors' Code of Conduct.

9.5 Governors' Declaration of Interests MHU noted that governors could now register their interests annually on GovernorHub. He would email instructions on how to do so.

ACTION *Item 9.5* **MHU** to email governors with instructions on how to declare interests annually on GovernorHub.

9.6 FGB work plan 2020-21 SSK noted that, when circumstances normalised, an annual work plan would be presented to governor to help plan meetings.

9.7 Governors' dates 2020-21 Governors **AGREED** the dates of governor meetings as circulated, acknowledging that some dates could still change *in extremis*.

9.8 Governor attendance report 2019-20 Governors noted this report.

9.9 Governor training report 2019-20 Governors noted this report.

10. Agree governor protocols

10.1 Naming governors in minutes Governors **AGREED** that they should be named in minutes as a matter of course, but that any governor who wished should have the right to have their contribution anonymised.

10.2 Approving policies Governors **AGREED** on the principle of subsidiarity: all policies to be approved at committee if possible or by an individual or the headteacher if guidance permitted and the committee wished.

10.3 Virtual meetings Governors noted the virtual governance protocols, as approved at the EGM of 1 June 2020.

11. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 2 July 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. SSK to sign them at a later date. There were no matters arising. The single action – for LEM to share research on student engagement – had been fulfilled.

12. Any other business

12.1 Appoint associates of the Governing Body SSK nominated NSI and RYU to be associates of William Ellis's Governing Body. Governors **AGREED** to appoint them as associates, as of this date, for a year, with speaking rights at FGB and whichever committee they join.

12.2 Thanks to staff SSK thanked the staff at every level for the hard work and long hours they had put in this term. Governors concurred.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 3 December 2020 at 5pm

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, SSK thanked all present for attending and closed this part of the meeting at 6.46pm. SUH, IJO, BLA, MSC and RYU logged off at this point. A confidential item followed.

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

Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION *Item 4.4* **All governors** to check tick box on GovernorHub to confirm that they have read the September 2020 edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

ACTION *Item 4.8* **SSK, IJO and BLA** to liaise on potential briefing for governors on the theory and practice of trauma-informed practice.

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