

# WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



## MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 3 December 2020

### MINUTES

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| GOVERNOR                  |  | Present |
|---------------------------|--|---------|
| <b>Acting headteacher</b> | Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)                                | ✓       |
| <b>Co-opted</b>           | Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)                               | ✓       |
|                           | Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)                              | ✓       |
| <b>Foundation</b>         | Mr Richard Ault (RAU)                              | ✓       |
|                           | Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)                               | x       |
|                           | Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)                           | ✓       |
|                           | Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)                          | ✓       |
|                           | Mr Omar Harmon (OHA)                               | x       |
|                           | Ms Fiona Millar (SSK)                              | ✓       |
|                           | Prof Daniel Monk (DMO) <b>Vice chair</b>           | ✓       |
|                           | Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)                          | ✓       |
|                           | Ms Selina Skipwith (SSI) <b>Chair</b>              | ✓       |
| <b>Local authority</b>    | Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)                             | x       |
| <b>Parent</b>             | Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)                            | ✓       |
|                           | Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)                             | ✓       |
| <b>Staff</b>              | Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)                          | x       |
| <b>ASSOCIATES</b>         | Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)                          | ✓       |
|                           | Mr Rob Yurchesyn (RYU)                             | ✓       |
| <b>ATTENDING</b>          | Ms Sue Higgins (SUH) <b>Consultant headteacher</b> |         |
|                           | Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) <b>Acting deputy head</b>    |         |
|                           | Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) <b>Assistant head</b>       |         |
|                           | Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) <b>Clerk</b>              |         |

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

SSK welcomed everyone to this meeting of William Ellis School's Governing Body, which began at 5.04pm by video conference, in line with government advice on social distancing in the current coronavirus pandemic. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RCO, GGO and OHA. JMN is on sabbatical. MSC 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. Receive report following Pupil Premium review**

**2.1** IJO thanked SUH and Rob Robson (RRO – the school's Camden school improvement partner, who was not present at the meeting) for their report, and IJO for her executive summary, which she had presented to a recent (19 November 2020) meeting of the governors' School Improvement Committee.

**2.2** IJO explained that the research that SUH and RRO had undertaken had built on interviews with Y11 students previously at risk of permanent exclusion undertaken by SJE and STA a year ago.

**[ISH and STA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.07pm.]**

**2.3** Their conclusions underlined the complexity of the school's Pupil Premium cohort, suggested some ways to improve the teaching and learning of these students – which would hopefully improve their behaviour – and how resources might be reallocated to ensure that the students concerned were being well supported.

**2.4** SUH pointed out that William Ellis's disadvantaged population was complex. She had been surprised to discover a high proportion, well above the national figure, of boys receiving free school meals, as opposed to Ever-6 students (who were, or had been in the previous six years, in receipt of Pupil Premium funding).

**2.5** Given that their family lives were often chaotic, with intergenerational unemployment, it was important to fully appreciate their backgrounds, and how much work it would take to raise their aspirations and achievement.

**2.6** The report had also highlighted attendance. If students were not in school, the best strategies for teaching and a heartfelt commitment to raising attainment would fail. Poor attendance was pronounced among disadvantaged boys. Only a handful had 100 per cent attendance. Additional resource was needed to improve it.

**2.7** The quality of teaching in schools where disadvantaged students made good progress was uniformly high. Teachers planned, delivered and assessed a programme of teaching that focused on disadvantaged students first and foremost.

**2.8** Finally, the school had to be very ambitious for these boys, firing their passion to embrace opportunities in their adult lives.

**2.9** SSK thanked IJO and SUH and called for comments and questions, to which SUH responded as follows.

### **2.10 Does the curriculum offer Pupil Premium boys the opportunities they need [SJE]?**

Often SUH's recommendations to other governors and school leaders were that disadvantaged boys needed to be offered a more academic curriculum. William Ellis bucked that trend: the school offered a highly academic curriculum where, with high-quality provision, boys made good progress parallel to that of their non-disadvantaged peers. But provision could be patchy. Some boys might benefit from vocational courses, but William Ellis was a small school and if it were to broaden provision then it would need do so in collaboration with other schools.

### **2.11 Are you glad that the school is offering them such an aspirational curriculum [SJE]?**

In the context of the current Ofsted framework, yes, but whatever the curriculum, it was the quality of teaching in classroom that was crucial. Y10 students taking double languages were receiving excellent teaching and thriving on it.

**2.12** KDU thought that, with more than 50 per cent disadvantaged boys, the school would certainly not have started with the current highly academic curriculum. Many of the boys were taking demanding subjects when they could be taking others.

Falling numbers meant boosting advertising and marketing, and there was a conflict there: if the school wished to target middle-class parents it would have to advertise its academic curriculum, which those parents, rightly or wrongly, valued.

**2.13** IJO thought that the report identified the need to move away from a “one size fits all” curriculum, whether for these students or those currently identified for higher grades. As SUH had said, the quality of teaching was crucial.

**[BLA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.21 pm.]**

**2.14 Can SUH identify any subjects Pupil Premium boys find difficult; how do teachers access data to tailor their lessons appropriately; and how is the issue of provision for Pupil Premium students being addressed at KS3 level [DNE]?** SUH reminded members of the committee that she and RRO had attended the school for a day, and so had had limited opportunity to review teaching. Analysis of KS4 data had suggested focusing on two subjects were the pattern of achievement of disadvantaged students differed widely: science and languages. More analysis was needed.

**2.14.1** In terms of data, IJO noted that this was being enhanced. Teachers were being encouraged to view data as “live”, to be used for continual adjustment of provision. The areas where there was the biggest gap between the progress of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students were the areas where there was most work to do to improve teaching, between subjects, and within departments.

**2.15** SSK read a question from LEM in the chat function of the video conferencing platform.

**2.16 It is good to see a focus on improving classroom teaching, but could low attendance be due to the school’s curriculum offer – because students are not motivated by what is on offer – or are there other reasons [LEM]?**

**2.17** SSK invited FMI to ask a question in tandem; FMI thought collaborations with other schools were key to widening the curriculum.

**2.18 Why did teacher assessments give Pupil Premium students lower grades than previously suggested by mock exams [FMI]?** SUH identified some clear teacher bias about the learning potential of disadvantaged boys: a widening gap in progress had essentially been based on teacher assessments. Teachers had to be challenged about having lower expectations of this group of students. The curriculum offer was one thing, but the school had to ensure all students, whatever their starting points and backgrounds, were making the same progress as a result of excellent classroom teaching, rather than interventions beyond the classroom.

**2.19 How is this being communicated to teachers [ISH]?** IJO answered this question. This was a long-term project. First and most urgently, the attendance team needed to be at capacity, and teachers themselves had to have capacity, to ensure students – particularly Pupil Premium students – were in school.

**2.19.1** Second, lessons had to be learned from previous Y11 mock grades in order to identify gaps and how to narrow them. Back in September 2020 it had been made clear to all teachers that their first and more important appraisal target was the progress of the disadvantaged students in their teaching groups.

**2.20** RYU confirmed that teacher bias was of concern to a lot of teachers, including himself. Assigning teacher-assessed grades had weighed heavily on staff. There had been no intention to penalise disadvantaged students. The academic year had ended before many late-developing students had had a chance to flower.

**2.21** DMO suggested that governors and their contacts could be a significant resource to support interventions with which to fuel disadvantaged students’ aspirations and ambitions. SSK confirmed that she and IJO had discussed this.

**2.22 If William Ellis is to collaborate with other schools to widen its curriculum, what will be the timeframe [STA]?** SUH explained it would be linked to curriculum planning for the new academic year, which tended to be clarified in January or February.

**2.23** Food technology – newly taught with Parliament Hill School – was a good example of the potential for collaboration. Parliament Hill and William Ellis had once also shared some dance and music provision. There were definitely possibilities.

**2.24** SUH added that teachers who worked at William Ellis were in the main very committed to social justice and social mobility. That was why they had chosen to teach in a comprehensive setting. A coherent and dynamic approach was needed to ensure consistently excellent teaching. William Ellis would not be an excellent school until it was an excellent school for disadvantaged students.

**2.25** IJO urged governors to keep SUH and RRO's report in mind when planning future staffing and resources.

**2.26** SSK thanked SUH again for her report, and for answering questions.

### **3. Receive headteacher's report**

**3.1** SSK thanked IJO for her report and invited her to present it, which she did as follows.

**3.2 Impact of coronavirus and changes to routine** IJO noted that drafting this part of her report had been quite an intense experience, as it had been the first time she had chronicled in a single document how the school had responded to the challenges of the current coronavirus pandemic.

**3.2.1** With new cases coming in, the report was out of date virtually as soon as it was revised. As with other Camden schools, William Ellis had managed through reallocating teaching staff, but at the cost of closing the school, on a rota, to two year groups. This would continue for nearly a week, at least.

**3.2.2** William Ellis's remote learning policy had become a key document, setting teacher expectations to introduce the flexibility to maintain teaching and learning. It would be reviewed in a year's time, when hopefully challenges would have eased. One challenge of remote learning had been managing parents' expectations, which often, on technological issues particularly, diverged widely from the school's.

**3.2.3** In the report, she had also summarised the strategic work which had been undertaken by the school's senior leaders, particularly with regard to Pupil Premium, assessment, and data, as referenced earlier in the meeting.

**3.2.4** Proposed departmental improvement work, informed by SUH and RRO's research, faced huge challenges under the current circumstances.

**3.2.5** SSK thanked IJO for her introduction, noting that a policy on remote learning had been circulated. It was a huge issue which had been vexing parents. She had asked DNE to be link governor for this important area, in order to ensure that the school was doing the best it could with the resources under its control.

**3.2.6** SSK asked for questions on this part of IJO's report, which IJO answered as follows.

**3.2.7 How much is the school educating students in the risks of Covid-19, their responsibilities for helping to maintain a strict hygiene regime, and the prospect of a vaccine [DNE]?** As much as possible. If students were asked to wear a mask, or use hygiene gel, an explanation was given. Unfortunately, one less tutorial period a day was available for this, as it had been cancelled to enable a staggered start.

**3.2.8** Even without a proactive campaign, students would have posed questions. Often, they were anxious and required reassurance about safety. IJO's biggest worry was those students who were not attending school, or not accessing the live provision or resources offered when they had been told to stay at home.

**3.3 Update on school self-evaluation: commentary** IJO noted that this document had not changed substantially since February 2020, because the school had hardly been open since then. That said, data and information about quality of education – particularly with regard to literacy and equalities – had been updated, and sections on remote learning and Covid-19 compliance added. The document also captured the two external reviews undertaken – by SUH and RRO, and on safeguarding.

**3.3.1** MSC added that the self-evaluation highlighted the complexity of the school and its intake, and the variability between year groups, which set teachers considerable challenges. As noted earlier, variation in progress in different subjects reflected the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

**3.3.2** BLA stressed that attendance was a key driver in safeguarding.

**3.4** SSK thanked IJO, MSC and BLA and called for questions on IJO's report generally. There were none. RYU highlighted the diversity of the student intake and the difficulties faced by staff.

**3.5 What does RYU think is the link between this report and changes required in classroom teaching [SJE]?** RYU thought that the headteacher set the tone, for instance through targets and goals which ensured that all staff were pulling in the same direction. These were cascaded through departments to solicit ideas for potential change. In the English department, Ofsted comments about literacy and disadvantaged students had led to a complete overhaul of assessment and feedback at KS3. But he warned that these things took time.

**3.6 What is the profile of sixth form students with complex needs, and if attendance is such an issue for the school, why does the self-evaluation apparently reference it only in a single line [ISH]?** IJO replied that attendance appeared to be minimised only because the self-evaluation's format reflected the Ofsted framework. Not far off 50 per cent of sixth form students had special educational needs, significantly higher than for Camden schools generally.

**3.7** IJO added that student engagement was more than ever a key improvement goal of the School Development Plan. The progress of students, when they attended school, improved in line with three things: the quality of teaching, an appropriate curriculum offer and raised aspirations.

#### **4. Receive reports on admissions**

**4.1** IJO reminded governors that she had been asked to source data on first and second choices from Camden: she had been told it was "currently not available", but whether that meant the data would be released in future was not clear.

**4.2** Camden had asked her to identify the reasons for a fall in demand at Y7: however, all headteachers appeared to have received a similar request, suggesting that the explanation for the falls was not at individual schools' level, but wider.

**4.3** There could be several reasons: changing demography, moves to the independent sector, or overseas flight due to Brexit and Covid-19. No other Camden headteacher to whom she had spoken had experienced a drop in the Y7 roll less than 15 per cent.

**4.4** It followed that changing the criteria for entry to the school was unlikely to boost Y7 intake. Back in March 2020, William Ellis's Y7 had been oversubscribed. The issue was not wooing applicants, but hanging on to them.

**4.5** SSK thanked IJO for her comments and called for questions.

**4.6 Are the admissions criteria made public [KDU]?** FMI confirmed that they were, published by Camden. Currently William Ellis's criteria reflected those of Camden's maintained schools, but as a foundation, the governing body could alter them.

**4.7 If the school needs students, why are the criteria so narrow [KDU]?** FMI pointed out that there were a number of legal restraints on what the criteria could or could not stipulate. If William Ellis wanted to continue to be a community school, serving children from the local community, then distance was the fairest criteria. On first and second choices, she pointed out that Camden used to supply these details – she would source, and supply IJO with, a document from a past year to bolster her argument for access to current data from Camden.

**ACTION** *Item 4.7* **FMI** to source, and supply IJO with, a past report from Camden on first and second choices for Y7 places.

**4.8** SSK pointed out that demographic changes had already led to smaller rolls at a number of Camden primary schools. Falling Y7 rolls suggested those demographic changes were beginning to affect the borough's secondary schools.

**4.9 If Camden knows of demographic changes, why ask schools [NSI]?** IJO thought that Camden was asking a fair question, given that schools followed up students why they had changed their minds on choices. Camden did not have that data.

**4.10 Does data cover the number of students who applied, as well as those who accepted [NSI]?** Yes: in March 2020 the school had had a Y7 waiting list of 48 on top of the 130 places offered. By September, there were 15 vacant places. That was why retention was key.

**4.11** SSK thanked IJO for answering questions.

**4.12** Governors **AGREED** the Admissions Criteria for September 2020, and **AGREED** the Musical Aptitude Admission Criteria for September 2020.

## **5. Receive reports from committees and other bodies**

**5.1 School Improvement Committee** SJE, who chairs this committee, reported that previously-unavailable minutes for the meeting of 17 September 2020, at which the committee had discussed teacher-assessed exam grades and attendance, had been circulated.

**5.1.1** The committee had met most recently on 19 November 2020, when it had discussed the Pupil Premium gap, the School Development Plan section on relationships and engagement, the SEND policy and the Relationships and Sex Education Policy, which was currently subject to consultation. Draft minutes were not yet ready for circulation.

**5.1.2 Could governors help with the relationships and sex education consultation [DMO]?** IJO appreciated the offer, but thought it unnecessary as the context had changed: what had previously been a live political issue was now lower key.

**5.1.3** Governors **AGREED** the terms of reference of the School Improvement Committee as circulated.

**5.2 Personnel and Resources Committee** KDU, who chairs this committee, reported that it had not met since the previous (15 October 2020) FGB meeting, although previously-unavailable draft minutes of the 8 October 2020 PRC meeting had been circulated.

**5.2.1** Covid-19 costs of £40k had been refunded centrally. A falling roll rendered future finances problematic. Five new teachers, including a part-time food technology teacher and a new head of PE, had been recruited. City Year peer mentors had returned to the school. Highgate School had donated laptops.

**5.2.2** Progress had been made on sharing administration resources with neighbouring Parliament Hill School. An excellent paper by OHA on the school's field studies centre in the Surrey Hills, The Mill, had informed progress there. The committee had agreed policies on safeguarding and data protection.

**5.2.3** ISH offered help on a communications strategy to counter the school's potentially falling roll; KDU confirmed that a further report on The Mill would be considered at the next (10 December 2020) meeting of the committee.

**5.2.4** Governors **AGREED** the terms of reference of the Personnel and Resources Committee as circulated.

**5.3 Pay Committee** JWO, a member of this committee, reported that he, RAU and KDU had met on 22 October 2020 to review IJO's recommendations for performance-related pay awards to staff. Of 17 recommendations, they had approved 15. Given the nature of the proceedings, minutes were confidential.

**5.4 Headteacher Performance Review Panel** SSK reported that this panel, consisting of herself, SJE and FMI, advised by RRO, had met IJO earlier that day to set her objectives, which would be reported to the forthcoming (10 December 2020) Personnel and Resources Committee meeting. Given the nature of the proceedings, minutes – which in any case were not yet available – were confidential.

## 6. Approve policies

**6.1 Equality Policy** Governors appointed STA as link governor for equalities and **AGREED** the Equality Policy.

**6.2 Remote Teaching and Learning Policy** SJE noted some typographical errors; IJO to amend. Governors **AGREED** the amended Remote Teaching and Learning Policy.

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| <b>ACTION</b> | <b>Item 6.2</b> | <i>IJO to amend typographical errors in Remote Teaching and Learning Policy.</i> |
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## 7. Receive reports on governor visits and training

SSK looked forward to governor visits to the school resuming in the new year and urged governors to log any training undertaken on GovernorHub.

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

Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. SSK to sign them at a later date. There were no matters arising. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

**[FMI left the meeting with apologies at 6.25pm.]**

## 9. Any other business

**Training audit** MHU to circulate list of Camden training courses; governors to indicate attendance; SSK to audit. In answer to a question from NSI, SSK clarified that certain training, such as that in safeguarding and safer recruitment, had to be evidenced with a certificate. MHU urged governors again to log training on GovernorHub.

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| <b>ACTION</b> | <b>Item 9.1</b> | <b>MHU to circulate list of Camden training courses; all governors to indicate attendance; SSK to audit; all governors to log training on GovernorHub.</b> |
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**Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 11 February 2021 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 6.32 pm. Confidential items followed. SSK gave permission for all present to stay for the first of these.

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

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

### **ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES**

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| <b>ACTION</b> | <b>Item 4.7</b> | <b>FMI to source, and supply IJO with, a past report from Camden on first and second choices for Y7 places.</b> |
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| <b>ACTION</b> | <b>Item 6.2</b> | <b>IJO to amend typographical errors in Remote Teaching and Learning Policy.</b> |
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