

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 11 February 2021

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		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)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	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
ASSOCIATES	Mrs 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

SSK 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. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, LEM. JMN is on sabbatical. BLA 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 acting headteacher's report

2.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report and invited her to speak to it, which she did as follows.

[GGO joined the meeting with apologies at 5.04pm.]

2.2 Challenge Partners review and report This annual peer review of the school as part of the national programme of which William Ellis was a member had, due to pandemic restrictions, taken place remotely this year.

[DNE joined the meeting with apologies at 5.05pm.]

2.2.1 The scope and focus of the "leadership quality assurance" review had also changed due to the pandemic. IJO highlighted three key aspects of the report.

2.2.2 First, the previous review's "**overall peer evaluation estimate**" – not necessarily to be equated with an Ofsted judgement – had been that the school was working towards effective.

2.2.3 This year, the school's leadership and school improvement strategies were both deemed effective, and thus the overall evaluation was effective.

2.2.4 This was external evaluation evidence by independent, trained reviewers that the school merited, in their view, a Good Ofsted judgement.

2.2.5 It was a vote of confidence in the school's leadership team, giving governors a view of the effectiveness of continuing improvement work at the school, even while day-to-day practicalities were dominated by such things as social distancing.

2.2.6 Second, the report's **suggestions for improvement** supported the school's own improvement focus. The report's six EBIs – "even better ifs", or areas for improvement – were all "to continue to...". This showed that the school had the right priorities, and was going in the right direction. The EBIs provided extra insight on the improvement goals which could be achieved this year and how to achieve them.

[FMI joined the meeting with apologies at 5.08pm.]

2.2.7 Third, the exercise had prompted IJO and her senior leadership team to re-visit **the school's self-evaluation** – in particular, in terms of benchmarking. Available progress data for the 13 non-denominational, non-selective London boys' schools of which William Ellis was one dated back to 2019, so was of limited value.

2.2.8 More useful was data on the cohort's characteristics. For instance, the rest of the cohort had fewer students in receipt of free school meals, and although entries for EBacc subjects were high, none could equal William Ellis's.

2.2.9 Conversely, other schools had more exam entries in community languages.

2.3 Headteacher targets IJO reported that she had met with SSK, FMI and the school's Camden Professional Partner Rob Robson to agree the following performance targets for her over the 2020-21 academic year:

- Progress at KS4 in line with national averages for boys, including for students who are disadvantaged
- KS5 students taught at William Ellis at least in line with average national progress

- Strengthened impact of middle leadership in curriculum and assessment, particularly in science and English (this week, there had been an external review of the science department)

[BLA joined the meeting at 5.11pm.]

- Successful implementation of the shared business operation with Parliament Hill in the light of longer-term strategic development and financial planning, especially in the light of exploring alternative provision partnerships.

2.3.1 On the latter, IJO reported that there had been Interviews for a joint finance post that day. She hoped to report progress to the next (25 March 2021) meeting.

2.4 Assessment consultation – executive summary IJO outlined the likely outcome of this Ofqual consultation. There would supposedly be “no exams”, but in reality there would be exams. The exams would be marked by schools’ teachers, leading to more variability, but also more accountability of schools themselves.

2.4.1 IJO could see the value in external assessment but preferred maximum optionality so that students could show what they knew, rather than respond to questions which might focus on learning they had missed.

2.4.2 Workload was an issue in the suggestion that teachers should mark papers. This they usually did, but as paid work, organised nationally. They would find it hard to run a school at the same time, and she hoped this proposal would be re-thought.

2.4.3 Ofqual’s proposals on quality assurance were also problematic if, as proposed, attainment and progress were benchmarked against 2019 results rather than those of 2020.

2.4.4 Finally, it was proposed that appeals should come to schools rather than to the exam boards – something which would have to be handled at the same time as results, transition, etc.

2.4.5 All would be revealed when the results of the consultation were unveiled on the following evening (12 February 2021) at 9pm.

2.5 Staffing update Interviews had taken place for a finance manager – as reported earlier – and a teacher of computing. The latter role had been awarded to the school’s current long-term supply contract teacher, who would join the school on a permanent basis as a newly-qualified teacher (NQT). The school was likely to need to recruit teachers shortly in maths and history, and to allocate responsibilities in languages, PSHE and outdoor education.

2.6 School operations A full report on **remote learning** had been received by the 14 January 2021 School Improvement Committee. A full timetable of lessons was offered, backed by training and one-to-one coaching for teachers. Attendance reporting and tracking of online provision would be a focus after the half-term break.

2.6.1 Some 50 students were now accessing **on-site provision**, which involved online lessons supplemented by some live PE and maths support, with science support to follow after the half-term break. Years 8 and 9 students were mentored in boxing twice a week. The students were mostly vulnerable children, with some who were not officially vulnerable but were having a difficult time at home and generally.

2.6.2 IJO foresaw widespread difficulties with self-regulation when students returned to school on a permanent basis. She highlighted a Camden report on reducing exclusions, but pointed out that the challenge presented was phenomenal.

[STA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.20pm.]

2.7 SSK thanked IJO for her comprehensive report and added that she had sat in on parts of the Challenge Partners review, including the final summing up. The school's senior leaders had done the school proud. Governors echoed her acclaim.

2.8 SSK called for comments and questions, which she took two at a time, but which are disaggregated here for ease of reference.

2.9 How will assessments proceed this year [KDU]? Certainly not using an algorithm: possibly though analysis of the difference between this year's and 2019's grades. The school could be asked to account for any discrepancy with evidence of its moderation process. IJO understood the logic but was annoyed on behalf of the Y11 students. The proposal also did not account for school improvement.

2.10 If long-term data lacks integrity, how can governors make a judgement on progress [FMI]? IJO explained that Camden schools were discussing moderation and standardisation processes in order to address any Ofqual concerns or parental appeals. Benchmarking against other Camden schools could also be useful.

2.11 What is the status of Covid-19 testing at the school; can it be scaled up; and how many students and staff have tested positive for Covid-19 [ISH]? The school was still administering lateral flow tests for students and staff, weekly or twice-weekly, before school. Those who had been in contact with a potential case of Covid-19 were tested every day. If they proved positive, they were sent home and their contacts traced. This had happened twice, to students.

2.11.1 IJO's concern was that despite Camden support, when the school opened on a more permanent basis testing could not be scaled up for the numbers of staff and students returning. More staff to perform tests were needed, and more space to test in. Testing at home, or in classrooms, could be a possibility.

2.11.2 Staff who had fallen ill in February and March 2020 had not been tested, so Covid-19 might not be the cause. Some staff had tested positive in the autumn term of 2020, and many had fallen sick in January 2021. Two had been hospitalised. Some 35 students had been taken ill in the autumn term. The whole of Y9 had been sent home to isolate. Many others were also isolating. They had also cared for ill parents.

2.12 Students' work experience and the week-long Y7 camp usually give staff a breathing space to mark exams – how will they manage if these are cancelled [RYU]? IJO sympathised. The school's response to the Ofqual consultation had stressed these problems. Work experience was likely to be online. Whether the Y7 camp went ahead was moot. The school may have to be realistic.

2.13 Doesn't Camden's exclusions report demonstrate that the pandemic is encouraging everyone to open their minds and think a little differently [ISH]?

BLA thought that the principles of the report were excellent, but to turn its vision into something long-term demanded fundamental structural changes, and even minor changes required resources. He expected problems when students returned to school. Yes, people were thinking about things in a different way. There were exciting opportunities to redesign services. But staff still had to run the school.

2.14 GGO, who is leader of Camden, pointed out that the report in question was from councillors on the authority's School Exclusions Scrutiny Panel, which had been circulated for interest, and to provoke debate. It was not council policy.

2.15 ISH urged all governors to become involved in the development of Coming Back Stronger, Camden's new education strategy, and particularly to take part in one or more of the fortnightly (Wednesdays, 4-5pm) online Camden Conversations, the next of which would be on 24 February 2021.

ACTION *Item 2.15* **All governors** to consider to take part in one or more of the fortnightly (Wednesdays, 4-5pm) online Camden Conversations, which aim to inform Camden's new education strategy, Coming Back Stronger.

2.16 Given that data from William Ellis's comparator schools shows more breadth in languages, might anticipated turnover in the languages team provide opportunities to rethink the languages curriculum [SJE]? Other schools' wider – community – languages included Bengali, Arabic and Polish, in quite small numbers, possibly because examination boards required evidence that candidates had to be able to read and write in a language, not just speak. Where those languages were taken, they added to the EBacc "bucket". Turnover in the languages team would allow the school to think again about its language offer. Now was perhaps the time.

2.17 SSK thanked IJO again for her report, and for answering questions.

3. Receive report on initial curriculum planning and staffing

3.1 SSK thanked MSC for his report and invited him to present it.

3.2 MSC noted that the document was based on the previous year's curriculum planning and staffing but was already effectively out of date.

3.3 The students loved food technology. Demand meant William Ellis used more of the time of the member of staff in question (shared with Parliament Hill) than anticipated. Expanding provision could be challenging. The reintroduction of PE at GCSE had been welcomed. The latest appointment meant computing was more secure. The offer in languages, as previously indicated, could change. The curriculum would certainly need to be reviewed further.

3.4 The options process would begin on 15 March. Currently students were asked to rank their preferences for nine GCSEs, including humanities and languages subjects.

3.5 Depending on the results of the Ofqual consultation, that could change, with a possible reduction to eight GCSEs. This year's Y10s – next year's Y11s – may be asked nominate a subject to drop. That could have staffing implications.

3.6 Within the report, staffing remained as currently. The many temporary posts and potential resignations meant there was more uncertainty than usual at this time of year. That presented opportunities, but also challenges.

3.7 SSK thanked MSC again for his report. She called for questions: there was one.

3.8 Part of the school's ability to recruit good language teachers in the past has been because so many boys learn languages – wouldn't it be a shame if the school loses this USP [FMI]? MSC did not disagree. Any pause – in whatever subjects – would be temporary, as part of a recovery curriculum to enable the school to plug any gaps in student progress, in order to give students their best chance going forward.

3.9 IJO agreed with the importance of languages at William Ellis. But taking pressure off in the short term would ensure that the department could be rebuilt. Languages were important but Y10 faced challenges, not least in attendance. In the absence of external exam results, attendance was the hardest data available to governors.

4. Receive reports from committees and other bodies

4.1 School Improvement Committee SJE, who chairs this committee, noted that previously-unavailable minutes for the meeting of 19 November 2020 had been circulated. The committee had met again on 14 January 2021, when it had received an excellent report from Lucy Strike, who is in charge of literacy at the school, and assessed current attendance and progress, and online and on-site learning.

4.2 Personnel and Resources Committee KDU, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 10 December 2020 (minutes circulated) and 28 January 2021 (draft minutes not yet available). The latter meeting had been briefed on a potential £135k budget surplus, and on the current challenges faced at The Mill, the school's outdoor studies centre in the Surrey Hills.

5. Assign new governor and associates to committees

RYU to join the School Improvement Committee. NSI and DNE to join the School Improvement and Personnel & Resources committees, at least while meetings remain virtual.

6. Approve SFVS

KDU reminded governors that the Schools Financial Value Standard was an annual form submitted to Camden by which governors audited the school's financial probity and effectiveness. The completed form had been thoroughly scrutinised by her committee. Governors **AGREED** the Schools Financial Value Standard.

7. Review policy schedule

Governors noted that the schedule circulated logged only those policies within the remit of the Personnel and Resources Committee. The School Improvement Committee was responsible for fewer policies, but among them were key documents such as the Relationships & Sex Education and homework policies. SJE, IJO and MHU to discuss how to supplement the existing policy schedule.

ACTION	Item 7	<i>SJE, IJO and MHU to discuss how to supplement existing policy schedule with policies for which the School Improvement Committee is responsible.</i>
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8. Approve policies

8.1 Relationships and Sex Education Policy Governors **AGREED** the Relationships and Sex Education Policy.

8.2 Grievance Policy and Procedures MHU noted that this policy and procedures had been thoroughly reviewed at committee but being statutory had to be agreed by the FGB. Governors **AGREED** the Grievance Policy and Procedures.

8.3 Disciplinary Policy and Procedures MHU noted that this policy and procedures had been thoroughly reviewed at committee but being statutory had to be agreed by the FGB. Governors **AGREED** the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

9. Receive reports on governor training

RCO, NSI, SSK and STA had attended training on Increasing Race Diversity across School Governing Bodies, led by the National Black Governors' Network. ISH had attended a "Camden Conversation" on developing the borough's education strategy; Camden training on Behaviour, Attendance and Attitudes – Getting the Best for Your Pupils; and Camden Music Service training on diversity in music education. NSI had attended Camden training on financial efficiencies. SSK had attended two Camden Secondary Chairs' Network meetings, and Camden training on safer recruitment. She and STA had attended Camden training on arts governance. SSK urged governors to log any training undertaken on GovernorHub.

ACTION *Item 9* **All governors** to log training undertaken on GovernorHub.

10. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

10.1 Minutes of the meeting of 3 December 2020 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. SSK to sign them at a later date. There was one matter arising.

10.2 Item 4.7 SSK reported that she had been advised by Camden that information on first and second choices for Y7 places could be provided, as previously.

10.3 Both other actions – to amend typographical errors in a policy, and concerning various aspects of training – had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

[MSC left the meeting at 6.20pm.]

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 25 March 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 6.21 pm. Confidential items followed. SSK invited SUH, BLA and RYU to stay for the time being.

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

Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

Actions listed on the following page...

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION *Item 2.16* **All governors** to consider to take part in one or more of the fortnightly (Wednesdays, 4-5pm) online Camden Conversations, which aim to inform Camden's new education strategy, *Coming Back Stronger*.

ACTION *Item 7* **SJE, IJO and MHU** to discuss how to supplement existing policy schedule with policies for which the School Improvement Committee is responsible.

ACTION *Item 9* **All governors** to log training undertaken on GovernorHub.