

# WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



## MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held by video conference on Thursday 25 March 2021

### MINUTES

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GOVERNORS		Present
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓
<b>Co-opted</b>	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	x
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
<b>Foundation</b>	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	x
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI)	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO) <b>Vice chair</b>	✓
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓
	Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) <b>Chair</b>	✓
<b>Local authority</b>	Mr Hanad Mohamed (HMO)	✓
<b>Parent</b>	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	x
<b>Staff</b>	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	x
<b>ASSOCIATE</b>	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>	
	Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) <b>Assistant head and director of sixth form</b>	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) <b>Clerk</b>	

## 1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

1.1 SSK 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 HMO, as the Governing Body's new local authority governor. For his benefit, all present introduced themselves.

**1.2** Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, RAU and JWO. There were no apologies from STA. HMO and NSI apologised for an early departure. JMN is on sabbatical. No other apologies were necessary, as all other governors were, or would be, present, and thus a quorum.

**1.3** 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 headteacher's report**

**2.1** SSK thanked IJO for her first report as newly-appointed substantive headteacher and invited her to speak to it, which she did as follows.

**2.2** IJO was delighted to have been appointed as William Ellis School's first female headteacher in its 159-year history, an appointment which she saw as a big step for the school. It recognised governors' desire to embrace change and move the school forward.

**2.3** Her vision was of William Ellis as a centre of excellence for boys' education in the 21st century in terms of their emotional and physical health, literacy and creativity, and pride in their identity.

**2.4** This was something she had developed as something of a mantra for staff. What did the school's motto "Rather use than fame" mean for boys in north London in 2021, in the post-Covid, post-Trump era?

**2.5** It had been a real pleasure to see governors in school for the interview process. She hoped that in the summer term, even if it was not immediately possible for the Governing Body to meet as a group, governors would increasingly visit the school to see it as it was.

**2.6** The library had been refurbished. Changes to routine had made a big difference to how it felt. Students had been getting used to them, and the intensity of interaction of a normal school day. The routines included increased supervision from the extended leadership of the school at lunchtime, with breaks and lunchtimes split, and staggered start and finish times. Managing the premises as efficiently as possible had required some temporary, additional staffing.

**2.7** Excitingly, the school had appointed a new finance manager, from Swiss Cottage School, who would start in May 2021. A new head of modern foreign languages (MFL), recruited from Hampstead School, would start in September 2021.

**2.8** Recruitment of a substantive deputy headteacher was scheduled for the last week in April. This year, a broader senior leadership team with wider distributed responsibilities had helped to keep the school focused on its priorities.

**2.9** IJO explained that the bulk of her report was about assessment. Y11 and Y13 students who would have sat exams this year were it not for the pandemic. The school aimed to support them to achieve the best credible grades. The process differed from last year.

**[SUH joined the meeting with apologies at 5.15pm.]**

**2.10** The school still awaited the release of further guidance from Ofqual and the exam boards. Y11s and Y13s were this week and next completing the first stage of evidence to support grading. After Easter, they would be more formally assessed.

**2.11** SSK thanked IJO for her remarks and called for questions, which IJO, MSC and FWI answered as follows.

**2.12 For teachers to assess grades will clearly be a huge burden – has guidance been adequate [DMO]?** It had been too late. This was the biggest factor in the stresses and burden on staff and students. Students, having prepared for an exam-heavy system, now had to adjust rapidly to new forms of assessment. Ofqual's consultation had been more transparent and fairer than last year, and the fact that no algorithm was involved was an improvement. But timeframes were unforgiving. For instance, teachers clearly had to stop taking work in before the date initially announced, in order to assess it securely. Ofqual had not considered that.

**2.13** Another factor was bringing results days forwards, and the potential for appeals, which depended on getting standardisation right. Cross-school moderation, supplementing in-school moderation, would help here.

**2.14 How has the school addressed possible unconscious bias in teacher assessments [FMI]?** Ofqual guidance had discussed bias. Anonymised moderation within school and anonymised standardisation across schools would address this.

**2.14.1** Schools were still waiting to know how much historic data they could use. Ofqual had raised the prospect of consistent evidence across year groups, which was an unprecedented additional layer of potential complication.

**2.14.2** Blind marking, moderation within school and standardisation across schools and from exam boards should remove bias. Analysis should subsequently reveal any gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

**2.14.3** Even when conscious and unconscious bias are removed, students from disadvantaged backgrounds were unlikely to have as secure a portfolio of work as their peers, particularly due to lockdown. The period between 28 May and 18 June would provide an opportunity to offer interventions to plug any gaps.

**2.14.4** Ofqual's decision to make exam materials available to all did not level the playing field. Some students had no home support to access those resources and learn answers. It narrowed some of the gap but did not level the playing field.

**2.14.5** Within LaSWAP, last year's mandatory rankings had proved useful to inform discussions about grading.

**2.15 How have you communicated the process of teachers assessing grades to parents, and are students adequately informed on how they need to prepare compared with previous years [DNE]?** Parents had received a series of explanatory letters. Students, in tutorials and at registration, had been clearly informed of processes and timelines.

**2.15.1** The school knew that students were adequately informed, because they were stressing. This was not because of uncertainty, but because they had returned from three months or more out of school and in a couple of weeks would be subject to formalised assessments which would count towards their futures. The impact and stress on them should not be minimised. Y11 art students who had taken their first "exam" in controlled conditions had been aware of its formality and gravity.

**2.16 Are students at risk if the school has to confirm that they have been taught sufficient content to allow them to progress to the next stage of their education, and have teachers enough data to make this assessment [DNE]?** "Sufficient content"

had not been defined, perhaps intentionally. IJO would be signing off to award qualifications to students who had been timetabled to attend courses and, given the circumstances, had undertaken a reasonable amount of learning. William Ellis's Y11s had done better than most nationally. The aim was not to award qualifications to students who would not have received them if the pandemic hadn't happened.

**2.16.1** Y10 data was incomplete only because late spring and summer assessments hadn't happened, because students had not been in school at that point.

**2.16.2** William Ellis was in no different position than other schools. All had significantly less Y11 data. Summer term assessments had provided some evidence. An audit had ensured that the resulting data was robust.

**2.17 How will the school ensure that students aren't stressed by sitting a series of lengthy assessments – longer than exams would have been – and being pursued by teachers for appropriate work [RYU]?** Past assessments could be employed as well as the results of those carried out in the summer term. A calendar of assessments would ensure that the latter were spread out. Sharing information on what was used to assess grades, so that students appreciated the sources of evidence, should help to reduce appeals. There would be pinch points. But there would be a protected period in the first half of the summer term when Y11 lessons would not be interrupted.

**2.17.1** Assessments should largely be completed the May half term break, leaving two weeks for emergency catch-up if individuals didn't have their ideal grade.

**2.18** SSK pointed out that, in the chat facility of the video conferencing platform, HMO had asked what provisions and booster classes were being put in place for those who required it most.

**2.19** There would be Easter revision sessions in perhaps five subjects. But revision would dominate term-time learning.

**2.20 Surely there is no ranking of students this year; what guidance is still awaited from Ofqual and does it include an end-of-term date; and aren't targeted post-Whitsun catch-up sessions quite late [ISH]?** The post-Whitsun sessions were by no means the only catch-up and intervention sessions. Many had already started. From 28 May students would no longer be in normal lessons, in order to cater for assessments and interventions. Ranking was not being collected by Ofqual or the exam boards this year, but LaSWAP had found the process useful to spark discussion, to strengthen internal moderation and to challenge unconscious bias.

**2.21 Has the previously-flagged "micro" exam been scrapped in favour of assessments [RCO]?** Three days had been set aside for Y13 teachers to set a short exam or use exam board material as an exam, as part of gathering final evidence. Teachers in some Y11 subjects were doing the same, but only as part of the assessment process. Exams were certainly not the sole and only form of assessment.

**2.22 Could you return to ISH's question about what information is still awaited from Ofqual [SSK]?** Yes: quite a lot. Ofqual had published principles and timescale. Boards were due to publish information on past papers, unseen papers, optional questions, how schools should standardise, grade boundaries... the whole exam process. They would also hopefully give examples of how to moderate. There was quite a lot of information that schools didn't yet have. It was becoming frustrating.

**2.23** On an end-of-term date, no specific date was likely to be advised. Camden's thinking was that it would be unwise for all the borough's Y11s to finish at the same time on the same day. A window for finishing or advice on an earliest end-of-term date were more likely. Delay could allow more intensive Y11 LaSWAP transition work and, for some Y13 students, personal development work, such as online work experience.

**2.24** IJO pointed out that a results day on 9 August meant a short summer for MSC and FWI.

**2.25** ISH regretted the stress and uncertainty which IJO, her senior leaders and all staff had been through over the past year, with Covid-19 testing to boot.

**2.26** SSK thanked IJO again for her report, and all concerned for answering questions.

### 3. Review latest Covid-19 risk assessment

Governors noted this latest risk assessment. IJO reported that contact tracing had been mercifully minimal, and not a result of cases in school. BLA said that 3,000-plus tests had been carried out over the past two weeks, with no positive results.

**[IJO left the meeting at 5.53pm.]**

### 4. Receive report on sixth form

**4.1** FWI reported that the current Y12 cohort was larger than the current Y13 and more students were taking A levels. Leaders of the four schools in the LaSWAP sixth form consortium had discussed how achieve a more equitable gender balance.

**4.2** Hopefully 2021-22 would see proportions more in line with the population.

**4.3** More students with education, health and care plans were coming into mainstream A level provision, which was welcome but could be challenging.

**4.4** Camden-wide guidance on moderation of assessments for teacher-assessed grades had been useful, helpful and supportive. Moderating across the four LaSWAP schools would be robust and challenging.

**4.5** A number of U, D and E grades were being predicted, but hopefully these predictions were over-zealous. Teachers didn't want to over-predict and be held responsible. Two U grades were unfortunately inevitable.

**4.6** Y13 progress figures were interesting. Figures for those students "taught at" William Ellis (i.e. on another school's roll) were less robust than for students on roll at the school, but gaps were closing. For various reasons, figures could be skewed.

**4.7** One exciting development was the forthcoming introduction of the vocational T levels. FWI had circulated a link to a video introducing T levels, but would send to MHU, for him to circulate again.

**ACTION** *Item 4.7* **FWI** to forward link to video introduction to T levels to MHU; **MHU** to circulate to all governors.

**4.8** SSK thanked FWI for her remarks and called for comments and questions, to which FWI responded as follows.

**4.9** DMO noted that, in the video conferencing platform's chat function, HMO had highlighted how national data suggested that black, Asian and other ethnic students' actual grades were often a lot higher than predicted grades. He went on to ask two questions.

**[HMO left the meeting at 6.01pm.]**

**4.10 How can a perception of LaSWAP being a vocational rather than an academic destination be addressed; and what system is in place for clearing following the award of grades [DMO]?** Clearing was filling FWI with dread, as she would have to address it at the same time as enrolling students into LaSWAP. Any advice on a clear and robust system would be welcome. Currently LaSWAP ensured plentiful phones and laptops in the sixth form centre, with support to students to use them effectively. It was all hands on deck. By its nature, clearing was different every year.

**4.10.1** DMO noted that from his experience it was often articulate parents and students with ample social capital who made the best use of clearing.

**4.11 What do students know about the process [DMO]?** They knew what it was and how to access it. But a crib sheet might be useful before results landed, perhaps as part of the optional professional development programme. DMO to advise.

**ACTION** *Item 4.11* **DMO** to advise FWI on clearing crib sheet.

**4.12 Rather than Y12 finishing school after their assessments, could they not receive another month of teaching; and why are predicted Y13 grades for A level chemistry and geography missing [KDU]?** Y12 were finishing after their assessments, but their assessments had been put back. There were no predicted grades for chemistry or geography because they were taught at other schools in the LaSWAP consortium.

**[IJO returned to the meeting at 6.08pm.]**

**4.13 Are there any plans for autumn exams or a Y14 [ISH]?** LaSWAP was not promoting a Y14 at the moment. LaSWAP had a policy of no resits and no private candidates, although some LaSWAP schools allowed them in exceptional circumstances, which could be deemed appropriate under the current circumstances. The aim was to concentrate as much possible on this year and address any problems later.

**4.14** FWI returned to DMO's original question, on the perception of LaSWAP as an increasingly vocational destination. Some perceived the rival Woodhouse College and Camden School for Girls were more suited to academic students. LaSWAP challenged that, but there was no denying that T level courses would be time-consuming to deliver and so could impact A level course provision. T levels were exciting, but everything came with a risk, and the risk was to A level provision.

**4.15** FMI cautioned against accepting the suggestion that LaSWAP must either be a vocational or academic destination. Its strength had always been as a comprehensive sixth form which offered a wide curriculum to students of all backgrounds. That had to remain its guiding principle.

**4.16** SSK noted that, with the retirement of FMI as a governor, there would be a vacancy for a LaSWAP link governor. FWI added that another role could be for a governor from one LaSWAP school to become KS5 link governor for another.

**4.17** SSK thanked FWI again for her report, and for answering questions.

**4.18 LaSWAP collaboration project: outline proposal for next steps** Governors **AGREED** the outline proposal for next steps in the LaSWAP collaboration project.

**[FWI left the meeting at 6.16pm.]**

## **5. Receive reports from committees**

**5.1 School Improvement Committee** SJE, who chairs this committee, reported that the committee had met on 4 March 2021. Draft minutes had been circulated. A renewed focus on the business of school improvement rather than Covid-19 management had been universally welcomed. Issues covered by the committee had included curriculum and assessment, equalities, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and attendance.

**5.2 Personnel and Resources Committee** KDU, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 18 March 2021. Draft minutes were not yet available. The committee had discussed the budget and its small surplus; a draft three-year budget; plans for staffing, including an exciting new post of head of outdoor education; and the site services restructuring in order to share provision with Parliament Hill School. A new link governor for The Mill would need to be recruited.

**[MSC left the meeting at 6.23pm.]**

## **6. Delegate approval of 2021-22 budget to committee**

Governors **AGREED** to delegate approval of the school's 2021-22 budget to the next (6 May 2021) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee, on the understanding that it would return to the following (20 May 2021) FGB meeting for final ratification.

## **7. Approve SFVS**

KDU explained that the latest (18 March 2021) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee had approved a completed Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS), by which governors annually audit the school's financial probity and effectiveness. However, the document had to be approved by all governors. The form exposed the high cost of some of the school's teachers, which had welcome educational, and not-so-welcome financial, consequences. Governors **AGREED** the SFVS as circulated. SSK to sign for forwarding to Camden.

**ACTION Item 7 SSK to sign SFVS for forwarding to Camden.**

## **8. Receive Challenge Partners report**

This report from the peer review organisation Challenge Partners of a virtual leadership quality assurance review carried out on 27 January 2021 had found that leadership was effective. It had been circulated again for governors' interest.

## **9. Receive reports on governor training**

SSK to circulate a link to recorded online Camden Conversations, which aim to inform Camden's new education strategy, Coming Back Stronger, and which she commended to governors. She had begun lengthy DfE-funded chairs' training, as part of which she would in time be emailing a form to all governors as part of a 360° review. She urged all governors again to log any training undertaken on GovernorHub.

**ACTION Item 9 SSK to circulate link to recorded online Camden Conversations; all governors to log any training undertaken on GovernorHub.**

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

**10.1** The minutes of the meeting of 11 February 2021 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. SSK to sign them at a later date. There was one matter arising.

**10.2 Item 7** MHU apologised that he, SJE and IJO had not yet discussed how to supplement the existing schedule with policies for which the School Improvement Committee was responsible but would do so.

**ACTION Item 10.2** *SJE, IJO and MHU to discuss how to supplement existing policy schedule with policies for which the School Improvement Committee is responsible.*

**10.3** Both other actions – for governors to take part in the online Camden Conversations and log training undertaken on GovernorHub – had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

## 11. Minutes of the EGM of 12 March 2021

Governors asked MHU to further redact the draft minutes of the extraordinary general meeting of 12 March 2021, convened to appoint a substantive headteacher, and bring them to the next (20 May 2021) FGB meeting for approval.

**ACTION Item 11** *MHU to further redact the draft minutes of the EGM of 12 March 2021 and bring to the next (20 May 2021) FGB meeting for approval.*

## 12. Any other business

**12.1 Farewell to Fiona Millar** SSK pointed out that this was FMI's last FGB as a governor of William Ellis School, although she was welcome to attend forthcoming School Improvement Committee (29 April 2021) and Personnel and Resources Committee (6 May 2021) meetings, being a member of both committees.

**12.1.1** SSK thanked her for her extraordinary work for the school, culminating in chairing the FGB, over many years. Her tenure had only come to an end because she wished to retire. SSK was particularly grateful for FMI's generous mentoring over the first few months of her own chairing of the FGB.

**12.1.2** IJO thanked FMI for her continuing support over the years, beginning when IJO taught at Parliament Hill School, where FMI's daughter had been a student. IJO commended all that FMI had contributed to WES, and the legacy she had left. She would miss her contribution to the Governing Body, and sad that the last months of FMI's chairmanship had been dominated by Covid-19 rather than positive aspects.

### Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 20 May 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 6.37pm. LEM, SUH, IJO, BLA, NSI and RYU left the meeting at this point.



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

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

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

**ACTION** **Item 4.7** **FWI** to forward link to video introduction to T levels to **MHU**; **MHU** to circulate to all governors.

**ACTION** **Item 4.11** **DMO** to advise **FWI** on clearing crib sheet.

**ACTION** **Item 7** **SSK** to sign **SFVS** for forwarding to Camden.

**ACTION** **Item 10.2** **SJE, IJO** and **MHU** to discuss how to supplement existing policy schedule with policies for which the School Improvement Committee is responsible.

**ACTION** **Item 11** **MHU** to further redact the draft minutes of the EGM of 12 March 2021 and bring to the next (20 May 2021) FGB meeting for approval.