

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 20 May 2021

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	x
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Ms Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	x
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO) Vice chair	x
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓
	Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	x
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) Chair	✓
	VACANCY	N/A
Local authority	Mr Hanad Mohamed (HMO)	x
Parent	Ms Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	x
Staff	Ms Jennifer Meechan (JMN)	x
ASSOCIATE	Mr Rob Yurchesyn (RYU)	✓
ATTENDING	Mr Gabriel Benson (GBE) Y11 student	
	Mr Breno Borges (BBO) Y11 student	
	Mr Josh Coffey (JCO) Y11 student	
	Mr Kye Horsford (KHO) Y11 student	
	Mr Aaron Khan Edwards (AKE) Y11 student	
	Mr Zach Millard (ZMI) Y11 student	
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) Acting deputy head	
	Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) Assistant head	
	Mr Jeremy Pratt (JPR) Acting associate 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 5.05pm at the school – the first time the Governing Body had met at the school since its EGM of 21 May 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. She particularly welcomed members of the Student Council, who were to present to governors. For their benefit, all present introduced themselves. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, LEM, HMO, DMO, NSI, STA and JWO, as well as Y11 students Kriony Lukemba, Mickel Tennett Miller and Daniel Unwene, who had been due to present with their fellow students. JMN is on sabbatical. No other apologies were necessary, as all other governors were 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. Student presentation

2.1 The student's presentation is best summarised by a subsequent email from SSK to JPR, in which she asked him to pass governors' thanks to the boys. In it, she said:

"It was wonderful to hear them speaking so passionately and maturely about the issues that matter to them and how they plan to do everything they can to create a community where everyone is treated equally and where there is no room for prejudice and hate, and how they plan to work with younger year groups to challenge attitudes around race, toxic masculinity, [sexual] consent and homophobia, amongst other things."

2.2 Following their presentation, governors asked a series of questions, which the students answered as follows.

2.3 Were you planning to achieve everything you have outlined in a single year [ISH]? The students would achieve what they could, but having set the agenda, would leave "a list of chores" for their successors. RYU noted that the work of the council had definitely been felt around the school this year. He added a question.

2.4 Given that littering and corridor behaviour continue to be problems, but the library is more valued following refurbishment, how can students be encouraged to take responsibility for their environment and behaviour [RYU]? The aim was to make the corridors calmer and less hectic. A carrot and stick approach would discourage littering. The culture needed changing.

2.5 Could earlier co-education avert toxic masculinity and racism [RAU]? It could go both ways. Some boys may become more mature and display less sexism, others may display more toxic masculinity. Co-education may allow boys to understand girls more, but it depends also on the individual. Until it was tried, who could say?

2.6 How can governors help you to make the changes you want to see [SJE]? Any ideas on how to influence students to avoid toxic masculinity would be welcome.

2.7 How are "isms" best addressed [SSK]? Students were taught not to respect peers who differed from them but to tolerate them. They were taught that racism and sexism were bad, not why they were bad. Older generations passed on their prejudices. The students' generation had to counter ignorance and hate, from Y7.

2.8 Do students counter casual racism or homophobia [SSK]? Older students' maturity had grown over the pandemic. They now challenged homophobia jokes, for instance. Knowing right from wrong was crucial to personal improvement.

2.9 Was the new personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum reformed enough [RYU]? Changes had been dynamic. Y11 studied more adult topics because they were more mature. The curriculum was heading in the right direction on issues like sexual consent. Weekly and more impactful PHSE lessons were needed. They taught real-life topics and how to see the world through other people's eyes. Even adults seldom discussed how to manage money, for instance.

2.10 How do you change a curriculum which negatively portrays black people as victims [RCO]? It was a subject that people needed to discuss. A tone deaf curriculum which portrayed black history as just Martin Luther King and Malcolm X didn't help. An expanding curriculum embracing black achievements and those of other communities would be more balanced.

2.11 How do you measure success in what you are proposing [DNE]? Through anonymised feedback on the issues addressed, solicited over time so that improvements could be monitored.

2.12 Do you have a forum to discuss momentous world events [DNE]? The diverse volunteer City Year mentors were always happy to talk about what was on your mind. Diversity among staff was important to challenge and widen students' perspectives. For instance, the school's trans teacher had sparked a debate about pronouns. Sometimes this was more impactful than class discussions.

2.13 How can underlying, perhaps even unconscious misogyny and homophobia be more positively challenged [IJO]? Education equalled understanding. Just because an issue wasn't in the curriculum, didn't mean it wasn't taught. Common sense was everywhere. Everywhere you could learn something new. It was all about moral values. PHSE should emphasise more that not everyone was the same, or needed to be. Co-education could help. Sisters were useful. An all-boys school was a massive barrier. But most students would leave William Ellis with mature attitudes.

2.14 How do you get to sit on the School Council [SSK]? Elections by form enabled students to elect the person they thought was best suited to represent them. Those who wanted to make a change were those who stood.

2.15 SSK thanked the students again for their presentation, and for answering questions. BLA thought it important to capture the skills and enthusiasm and leadership demonstrated by the students.

[GBE, BBO, JCO, KHO, AKE, JPR and ZMI left the meeting, and MSC joined the meeting, at 5.52pm.]

3. Receive reports from committees and other bodies

3.1 School Improvement Committee SJE, who chairs this committee, reported that the committee had met on 29 April 2021. Draft minutes had been circulated. The meeting had discussed teacher-assessed grades, potentially reducing the number of GCSEs taken, student attendance and an aspiration for zero exclusions.

3.2 Personnel and Resources Committee KDU, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 6 May 2021. Draft minutes had been circulated. The committee had discussed proposed new senior leadership and admin structures, diversity and the budget, and given the go-ahead to refurbish the school hall.

4. Receive headteacher's report

4.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report, which IJO summarised, focusing in particular on progress in developing teacher-assessed grades.

4.2 During the course of her remarks, she noted that the exams regulator Ofqual had declared that the way to counter unconscious bias in teacher-assessed grades was "to be aware of it". That suggested that exams were the fairest system, although they helped to create a less diverse curriculum.

4.3 She added that the school was no longer considering cutting the number of GCSEs taken by each student from nine to eight.

4.4 MSC thought that assessments were going well. The vast majority of students had completed them, with catch-up sessions for the others.

4.5 SSK thanked IJO and called for questions, of which she asked the first.

4.6 How are students bearing up [SSK]? IJO thought they were tired and cracking a bit under pressure, with some challenging behaviour. Y11 should have gone on exam leave this week. MSC expected attendance to drop off once they had completed assessments. RYU pointed out that staff were also pressured, though marking without having to give feedback was at least faster.

4.7 Will assessments finish by the half term break [ISH]? IJO replied that they would, although Camden schools were legally required to provide education until the last Friday in June. This "education" would normally take the form of exams, but this year would be a combination of selective catch-up sessions, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, sixth form tasters, an extended project qualification (EPQ) "boot camp", and activities at Talacre Community Sports Centre in Kentish Town.

4.8 Can students take eight GCSEs if they wish [KDU]? All were studying for nine at the moment. Reducing that number to eight was not in students' best interests.

4.9 What if individual students wanted to drop a GCSE [SSK]? The school could make individualised concessions.

4.10 If teachers are frazzled, what is the impact on students [SJE]? BLA had reminded students that everyone was tired, including teachers, and that everyone needed to be kind to each other. The reminder had been well received. KDU noted that students' parents would also be frazzled.

4.11 How do assessments vs exams compare on the frazzle index [DNE]? MSC said that Y11 lessons were now very different, with remote learning, standardisation, gathering evidence and assessments. BLA thought the uncertainty corrosive. RYU pointed out that teachers were now effectively also acting as their students' examiners. That said, the system was less daunting for some less able students.

5. Agree 2021-22 budget

SSK reminded governors that the previous (25 March 2021) FGB meeting had delegated agreement of the 2021-22 budget to a forthcoming (6 May 2021) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee, so that it could be signed and forwarded to Camden before the deadline for submission. This had been done. IJO noted that the school's Department for Education (DfE) capital funding had fallen from an anticipated £240k for this financial year to £140k, following a change in methodology, although the budget was unaffected. Governors **AGREED** the 2021-22 budget. Later in the meeting, SJE recommended that students' earlier warm endorsement of the City Year volunteer mentors should inform the setting of the 2022-23 budget. IJO reminded governors that volunteer quality could be volatile.

6. Receive Covid-19 risk assessment

BLA reported on Covid-19 precautions at the school. With loosening guidance it had been tempting to abandon the wearing of masks in school immediately but on the precautionary principle and to promote gradual rather than precipitate easing they would be retained until the May half term break. RYU argued that students needed to be urged strongly, regularly, often and from every quarter to undertake Covid tests. BLA added that split KS3 and KS4/5 lunchtimes and breaks had been successful and may be retained. Governors **AGREED** the Covid-19 risk assessment as circulated.

7. Discuss plans for governor awayday

SSK reminded governors that the plan was for the awayday at The Mill on 8 July 2021 to reset the governors' three- to five-year vision in the light of discussions about Camden's developing education strategy. The school's dedicated Camden adviser Rob Robson and educational consultant and former Parliament Hill headteacher Sue Higgins would facilitate. Reading in advance would include IJO's updated School Development Plan and two National Governance Association publications, on school governance, and integrated curriculum and financial planning. SSK assured ISH that governors' previous work on vision would not be disregarded.

8. Receive reports on governor training

SSK urged governors to log their training on GovernorHub, their secure online database. Since the previous meeting, she and SJE had attended Camden Learning training on the role of governors in the secondary school curriculum. DNE had undertaken training with Governors for Schools on staff and pupil wellbeing. ISH and NSI had attended a Camden conference on its developing education strategy. All attendance had been online.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

9.1 The minutes of the meeting of 25 March 2021 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SSK to sign after the meeting. There was one matter arising.

9.2 Item 4.11 DMO, who had given apologies for this meeting, to confirm that he has advised assistant head and director of the sixth form Flora Wilson (FWI) on drafting a student briefing on the university clearing system.

ACTION	Item 9.2	<i>DMO to confirm that he has advised FWI on drafting a student briefing on the university clearing system.</i>
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9.3 All other actions had been fulfilled.

10. Minutes of the EGM of 12 March 2021 and matters arising

Governors **AGREED** the revised minutes of the EGM of 12 March 2021.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 28 July 2021 at 10.30am, at The Mill

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. SSK invited BLA and RYU to stay. MSC left the meeting at this point.

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

Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTION ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION	Item 9.2	<i>DMO to confirm that he has advised FWI on drafting a student briefing on the university clearing system.</i>
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