

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 2 February 2023

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓
Co-opted	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
Foundation	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓ ¹
	Mrs Sophie Jenkins (SJE)	✓
	Mr Hugh Matheson (HMA)	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO) Vice chair	x
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓
	Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) Chair	✓
	VACANCY	N/A
Local authority	Mr Hanad Mohamed (HMO)	✓
Parent	Mr Carlton Hood (CHO)	✓
	Mr Stuart Taylor (STA)	x
Staff	Mr Rob Yurchesyn (RYU)	✓
ASSOCIATES		
	Mrs Ronke Coote (RCO)	x
	Prof Lee Elliot Major (LEM)	x
ATTENDING		
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) Deputy head	
	Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) Senior assistant head	
	Mr Karl Altmann (KAL) Assistant head	
	Ms Sam Nunnery (SNU) Assistant head	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) Clerk	

¹ By video conference.

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

SSK welcomed all present to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5pm sharp. She particularly welcomed SNU, a new assistant head whose briefs will be literacy and professional development. For her benefit, all non-staff governors present introduced themselves. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, LEM and DMO. There were no apologies from RCO or STA. 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.

2. Receive chair's report

SSK reported that she had recently attended the WESPA (parents' association) AGM. The new and dynamic chair, the father of a Y7 boy, intended to revive the WESPA newsletter; she would be interviewed in it before Easter. She, CHO and HMA would be attending a social gathering for the parents of boys in Years 7 and 8 following this meeting. Her diary included chairing the LaSWAP governors' forum on the following Monday and attending a meeting of the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust.

3. Receive headteacher's report

3.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report and asked her to introduce it: she explained that it summarised the papers which had been circulated to governors.

3.2 Behaviour Policy This policy, aimed at the range of the school's stakeholders, had been thoroughly reviewed. New were an initial set of principles, providing a broad rationale linking student behaviour to the school ethos, and an additional appendix on alternative provision, managed moves and off-site directives. This appendix provided an explicit structure, agreed among Camden secondary heads, for how these constructive alternatives to permanent exclusion were to be negotiated and monitored.

[SHA joined the meeting online with apologies at 5.08pm.]

3.3 Safeguarding, behaviour and attendance Up-to-date data was now available for the autumn term: the need now was to return to a pattern of reporting data retrospectively at the first FGB each term. KAL had provided a full commentary on the data at the December FGB and will provide a verbal update to this meeting. ISH would also report back on the results of a recent governors' student voice workshop on the themes of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

3.4 Curriculum planning MSC would report on outline curriculum plans for the 2023-4 academic year. These plans would inform staffing decisions and GCSE options.

3.5 Camden support and project board meeting Last term Camden behaviour consultant Jeanette Lowe had carried out a review of behaviour and culture at William Ellis; the resulting report had been circulated. The school was working to implement its recommendations.

3.5.1 Also circulated had been the report from the latest half-termly Camden project board meeting, attended by IJO, SSK, Stephen Hall (chief executive of Camden Learning) and Anne Hudson (William Ellis's new school improvement partner).

3.5.2 The final page of the report said that the school's overall risk of not meeting the agreed end of year outcomes was high, even though the school was making satisfactory progress. IJO had clarified that the reason for this discrepancy was that some of the challenges were complex, long-standing and determined by factors outside the school's control, including difficulties in recruiting teachers.

3.6 Challenge Partners Four senior leaders from not-too-dissimilar schools had visited in November 2022 as part of the Challenge Partners peer review programme. The lead reviewer had led the previous, February 2020, review, so could offer a sense of progress made. And progress was being made: "keep going" was the general theme. The report's summary included useful action points for improvement.

3.7 Schools Financial Value Standard This had been discussed at length and approved at the recent (12 January 2023) Personnel and Resources Committee, but needed to be signed off by FGB, hence its place on the agenda.

3.8 Teachers' strike IJO would be reporting back on this in Part 2 of the meeting.

3.9 SSK thanked IJO for her summary. Following the project board meeting she had had a one-to-one meeting with Stephen Hall. There was much he did not know about the school, including that IJO was a relatively new headteacher, and that William Ellis shared a business director and other staff with Parliament Hill. She was convinced that he would be an excellent addition to Camden school governance.

3.10 SSK called for comments and questions.

3.11 SHA thought Jeanette Lowe's report on behaviour and culture had not been clear-eyed or honest enough about two incidents that she, he and other governors had witnessed on a recent tour of the school.

3.12 The first had been a shambles at the end of the lunch break, and the second had been poor behaviour by students who had been denied access to a classroom.

3.13 If either had been witnessed by Ofsted inspectors they would have taken a dim view, even given the mitigating factor of a shortage of staff that day.

3.14 In the case of the first incident, KAL thought that students knew the routines, but the lack of staff had meant that the boys had not been moving as quickly as necessary. A new system for covering staff absences was now in operation.

3.15 In the case of the second incident, IJO said that changing the timings of movement around the school by just a few minutes had reduced the potential for boys colliding in the corridor. Other schools' corridors were significantly wider.

3.16 RYU, as staff governor, did not think such incidents at transition points were common. However, they were wearing for teachers, and left them exhausted.

3.17 IJO agreed, but demanding perfect behaviour would mean 350 detentions a night.

[HMO joined the meeting with apologies at 5.29pm.]

3.18 CHO challenged this. Surely there was a happy medium on student behaviour between laissez faire and Draconian measures? IJO assured him that the school was taking a staged approach to student behaviour. Changes so far – and more to come – would require consistent commitment from staff and students.

3.19 IJO added that she had had no influence on the text of the report.

3.20 SHA warned that if younger boys were pushed and knocked in the corridors it would affect their confidence, and potentially their academic achievement. He urged staff to target the “pinch points”. IJO said that that was part of the strategy.

3.21 BLA noted that there were 13 transitions during the school day which SSK and SFE were welcome to observe when they attended the school on 9 February in advance of project board and School Improvement Committee meetings. The incidents referenced were atypical.

3.22 IJO added that the next stage of the behaviour and culture review would take place on 27 March 2023. Governors were welcome to attend.

ACTION *Item 3.22* **All governors** to consider attending next stage of behaviour and culture review on 27 March 2023.

3.23 KAL added that the school had the data to prove that there had been a marked improvement in student behaviour in the corridor, although students, when asked where they felt least safe in school, frequently referenced the corridors.

4. Receive update on behaviour and attendance

4.1 SSK invited KAL to further update governors on student behaviour. He tabled four A4 tables, one on attendance, one on suspensions, and one each on behaviour by group (ethnicity, Pupil Premium, etc) and behaviour by year.

4.2 Years 7-11 attendance for the school year to date was 91.6 per cent, in the top quartile of similar secondary schools nationally. Compared with nationally, persistent absence of 27.7 per cent was positive. Attendance by students in receipt of free school meals, and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), was problematic. The pandemic had hit attendance hard. Poor habits were engrained.

4.3 Camden advice had been not to accept 91 per cent attendance as a “new normal”. There was still a lot of work to be done.

4.4 SSK thanked KAL for his introduction and called for questions, of which there was one, and which KAL answered as follows.

4.5 Is Y8 attendance always an issue [NSI]? No, it was this particular cohort. One new strategy was to compile a “hard hitters” list to target students and their families.

4.6 Governor focus group on attendance ISH reported back on a student focus group on attendance led by her, KDU and SSK earlier in the week. The 14 Years 7-10 boys had engaged well. All were convinced that their views represented those of their non-attending peers.

4.6.1 Registration The boys wanted to start school later, and stressed the importance of “enthusiastic teachers” who engaged students in the registration period.

4.6.2 Lateness and absence The school's late policy was too harsh, resulting in the perverse incentive that, rather than receive a detention, boys preferred not to turn up to school at all. A key reason for lateness and absence was not getting up in time due to late nights.

4.6.3 Inconsistency Politeness to students, behaviour management and applying the “concern” system were inconsistent. Motivators included “nice teachers”. Some teachers were rude or sarcastic. A plethora of supply teachers could demotivate.

4.6.4 Behaviour management system There was inconsistency here, too. Students requested positive rewards for praise points, such as jumping the lunch queue, more playground time, being let out of school to source provisions, and trips.

4.6.5 Subjects PE was unanimously the favourite. “Nice teachers” were key to other favourite subjects: they encouraged better class behaviour, which students liked.

4.6.6 Homework They deplored the length of time and repetition of the Sparx maths system. If they were absent, they didn't receive the homework set.

4.6.7 Dislikes As above, but additionally the mobile phone policy, lunch queues for a limited menu, and an unsatisfactory playground surface.

4.6.8 Likes Breaks, lessons, the registration period when teachers were enthusiastic, and PE.

4.6.9 How to make it fun to come to school By providing footballs at break times, access to ping pong, allowing phones in the playground, more trips, and perhaps a pre-school football club.

4.7 SSK thanked ISH and called for any comments or questions.

4.8 KDU noted Covid's major impact on attendance, if only because children had discovered that the world had not ended when they didn't go to school as much. And GCSE rates even went up! Parents may not be in a position to give their boys breakfast and send them to school.

4.9 IJO agreed. Attendance was not going to bloom overnight. Letters highlighting pool attendance letters elicited indignant calls from parents. But 91 per cent was not acceptable. The school needed to continue to challenge students and families. NSI, from her own experience, noted a decline in youngsters' commitment and skills.

4.10 Do students really choose absence over lateness [CHO]? MSC thought a few did. IJO noted that the choice only made sense if a student thought that school was not worth bothering about, that attending or not would make no difference.

4.11 HMO noted that Covid-influenced changes in parents' working lives had had huge effects on their children. He suggested creative pre-school play could increase attendance. KAL agreed that the current breakfast and basketball clubs certainly increased attendance. There could be more capacity for an extra club.

4.12 KAL identified a need for the voice of persistently-absent students to be heard. Government advice to anyone feeling poorly to stay at home did not help. And it was important that the boys were faced with the figures on their absence. A boy with 85 per cent attendance missed 30 days of school a year.

4.13 Did the school systematically note when boys made even small improvements in their attendance [SJE]? KAL replied that it did not.

4.14 SSK thanked KAL again for his update, and ISH for her report.

5. Review Behaviour Policy

5.1 KAL reminded governors that, as mentioned by IJO earlier, the school's redrafted Behaviour Policy included a set of principles based on William Ellis's "5R" attributes – responsibility, respect, resourcefulness, reflection and resilience. An additional appendix focused on alternative provision, managed moves and off-site directives.

5.2 SSK thanked KAL and called for questions and comments.

5.3 If students don't see praise points as effective, is there work to be done to get the balance of praise and sanction right [CHO]? IJO agreed that there was. Praise was not highlighted in this policy because it was a key document in exclusion hearings. She agreed with KDU that, for that reason, it was more of a Bad Behaviour Policy.

5.4 RYU noted that members of staff found it harder to log praises on the new management information system, Bromcom, than its predecessor.

5.5 SHA urged the school to recognise the potential for inconsistency, particularly among new teachers, in applying the policy to the categories of vulnerable students in Section 8. This could perhaps be addressed through training.

5.6 In the code of conduct at Appendix 1 could William Ellis's "richly diverse community" consist of more than merely "men and women, boys and girls" [SJE]? KAL to amend to "people".

5.7 With that amendment, governors **AGREED** the Behaviour Policy. SNU to report to a future FGB on positive behaviour reinforcement initiatives.

ACTION *Item 5.7* **SNU** to present to future FGB on positive behaviour reinforcement initiatives.

6. Receive report on safeguarding

Governors noted KAL's report on safeguarding – particularly its concision – with thanks. KAL reassured SSK that he had seen no further evidence of fines for poor attendance prompting parents to consider home-educating their son(s). IJO pointed out that, as requested by governors, the report included attendance data for students for whom there were safeguarding concerns. SSK noted that many of these students attended well; KAL thought there was little correlation between poor attendance and safeguarding issues.

[SNU left the meeting at 6.27pm.]

7. Receive report on curriculum planning

7.1 SSK thanked MSC for his report on curriculum planning and asked him to introduce it, which he did as follows.

7.2 In response to feedback following the recent Ofsted inspection, food technology had been introduced in Years 7 and 8, at the cost of reducing PE from five to four periods fortnightly. Extending the offer to Y9 could entail docking a period from science teaching.

7.3 The curriculum offer for next year's Y10 had had to be amended, as the year was capped at 112 boys. To maintain efficient staffing, fewer students were likely to be able to take their GCSE subjects of first choice.

7.4 Ofsted inspectors had noted that computing was not taught in Y9. However, a lack of teaching capacity meant that reducing teaching of the subject across Years 7 and 8 was the only option to teach exactly the same content across all of KS3.

7.5 On the horizon were T levels in the sixth form, which was prompting MSC some anxiety around timetabling.

7.6 National tutoring funding had boosted staffing in English and maths and was set to be widened to more subjects.

7.7 The proposed curriculum model for next year, assuming similar demands at KS5 and like-for-like staff, would give some 5 per cent leeway.

7.8 Key questions included teaching the computer science curriculum; the reduced Y10 roll, meaning five rather than six subjects; potential single classes in business students and science; and scheduling food technology.

7.9 A carousel – potentially a logistical nightmare – could be an option for some subjects. There was no RE specialist in the school.

7.10 SSK thanked MSC and called for questions and comments.

7.11 How has food technology been received by the students [CHO]? Very well. Students enjoyed it and demand was increasing.

7.12 SHA warned that carousels, quite apart from being logistical nightmares, made sequencing the curriculum problematic.

[KAL and MSC left the meeting at 6.37pm.]

8. Receive report from Staffing and Resources Committee

KDU, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 12 January 2023. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. Financial benchmarking exercises had revealed that staff costs were average and premises costs were comparatively low. The committee had scrutinised the Schools Financial Value Standard: all its questions had been answered positively. The budget forecast was for a £662k carry-forward, although energy costs and a lower pupil roll could dent that. Funding for energy-saving initiatives was welcome, as was the signing of a new photocopier contract.

9. Approve SFVS

SSK noted that the Schools Financial Value Standard was an annual checklist which enabled governors to monitor and review the school's financial probity and effectiveness. The document had been thoroughly reviewed at the last (12 January 2023) Personnel and Resources Committee. Governors **AGREED** the SFVS.

10. Receive update on governance review

SSK reported that Stephen Hall, chief executive of Camden Learning, had recommended a swift review by the National Governance Association (NGA). SSK and IJO had discussed with the NGA's Diane Moss. She would be attending the next (9 February 2023) School Improvement Committee meeting and possibly, via video link, the next (23 March 2023) FGB, with the aim of completing her review by Easter. Governors would receive an invitation to partake in an online survey shortly.

11. Receive updates on governor training and visits to school

SHA had completed Camden Learning induction training. ISH, SSK and KDU had attended the student focus group on attendance. SSK pointed out that FGB vice chair DMO would be stepping down at the end of the school year: a new Foundation governor would be necessary to replace him, and she had discussed succession with CHO. ISH would also be stepping down; SJE had expressed some interest in taking over as governor with responsibility for attendance. STA's term of office would end in May; a parent governor election would be necessary .

12. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

12.1 The minutes of the meeting of 8 December 2022 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SSK to sign after the meeting. There were a number of matters arising.

12.2 Item 5.2.2 MHU apologised that he had omitted to schedule discussion of the Pay Committee terms of reference on the agenda of the 12 January 2023 Personnel and Resources Committee: he would schedule on the agenda of the next (4 May 2023) PRC meeting.

ACTION Item 12.2 *MHU to schedule discussion of Pay Committee terms of reference on agenda of next (4 May 2023) PRC meeting.*

12.3 Item 11.2 SSK pointed out that the safeguarding training referenced in this action was that of the National Governance Association, not the NSPCC. She would forward a link for the training to MHU. MHU to circulate link to governors. All governors to undertake the training.

ACTION Item 12.3 *SSK to forward link for NGA safeguarding training to MHU; MHU to circulate to all governors; all governors to undertake NGA safeguarding training.*

12.4 Item 11.3 Given that this action – for STA to brainstorm ways to address toxic masculinity in school with the School Council – had been outstanding since 24 March 2022, it was shelved.

12.5 All other actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 23 March 2023 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 6.50pm. Confidential items followed. All present remained.

Signed.....

23 March 2023

Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---|
| ACTION | Item 3.22 | All governors to consider attending next stage of behaviour and culture review on 27 March 2023. |
| ACTION | Item 5.7 | SNU to present to future FGB on positive behaviour reinforcement initiatives. |
| ACTION | Item 12.2 | MHU to schedule discussion of Pay Committee terms of reference on agenda of next (4 May 2023) PRC meeting. |
| ACTION | Item 12.3 | SSK to forward link for NGA safeguarding training to MHU; MHU to circulate to all governors; all governors to undertake NGA safeguarding training. |