

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 12 October 2017

MINUTES

GOVERNORS		Present
Headteacher	Mr Sam White (SWH)	✓
LA	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	✓
Elected parent	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
	VACANCY	N/A
Elected staff	VACANCY	N/A
Foundation	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	x
	Mrs Ronke Coote (RCO)	x
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	✓
	Ms Julie Eccleshare (JEC)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE)	x
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
	Mr Omar Hamon (OHA)	x
	VACANCY	N/A
Co-opted	Ms Laura Concannon (LCO)	✓
	Ms Pandora Kay-Kreizman (PKK)	✓
	VACANCY	N/A
ASSOCIATE		
ATTENDING	Mr Abdi Ahmed (AAH)	x
	Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) Assistant headteacher	
	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO) Assistant headteacher	
	Ms Elizabeth Lawson (ELA) Maths teacher	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) Clerk	

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and declarations of interest for this meeting

1.1 FMI welcomed everyone to the meeting, which began at 5.07pm. She particularly welcomed the new clerk, MHU. For his benefit, all introduced themselves.

1.2 Apologies were received from, and permission for absence given to, AAH, RAU, RCO, CGE and OHA. DMO apologised for leaving early. No other apologies were necessary as all other governors were present, and thus a quorum.

1.3 There were no declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in respect of any items on this agenda. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers had been distributed in advance.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 6 July 2017 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them after the meeting. There was one matter arising.

2.2 **Item 7** KDU reported that the Personnel and Resources Committee had not in the event discussed a sustainable fundraising model for The Mill, but a working party would now consider it. FMI noted that The Mill's separate trust complicated matters.

ACTION Item 2.2 OHA to present to next FGB on fundraising for The Mill;
MHU to schedule on agenda.

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

3. Discussion item: work of the Governing Board

3.1 FMI proposed taking this item out of agenda order as SWH had not yet joined the meeting.

3.2 **Constitution** FMI handed out a single A4 sheet summarising possible reconstitution models, from a Governing Board consisting of 12 governors to one of (as now) 20 governors. She pointed out that, as a voluntary aided school, Foundation governors had to outnumber all other governors by two. The other governors had to include two elected parents, one elected staff governor, the headteacher, and one governor nominated by the local authority. For historical reasons, two of the Governing Board's current co-opted governors were members of staff.

3.2.1 DMO pointed out that one drawback of a smaller board was that it could already be difficult to muster governors to serve on panels. LEM argued that if members of a larger board were not engaged then they would not attend meetings; he advocated a Governing Board of 16.

3.2.2 PKK noted that, almost by definition, governors tended to be busy people. JEC argued that at least one co-opted governor should be a member of staff. LCO, one of the co-opted members of staff (the other being PKK), said that a single staff member would be enough if parent governors were sufficiently differentiated in their skills. FMI noted that, given that parents were elected, the Governing Board could only be certain of specifying the skills of co-opted and Foundation governors.

[SWH joined the meeting with apologies at 5.23pm.]

3.2.3 The consensus coalesced around a Governing Board of 16, with two parents (rather than the current three) and two co-opted governors, one of whom could be a member of staff. That would imply losing a staff member. The current staff members who were co-opted governors accepted this.

3.2.4 Governors **AGREED** to reconstitute as above: FMI to liaise with Camden.

ACTION Item 3.2.4 FMI to liaise with Camden on reconstituting.

3.3 Governor visits FMI proposed three themed Governors' Days a year, starting with the theme of SEND (special educational needs and disabilities).

3.3.1 The days would include learning walks and opportunities to canvas the views of staff, boys and parents. SWH urged a single day of visits, with a full schedule, perhaps during w/c 27 November, and perhaps even on Thursday 30 November, when the FGB met. ISH noted that most parents worked full time: could governors canvas their views separately?

ACTION Item 3.3.1 SWH and FMI to liaise on first Governors' Day.

3.4 Governor training FMI noted a recent decline in the organisation of Camden training: DMO suggested that the FGB organise its own training, as part of a Governing Board meeting, or in partnership with other schools. LEM suggested training in new performance measures and how to hold school leaders to account, which SWH welcomed. FMI to schedule for an FGB meeting.

ACTION Item 3.4 FMI to schedule training in new performance measures and how to hold school leaders to account for an FGB meeting.

4. Discussion item: strategy and risk

4.1 Erasmus trip to Finland SWH noted that, although it was important for governors to retain a focus on risks to the school, strategic development demanded more. Camden had received a £240k grant from the EU's Erasmus student exchange programme to organise opportunities to study educational practice abroad.

4.1.1 He invited BLA and ELA to speak about their recent week's trip to Finland, which they did, answering questions as they did so.

4.1.2 ELA circulated a single A4 sheet summarising the learning from the trip, which was attended by staff from William Ellis and five other Camden schools; two governors also attended. She had been the single classroom-only teacher.

4.1.3 The eight key points learned ranged from the promotion of wellbeing and building trust to opportunities to collaborate, supportive technology and paired ITT (initial teacher training) placements. Students were supported to become autonomous and self-managing, and learning was tailored to individual students.

4.1.4 BLA identified an emphasis on the professionalism of teachers, which, as a UK teacher of 27 years' experience, struck him as novel. To have the opportunity to ponder the core purpose of the teacher's role had been valuable. Despite the fact that Finnish education seemed unattainably far ahead of the UK's, all the visitors had come away inspired.

4.1.5 He recalled that the relaxed, informal and insightful deputy head of the first school visited by the Camden group had greeted them in ripped jeans and sandals. The headteacher was on a training session in Helsinki with 16 teaching staff. Here, the focus was on the learning of the 600 11- to 16-year-old students. The atmosphere was calm and the wellbeing of teachers and students was clearly a priority.

4.1.6 What was the intake of the school [LEM]? The school was in a university town of some 60,000 people in Eastern Finland, close to the Russian border: it certainly did not have the ethnic mix of a typical London school.

4.1.7 How privileged were the students [PKK]? Certainly there were disadvantaged students, but their needs did not drive the teaching. It was all about the learning.

4.1.8 ELA noted that the first couple of schools visited had brand new facilities. Others were clearly in receipt of less funding, and low level disruption from students was more apparent, but they shared the same ethos of learning.

4.1.9 Classroom technology was another eye-opener. Every student was loaned their own iPad, which they could buy after leasing it for three years. Students would read tutorials on their phones, and researched school subjects on YouTube.

4.1.10 BLA identified trust as a key element throughout the educational system, right down to the students themselves. Y8 biology, physics and chemistry students acted independently to progress their learning, with the teacher simply facilitating.

4.1.11 BLA had been reflecting just how much William Ellis students were trusted – or not – simply to get on with their own learning. Primary schools did tend to trust their pupils. The risk was that secondary schools clamped down on that.

4.1.12 Could what BLA and ELA observed be a societal thing; that the Finns simply had a different attitude to education [PKK]? It was hard to isolate but there was definitely a sense of a different, common way of thinking about education.

4.1.13 How large were class sizes [JEC]? Small; fewer than 20.

4.1.14 BLA noted that the promotion of wellbeing was well advanced at William Ellis but the school clearly had more to do.

4.1.15 How would the learning be taken forward collaboratively [FMI]? Through Camden Learning: six or seven more tours for Camden schools were to follow.

4.1.16 Could the Finns be invited to the UK [DMO]? They (the Finns) were not enthusiastic.

4.1.17 KDU pointed out that UK cultural forces may not support the ideas of wellbeing and trust in schools. BLA argued that there was much that could not be controlled but it was worth trying.

4.1.18 ISH stressed that UK schools might only have access to Erasmus for another year or two, in which case retention of staff would be important so that the knowledge gained could grow through the Camden system. The funding would not come round again.

[GGO joined the meeting with apologies at 6.01pm.]

4.1.19 In light of the Finnish experience, what would BLA and ELA like to see change in the next year at William Ellis [ISH]? ELA volunteered the last of the eight learning points identified: "opportunities for primary and secondary schools to collaborate, learn from each other and to accelerate progress from KS2 to KS3".

4.1.20 Was a different language needed to balance challenge and support [FMI]? BLA said he would like to see a more relaxed attitude to management but not to see the end of all of the current culture. In Finland, the headteacher set the vision. The teachers led. It was a form of distributed leadership without heavy-handed accountability.

4.1.21 FMI thanked BLA and ELA for their presentation and for answering questions.

[BLA and ELA left the meeting at 6.06pm.]

4.1.22 FMI invited SWH to comment. He noted that, although Finnish schools were working within a different system, there was nothing in William Ellis's own School Development Plan that contradicted anything in the eight key learning points.

4.1.23 FMI said it would be encouraging if collaboration between primary and secondary schools was rolled out throughout Camden: they did not collaborate enough. ISH thought individual teacher collaboration rather than whole-school initiatives might be more effective.

4.2 Update on change programme SWH reminded governors that the change programme had focused on developing the role of the curriculum, managing the staffing budget, distributing leadership, and through this improving teaching and learning. Overall it was progressing well.

4.2.1 The new School Improvement Programme had meant a new, streamlined senior team. Middle managers would step up, although not overnight. Staff were readjusting to new ways of working, with a less layered structure.

4.2.2 There had been challenges. The introduction of a new PHSCE (personal, social, health and citizenship education) programme had been a positive move but delivering it had made demands on staff.

4.2.3 Had there been an impact on standards [FMI]? There were concerns about the needs of Y11 as there was less staffing to provide additional support for interventions in and out of class, particularly in English and maths.

4.2.4 What of middle attainers [FMI]? They were a disparate group, so treating them as one group was not necessarily useful. SWH thought that at this point it might be helpful to inform governors the school's provisional Progress 8 score. This score indicated that the high and low attainers were doing well, particularly for boys. The school's overall Progress 8 score was -0.23; last year, the national P8 score for boys had been -0.17. (This year the boys' national value was -0.24.) If outliers were removed, the school did better. The value for maths was positive, EBacc subjects were neutral, English was negative and the open element was significantly negative. The last was the key risk.

[DMO left the meeting at 6.17pm.]

4.2.5 LCO warned that staff stress levels were high. Staff felt strongly that bringing in PHSCE and the new tutor programme at the same time as increasing contact time with students was too much. Staff felt stretched. SWH asked how workload could be better managed; LCO reminded him that a list of ideas had been presented to the school's senior leaders. KDU recommended training middle leaders in "smart" working. Personnel and Resources Committee to consider staff workload issue.

ACTION Item 4.2.5 *MHU to schedule consideration of staff workload issues on agenda of next Personnel and Resources Committee.*

4.3 Financial outlook SWH reported that Camden advice was (given a stable roll) to assume flat funding, with rising costs. This was not as bleak a picture as the £300k overspend recently reported to the Personnel and Resources Committee, predicated on an assumed fall in funding.

4.3.1 FMI agreed that phasing in of a new funding formula had eased financial pressures slightly, but any extra funding did nothing to address rising costs. SWH agreed that it would be useful for educational consultant Sam Ellis to return and review the budget following the restructure, and possibly meet JWO and RAU. FMI to contact him.

ACTION Item 4.3.1 *FMI to contact Sam Ellis re reviewing the budget following the restructure.*

4.3.2 LEM noted that Camden School for Girls was to host a £150-a-head fundraising evening at a prestigious restaurant in Clerkenwell. Perhaps William Ellis should do likewise.

4.4 Risk factors FMI listed these as:

- Progress
- Attendance
- Sixth form
- Middle attainers
- Disadvantaged students
- Curriculum.

4.4.1 Essentially, these boiled down to two key risk factors; curriculum, of which attendance was an aspect – students did not attend when not engaged – and progress, which covered disadvantaged students, middle attainers and the sixth form. However, perhaps curriculum was a development opportunity rather than a risk.

4.4.2 SWH thought that there were curriculum matters that needed to be resolved. These included staffing the teaching of the new subjects of food technology and engineering, and the leadership and management of some curriculum areas. The proposed review of the technical support had also not happened.

4.4.3 Although creativity was not just the realm of arts subjects, reductions to art, DT and the like meant that the school was not meeting the needs of those students who said they wanted opportunities to be creative.

4.4.4 FMI suggested bringing in an external consultant to facilitate a curriculum review. SWH to consider.

ACTION Item 4.4.4 *SWH to consider bringing in an external consultant to facilitate a curriculum review.*

4.4.5 SWH pointed out that, within a few months, new LaSWAP facilities would aid sixth form recruitment and boost the school's budget.

4.4.6 At KDU's suggestion, FMI added the following to the risks facing the school:

- Teacher workload and wellbeing
- Financial pressures.

4.4.7 She thanked all concerned for their contributions to an interesting debate.

5. Approve Pay Policy

5.1 SWH noted that the model Camden policy had been reviewed, discussed and approved by the Premises and Resources Committee. The proposal was to take up Camden's recommendation to award an (unfunded) two per cent cost-of-living pay rise to all teachers on the main pay scale, and not just those on the minima and maxima of the scale. All other staff would receive the basic one per cent rise.

5.2 Was there anything within the policy which might link to the school's agreed objectives [ISH]? SWH replied that, given that this was a Camden model policy, it would be ill-advised to amend it too much; in any case, a better mechanism for aligning staff performance with the school's objectives was appraisal.

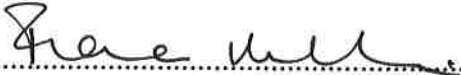
5.3 Governors **AGREED** the Pay Policy; a two per cent rise for all teachers on the main pay scale; and a one per cent rise for all other staff.

6. Any other business

MHU asked all governors present to fill in, and return, an annual declaration of business and other interests, which they did.

Next scheduled meeting: 30 November 2017 at 5pm, followed by festive drinks at KDU's kind invitation, at her home near the school.

There being no other business and no confidential items, FMI thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.53pm.

Signed..........

30 November 2017

Fiona Millar
Chair of the Governing Board, William Ellis School

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

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| ACTION | Item 2.2 | OHA to present to next FGB on fundraising for The Mill;
MHU to schedule on agenda. |
| ACTION | Item 3.2.4 | FMI to liaise with Camden on reconstituting. |
| ACTION | Item 3.3.1 | SWH and FMI to liaise on first Governors' Day. |
| ACTION | Item 3.4 | FMI to schedule training in new performance measures and how to hold school leaders to account for an FGB meeting. |
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| ACTION | Item 4.4.4 | SWH to consider bringing in an external consultant to facilitate a curriculum review. |

