

# WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



## MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 22 March 2018

### MINUTES

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GOVERNORS		Present
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Sam White (HT)	✓
<b>LA</b>	Ms Georgia Gould (GGO)	x
<b>Elected parent</b>	Ms Imogen Sharp (ISH)	✓
	Mr Jonny Woolf (JWO)	✓
<b>Elected staff</b>	Mr Richard Whitenstall (RWH)	✓
<b>Foundation</b>	Mr Richard Ault (RAU)	✓
	Mrs Ronke Coote (RCO)	✓
	Dame Karen Dunnell (KDU)	✓
	Dr Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)	x
	Prof Conor Gearty (CGE) <b>Vice chair</b>	✓
	Mr Omar Hamon (OHA)	✓
	Ms Fiona Millar (FMI) <b>Chair</b>	✓
	Prof Daniel Monk (DMO)	✓
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK)	✓
<b>Co-opted</b>	Ms Laura Concannon (LCO)	✓
	Ms Pandora Kay-Kreizman (PKK)	✓
<b>ASSOCIATE</b>		
	Mr Abdi Ahmed (AAH)	x
<b>ATTENDING</b>		
	Mr Joey Glover (JGL) <b>Y7 student progress leader</b>	
	Members of the Student Council <sup>1</sup>	
	Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) <b>Clerk</b>	

### 1. Welcome and School Council presentation

1.1 FMI welcomed everyone to this FGB meeting, which began at 5.06pm. She particularly welcomed members of the School Council, who presented to governors as follows, supported by the Y7 progress leader, JGL.

1.2 This year's equality day had been specific to gender equality. Members of the Student Council had supported teachers in planning the day, in February. Non-uniform days had raised £460 for Mosaic LGBT Youth, £600 for Save the Children and Shelter, and £466.86 for UNICEF. The following week's non-uniform day would be in aid of Cancer Research UK.

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<sup>1</sup> Nasrudin Abshir, Anes Bouzouina, Alioune Bukasa, Jack Espiner, Santi Hincapie Garcia, Billy Jenkins, Fortune Ngina-Mau, Roko Orosnjack, Zakiyy Rettali, Burt Thorne and Casey Yusuff-Phillips.

**1.3** The council's main role, however, was to take action to address an issue raised by students across the school. This year, the issue voted the highest priority by the majority of William Ellis students had been cuts in school funding and their impact on students. Effects had included lack of money to buy or maintain resources and equipment, restricted GCSE options and fewer extra-curricular opportunities. Fewer teachers were more stressed and had less time to focus on students as individuals.

**1.4** An opportunity to discuss these issues had arisen when the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, had visited the school. He had agreed with everything members of the School Council had said, particularly on the need for more practical and creative opportunities for students who were less academically inclined, and the need to tax private schools.

**1.5** Unfortunately, given that cuts in education funding were driven by the government, there was little the members of the Student Council could do to effect change. However, they would not give up. Meanwhile, other issues included:

- **Equity of trips** To ensure everyone was included in the trips offer.
- **Respect for the school's resources** To encourage all students, in the light of restricted budgets, to respect these.
- **School library** To ensure that this was a resource for quiet study and revision, rather than a place to play computer and other games.

**1.6** FMI thanked the members of the Student Council and asked for governors' questions, which were answered as follows.

**1.7 What kind of library did members of the council want [PKK]?** When students were playing computer games it could get quite exciting, so perhaps another space could be dedicated to quiet study.

**[OHA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.18pm.]**

**1.7.1** The library was supposed to be a learning resource centre but it was often full and it was unfair that Y11 students, who needed to revise, were sent away while students from Years 7 and 8 played cards, chess and computer games.

**1.8 It had been gratifying to hear students' eloquence, but could they say more about their meeting with Jeremy Corbyn [JWO]?** They had asked him how, if he were in power, he would make schools better. At William Ellis, teaching of design technology had been cut back: he said he would focus on the apprenticeship system. He agreed that private schools were not fair.

**1.9 What arrangements were in place for the Student Council to feed ideas to the school's senior leaders, and how could they be improved [CGO]?** JGL chaired Student Council meetings, took minutes and fed back to HT. HT noted that Student Council views had influenced the development of the school's PSHCE (personal, social, health, citizenship and economic) curriculum and its "curriculum for life".

**1.10 Which curriculum subjects helped to teach members of the Student Council to think about their concerns [DMO]?** Teaching of design technology had been reduced. Tutorial lessons, as part of PSHCE, helped. In most lessons, teachers might mention budget cuts. Many students kept up to date with media coverage.

**1.11 Was fundraising for charity only among William Ellis students, or did it go wider [RAU]?** It was mainly focused on non-uniform days: each of the four was dedicated to raising money for a single charity. Students had taken enthusiastically to the days. HT added that students had raised some £5k for the school from sponsorship of the annual WESPA (William Ellis School parents' association) 5km fun run.

**1.12 What were the inconsistencies in awarding praise and concerns [RCO]?**

Students were not telling teachers to be all the same because they were only human and had a range of teaching styles, but some gave no praise, and others too much.

**1.13 Which did students prefer [CGE]?** Too much.

**1.14 What was the inequity in trips [KDU]?** This was linked to the budget cuts. The school should try to spread them out more evenly so that everyone had an opportunity to go on them.

**1.15 With a reduction in the teaching of design technology, did students believe that the curriculum was becoming too academic [PKK]?** Jeremy Corbyn had said that the curriculum generally was too academic but students would like more computer lessons. The cousin of one member of the Student Council, who went to another school, had studied food technology, but the course had been scrapped.

Meanwhile, private schools had six hours of drama lessons a week. That was crazy.

**1.16 Was there more that WESPA could do to raise funds for the school [SSK]?** The school relied too much on WESPA. Students should be more involved. A WESPA assembly to explain how and why it raised funds would be helpful.

**1.17 How and when had students first become aware of education funding cuts; should there be a student campaign against them; and what were the Student Council's views on homework [FMI]?** There was already a student campaign, led by the Camden Youth MP, who represented the views and interests of local young people at regional and national level through the UK Youth Parliament. Camden Youth Council had campaigned on, and halted, cuts to youth clubs. William Ellis's Student Council could perhaps join forces with it, and the UK Youth Council.

**1.17.1** With regard to homework, teachers needed to work on consistency. Some teachers stuck to a timetable, setting it on Monday to be returned on Friday, or even Wednesday. Others wouldn't set homework for two or three weeks, then set an enormous task to be handed in by the end of the week. It could be a lot to do.

**1.17.2** A homework timetable lasted about a week, then teachers forgot about it and returned to setting homework inconsistently.

**1.17.3** Using a free web planner such as Google Classroom to simplify creating, distributing and marking homework paperlessly could be useful. Students with a phone would always have it with them, compared with a piece of paper which could get lost in the bottom of a school bag.

**1.17.4** For older students working towards their GCSEs, homework tended to give way to revision. But generally, the problem lay with individual teachers and the amount they set at any one time. A consistent amount would be helpful, and over a weekend rather than during the week. The more of a subject that was taught, the more homework you got. Teachers should coordinate on a regular homework plan so that students could plan.

**1.17.5 Would Google Classroom allow students to plan [FMI]?** Yes; parents and carers could also monitor if their children had homework. But there should always be the old-fashioned option of pen and paper too. The advantage of Google Classroom was that students could interact with teachers; you had no excuse that you weren't there when homework was set. But not everyone had a phone.

**1.18 Was the issue with computers connected only with the library [ISH]?** No, the computers in the gallery were quite slow.

**1.19 Returning to education funding cuts, had students heard about them through the school or through the media [FMI]?** Everyone noticed a year when a lot of teachers left, and it was because of the budget cuts. The school was very transparent about its financial problems.

### **1.20 What role could the Student Council play in governors' decisions [FMI]?**

Governors' decisions changed students' lives, so they should be consulted.

Governors could explain what was happening and what might happen in the future.

London schools were disproportionately hit by cuts compared with elsewhere.

Awareness for students began in 2007 when David Cameron's government first came under fire because it had introduced austerity.

**1.21** PKK noted that it was heartening that bullying was not an issue for students, and that they still enjoyed school lunches.

**1.22** FMI thanked members of the Student Council and reiterated that it had been useful to have their input. HT suggested a meeting with the Student Council in the summer term, about the budget and how creativity in the curriculum might be developed. The school was committed to a significantly increased creative aspect to the curriculum but it needed students to choose their subjects.

**[JGL and members of the Student Council left the meeting at 5.49pm.]**

## **2. Apologies and declarations of interest**

Apologies were received from, and permission for absence given to, LEM and GGO. There were no apologies from AAH. A quorum was present. There were no other declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in respect of any items on this agenda. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers had been distributed in advance.

## **3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

**3.1** The minutes of the meeting of 8 February 2018 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record. FMI to sign them after the meeting. There was one matter arising.

**3.2** SSK reported that she had begun enquiring about potential events companies who might be interested in The Mill's facilities: she would report further in time. HT reminded governors that he and OHA would be meeting The Mill's current facilities management company, ACH, shortly.

**3.3** The other action had been fulfilled.

## **4. Headteacher's report**

**4.1** FMI invited HT to present his report to governors, which he tabled with apologies for its late arrival. He answered questions as they arose.

**4.2 Summary of Progress 8 issues** HT circulated copies of the Progress 8 report which the School Improvement Committee had considered at its meeting of 1 March 2018.

**4.3 Progress on Ofsted improvement points** HT noted that he had RAG-rated post-Ofsted improvement actions amber and green.

**4.3.1** The **school management restructuring** had been implemented. Governors should feel reassured by various improvements in the **support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**: this had improved significantly but there was still work to be done.

**4.3.2** By definition, those students who were still on the register had not made enough progress to leave it, but many had. A more flexible system to resource the needs of newly-arrived SEND students was needed, rather than applying for an EHC (education, health and care) plan which took at least 20 weeks to come through. Camden, which spent more than other boroughs on SEND, was responding here.

**4.3.3** The post-Ofsted improvement action on **homework** was under way. This was not a single issue but took in independent learning and learning generally. HT's initial intention had been to scrap planners and buy into the software solution called Show My Homework. Fortunately he had paused in order to review the use of planners rather than resort to an expensive IT solution. Whatever the system, it had to be easy and have obvious benefits, such as transparency and clarity about what homework had been set. A parent survey this week would inform any decision.

**4.3.4 Would HT reflect on the comments of the Student Council, and given that someone line managed the process of setting homework, was there an issue with identifying where that responsibility lay (FMI)?** PKK said different departments had different systems. One problem was delivery, but students also complained how much or how little homework they received.

**4.3.5 Was the homework that was set useful, productive and effective?** PKK thought that a lot of teachers were not sticking to the homework plan precisely because they wanted the setting of homework to be effective.

**4.3.6 Was the process of setting homework consistently managed [FMI)?** PKK thought it depended on the department. There would always be inconsistency. HT thought that the school's homework policy allowed for that. He had been trying to encourage departments to clarify their policies, which did indeed vary. He would like to see an agenda of standard homework tasks across the board within departments.

**4.3.7** PKK suggested that homework should vary according to the students' abilities. FMI thought that departments should have a policy that all teachers in that department understood. LCO thought that setting homework online was quickest, easiest and most consistent. ISH thought self-marking online homework was very popular with students, because of the instant feedback, but SSK pointed out that not all students had access to a laptop.

**4.3.8** RCO noted that the majority of detentions were connected with homework: HT pointed out that chasing homework was an ongoing battle and teachers sometimes understandably defaulted to handing out a detention.

**4.3.9 Were detentions effective [DMO)?** HT said they were not the first port of call.

**4.3.10** FMI suggested returning to the issue of homework in the September 2018 FGB meeting. She suggested a governors' focus group on homework, like that which had been pioneered on the subject of SEND. HT to organise.

**ACTION** *Item 4.3.10* HT to organise governor focus group on homework.

**4.3.11** HT noted that the final post-Ofsted improvement action, on additional funding, had been completed.

**4.4 Progress on School Development Plan** HT noted that, apart from a greater focus on attendance, the current plan met all the needs of the school and it was not his intention to amend it radically. He had RAG-rated the plan, which was appendix C of his report, and at this meeting intended to focus on those aspects RAG-rated red.

**4.4.1 Lead practitioner CPD** This had not been completed because poor take-up had led Camden to cancel the planned CPD course.

**4.4.2 Was there an online version available [KDU]?** HT to investigate.

**ACTION Item 4.4.2** HT to investigate availability of online lead practitioner CPD.

**4.4.3** LCO noted that teachers had found that day's in-house training – the first of a planned programme – very useful; the subject had been teachers' disciplinary enquiry projects. PKK described the training as inspiring. HT said his intention was to develop it next year.

**4.4.4 Why [paragraph T5a] did governors need be trained in curriculum planning [KDU]?** FMI thought this referred not to training as such, but briefing. HT to amend.

**ACTION Item 4.4.4** HT to amend School Development Plan to reference briefing of governors re curriculum planning, rather than training.

**4.4.5 More flexible KS4 curriculum to support vulnerable students** HT noted a need to develop a more flexible and less academic curriculum. Fortunately, a number of new vocational qualifications had been launched, although too late for next year's Y10, which could be alternative additional pathways. Widening the curriculum was challenging for a small school like William Ellis.

**4.4.6 How would the success of a wider curriculum be measured [RWH]?** Presumably by comparing the pathways of boys historically who had stumbled in a more rigorously academic environment. Ideally, less academic Y11 students would achieve higher grades than they would have done otherwise. For them, taking nine academic GCSEs was a struggle: perhaps 20 boys would be suitable for a non-standard route through KS4.

**4.4.7 Use of data** This was the subject of two actions RAG-rated red. There was much more to do here. So far the school had not secured much support from Camden Learning: development work in the school had relied on line managers and lead practitioners for support. The level of confidence about data among middle leaders varied.

**4.4.8 Was there resistance to using it [CGE ]?** In some quarters, yes.

**4.5 Student progress: Years 7-11** HT pointed out that each year group had a different Progress 8 profile. Y11's was not significantly positive, although in line with peers nationally. Progress in maths was strong and in EBacc was acceptable, but there were concerns about progress in English and the open element.

**4.5.1** Y11's attitude had been in question at times, but 55 students had attended a Saturday maths revision course. The importance of GCSEs had registered with most of the students and most had taken this week's English and maths mock exams very seriously. English was where most students were struggling. The quality and accuracy of their writing was a real barrier to higher grades. Interventions were helping.

**4.5.2 Were Y11's problems worse than those of previous Y11 students [ISH]?** It was hard to say. They were certainly more widespread than in previous Y11s.

**4.5.3 Was the hope that Y11's exam momentum would grow [CGE]?** This group lacked academic energy and faced some demanding GCSEs, about which even their teachers had anxieties. Teaching had to be clear and simple so that students were not overwhelmed.



**4.5.4 What could be done to encourage and empower teachers of Y8, which had a similar profile to the current Y11, to head off exam issues [LCO]?** Heads of all subjects were reviewing teaching at KS3, in preparation for KS4.

**4.5.5 Given the new GCSEs, were Y8 interventions appropriate [FMI]?** Teachers had so far focused on KS4: they would now have time to turn to KS3, and specifically Y8.

**4.5.6 Were the lessons of preparing for these more rigorous exams being learned [FMI]?** The entire School Development Plan was focused on preparing students for these harder exams, encouraging them in deeper, more independent learning than they currently practiced. Literacy would be a particular focus.

**4.5.7 What were the areas of concern in the progress of Years 8-10 [FMI]?** The gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged were narrowing so that there was no marked difference. Student attitudes were sharpening. Y9 was strong and academic; Y8 less so; Y7 was somewhere in between. Progress in English was consistently flagging. Middle attainers in science needed tracking.

**4.5.8** HT added that he had received a copy of a letter this week from DfE to exam boards, asking them to review requirements for students to pass all key units of a course, or fail the exam entirely. This affected vocational courses and looked like good news.

**4.6 Student progress: sixth form** HT pointed out that this data, which had only been received the previous week, was useful benchmarking. He was pleased with the improvement in attendance, and feeling positive about the work of the improvement teams.

**4.7** FMI thanked HT for his report, and for answering questions.

## 5. Review policies and other documents

**5.1 SFVS** FMI reminded governors that the Schools Financial Value Standard, which was a self-evaluation of the school's financial acumen, had been comprehensively reviewed by the Resources Committee. Governors **AGREED** the SFVS. FMI to sign and Debbie Smith (DSM – the school's finance manager) to submit to Camden.

**ACTION Item 5.1** FMI to sign SFVS; DSM to submit to Camden.

**5.2 Equality objectives in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** Governors **AGREED** the equality objectives in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

## 6. Receive chair's report

**6.1 Corbyn visit** FMI noted that she had observed the meeting in which members of the School Council, who had been very impressive, had grilled Jeremy Corbyn.

**6.2 Knife crime** FMI proposed that GGO, and possibly also AAH, should address the next meeting on this subject.

**ACTION Item 6.2** FMI to invite GGO, and possibly AAH, to address next FGB meeting on the subject of knife crime.

**6.2.1** It was notable that previous support that had been offered to children between the ages of nine and 13 had been withdrawn. Schools were responsible for safeguarding children in that period. A surge in knife crime could be the result. ISH added that the transition from primary to secondary education could be problematic for some children.

## **7. Any other business**

**7.1 Farewell to LCO** FMI noted that LCO would be leaving the school for a career break: governors wished her luck in whatever she did next. HT said that, sadly, LCO was not the only experienced member of staff leaving the school. Governors asked for exit interviews to be completed with members of staff who were leaving.

**ACTION Item 7.1** HT to ensure exit interviews are conducted with staff who are leaving.

**7.2 May social** KDU invited all governors to cheese and wine after the next FGB.

**Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 17 May 2018 at 5pm.**

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, FMI thanked all present for attending and closed this part of the meeting at 6.55pm. LCO, PKK and RWH left the meeting at this point. Confidential items followed.

Signed..........

17 May 2018

**Fiona Millar**  
**Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School**

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

**ACTION Item 4.3.10** HT to organise governor focus group on homework.

**ACTION Item 4.4.2** HT to investigate availability of online lead practitioner CPD.

**ACTION Item 4.4.4** HT to amend School Development Plan to reference briefing of governors re curriculum planning, rather than training.

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