

**COTHAM SCHOOL**

**Meeting of the Academy Governing Body**

**Thursday 7 July 2022, 6pm**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

<b>Governors Present:</b>		
Jo Butler, Headteacher	Daxesh Patel, CG	Ian Spencer, CG
Jo Feather PG	Richard Puttick, PG	Richard Storer, PG
Sandra Fryer, CG	Rebecca Reid, PG	Isabel Tobias, MG
Peter Huckle, MG	Emma Smith, CG	
<b>In Attendance</b> (non-voting) Chris Reed, Deputy Head Allison Crossland, Business Manager Leanne Sowersby, Clerk	<b>Apologies</b> Dora Alderson, MG John Bass, CG Jack Barber, CG Jane Chamberlin, PG Sophie Hamilton, PG Lucy Hunt, MG  <b>Absent:</b> Fatima Ali, CG	Governors in Post: 18/20 Quorum = 6 (1/3 rounded up) MG = Member Appointed Governor CG = Co-opted Governor PG = Parent Governor

<b>Item</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting</b>
1	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies for Absence, declarations of interest and notification of AOB</b></p> <p>Apologies accepted. No declarations of interest.</p> <p>SF outlined DP's application. <b>DP formally co-opted as a governor and welcomed to the governing body.</b></p> <p><i>DP joined the meeting</i></p> <p>Everyone introduced themselves.</p>
2	<p><b>2022-23 Budget Approval</b></p> <p>SBM talked through the process of setting the budget and the key points in the report.</p> <p>The budget was agreed on Monday in FPGP and recommended for approval to the FGB.</p> <p><b>Query re the teachers' pay increase – do we know, if there is 2% in the budget?</b> We do not know, but we have allowed for a 2% rise in the budget.</p> <p><b>Q – Do we know how many applications were first choice?</b> 50 % were first preference. We are currently 6 over PAN due to Ukrainian refugees. Discussion around hard to place children, for whom Cotham is often the first choice.</p> <p>RR discussed the process that the budget has gone through at FPGP, having been discussed on three occasions, and noted that the committee are happy to recommend approval of the budget.</p> <p>SBM explained the process of submitting the budget to the ESFA.</p> <p><b>SBM / RR to finalise the report to be circulated on GovernorHub</b></p> <p><b>2022-2023 Budget Approved.</b></p>

4	<p><b>Governance Audit Report</b></p> <p>RR Introduced the Governance Audit Report and talked through the process. The action plan against the report has also been drafted.</p> <p>It was a positive audit. We have reasonable assurance, which the auditors noted as a positive score. The only area scored limited assurance was around openness and transparency, primarily due to the website having needed updating.</p> <p>The two areas noted as high risk, as such because they make us non-compliant, rather than being high-risk.</p> <p>RR talked through the high-risk areas and the actions being taken to rectify these. Both areas have already been actioned.</p> <p>LS reported that the updates to the website have now been completed.</p> <p>Discussed one of the medium areas, where there is no attendance target / expectations set for governors.</p> <p>Discussion around the audit and the actions arising. Discussion around Governor training and the expectations for this, this could be discussed at the conference.</p> <p>Discussion around dates for next year – it would be helpful to have these sooner. Could aim for Easter.</p> <p>Governors were reminded that apologies must be given with reasons and must be accepted by the meeting.</p> <p>The Audit Committee will monitor the action plan.</p>
5	<p><b>Governor Conference</b></p> <p>This is likely to be the 17 September or 1 October. Preference for 1 October.</p>
6	<p><b>Policy Approval Process</b></p> <p>LS explained the proposed process. <b>Policy Approval Process approved</b></p>
7	<p><b>Financial Regulations Approval</b></p> <p>The record of approval was shared. Governors noted the approval.</p>
8	<p><b>Complaints Report</b></p> <p><b>Q – Did this report go to any committee?</b> It has generally come to FGB, but could potentially be discussed</p> <p><i>JBu joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>Discussion about the report and what should be reported.</p> <p><b>Agreed that the Communications and Community Committee will look at the complaints report.</b></p> <p>Discussion around the complaints that go directly to the ESFA and to Ofsted and how these are dealt with. Complaints direct to Ofsted should also be counted in the report.</p>
3	<p><b>Headteacher’s Report</b></p> <p>JBu gave additional verbal updates. We will finish term on Wednesday 20 July, due to the additional day for the Jubilee.</p> <p>Year 13 results day is 18 August and Year 11 on 25 August. The senior team will be here for that and the following weeks to support students.</p> <p>JBu talked through the start of term arrangements.</p> <p>Have currently heard nothing about Covid vaccinations etc.</p>

**Q – On the Monday staggered start, will everyone be in on the same day?** Yes – Year 8 to 11 will start at different times.

Governors noted that the report was very informative. Requested a list of acronyms to accompany the report.

**Q – What was the data that suggests focusing on High Middle Attaining Pupils and High Attaining Pupils?** This will be 2018-19 exam data and for Year 11. This will be those who have not done as well as expected in terms of their progress. Discussion around the data that is driving this. Are always talking about adaptations.

**Q – What safeguarding checks are in place for work placements?** Every employer must have a health & safety check which is done by an external company. We then check that students arrive at employers. We do not DBS check employers. There may sometimes be one to one situations, unless there is a specific request from a parent. Discussion around the possible checks and guidance.

**Careers Link Governor (SF) to take this up.**

Further discussion around this. Students are briefed on what to do and how to report back. JBu has authorised placements once she is satisfied.

RP offered assistance with the digital strategy.

Feeling that it might be useful for FGB to have briefings.

Requested Ofsted CPD for Governors. JBu is trying to arrange this, it is likely to be September. There will be a new framework.

Detailed sessions on data for a smaller group of Governors would also be useful. CR can arrange this.

Request for some context around the attainment data in the school improvement priorities section of the HT report.

Discussion around the data provided and data that is available.

Ofsted have not been interesting in data, and are more interested in safeguarding, PP and mental health and wellbeing.

**Q – Is there any early communication of expectations with parents around results around the likely reduction in overall grades this year?** Are drafting communications to parents at the moment, but have been reminding parents since we were aware of the way it would work this year, of the expectations of where grades would sit. Cannot project where Cotham will sit – parents and students are aware, but cannot predict how results will pan out.

**Q – Is the low attendance due to Covid absence / fear?** Mostly, yes. Persistent absence has crept up a bit. Attendance is much better at KS3 than KS4. Always work hard to ensure good attendance. Attendance has dropped across Bristol and some schools are really struggling.

**Q – Is there a lot of bullying and discriminatory behaviour in KS3, or that the children have not had the same PHSE input?** Have had significant experience of peer on peer harm. This seems to be an issue in other state schools. It is reflective of what is happening in society. Concerned about the cost of living crisis and the hardship that students are facing, which is likely to get worse.

Have seen an increase in very angry parents and abusive behaviour towards staff, as well as angry children.

**Q – Is this part of the same thing as the reset of behaviour expectations – has Covid made it harder to establish expectations?** Probably. Have struggled with the balance between being inclusive and compassionate, and the needs of the rest of the school community. There is huge pressure not to exclude. Suspension figures have increased, but are for a small group of students in each year group, where neither they, nor their parents, will listen to staff, often including JBu as HT. Feeling that parents who are finding it difficult are taking it out on school staff. Discussion around this and the change in the changes in the ways people behave.

	<p>JBu talked through the plans to reset the behaviour expectations, as well as the support that will be provided.</p> <p><b>Q – Will the revolving door provision be enough and can we afford it?</b> Yes, we can afford it and it is really needed now. JF fed back that this will be covered in a Link Governor report.</p> <p>The increase in difficult behaviours is reported in many schools.</p> <p><b>Q – Where does the national attendance figure come from?</b> That is our attendance target (96%). The historical national attendance has been 95%. This is the benchmark for performance targets. Bristol's average is 86%</p> <p>What Ofsted will want to know is what is being done to improve attendance and the impact of that.</p>
9	<p><b>Committee and other Reports</b></p> <p>Minutes from all committees have been circulated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning &amp; Well-being – JF/JC</i>  <b>Q – Re Year 11 and 13 students who have not experienced exams – what was the reality for them?</b> The extra lessons that were put in place were much appreciated, but students were very nervous. Absence from exams – there was concern that this might have been greater this year. There were gaps between exams to account for possible Covid infections. Attendance was actually very good.</li> <li>• <i>Personnel and Training – IT</i></li> <li>• <i>Finance Premises &amp; General Purposes – RR</i>  RR noted the issue with the fire alarms.  RR talked through the key discussions at the July meeting.  <b>RR reported the committee's recommendation for approval of the management accounts for Feb, March, April and May 2022. Governors approved same.</b></li> <li>• <i>Appointments &amp; Standards – JF</i>  JF reported the key points as the minutes were not available. Discussed changing the name to Governance Appointments and Standards and become a group of Chairs.  Also discussed the complaints policy and the need for training around this, as well as whether to use a panel for stage 3 complaints.  Discussion around the potential structure of the group. This committee is about the standards of Governance.  Could also include strategy in a Chair's committee / group.  Agreed to have a Chairs' Committee named Strategy, Governance Appointments and Standards</li> <li>• <i>Joint Staff &amp; Governors</i>  There have not been agenda items to discuss so the group has not met. Engagement with the NEU has been very good this year</li> <li>• <i>Post 16 – LH</i></li> <li>• <i>Communications &amp; Community</i>  IT gave an overview of the discussions  <b>LS to add the minutes to the folder</b>  <b>Query about the marketing firm being appointed</b> this is a new approach to marketing the school and look at communications. JBu talked through the work that is being done around communications etc.  Stick Man are looking at how we market ourselves more effectively – such as being a no. 1 choice for parents, distributing good news more effectively etc. They will help to benchmark where we are in terms of marketing and we can develop templates to help get news out more quickly.  This is strategic thinking, taking a long view to student numbers and changing demographics</li> </ul>

	<p>in the city.  Re the parent survey, parents particularly liked the senior leadership of the school. This could be discussed at the conference.</p>
10	<p><b>Dates for 2022-2023</b>  These were circulated.  Discussion around whether meetings are held virtually or in-person. Agreed to hold FGB meetings in person and committee meetings virtually.</p>
11	<p><b>Minutes of last meetings</b> – 31 March 2022 - Agreed as correct.</p>
12	<p><b>Matters Arising and Action List</b> – See Actions Report</p>
13	<p><b>Any Other Business</b>  <b>Succession planning</b> - PH has agreed to chair LWB. RP has agreed take over the Chair of P&amp;T. RR will continue with FPGP.  Will need to re-check Link Governor roles. Would be good to have a conversation around how that is working. Discussion around this.  SF talked through current vacancies and applications.  <b>Ofsted training</b> – Discussion around this. Suggest this is for the Chairs' to do. JBu to set a date. Could get hold of sample questions, but the questions they ask will depend on what they find. Anyone able to attend can attend.</p>

**Meeting closed at 21:00**

**Next Meeting – Thursday 22 September 2022**