

COTHAM SCHOOL

Meeting of the Academy Governing Body

Thursday 9 December 2021

Held virtually

MINUTES OF MEETING

Governors Present:		
Dora Alderson, MG	Jane Chamberlin, PG	Richard Puttick, PG
Fatima Ali, CG	Jo Feather PG	Rebecca Reid, PG
Jack Barber, CG	Sandra Fryer, CG	Emma Smith, CG
Jo Butler, Headteacher	Lucy Hunt, MG	Isabel Tobias, MG
In Attendance (non-voting)	Apologies	Governors in Post: 16/20
Chris Reed, Deputy Head	John Bass, CG	Quorum = 6 (1/3 rounded up)
Domini Leong, Deputy Head	Andrew Chadwick, PG	MG = Member Appointed Governor
Allison Crossland, Business Manager	Peter Huckle, MG	CG = Co-opted Governor
Ed Carpenter, Asst Business Manager		PG = Parent Governor
Leanne Sowersby, Clerk	Absent:	SLT = Senior Leadership Team

Item	Minutes of Meeting
1	<p>Welcome, Apologies for Absence, declarations of interest and notification of AOB Apologies accepted.</p>
2	<p>Annual Report and Accounts Approval RR talked through the key points. SBM reported a post balance sheet event regarding committed income of £55,000 that there remains uncertainty about in the final version of the accounts which has been considered since the draft accounts were produced. Therefore, it was decided in conjunction with the Auditors that the school would make the amendment now even though the income may still be received.. JBU thanked AC and EC for the work they have done to ensure that the audit was spotless, as well as KH for the overall work on the audit. Q – Is the £55,000 being adjusted or is it a post balance note? It has been adjusted and AC will upload the final accounts for everyone to see. Auditors advised that it was not a material amount and the decision was ours as to whether to adjust or just to note. Noted that ESm's attendance was incorrect and she had attended three of four meetings. RR noted the discussion around the levels of reserve. Governors approved the Annual Accounts for the financial year ending 31 August 2021 <i>FA joined the meeting</i></p>
3	<p>Admissions LS talked through the key points. CR gave an overview of situations when students apply for admission outside of their normal age group. It is very hard to decline applications if the child has spent their primary education a year behind. All of the applications we have had have been this situation. There are also concerns that we could be subject to discrimination claims if these applications are refused. There are some applications from students who have moved from other parts of the world.</p>

	<p>Q – Would this also apply to refugees? Potentially – are looking at emotional and cognitive development. They have normally gone into their chronological age year. Discussion around this relating to some Afghan children that have recently joined the school.</p> <p>LS outlined the way in which using GovernorHub could mitigate the data protection issue by using a restricted folder.</p> <p>Admissions Criteria Approved Post 16 Admissions Criteria Approved Option A for managing applications for outside normal age group (sending to LWB) agreed.</p>
4	<p>SEND Information Report</p> <p>Q – How do teachers know about students with SEND? Students have individual learning plans which are stored centrally. Staff know where these are and are given time at the beginning of the year to engage with these. The register highlights which students are SEND.</p> <p>Also use seating plan software that shows which students have SEND. Discussion around seating plans.</p> <p>SEND Information Report approved</p>
5	<p>Headteacher’s Report</p> <p>JBu gave a verbal update on the current Covid situation that was shared on GovernorHub. Are looking at whether some categories of staff could work at home.</p> <p>Note that the guidance does not say that Highly clinically vulnerable staff should be shielding / not in work.</p> <p>Need to consider how we staff the school – teaching staff have been very concerned about the amount of emergency cover that they have been asked to provide, due to staff sickness and a lack of availability of supply staff. We will be following the guidance as we need to ensure we can staff the school.</p> <p>PHE believes that, as a result of having adopted the masks policy early, our Covid numbers are now low. We still have unusually high levels of staff absence due to other winter ailments. Hope to keep those numbers at a minimum up to the winter break. Noted that staff wanted to adopt these measures.</p> <p>Have suffered staff absences across every area of the school and every team. This has caused pressure where cover is not available.</p> <p>There is a requirement for testing for students on their return in January. This takes those members of staff away from their other roles. The Government have agreed that this will require a staggered start, and this has been communicated to parents. Further details will be communicated as soon as possible. No concerns have been raised.</p> <p>Inspections will be suspended for the rest of this term and the first week of January.</p> <p>Have received an update that there is only one known case of Omicron in Bristol, but it is likely that this will increase. Need to be prepared for further measures to be introduced in January.</p> <p>Government says that exams will go ahead. Have written to students with plans, should we need to put contingency plans in place. Are confident that, should we have to, we will be able to manage a change of plan.</p> <p>Highlighted that everyone is very tired. There are some behaviour issues that are likely to be connected to Covid and the impact that Covid is having on families. Other Headteachers are reporting that students’ behaviour is deteriorating. Mask wearing is becoming an issue and JBu has written to parents about this today.</p> <p>JBu updated on recruitment. There have been issues across the city recruiting for some subjects. There is a shortage of teachers working in supply. We have had problems in recruiting Associate Staff in some areas. This experience is shared by other Bristol schools. The quality of candidates is an issue as well as quantity.</p> <p>Query about the School Improvement Partner JBu gave some background. She works with a number of schools and is also an Ofsted inspector. Has been working with the school for some years. Supports governors with JBu’s appraisal and also has a programme of work with the SLT around</p>

	<p>Ofsted preparation among other things. She is also able to do more work with governors such as walking through what a conversation with an inspector might look like etc.</p>
6	<p>Governor Conference Aim to discuss potential topics and the timing of this. Q – When do we expect Ofsted to come? The statutory window was five years after the last inspection, but in theory we could have been inspected last year (3 yrs) or this year. At the start of last year, the statutory window was increased to seven years, but Ofsted now have additional funding to speed up the programme, so back to five to six years. Think it is likely to be 2024. Priorities JBU would suggest would be safeguarding, sexual harassment in schools and attendance as these seem to be the areas that are being focussed on. SEND and vulnerable groups could also be an area to focus on. JMC is SENDCo but is also an Ofsted inspector. Would be useful for both the School Improvement partner and JMC to support Governors to be ready Discussion around the timings and the possibility of doing some work around Ofsted in smaller groups, for Link Governors etc before the conference. This could be useful and could also be done virtually. Communications and engagement are also possible topics. JBU advised that we are looking to work towards the Parent Partnership Award in the new year. There is also the work that was planned around a community charter or something like this to go alongside the new Articles. Governors have been discussing for some time that we should do a parent survey. It would be good to be able to link this in with any work that the school is doing on surveying parents. There is also an advisor who will work with us on the award.</p>
7	<p>Parental and Community Engagement Discussed in part above. Discussion around the possibility involving local councillors in the school. Would be looking for a communications strategy that listed the various stakeholders and how we will communicate with them. Can be useful to have councillors on board. Need to remember that the current circumstances mean that many of the natural times when parents would be communicating with each other are not happening at the moment. Have previously engaged with local councillors.</p>
8	<p>Terms of Reference / Scheme of Delegation Important to refer to staff governors rather than teacher governors. Discussion around the numbers of Governors. There is a need to be aware of the skills balance of the governing body. A skills audit is an annual requirement. Good practice would be internal skills audits and review annually with external reviews every three years. Skills audit to be reviewed in January at Appointments and Standards. FPGP, the Audit element of the committee has approved the audit programme for this year, which includes governance and specifically compliance. Discussion around the scope of this and the link to the skills audit. Agreed FGB membership should have 9 co-opted governors to include at least three members of staff. Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation Approved with the above changes.</p>
9	<p>Roles and Responsibilities PH will join LWB and is interested in Post 16 and will do DofE work. SF would be interested in offers to take up the support roles for committees and link roles. SF will discuss roles with individual governors RP has said he will shadow JBar on safeguarding visits.</p>

	<p>Discussion around a SEND link visit. JC has met with DL and CR this week. FA is not currently able to take a link role.</p> <p>RSHE is another area. DL oversees this. The coordinator is not currently in school and there is some work to do to fill the gaps.</p> <p>Q – Does the frequency of meetings as termly mean six times per year? This is old terms, could be every 12 -13 weeks, or three times per year instead.</p> <p>Discussion about what Ofsted want to see in a report – Ofsted will want to know what the issue is, what has happened and what the impact has been.</p> <p>Could add a column with the date of meeting and whether a report has been completed.</p> <p>Discussion around where RHSE sits – this is likely to sit with personal development.</p> <p>Discussion around the best way to monitor visits and visit reports.</p>
10	<p>Committee and other Reports</p> <p>Minutes from all committees have been circulated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Learning & Well-being</i> ● <i>Personnel and Training</i> ● <i>Finance Premises & General Purposes</i> <p>Governors approved the ICT Plan spend of £143,850 as recommended by FPGP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Appointments & Standards</i> ● <i>Joint Staff & Governors</i> ● <i>Post 16</i>
11	Minutes of last meetings – Approved via GovernorHub prior to the meeting.
12	Matters Arising and Action List – See Actions Report
13	Any Other Business Discussion around staff Christmas raffle etc.

Meeting closed at 20:00

Next Meeting – Thursday 31 March 2022