

## GOVERNOR SERVICES: EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

### ASHTON COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE (06104)

Minutes of the governing body meeting held at the school on Wednesday, 26 June 2024 at 5:00pm.

**Present:** Mr J Swindells (Chair)  
Mr W Clarke  
Mrs C Doolan  
Mrs S Evans  
Mr D Hird  
Mrs J Hoyle  
Mr O Mollart (virtual)  
Mr B Rollo  
Ms S Asquith (Headteacher)

**Also Present:** Miss V Gorstridge (Clerk/Governing Body Adviser)

#### Action

#### 24.16 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr M Catterall, Mr S Fern, Mr D Holden, Ms F Lloyd, and Mr D Maddox.

#### 24.17 Introduction of Head Girl

The governing body were introduced to the Head Girl for the 2024/25 academic year and the two deputy head girls.

The chair commented that it had been a pleasure to be part of the interview process. This year the decision had been made to mirror the school's senior leadership team and have one head with two deputies. **In response to a governor question**, the headteacher confirmed that work had already begun to encourage boys to apply for leadership roles in the future.

#### 24.18 Head Boy and Head Girl report

Governors had received a copy of the Head Boy and Head Girl's report prior to the meeting. The governing body expressed their thanks and asked the headteacher to pass on their good wishes for the future.

#### 24.19 Governing Body Matters

**a) Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest pertaining to agenda items.

Mr Hird declared that he worked for Eric Wright and had some involvement in building projects at the school, if a conflict of interest arose, he would remove himself from the meeting.

**b) Membership**

Mrs Evans resigned as of 31 August, leaving a vacancy for a co-opted governor.

The governing body adviser confirmed there were vacancies for one co-opted governor, one parent governor and one authority governor. Governors discussed options to recruit to these vacancies and agreed that a parent governor election would take place in the autumn term on arrival of the new year 7 intake.

The governing body adviser reported that Mr Clarke's term of office would end on 6 October 2024. Mr Clarke agreed to consider his position as governor going forward.

**c) DBS / Section 128 Checks for Governors**

The governing body confirmed that all necessary arrangements were in place and all governors had the required clearances.

The chair confirmed the Single Central Record (SCR) was up to date, and all details in relation to governors had been duly recorded.

**24.20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2024, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record, and were signed by the chair.

There were no matters arising from the minutes. The governing body confirmed that all actions had been completed.

**24.21 Reports****a) Committee Reports**

Governors noted the minutes of the following meetings:

- Resources Committee (budget setting) held on 17 April 2024.
- Resources Committee held on 22 May 2024.

Ms Asquith confirmed that Mr Maddox was in the process of arranging an auditor for the unofficial school fund account.

**b) Nominated Governors**

Where possible, the majority of nominated governors attended RAP meetings with their subject leads, staff were asked to send a note of actions rather than official minutes of these meetings.

Mrs Hoyle continued to provide an overview of RAP meetings within curriculum committee meetings.

Nominated governors were thanked for their continued support.

**c) Chair's Action**

The chair reported that it had not been necessary to take any urgent decisions on behalf of the governing body since the last meeting, however he had attended exclusion panel meetings, RAP meetings and had been involved in the recruitment and selection of the newly appointed Head Girl and her two deputies.

**24.22 School Improvement and Headteacher's Report****a) School Improvement**

The headteacher updated governors on the progress of this year's improvement priorities. Ms Asquith confirmed that a RAG rated version of this year's SIP had been included within her headteacher's report. **A governor asked** what the criteria for amber was, the headteacher explained that this was subjective and dependent on the criteria and targets for individual priorities.

The additional questions set out in the agenda were discussed, and the following noted:

- Going forward into the 2024/25 academic year school improvement priorities would be broadly similar to the current year and an updated SIP would be presented at the autumn term full governors meeting.

**b) Attendance**

Governors noted the information about their responsibilities to support schools with attendance. The chair confirmed they would read the document Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

The additional questions set out in the agenda were discussed, and the following noted:

- Attendance was closely monitored through daily morning registration, first day phone calls, home visits and a number of other interventions. The school had a number of vulnerable

families and the attendance team tried to support students and parents in order to reduce barriers to attendance.

- The attendance team monitored attendance in order to identify any trends. For example, boys attended more than girls and non-pupil premium students attended more than pupil premium students.
- Female students represented a higher proportion of persistent absentees. A number of systems had been implemented in order to support and engage with these students and an advert was currently out for a Family Liaison Officer post.
- Whole school attendance was just below the national average.

**In response to governor questions**, Mr Clarke clarified that when in school persistent absentees required a lot of support and intervention from staff however when not in school attendance staff worked hard to get them into school.

### **c) Inclusion**

The governing body discussed the suggested questions from the agenda, and confirmed the following:

- The school had been requested to reintegrate three pupils. One had been rejected however the local authority had directed that the student was admitted via In Year Fair Access arrangements.
- Two had previously been at the Larches, one had been accepted and one had been rejected.
- Exclusion rates remained high and above the national average. The headteacher reiterated that permanent exclusion was always a last resort.
- SEND pupils were monitored by the SENCo and were making progress.
- There was a national issue regarding the high numbers of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and the local authority continued to be overloaded and unable to meet required deadlines.
- The SENCo supported parents with the EHCP process as it was quite a time consuming and overwhelming process and some parents found this difficult to manage.
- 36 students had been removed from roll to be home educated however two had returned back to school.
- The Elective Home Education Service had also advised two other families to get in touch with school in order to reintegrate them back into education however parents had not yet been in touch.
- The three core reasons for removing a child from role to home educate were usually:
  - Parental choice – where the parent actively wanted to educate their child at home.

- Social/emotional issues – where students lacked the resilience for school due to social/ emotional or mental health issues.
- Disengagement – where parents had become tired of being contacted by school usually as a result of behaviour or attendance issues.
- Financially, the impact of this was small as the school population fluctuated throughout the year with pupils leaving and pupils arriving.
- The school followed the local authority process and letters were sent in the majority of cases to inform that home education was not in the best interests of the student.

**A governor asked** how long pupils tended to be home educated for. Mr Clarke confirmed that this varied considerably and there had been pupils that had returned after three days and then pupils that had been off roll for over 12 months.

**In response to a governor question,** Mr Clarke advised that penalty notices were issued regarding unauthorised holidays in term time however were rarely issued for non-attendance due to how time consuming the process was and the limited success rate. A number of families were in crisis, deprivation or vulnerable and it was not considered appropriate as the legal process would not improve this situation or support them and would likely make things worse.

#### **d) Headteacher's Report**

Governors had received the headteacher's written report in advance of the meeting. Ms Asquith invited questions and provided the following information in response:

- Four teaching assistants and a behaviour support officer had recently been appointed however there were still some vacancies.
- It was common this time of year for there to be a lot of flux in staffing.
- The recruitment of support staff continued to be a struggle due to the terms and conditions and the pressures of the job.
- There had been a high number of parental complaints and the headteacher recognised that a proportion of these could have been avoided if school communication had been better however there were also some parents that were serial complaints. The school followed the complaints policy for all complaints received.

The headteacher was thanked for her comprehensive report.

## **24.23 Safeguarding**

Governors noted the requirement to attend regular safeguarding training and that the Section 175/157 audit toolkit was available for schools to complete.

#### **24.24 Arrangements for 2024 Exams**

The governing body noted the information regarding GCSEs. The suggested questions from the agenda and Information Booklet were discussed, and the following confirmed:

- As a result of a staff bereavement management of examinations had been a struggle and the school had been granted special consideration for students who had sat exams on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May.
- 'Boost' revision sessions had been held before morning exams.
- Revision sessions had also taken place during the Easter and May half term holidays.
- Access arrangements had been put in place for those students who required them.
- A parents evening had been held however this had not been massively well attended.
- Two students had been unable to attend exams due to hospitalisation and special consideration had been requested.
- There had also been some students, who had attendance issues that had not attended for some exams or had arrived late. Revision sessions prior to exams were also used as an opportunity to ensure all students would be attending and gave staff time to try and get students in school if they had not arrived.

The headteacher asked for her thanks to Janet and Emily to be noted, for all the hard work they had put in regarding management of the exam process.

#### **24.25 Unavoidable School Closures**

The headteacher confirmed there had been no unavoidable full or partial school closures since the last meeting.

#### **24.26 Educational Visits**

The headteacher reported details of the following proposed educational visits which were considered and approved:

- Berlin
- Fleetwood

Mrs Hoyle advised that where possible, subject leads were asked to provide educational visits with limited impact on learning for example at weekend or during school holidays.

#### **24.27 Budget Outturn 2023/24 and School Budget 2024/25**

The governing body noted the school's outturn position for 2023/24.

The Resources Committee had considered and discussed any significant differences and continuing commitments.

Following the recommendation of the Resources Committee, and after considering any budget sustainability issues, the governing body approved the school budget plan for 2024/25 as follows:

Revenue income of £7,653,780 and proposed revenue expenditure of £8,482,932 resulting in a net in year deficit of -£829,151.

The governing body considered the effect on school balances and noted the estimated balance of £844,985 brought forward from the previous year which would result in a forecast carry forward balance of £15,834 into 2025/26.

Financial forecasts for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were noted.

The headteacher confirmed that the Income and Expenditure Form had been submitted to the county council within the required timeframe.

Mrs Evans reported that without indicative funding beyond the current year it made making financial predictions more difficult and less reliable for future years.

The governing body thanked Mrs Evans for her support and contributions over the years and wished her well for the future.

## **24.28 Policies and Procedures**

### **a) Performance Management**

In preparation for the performance management of staff in the autumn term, the governing body confirmed that the following arrangements were in place:

- a committee to undertake the appraisal of the headteacher's performance and the validity of the appraisal process across the school.
- the school had bought into the county council Schools Advisory Service for advice regarding the appraisal of the headteacher.
- a committee to undertake pay decisions in relation to the headteacher and teacher's pay (Mr Swindells, Mr Maddox, and Mr Hird).
- relevant training had been undertaken by governors to assist them in fulfilling their duties.

**b) Lancashire Personnel Policies**

The governing body confirmed adoption of the following model Lancashire Personnel Policies and Procedures, and also all generic HR policies:

- Alcohol / Drug Abuse, Statement for Employees
- Directed Time
- Extreme / Unpredictable Weather Guidance
- Flexible Working
- Grievance Procedure (Support Staff)
- Grievance Procedure (Teachers)
- Job Share
- Leave of Absence
- Paternity Leave Policy & Form
- Shared Parental Leave
- Smoke-Free Policy
- Trans Equality Guidance.

**c) Staffing Arrangements**

The governing body considered the current staffing arrangements and agreed that a reorganisation was not necessary.

**24.29 Governor Training and Development**

Attention was drawn to the courses available through Lancashire Governor Services, including the online training via the NGAs Learning Link.

Governors agreed to inform the link governor of any training attended.

**24.30 Governing Body's Effectiveness and Strategy for 2024/25**

The effectiveness of the governing body was considered and discussed.

**24.31 Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

The governing body noted the options available for the appointment procedure of chair and vice-chair.

It was agreed that:

- nominations would be accepted by self-nomination/nominated by another governor/both self and other nomination.
- nominations would be received prior to the meeting (to the clerk for inclusion on the agenda for the meeting, at least 21 days prior to the meeting) / at the meeting / both prior to and at the meeting.



- voting would be by secret ballot/show of hands.
- in the event of a tie, a second vote would be held; if the outcome remained tied then lots would be drawn.
- in the event of only one candidate being nominated for a position the candidate would / would not be asked to leave the room while a vote was held.

**24.32 Governor Arrangements 2023/24****a) Review of Constitution**

The governing body agreed to retain the current constitution, without amendment.

**b) Membership and Terms of Reference of Committees**

Following a review, the governing body confirmed the membership of the committees for the 2024/25 academic year remained the same.

The terms of reference and delegated powers of the committees would remain the same as in the previous year.

**c) Nominated Governor Reporting**

Nominated governor appointments were retained without amendment with the addition of Mr Catterall as nominated governor for geography and Mr Hird as nominated governor for cyber security.

**d) Appointment of a Clerk**

The governing body reviewed the requirement to appoint a clerk to each working committee, including the Pay Committee.

**24.33 Information, updates, and items for further discussion as appropriate**

The governing body noted the guidance and additional information in relation to:

- a) Safe Work Statement
- b) Wellbeing and Mental Health
- c) Chairs Forum
- d) GovernorHub

- e) LASGB
- f) Recovery Premium Funding
- g) PE and Sport Premium Funding – Primary Schools  
Governors noted that the reporting deadline for the current academic year was 31 July 2024
- h) Apprenticeship Levy Underspend to be shared with Non-Levy Paying Schools
- i) Cyber Security  
  
Governors noted their responsibility for cyber security.
- j) Sustainability

## 24.34 Confidentiality

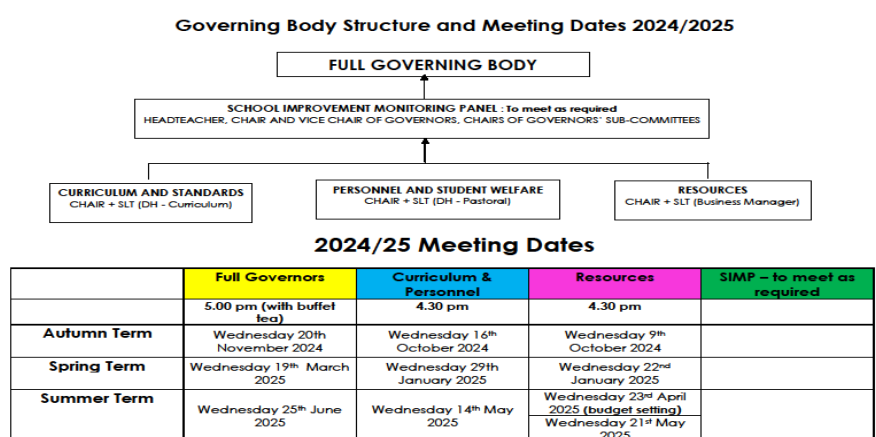
Governors were reminded that all matters discussed at governing body meetings were not for general discussion outside the meeting.

The governing body considered whether any items discussed were required to be recorded in the minutes as confidential; that is, that should not be made available to the general public should a request be received to view governing body papers.

For the purpose of the minutes there were no items deemed confidential.

## 24.35 Date and Time of Future Meetings

The governing body confirmed the pattern of dates for the 2024/25 academic year as follows:



\*All meetings will be held in school in the visitor centre. Teams invites can be arranged for those unable to attend in person. Please request this in advance of the meeting.

The chair thanked governors for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 6:20pm.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chair)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_