



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board meeting

Monday 5th October, 7:00 pm, via MSTeams

MINUTES

In attendance

Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ)[Chair], Eric Medway (ERM), Jonathan Webb (JMW), David Ball (DB), Vicki Barton-Brown (VB), Matthew Bean (MB), Tom, Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Mike Chambers (MC), Steve Chaplin (SC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Richard Grime (RG), Helen Stiles (HS) Steve Williams (SW), David Winspear (DW), Kirstin Wood (KW).

1. Welcome and Apologies for non-attendance

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting - in particular Helen Stiles (HS) for whom this was her first meeting following co-option in June. Richard Grime was welcomed and congratulated on his re-appointment to the role of staff governor.

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 June 2020

These were approved - proposed by TCT, seconded by SW) and have been signed as a correct record

4. Matters arising and update on any action points not covered by the agenda

The Health and Safety item - relating to the allocation of H&S issues to the sub-committees remains in progress - with plans to ensure a distribution of the list of H&S responsibilities to sub-committee chairs by the end of October 2020

ACTION EAJ

5. Headmaster's Report to the FGB

JMW was thanked for producing a detailed and comprehensive report on which governors were able to ask questions.

C-19 pandemic was a focus for discussion. Governors were pleased to hear that attendance in school was good. JMW described again how the school was working to adhere to guidelines issued by both NYCC and the DfE. There have been, to date, two confirmed cases in students which have resulted in the isolation of sub-groups from two years. There have been no demonstrable cases of transmission within school.

DW and HS asked about contingency planning in the event of increasing numbers of cases and about the teaching provision for those students self-isolating. JMW described the combination of live lessons and virtual learning by MS Teams. Governors were pleased to hear of the training to parents being offered by Mrs Helen Mars on how to access the on line resources.

Governors expressed concern at the workload for all members of the teaching team - with an appreciation that teaching staff were now being expected to deliver lessons in the classroom (with the added complications of the C-19 precautions) plus providing on line lessons and resources. RG and JMW described the challenges of this.

JMW and RG were asked about staff wellbeing. Both described the challenges being faced. RG explained how staff were sharing information and experimenting with technology. Both described the challenges of the technology. Governors were pleased to hear that the school had provided IT devices to staff to ensure they were able to work effectively from home using on line platforms.

Governors heard how many staff are 'stressed, and finding life tough at the present time. RG described with gratitude the support and understanding being afforded to the staff team by all members of the SLT and commended the team on the way they had been working over recent months.

Governors asked what support could be provided - and realised that using sensible discretion, responding to requests and not being overly demanding was what is currently required.

EAJ thanked JMW and RG on behalf of the whole board for the work being done. It was agreed a letter of thanks should be written again to the staff team.

In the meantime JMW and RG were assured of our support and commitment to the School and reminded that they should ask without hesitation for support on strategic or day to day matters if needed.

Governors were pleased to review the numbers on role - and delighted that the numbers in Boarding were healthy. JMW reported that the new staff and students had settled well into boarding life. Governors are sorry that they have not been able to have a visible presence in the boarding houses - due to current restrictions.

JMW outlined the current role of Ofsted who are currently running school inspections. HS informed the board that Tadcaster Grammar School had been recently inspected and may be able to provide information to the SLT on the nature of the visit.

6. Update on the 3G pitch and current restrictions to use.

Papers were provided to governors outlining the current issues. The 3G pitch planning consent was subject to conditions around noise and lighting.

Complaints have been received by NYCC from local residents who have objected to the noise from the pitch when being used outside the school day. Simultaneously, Persimmon Homes have submitted an application to NYCC to enable the discharge of the conditions described. As a result NYCC put in place a prohibition order - preventing the school from using the pitch at any time.

JMW and the Premises Manager, along with governor support, have appealed against this - particularly because of the loss of sporting amenity

for the students of the school and the loss of space to facilitate social distancing during lunch and break times. In their submission NYCC were reminded that NO residents had complained about the pitch use during the school day, and also that the noise from the pitch use during the day would be no different from the noise ensuing from when the area of grass was utilised as a rugby pitch.

EAJ was pleased to report that the appeal was upheld - and the school had permission to utilise the pitch within the school day for curriculum based use, co-curricular sport and for matches (should they be permitted).

JMW stated that he expected a decision from the planning authority within a couple of weeks regarding the Persimmon Application.

This will be discussed further at the forthcoming premises committee.

7. Financial Matters

The budget monitoring report for the month ending August 2020 was presented. As expected, there is significant variation from the initial start budget submitted in March 2020.

A number of variants were described by SW, with changes of income relating particularly to catch up funding, adjustments to pupil premium funding and the furlough rebate for boarding and caretaking staff between March 2020 and August 2020.

Lower returns than predicted were noted for catering and lettings - with the cancellation of all lettings since March 2020 and then uncertainty from September onwards due to the legal disputes regarding the 3G pitch; and the income lost due to the insolvency of SLS who had an outstanding amount of c£36k.

During the pandemic period the loss of boarding income (£282k) has had a dramatic effect - but the deferral of the JH loan repayment and savings on staff within boarding has provided some offset, along with prudent savings on variable costs (eg cleaning) during the school closure.

There were a number of savings relating to staffing (reduction in supply staff, vacancies kept open during the period of closure, but also significant savings related to discretionary learning resources and the refund of exam fees.

SW congratulated and thanked Alison Balsdon and the Headmaster for their prudent financial management during the recent period - the consequence of this is an adverse variance from the initial start budget of £39,706 which, all agreed, was significantly less than initially expected.

SW presented a helpful analysis of the Covid-19 impact to illustrate the variances and current position further.

8. Capital Developments

a. Review of Johnson House Development

Governors were delighted to hear of the completion of the conversion project within JH - which was done to time and within budget and to an extremely high standard. The premises manager (A Hogg) had submitted a comprehensive final report and balance sheet.

It was acknowledged as to how much work and effort Mr Hogg had devoted to this project, and all members of the Board offered wholehearted congratulations and thanks.

It was agreed that the chair would write him a letter of thanks.

ACTION EAJ

b. Update on Estates Development Plan and work with Squires & Brown

The appointed architects, Squires and Brown, presented their initial proposals to members of the Estates Development Group in July 2019. This presentation did not meet with the expectations of the committee - partly due to the C-19 restrictions - but the company were asked to review their proposal.

The company have now undertaken a site visit, met with the premises team and the Headmaster and are working up two to three options with budgeted costs to present to governors in November.

Governors are unclear as to how we will proceed following this stage of the process - acknowledging that the current climate may require us to alter our timeline and pause development plans until the C-19 pandemic has passed.

9. Strategic Improvement Plan - review of 2019-2020 and plans for 2020-2021

The Headmaster discussed the SIP for last year - stating that he felt we had been 'strategically treading water' since March. Governors acknowledged and accepted this and reminded the Head of the unprecedented situation the School had faced and the huge workload he and the team had dealt with, and continue to deal with.

JMW outlined a number of key priorities for the next year including improving the schools digital strategy and our digital literacy.

Governors were entirely supportive of this as a key priority to provide contingency and future proof ourselves to enable off site learning.

Other areas include the review of the school day; the continuing task of ensuring we are Ofsted ready and have an up to date Self Evaluation Form (SEF); site security and car parking.

Governors were pleased to hear of the success to date of the new school uniform policy and the change in sixth form curriculum

JMW informed governors that he would circulate and up to date SDP prior to half term.

ACTION JMW

10.FGB Self Review

ERM presented the results of the FGB self-review undertaken last term. This year the review was circulated using MStTeams which made it more convenient for governors. He was thanked for his clear presentation.

All areas scored highly - with mean scores comfortably >4 in all areas except engagement with parents. During the last academic year the usual engagement events have been impossible due to the C-19 restrictions.

We hope to be able to revisit our usual Y9 parent's interaction sessions - but again will not have the usual opportunity at school events to talk to parents and seek their views.

11.FGB Annual Report 2019-2020

The Annual Report has been produced and circulated. EAJ thanked the sub-committee chairs for their input. There were no additions or amendments and the report was approved.

It will be circulated to parents and also uploaded to the school website.

12.Report on SCR Check (11/9/2020)

EAJ reported that she had undertaken a full check of the SCR - a report of this has been uploaded. There were no issues of concern identified and all audit measures were adhered to by the School.

13. Membership of Governors' Committees

The membership of the governor sub-committees was agreed. Governors were thanked for taking on the additional roles.

14.Governors' Committee Meetings (full minutes are available on sharepoint)

a. Admissions Committee (30/9/20)

ERM outlined the main issues being addressed by the admissions committee - namely the Y11 entrance assessment and the surrounding procedures and processes.

Members of the committee remain concerned that the current method of assessing, marking and standardising may not be fair. ERM is awaiting further data from NYCC so that this can be pursued further. The committee is expecting to recommend a change to the assessment procedure from September 2021 - which will require public consultation.

b. Finance and Personnel Committee (29/6/20, 24/8/20)

The minutes of the meetings were presented by SW. The details of these were largely covered in agenda item 8.

Particular emphasis was given to the issue regarding SLS - the school has registered as an unsecured creditor with the hope of recuperating between 5 and 10% of the income due which relates to 3 months of lettings.

Governors noted that the lettings income at the moment is minimal due to the current Covid restrictions. The school still plans to manage lettings internally and the Headmaster and finance team are reviewing mechanisms to facilitate this (including the procurement of software to enable bookings).

It was highlighted to governors that the school has now in place direct debit arrangements for boarding fees which should help to secure fee payment and reduce the risk of parents falling into arrears with payments. The finance team were thanked for putting this in place.

c. Pastoral Committee (10/6/20)

The last pastoral meeting held in June focussed on gaining the views of staff on the pastoral issues relating to lock down and the wellbeing of staff and students.

TCT reported to the meeting the work undertaken and the impressive and creative methods used to confirm the welfare of all students, with high levels of vigilance, regular communication with parents and enhanced support for the vulnerable students.

It was noted that neither the Y7 transition days, nor the sixth form induction dates were able to be held in the summer term and plans were in place to welcome new students in September.

EAJ has responded to the students who wrote to governors regarding the Black Lives Matter campaign.

d. Staff Pay Committee (21/7/20, 24/8/20)

The SPC had met twice - initially to review the applications submitted by teaching staff to move up the pay scale and later to resolve uncertainties identified.

Governors were told of the rigor applied to applications and the care taken to ensure staff had made the required progress to move either up the main pay scale, or to transition into the upper pay scale.

The committee had reviewed the leadership pay scales.

The SPC asked the FGB for approval of the recommendation (which was supported by the F&P Committee) that the pay scales for deputy heads in school are adjusted from L16 - L20 to L18-L22.

The reasons for this are

1. The current small differential between the scale for Assistant Heads (L12-L16) and Deputy Heads.
2. The increased workload for Deputy Heads as the school has increased in size.
3. Recognition of the extra load for Deputy Heads caused by the school's boarding element.
4. The fact that Deputy Heads would be asked to stand in for the Head if incapacitated.
5. Two Deputy Heads having been at the top of the scale for several years whilst continuing to increase their performance.

Governors unanimously approved this recommendation

e. Any urgent business from other committees not covered in the agenda

None

f. Health & Safety issues arising from any committee that needed to be brought to the attention of the FGB

None

15. Governors with specific areas of responsibility

a. Child Protection & Safeguarding Governor (DW)

No issues have been brought to the attention of the Board

b. CEIAG Governor (TCT)

TCT will be meeting with the careers team this term.

c. H&S Governor (DB)

DB outlined the HS issues regarding the C-19 pandemic which are incorporated within the C-19 risk assessment document. No issues were brought to the attention of the meeting.

d. Inclusion Governor (EAJ)

EAJ informed the Board of the new Inclusion Manager - Mrs Belinda Roy - with whom she will be meeting prior to half term.

e. Staff Welfare Governor (KW)

No issues brought to the attention of the Board.

16. Policies for approval by the FGB

Safeguarding - the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy is a NYCC produced document which the school adheres to. The DSL (Miss Murray) has asked for the document to be left as a NYCC document - given the legal nature.

Other than an amendment - regarding names - the policy was approved following the meeting.

17. Off-site visits and activities: for information and approval where necessary.

Current guidance prohibits overnight trips and therefore the usual ski trips and other educational trips have not been arranged for this year.

Governors were pleased to hear that the School was still managing to run the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and go ahead with the expeditions (though without overnight stays).

The World Challenge Trip for 2021 currently remains in abeyance with no decision made.

18.Any other Business.

None

19.Date of the next meeting.

Monday 7th December at 7pm via MStTeams.