



# Ripon Grammar School Governors

## Full Governing Board meeting

Monday 7th December 2020, 7:00pm, MSTeams

### MINUTES

#### 1. Welcome and apologies for non-attendance

The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting, including Kiran Fernandes - recently elected parent governor. Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Chambers (who was attending NYCC meeting).

In attendance

David Ball (DB), Vicki Barton-Brown (VBB), Matthew Bean (MB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Steve Chaplin (SC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Richard Grime (RG), Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) [chair], Eric Medway (EM), Helen Stiles (HS), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Steve Williams (SW), David Winspear (DW), Kirstin Wood (KW),

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

None

#### 3. Minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 5 October 2020

An error was noted in the draft minutes - relating to the financial figures - the adverse variance from the initial start budget - the correct figure being £39,706 (rather than £25,320).

The minutes were approved (pending correction) by SW and TCT.

#### 4. Matters arising and update on action points not otherwise on the agenda

EJ has written to the premises manager thanking him for his efforts and congratulating him on his successful management of the Johnson House project.

#### 5. Headmaster's Report

The Chair thanked the Headmaster for his detailed report and acknowledged the challenges he and the team in school had faced, and were continuing to face within the school. Governors were delighted to hear that he felt that education of the students had not been subject to the expected level of disruption during the autumn term because of the relatively few numbers of Covid-19 infections - resulting in fewer numbers of students having to isolate at home. For those who had, blended learning with on-line access to lessons and resources has continued to be positively received by students and parents. The staff are now increasingly accomplished in the 'new normal' methods of delivery of lessons using on-line platforms.

Governors asked about the impact of Brexit on boarding numbers - and were reminded of the relatively low number of EU students having accessed boarding places at RGS historically. The ambition remains for RGS to be a competitive alternative to the independent sector - and marketing is being focused on this - targeting UK families in particular. Overseas applicants

must be entitled for settlement status within the UK in order to access the free day- education offer.

The new catering contract was discussed. The Headmaster reported some initial issues regarding inconsistencies in quality, especially for the boarding students, and assured the Board that he was pursuing this. The sixth firm café and lunches are proving to be very popular indeed and the Christmas lunch bookings are so high there is concern as to how all students will be fed!

There is however on-going negotiation relating to the actual contract and payments to the school. Governors voiced concern that there had been no financial reports back to the school from CH&Co. JMW assured the Board of his commitment to this and was asked to alert the Chair and the Chair of Finance if concerns remained and monies were not appropriately paid to the school.

### **ACTION JMW**

Governors were keen to understand the impact of the Covid restrictions and concerns on the school community. The Headmaster reported higher than usual anxiety levels within the student body - especially those in exam years - but also high levels of commitment and engagement from students and a strong focus on learning. Governors asked about the management of the anxiety-related issues and were reassured by the explanations of the support programmes in place, the emphasis being given to staff on promoting student wellbeing, and time being spent within tutor groups and PSHCE on this.

Governors asked about the wellbeing of the staff. JMW and RG were able to report on these issues with a general feeling that all staff were tired and ready for the Christmas break. RG reported that this had been the most difficult time in his 20+ year teaching career at RGS. He reported how staff are challenged by the rigors of teaching within the restrictions, the additional demands of the on-line learning whilst managing home and family life. Governors acknowledged the lack of 'relief' with very limited ability for staff to get together for informal debriefs and support, because of the need to adhere to the Covid guidelines.

RG again thanked the Senior Leadership Team for their strong front line leadership - their visibility and presence within the school and their support to staff and students. This was wholeheartedly endorsed by all governors who reiterated their thanks to the entire staff team.

Governors asked what they could do (or not do) to support the staff team during the unprecedented times. There were no immediate suggestions, but the Chair reminded JMW and RG of the need to alert the Board to any assistance needed, and reminded the governors of the need to be mindful of the workload on staff at the present time.

## **6. Finance**

### **a. Budget 2020-2021: monitoring reports and update on items of major expenditure including any for FGB approval**

SW presented the budget monitoring reports and the papers attached to the minutes. Within this governors were alerted to the potential shortfalls, especially in the event of further Covid

restrictions, due to reductions in projected boarding numbers or if lettings of the 3G pitch were not able to resume. Governors noted the detailed analysis that had been made within the Finance Meetings and thanked SW and AB for their huge efforts in their analysis and management of the finances. Governors were pleased to note that boarding fees are now being paid by direct debit (in the main) and that boarding fee arrears were significantly reduced.

**b. Proposal for Boarding Fees 2020-2021**

The proposed increase in boarding fees, documented in the accompanying paper, was discussed and agreed. Within these discussions governors expressed concern that a year on year increase could only be justified if the quality of the boarding experience was maintained to the highest standard. Governors noted the recent investment within boarding staff accommodation and agreed that this was imperative, acknowledging the need to ensure staff wellbeing and retention, which would directly and positively impact on the quality of the boarding experience. The Headmaster was asked to ensure that the improvements being made were appropriately publicised to ensure that current and future parents are aware of the high quality provision in a time where, of course, they cannot see for themselves the changes that have taken place.

**ACTION JMW**

**7. Strategic Projects**

**a. Strategic Development Plan**

The Head reported that the SDP had not been able to be updated due to the workload from Covid-19. However, he and the SLT continue to meet and review the plan.

The Chair asked the Headmaster that this be prioritised for next term - the SDP being needed to inform the SEF and vice-versa.

**ACTION JMW**

**b. Estates Development Plan**

DB updated the Board on progress with the EDP. The appointed architects (Squires and Brown) have produce outline proposals which now required further work-up. Governors noted that the architects have not, in the opinion of the Estates Development Group, yet fulfilled all the requirements of their brief.

Once this has been actioned, board members will be invited to attend a separate meeting to discuss the preferred option and agree the next steps. Despite the current constraints, governors agreed that the project should be pursued with a view to considering fundraising strategies towards the end of the year.

**ACTION DB/JMW**

**8. Update on lettings and the 3G pitch use**

The 3G pitch is still can't be used outside the school day nor for external lettings. This decision has been made by NYCC planning in response to complaints from local residents regarding the sound and light impacts from the pitch.

A recent noise survey undertaken by Persimmon Homes has been deemed, by the EHO, to demonstrate that the noise levels are too high. As such there is a requirement for Persimmon Homes and NYCC to come to an agreement on a noise reduction strategy,

Governors expressed concern and frustration at the situation. The current sanctions are preventing adherence to the community use agreement but also resulting in significant income loss to the school from lettings and loss of amenity to the local community.

### **ACTION EJ/JMW to pursue with NYCC planning and Persimmon Homes**

## **9. Governors' Committees**

a. Full minutes of all committee meetings are available on Sharepoint.

### **i. Boarding Committee 14/10/20**

MB reported on the positive impact being made by the new AHB (Caroline Day) on the boarding experience. There is significant on-going work to ensure uniformity between houses, a sense of community within the boarding facilities and improving the boarding experience for students. Alongside this, there is a review of policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every student continues to be exemplary. Meetings will now be held termly to support this work and development.

### **ii. Pastoral Committee 21/10/20**

TCT reported on the pastoral meeting - with a focus on wellbeing of staff and students during the pandemic. The pastoral staffing structure continues to serve students well, and the pastoral centre and team is resourced sufficiently to support the needs of students. Governors were pleased to hear how, despite the challenges, in general students were happy and motivated within school. The new uniform policy has been implemented without challenge.

### **iii. Curriculum Committee 4/11/20**

EM reported on the success to date of the 3 A levels and the Plus One programme for the Y12 students with many more students working for an EPQ. The 2020 A level and GCSE results were reviewed. Governors congratulated the Head and Deputy Head (Academic) on the regime used to determine Centre Assessed Grades which had been as accurate as possible, evidenced by the low number of changes at A Level when "algorithm grades" had been published. The impacts on school of the Covid restrictions were reviewed. There was no evidence that students were behind in their learning – with most HODs saying students were very well engaged and ahead of expectation at this stage. The impact and load on teachers are considerable. The burdens of supervisions at lunchtime have also increased, especially on SLT.

The chief strategic academic priorities for 2020-21, class sizes, and progress data for Years 11 and 13 were reviewed.

The interventions with students have been mainly SCMH related, rather than connected directly with learning. This is increasing the load on the pastoral team.

**iv. Premises Committee 10/11/20**

SC reported on the changes to the MASS maintenance scheme. This will not now be introduced until 2022 and will effectively provide access to a pre-approved set of contractors and some ancillary services.

The general consensus is that the revised scheme is unlikely to be especially attractive to the school and that, in any case, it will necessitate significant changes to financing and managing maintenance work within the school and that there was little to be gained from postponing these changes until April 2022. Work is being undertaken by governors, the Premises Manager and the Headteacher to manage the transition from the MASS scheme to a workable alternative. This may have budgetary impacts but is expected to be a more transparent, efficient method of managing this significant cost pressure.

**v. Finance and Personnel Committee 12/10/20, 30/11/20**

SW discussed the budget proposals for 2021-22, including the assumptions.

There has been detailed analysis of the monitoring reports, and the impact of C-19 on the financial health of the school.

There has been significant discussion regarding the catering contracts and, with this, the legal advice being provided to the school for the review this and other contracts. Whilst the consensus remains that the NYCC legal services are useful and represent value for money for routine day to day issues, governors support the use of more specialised practitioners for areas such as contract management and this is being further investigated by the committee.

**b. Any urgent business from other committees**

None

**c. Health and Safety Policies**

EJ presented a paper clarifying H&S policy responsibilities for each committee.

Current practice within school is such that all health and safety issues are managed by the premises manager who reports directly to the Health and Safety Committee. This is an unmanageable workload for one individual, and removes accountability from those who are responsible for such issues on a day to day basis.

Whilst all of the policies and procedures are relevant to the entire school community, a number health and safety issues relate to the specific work aspects of school life, and therefore fall within the terms of reference of the governor committees.

A list of health and safety policies, with a delegation of responsibility for each has been produced. Committees are asked to provide assurance that the current policies and procedures for those areas are up to date, and that the Board has evidence of adherence to these.

SC and DB thanked EJ for her work on this and all agreed with the proposed change.

**10. Policies for FGB Approval**

The SEND policy and SEND report were approved by the board

## 11. Governors with specific areas of responsibility

### a. Child Protection and Safeguarding Governors

DW reported on his visit to meet the DSL (Miss Murray) in school. There were no safeguarding concerns to report.

### b. Staff Welfare

KW reported on her meeting with Mrs Keelan-Edwards focussing on well-being, reiterating the challenges staff were facing in the current climate. Governors were pleased to hear of the huge efforts being made by SLT to support the staff. Governors were concerned about the wellbeing of the SLT and the Headmaster was again assured of our unwavering support.

### c. Inclusion Governor

EJ reported on her meeting with the SENCO (Belinda Roy) who is highly experienced and very keen to enhance the provision within school to meet the increasing needs - relating to social, emotional and mental wellbeing. This may require increased time and as such will have budgetary implications.

Governors were pleased to hear of how the SENCO team had been able to support, to date, the needs of individual students with high levels of need and EJ offered her congratulations to the team on how the inclusion service was evolving.

### d. CEIAG Governor

TCT reported plans to meet with the careers department over the next term.

### e. H&S Governor

DB reported the need for the H&S committee in school to meet - plans for this to be reviewed in the spring term.

## 12. Governors' training

**Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020** - EM confirmed all governors have read and assimilated this document

**School Improvement Network Meeting** - EJ reported her attendance at the recent SIN meeting - where the focus had been on staff wellbeing, and Covid security - all of which the school is currently managing.

**NYCC training** - training is available for SEND, Safeguarding and Complaints Management - details have been circulated separately to governors.

## 13. Off-site visits and activities

Governors were pleased to hear of the maintenance of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme within RGS - with expeditions planned in 2021. Governors recorded their thanks for Mr J Highton for his leadership of this valuable scheme.

#### **14. Calendar**

18/12/2020 - Virtual Carol Service (on-line)  
Whole School Prizegiving - tbc (summer term)

#### **15. Any other business**

The Headmaster left the meeting at this point.

EM presented the recommendation from the Staff Pay Committee and agreed by Finance & Personnel that the salary scale of the Headmaster should be extended to point L38 (from the current maximum of L35). RGS is graded as a Group 6 school - based on numbers only - but no account is made for boarding. The salary is determined by the group allocation. Governors have the authority to increase the salary by 25%. The proposed increase would represent a percentage increase to a maximum of 9.2% - and reflected the enhanced workload generated by the boarding aspect of the school. Governors unanimously agreed to this.

#### **16. Date of the Next Meeting**

22 March 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'L' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Approved 22.3.21