



Ripon Grammar School Governors Full Governing Board Meeting Monday 6 December 2021, 7pm, via MS Teams MINUTES

Present: Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) Chair, David Ball (DB), Vikki Barton-Brown (VBB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Stephen Chaplin (SC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Richard Grime (RG), Eric Medway (ERM), Robert O'Hare (RO), Helen Stiles (HS), Josh Stott (JS), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Stephen Williams (SW) David Winspear (DW).

In Attendance: Graham Livesey (GL), Director of Strategic Operations.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The chair welcomed Robert O'Hare and Josh Stott to their first Board meeting and thanked them for standing for election. She also welcomed Graham Livesey who had taken up his post on 1 December. For the benefit of newcomers, governors introduced themselves. The apologies of Matthew Bean (illness) were accepted.

2. Declarations of interest There were none.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 7 October 2021

The minutes were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising and Action Points not appearing in this agenda. There were none.

5. Governor Vacancies

EJ reported that our LA-nominated governor, Mike Chambers, has confirmed that he is no longer available to be a governor but will continue to support the school. EJ has thanked him for his long service to RGS.

We need to identify a suitable person to propose as the LA-nominated governor. Governors were asked to notify any suggestions. **EJ/ERM**

Stephen Williams' term as a co-opted governor was complete and he had expressed interest in continuing (Paper 05). SW was asked to leave the meeting to allow governors to discuss. Several expressed appreciation of the clearer and sharper scrutiny he had brought to the school's finances and he was co-opted unanimously for a term of four years. SW was then asked to re join the meeting.

6. Headmaster's Report

The Headmaster had provided a full and comprehensive report (Paper 06) and drew the attention of governors to concerns about staff welfare at the end of a long and difficult term and with the imminence of Ofsted. He also noted his request to NYCC (unanswered) for a reassessment of the school's safeguarding grade. Concerns continued about low level disruption by a few students, typically in Years 9 and 10, more than we are used to. Governors sought further details on several matters:

- *Regarding student behaviour, is there anything further you need from governors?* Perhaps additional staffing. With the forthcoming retirement of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) we are re-considering the whole pastoral structure. We may want to redistribute resource towards additional support staff. I will be discussing this with SLT next week. Some of the

issues we are seeing are surely due to students missing the regular routines of school because of Covid – but not all.

Governors supported taking the opportunity for a full review of Pastoral Structure.

- *What are you doing to prepare for any disruption to public exams again this year? Are you running extra mock exams for instance?*

There will be the regular mock exams early next term. We will add further formal assessment points if we think necessary. A letter explaining everything is going to relevant parents at the end of term. We are telling them and students that we keep evidence of attainment but the assessments aren't graded.

Staff governor RG added his experience as a Year 11 tutor: Tutors are trying hard to reduce anxiety and stress in students. We are explaining that while mocks are important anyway, if we need to produce TAGs again, students' final grades won't depend only on their mock performance.

VBB (as a Year 11 parent) commended RG and all Y11 tutors for the support and guidance they were providing.

- *What are you doing to support students with mental health problems post-lockdown?*

We have used some tutoring money for catch-up classes but usually this isn't the root problem. We have extended the hours of the Pastoral Support Officer and are looking at the hours of the School Counsellor, who is pretty well booked up.

- *But what about those students who are in difficulty but won't speak up?*

We have a variety of communication channels available, for example sixth form mentors, and we emphasise that "it's OK not to be OK". Staff are reminded to be positive, especially with those in Years 10 and 11 and focus on what they can do, not what may need to be caught up. In the end though, students have to be prepared to speak.

- *Staff are the professionals here and we expect them to do a good job and they do. They don't need to worry about Ofsted. Our judgement is based on years of continuous monitoring.*

The Headmaster agreed. He has had a similar conversation with a worried HoD. We know our students best and we do what is right for them.

- *We need to encourage staff to identify what is real and what is imaginary so they are confident and have control. They need to avoid group think.*

The Headmaster said he agreed and was having those conversations with worried staff.

7. Safeguarding – Update on Action Plan

The Headmaster had provided a summary document (Paper 07). Attention was drawn to the following:

There had been some additions since the last meeting, e.g. Lockdown Training and Rehearsal.

We have a new NYCC advisor who has visited and feedback was very good.

We are focussing on further development of PSHCEe in KS4.

The Headmaster and Chair of Governors have written to NYCC asking why the school's grading had not been returned to a higher level, given there had been no communication from them for almost three months. EJ reminded governors that this is not a 'tick box exercise' and we will never be relaxed about safeguarding; but that the targets set had, in the main, been achieved. She reminded Board members of our responsibility to ensure the safety of the school, and challenge this at every occasion. She was concerned as to what further was required from us to be deemed acceptable. All agreed that this was imperative, and agreed that if we are not acceptable in this regard we must understand why and develop a plan to rectify such deficiencies.

GL added that as a new member of staff about school he had been repeatedly challenged by both staff and students when his lanyard and card had not been as visible as they might have been.

Governors noted that the Kirkland Rowell Student Survey next term would include questions about student perceptions of safety and risk.

- *Is there a means for holding NYCC to account since three months have passed with the school graded at 4 with no communication of assistance from them?*

EJ reminded governors of the joint letter recently sent. She will be chasing a response vigorously.

EJ

- *Do you think the behaviour issues and derogatory language in KS4 will be dealt with by the expansion of PSHCE*

There is a staff committee looking at the developments and I have pushed them along with a 10-point plan drawing attention to the critical issues. We are reviewing the provision of PSHCE within KS4 and are likely to be asking for governor support in including additional curriculum time for this. Governors asked about training for staff in PSHCE. JMW commented on the new provisions being put in place by the new head of PSHCE (Helen Mars). It was agreed that Helen would present to governors at the training evening planned for the first 2 weeks of the Spring Term.

- *Is there anything more we need to do at this stage to support you in delivering this, and the other actions from the NYCC review?*

No.

- *Were you satisfied with the lockdown rehearsal? Who did you know it was a success?*

The main focus of the exercise was to test communication throughout the campus and secondly, the response. That is why we used a "hazardous gas" rather than an intruder as the hazard. Coverage was almost 100% and we are looking at the few gaps and dealing with them. If we did it at, say, break-time and with an intruder, the methods and outcome would be different. That's for the next rehearsal. This exercise enabled us to 'test our strategy'. So we know now that whistles are hard to hear – but the use of the white boards with messaging was effective. We tested the messaging strategy and I am confident that we were able to lock down effectively.

- One of the major challenges is to ensure we have a culture of safeguarding and inclusion throughout the school – staff and pupils. How are we progressing with this?

The feel in school is different. It is now normal routine and part of daily management – whether it be supervision at the start of the day, break and lunchtime. Staff and students now challenge – whether that be language or behaviour. Staff understand why we do this and the principles are embedded in school. The bromcom software now enables us to evidence in a standardised way what is happening and incidents from low level disruption to racism, homophobic language are all recorded. The reports from this will enable us to identify trends. We need to ensure that we have objective evidence of the improvements we believe are happening. We also need to know that there are no trends in terms of vulnerable groups.

8. Financial Matters

a) Budget 2021-2022 Monitoring

SW took governors through the most recent monitoring report. The projected in-year balance had improved during the last three months but was still a little short of the budget.

b) Boarding Fees 2022-23

Governors noted that the setting of the fees would be deferred until after the Boarding Committee strategy meeting in early January. Thereafter, the F&P Committee will set fees for recommendation to the Full Board meeting in March.

MB/EJ/SW

c) Financial Strategy

SW presented the Strategy report he was asked to develop at the last meeting (Paper 08c). Governors thanked SW for its clarity and agreed to build it into the Board's Strategy meeting next term. **EJ/SW**

GL remarked that the personal objectives he had agreed with the Headmaster on taking up his post aligned perfectly with this strategy document.

9. Strategic Matters

a) Progress on SDP

The Headmaster presented an updated document (Paper 09a) which is due to be discussed with SLT. He has drawn out the objectives for 21-22 to bring sharper focus to the tactical elements for both SLT and governors.

Governors commented:

- *This is thorough and comprehensive in every way except it makes no mention of parents. Schools are being made to take on increased activities from parents. Can we include a determination to re-engage parents more?*

That's a valid point. The Friends of RGS group have reconvened – having been in abeyance. I have chaired a re-vitalisation meeting; where there was considerable evidence of parental engagement. A major development project would also engage parents more.

- *But we need to think what we can off-load back onto parents and thus take the load off school and staff.* **JMW**
- *The Chair asked the Headteacher to ~~include within~~ include within the document the impact of / reason for doing each action and thus link the SDP more closely to the SEF.*

JMW

- *The Chair also asked how we will measure success / each of the areas? Can we add that too?*

JMW agreed that this will be refined following a discussion with the SLT

It was agreed that the SDP is a working document. This has embedded within it the strategic priorities of the Board, and will be reviewed at each meeting. **JMW**

b) Estates Development Plan

Governors noted that the relationship with Squires & Brown had been terminated and the possible replacement practice was coming for a meeting early in 2022.

- *Governors asked if there anything within the EDP that might need to be progressed this year – which would of course require capital funding.?*

JMW suggested that some additional classrooms may be required,

The Headmaster was asked to bring details to the F&P Committee. **JMW/SW**

10. – 13. No Agenda Items.

14. Membership of Committees

The list (Paper 14) was approved with the addition of David Winspear to Pastoral Committee. **ERM**

15. Reports From Governors' Committees (minutes provided in advance, Papers 15b-15g)

a) Admissions Committee

There had been no meeting.

b) Finance & Personnel Meeting

SW drew governors' attention to an independent scrutiny of Boarding Financial Management. Since our Boarding has an annual turnover in excess of £1M, the committee had decided an independent scrutiny was essential as part of good governance. It had

been carried out *pro bono* by a fully qualified colleague of VBB. The report revealed nothing of concern and all was in good order. A few minor enhancements for added surety were noted.

c) Staff Pay Committee

ERM provided minutes of a recent short meeting to consider one staff promotion to UPS. He briefly explained the scrutiny made by the committee and the decision to make all applications meet a deadline of 31 July in future years.

JMW

d) Boarding Committee

In MB's absence, KF drew governors' attention to progress on key matters since the meeting:

A significant improvement in the quality of meals (as attested by both staff and students) after the Headmaster's interventions.

Enhancements to Health & Safety, e.g. main gate and lettings regulations were discussed at the meeting and on the agenda for the next, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the boarders living on the site.

A survey of why parents/student chose RGS Boarding is to be conducted in the Spring Term, and a Boarding Strategy Day has been arranged for 6 January 2022, during which a discussion will be had on boarding fees, a proposal on which will be taken to the next F+P meeting.

KF/MB

e) Pastoral Committee

TCT said many of the issues in committee had been included in the Headmaster's Report to this meeting. He highlighted:

The very successful inductions of new students at all ages, demonstrating how staff had successfully adapted their programmes in the face of Covid constraints.

The successful roll-out of CPOMS and the positive impact expected from this – with reports to the pastoral meeting due in the Spring Term – looking at trends. The increase in student anxieties on return from lockdown – which have been addressed by the School Health Worker and the School Counsellor

The Kirkland Rowell Student Survey next term will assess student wellbeing.

f) Premises Committee

SC summarised the main issues:

Further discussion of the EDP

The termination of the MASS scheme and a consideration of participation in some elements of its successor.

A long-term maintenance cycle.

A review of the shared accountability for H&S policies to be convened by EJ.

EJ

g) Curriculum Committee

ERM provided notes and access to the full minutes. He drew attention to:

The good outcomes for 2nd MFL choice in Year 8

The excellent GCSE and A Level results with few appeals and no grade inflation. (Several parents had congratulated the school on its maintenance of standards).

Improved information for governors about the measurement and maintenance of the quality of teaching and learning.

The SLT required to take a firm line with staff failing to take lesson registers.

The approval of four curriculum-related policies.

h) Any Urgent Business from Other Committees – there was none.

i) H&S Issues from any Committee – there were none.

16. Governors With Specific Areas Of Responsibility

a) Child Protection and Safeguarding Governor

DW had no matters to report that had not already been covered in the meeting.

b) CEIAG Governor

TCT had reviewed the new CEIAG Policy for the Curriculum Committee.

c) H&S Governor

DB had no matters to report that had not already been covered in the meeting.

d) Inclusion Governor

HS reported a successful interview for a new Inclusion Manager who will start next term. HS will arrange a meeting after a few weeks.

HS

e) Staff Welfare Governor

AE had met Helen Keelan-Edwards and staff are being asked for suggestions how the funding available would best enhance their welfare.

17. Complaints

There had been none.

18. Governor Training

EJ will send the latest NYCC online training schedule to governors and urged governors to consider courses especially, where appropriate, safeguarding and complaints.

EJ

All governors were asked to e-mail ERM about any courses they attend so that the record can be kept up to date.

ALL

19. Policies for Approval

a) Suspensions and Exclusions Policy

This had been reviewed by EJ, ERM, TCT and HS, It was approved by the Board.

b) Instrument of Governance – was noted.

c) Peer on Peer Abuse Policy – This will be circulated by email for comment and approval.

JMW/EJ

20. Off-site Visits

There were none needing permission.

21. Calendar

The forthcoming Christmas Concert (sold out!) and Carol Service were noted.

22. AOB

For the ninth year running RGS was the leading state school in the North in the Sunday Times Parent Power poll. It included a very positive article.

EJ will write to all staff to thank them for their hard work and dedication this term.

EJ

The Chair of Governors thanked all for their commitment and wished them a Merry Christmas. **Meeting closed 2100h.**

Date of Next Meeting : Monday 21 March 2022, 1900h.

Approved 21/3/22

Proposer – TCT

Seconder – AE

Electronically signed – EA Jarvis 21/3/22

