



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board meeting

Monday 4th December 2023, 7pm - Meeting Room 1 Bishopton House

1.	<p>Welcome and apologies for non-attendance</p> <p>Apologies received from Robert O’Hare, Matthew Bean (With consent)</p> <p>In attendance:</p> <p>Josh Stott (JS), Vicky Barton Brown (VBB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Adele Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Helen Stiles (HS), Eric Medway (EM), Siny Jayan (SJ), Dave Winspear (DW), Victoria Pang (VP), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Elizabeth Jarvis (Chair)</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interests</p> <p>None</p>
3.	<p>Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th October 2023</p> <p>These were accepted as a true and correct record (Proposed by EM, Seconded by AE).</p>
4.	<p>Matters arising and update on any action points not covered by the agenda</p> <p>None</p>
5.	<p>Governor Vacancies</p> <p>The vacancy of the LA governor was noted – EJ has pursued this with the LA, who will forward any potential candidates.</p> <p>Co-options to the FGB</p> <p>DW submitted an expression of interest in being reco-opted to the board. He left the meeting at this point – governors unanimously approved this – acknowledging his expertise around health and safety, safeguarding.</p> <p>DW was co-opted to the FGB for a 4 year term.</p>
6.	<p>Headmaster’s Report to the FGB</p> <p>JMW presented his report which had been made available to governors before the meeting. He was thanked for the comprehensive nature of this.</p> <p>Specific discussions occurred around</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In year leavers – governors noted that 1 or 2 students per year leave for reasons cited as bullying. The Head was asked about he schools’ response to this – ‘there is consistent focus of this within PHSCE and the form tutor programme – backed up by robust actions within the behaviour policy – which is being enacted’. <p>Governors asked about support for year 12 students new to the school – it was noted that over the last 5 years the highest number of leavers was in this group. The Head told governors of the mentoring and buddying system in place – but commented that most leave due to friendship issues – mostly missing old friends and former establishments. There have been no reports of discrimination, segregation or bullying from Y12 leavers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The PAN for Y9 is now 135 which has been agreed by the LA – governors noted the positive financial impact of this and were assured that the increased year size could be accommodated within the school estate. 3. Teaching and Learning - governors asked how they can be assured that approach to delivery of the curriculum to our SEND students is embedded (given the Ofsted comments). The Head described the consistent review of this within all teaching and

	<p>learning walks, departmental reviews with additional scrutiny and focus from within the SEND department. This is reviewed at the curriculum committee.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Governors were pleased to learn of the success of the Y7 and Y8 cultural evenings which were school officer initiatives. 5. Attendance is strong at 96.1% (Compared to 96.4% in last report). Governors asked if there were persistent absentees to which the Head responded that there are not and that in general absence is very low. Focus on attendance is being made through assemblies and tutor time – reviewing the impact on non- attendance using data to support this. 6. Governors were pleased to note that exclusions were falling and the Head described the positive behaviour initiatives and the culture of civility within school that is being promoted by everyone.
7.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>EJ noted that she was covering the safeguarding governor role; and had undertaken 2 visits since the last FGB. During this she observed lunchtime – including signing in and out processes. In the second visit she had met with the DSL and been updated on developments in the use of CPOMS for information recording.</p> <p>Governor compliance with safeguarding training</p> <p>It was noted that 5 governors had failed to complete the mandatory training on KCSIE.</p> <p>ACTION – ERM will follow up on this individually and feedback to next meeting</p>
8.	<p>Financial Matters</p> <p><u>Budget 2023 - 2024</u></p> <p>The latest available Budget Monitoring Report is for the month ended October 2023.</p> <p>The in-year balance (deficit) for 2023-24 now is now projected to be c.£39k. This represents an improvement of c.£8.8k from the Start Budget (of c.£47.8k).</p> <p>As a result, the Cumulative Balance at year-end is currently projected to be c.£9.1k. Obviously, this also represents an improvement of c.£8.8k from the Start Budget (of £313.00).</p> <p>Despite this slight improvement in the position, the school’s financial position remains a cause for significant concern. The margins are so tight, any movement in any variable can have a dramatic effect.</p> <p>Based on initial forecasts for Start Budget 2024-25 (as outlined below), F&P have asked the School, as a general matter (not solely in relation to energy) to prepare and finalise a new financial savings measures matrix, setting out various options, and their likely impact (financially and more widely, on staff, the curriculum etc.), for the School to find additional savings in its budget.</p> <p>Finally, as a comment on the wider economic position, in his Autumn Statement last week, the Chancellor chose to use (almost) the entirety of the ‘windfall’ of higher tax revenues (resulting from higher than hoped for inflation), in excess of the forecast increase in spending on debt interest, benefits and state pensions, on tax-cuts (in effect via a 2% cut in NICs). However, spending on public services (including education) does not automatically rise when inflation is higher. That means (without more... maybe at the next Spending Review... maybe under a new government... due in Autumn 2024) the squeeze on spending on public services is being extended out to the end of the forecast</p>

horizon (2028-29)... or, in even more simple terms, the £100 the DfE was promised last year will still only be £100, even though it is now only worth c.£90.90

Additional areas worthy of highlighting to FGB include:

- **Expenditure: Teaching Staff**

The cost of the pay settlement with Teaching Unions will not be covered by an increase in central funding. This is due to the fact that RGS recruits and retains a teacher-population at higher-than-the-average pay scale. As a result, RGS cost per member of staff always exceeds the national average (meaning that teacher pay awards will always cost RGS more than it receives).

- **Expenditure: Supply Teachers**

The cost of Supply during 2022-23 was almost £102k. This was due to (a) ongoing impact of pandemic-related absences, and (b) a couple of exceptional, long-term absence, scenarios.

The School has budgeted £60k for Supply for 2023-24. To date, that has proved to be a reasonable estimate. However, the School has expressed concern that costs are likely to rise sharply in the coming months due to another exceptional case. This continues to be an area of expensive risk for the School.

- **Expenditure: Energy**

Energy costs remain stubbornly high. Unit costs for gas have not fallen as quickly as hoped, and lags behind the cost-per-unit expected under the contract with NYC Energy Services. It is likely this is due to only a percentage of gas having been 'bought forward' (at a set price), with the balance being purchased on the spot market. In addition, standing charges continue to fluctuate. F&P have asked the School to continue to pursue its efforts to obtain greater certainty in this regard.

Governors should expect unit prices for energy to stabilise at elevated levels. In addition, there is limited scope for additional efficiency measures. As a result, the School must plan for high energy costs in the medium term.

- **The IT Project**

The School has embarked on a three-year project to upgrade IT provision and infrastructure. The entire project has a total cost in the region of £380k. It is being monitored by the Curriculum Committee. It is considered critical investment in the School's IT infrastructure; F&P has noted its frustration that the need arose suddenly and had not been previously included in any strategic plan. An IT Strategy has now been developed (again under the oversight of Curriculum). It is hoped this will avoid a repeat.

Appropriate provision has been booked in the School budget. Phase 1 has already been completed, 'under budget' (primarily due to the effort of the Facilities Team). However, some caution should be exercised as part of the reason Phase 1 was under budget was due to deferring some parts of Phase 1 into Phase 2 (and bringing parts of Phase 2 forward). There is also a lack of clarity {being investigated} over whether the full cost of the laptops has been included in the total project costs. It is hoped that further savings can be made in Phases 2 and 3.

F&P has noted that the existing **telephone system** is aging and may need to be replaced at some point in the near future. F&P has asked the School to investigate when that will likely need to be done, and the likely cost involved.

Start Budget 2024-25: DfE error

Initial steps to commence the Start Budget process have already been taken. Much of the Start Budget will be based on assumptions, based on the best available evidence. We will need to be rigorous in setting out our assumptions, using what we know (where we know it), and prudent expectations where the basis for calculation is unknown.

One area (in addition to elevated energy costs) that makes the current financial forecast for 2024-25 discouraging arises from the Department for Education's error in calculating schools' National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2024-25. In short, this means that while the School had previously been told that funding through the NFF would increase by 2.7% in 2024-25 (compared to 2023-24), that figure will now be revised down to 1.9%. This downgrade is particularly painful for the School because of the high proportion of funding it directs to Teaching Staff (as outlined above); that is, known, absolute, increases staffing costs will need to be met from a smaller pot of funds received.

End of year submission to NYC (& Start Budget 2024-25)

The School has an obligation to submit a brief financial statement to NYC at the end of the calendar year.

F&P discussed the basis upon which that submission should be made. One view is to prepare a 'worst case' scenario, setting bare the financial difficulty that the School finds itself to the Council. While another position is to manage the risks internally, and not advertise the challenges being faced, in order to avoid any risk of NYC intervention in (or adverse attention on) the School's financial affairs, the end-of-calendar-year submission is made for information purposes only.

F&P will convene (remotely) to discuss a draft submission in the coming weeks.

Income: Solar for Schools & Ripon AFC

In light of the financial position outlined above, F&P have encouraged the School to continue to apply all possible pressure to expediate decisions in connection with the Solar for Schools application (estimated to be costing the School c.£500 per week). It is understood that the obstacle to approval is a query over the procurement process (i.e., only one provider having been investigated).

In addition, it is hoped that final, formal, confirmation in relation to Ripon AFC's use of the 5G pitch (from January) is expected imminently.

Both projects represent significant sources of the financial income/saving for the school. They are both critically important.

Boarding Fees 2024 – agreement of timing

F&P have adopted a new approach to measuring the 'cost' of the Boarding provision. All income and expenditure is now recorded in a single account. This avoids the difficulty of separately accounting for Boarding income and expenditure each month. Instead, a separate Boarding statement is prepared. This is calculated on an annual basis using certain assumptions and metrics to accurately allocate the cost of various parts of the School budget to the Boarding provision. These assumptions and allocation keys should be recorded and transparent. The aim is to ensure the true benefit/cost of the Boarding provision can be calculated more accurately.

	<p><i>Boarding fees for 2024-25 will need to be finalised before offer letters are sent to prospective Boarders. That means final Boarding Fees 2024 must be approved at the meeting of FGB on 18 March 2024.</i></p> <p>Using the revised mechanism for calculating the costs attributable to Boarding, alongside the data and assumptions used in preparing the Start Budget for 2024-25, F&P will discuss and approve a draft Boarding Fees 2024 schedule (to be submitted to FGB for approval at its March meeting) during its meetings in January and March 2024.</p> <p>ACTION ROH/GL</p>
9.	<p>Strategic Matters</p> <p>a. Progress on SDP and SEF since last FGB meeting JMW presented the latest version of the SDP – for which updates are planned over forthcoming weeks. Governors were supportive of the strategic priorities for the year ahead which come under the headings of quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, sixth form, boarding, estates and community and outreach. It was agreed that strands would be picked up in governor committee meetings as previously outlined – and reviewed in detail. The SEF and SDP are working documents - it was agreed that these would be reviewed again at the next meeting of the FGB ACTION JMW</p> <p>b. Estates Strategy GL and DW presented the draft of the estate strategy – the focus of which is to set out how RGS will work with the LA to manage, invest and maintain the estate – in line with the DfE guidance on Good Estate Management for School. (GEMS). Currently in draft form, the Board noted that RGS that there is a £1.5M backlog for outstanding works from the LA – of which the RGS programme accounts for 9% of this (ie disproportionately high given we are one of 200 LA schools). It was agreed that this must be escalated ACTION EJ and JMW. DW described the ambition to describe the current estate risks and record these within a risk register for escalation. Governors welcomed this development.</p> <p>c. Staff Wellbeing Strategy JMW presented the draft wellbeing strategy which is to be shared with staff for review. Governors welcomed this – and asked for feedback and a progress update at the last meeting. ACTION – JMW/AE.</p>
10.	<p>Parental Engagement Meeting - 29th January 2024 The date for the Y9 parents evening is within the school calendar. Governors will meet face to face with Y9 parents to seek feedback. ACTION – EJ</p>
11.	<p>FGB Annual Report The report was approved. EJ thanked governors for their contributions to this.</p>
	<p>ROUTINE BUSINESS Governor Committee Meetings – note that full minutes are available in the relevant sections of Sharepoint.</p>
12.	<p>a. Curriculum (15/11/23) Notes were available in advance of the meeting for review. ERM highlighted the detailed discussions around progress and attainment in A level and GCSE results – noting that the</p>

	<p>progress of FSM and SEND students appeared less than previous years – but on detailed scrutiny was due to a small number of students.</p> <p>The committee has asked for detailed review of Further maths, history and French where performances were lower than expected.</p> <p>The committee were gaining increasing quality feedback on the quality of teaching and learning as a result of robust departmental review procedures which included review and analysis of embedding of SEND priorities across the curriculum.</p> <p>As part of the safeguarding responsibility, the committee noted that whilst lesson registration had significantly improved – 50% of missed registers were the responsibility of 8 teachers and JMW is taking action to deal with this.</p>
	<p>b. Estates Development Committee (23/11/23)</p> <p>DW outlined the strategic role of the committee and the helpful overlap with the F+P committee. Particular focus has been the development of the estates strategy but also RAG rating the current outstanding estates work in terms of safety and risk – for escalation to the LA. The committee had spent time reviewing the role of health and safety committee and the EDC supports this and gains assurance of embedding of routine health and safety behaviours as part of daily practice.</p>
	<p>c. Finance and Personnel Committee 20/11/23</p> <p>F+P spent time benchmarking financial position and performance against similar schools to gain sense check of financial governance, areas for improvements and risk. Thanks were recorded to ERM for his willingness to complete this exercise on behalf of the committee.</p> <p>An audit of capital assets is in progress</p> <p>Whilst F&P has taken the strategic decision to concentrate efforts on ensuring the school can operate within its means. A fundraising group was established and whilst outside the role of the committee, discussions around supporting this to ensure the School’s fundraising activities gain sufficient attention occurred.</p>
	<p>d. Pastoral Committee (25/10/23)</p> <p>The committee had met with the School Officers who had shared their ambitions for the year ahead – particular around community work and building relations within and outside school.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Report was reviewed. There was detailed discussions on the implementation of the behaviour policy – concerns about vaping in school continue despite the regular interventions.</p>
	<p>e. Health & Safety issues arising from any Committee that needs to be brought to the attention of the FGB</p> <p>None</p>
13.	Governors with Areas of Responsibility
	<p>a. Child Protection & Safeguarding Governor</p> <p>EJ outlined areas of focus with the DSL team – relating to child protection issues – the recording and response to these within school. Vaping and other recreational drug use remains a concern and a multi-pronged approach to this is being taken – with educational assemblies, inclusion in the pastoral teaching programme and parental education.</p> <p>The visibility of the internal aspects of boarding accommodation at Johnson House has been raised – from the 3G pitch – this is being reviewed and interventions will be made if this is confirmed.</p>
	<p>b. CEIAG Governor</p> <p>A report was made available for governors prior to the meeting. TCT outlined the exceptional level of provision being provided by a very small workforce. The sustainability</p>

	of this is a concern and the SLT have been asked to consider succession planning. The careers fair was noted again to be highly successful – providing a breadth of information around both higher education and employment opportunities.
	<p>c. H&S Governor</p> <p>DW reported on his conversations with GL and the premises team. He was pleased to report evidence of H&S processes not being embedded.</p> <p>A deep dive will be undertaken next term into PE – there have been several accidents reported – and a review to ascertain if there are trends or causative themes.</p> <p>There have been 2 accidents within school that have been reported to the HSE.</p> <p>DW agreed that he would gain assurance around the implementation of the evacuation procedure in school during the next term.</p>
	<p>d. Inclusion Governor</p> <p>HS had not been able to conduct a routine visit but described her ongoing work with the SEND team.</p> <p>The SEND Policy and SEND Report were approved.</p>
	<p>e. Staff Welfare Governor</p> <p>AE has met with the Head. No further interventions or interview have occurred with the staff team. She described her ambition to be involved with the wellbeing strategy and to continue to meet with staff members to support but also listen and understand the current position and challenges.</p>
14.	<p>Complaints</p> <p>None</p>
15.	<p>Governors' Training</p> <p>Governors were asked to consider undertaking the NYC Complaints Training. All training to be reported to ERM who will update the register.</p>
16.	<p>Policies for approval by the FGB</p> <p>None</p>
17.	<p>Off-site visits and activities: for information and approval where necessary</p> <p>None</p>
18.	<p>Calendar - School Events to the end of Term</p> <p>Governors were reminded of the invitation to the carol service and carol concert</p>
19.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>EJ thanked all governors for their hard work over 2023 and wished all a very happy festive season.</p>
20.	<p>Date of the next meeting</p> <p>18th March 2024 – 7pm</p>

Confidential Discussion

Headteacher Performance Review (JMW, GL and VP left the meeting)

EJ confirmed that the Performance review for JMW had been undertaken. A letter of assurance had been received from the external reviewer (Mrs P Langham) confirming the process and the quality of the review.

There were no questions on this.