



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board Meeting

Monday 10th July 2023

MINUTES

Governors present:

Vicki Barton-Brown (VBB), Matthew Bean (MB), Ian Charlton (IC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Adele Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) [Chair] (SJ), Eric Medway (EM), Robert O'Hare (ROH), Victoria Pang (VP), Helen Stiles (HS), Josh Stott (JS), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Dave Winspear (DW).

In Attendance : Graham Livesey (GL) DSO and Clerk to the Governing Board

1. Welcome and apologies for non-attendance

The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting. It was noted that since the last meeting she had met with JMW regularly - combination of face to face, virtual and telephone meetings, totalling 30 hours. 4 governors had attended tea with boarders prior to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Tom Cavell Taylor, Sinay Jayan and Alan Watson (with consent).

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 20 March 2023.

The minutes were approved (pending the amendment that DW was at the last meeting) – proposed by AE, seconded by DW.

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

None

5. Update on Governor Membership and Committees

The FGB now has no vacancies though noted that SC, EM, MB and AE would come to the end of his tenure on 31 August. Committee membership was circulated.

6. Headmaster's Report

The Head was thanked for circulating his presentation, prepared in advance of the meeting, which was available within the meeting documents.

Areas of particular discussion included:

a. Numbers on Roll and Recruitment

The numbers on roll have remained at 917 since the last meeting, but the Head presented projections of 942 on roll by September 2023, including 97 boarders and 132 for Y9 (due to offers made following Y9 testing) and 160 in Y12.

For Y12 this is based on the assumption that a larger number of current Y11 students will leave than usual; but also expecting a higher-than-normal numbers of new starters to the school (186 offers have been made).

Questions included.

1. *What is the maximum number we can accommodate in Y12?*
160 – and with that some subjects are already at capacity
2. *Will we be able to satisfy subject requests for all entrants?*
There is a risk of oversubscription to DT – the team are working at solutions to accommodate this.
3. *Again, projected sixth form boarders are predominantly female. Why is this?*
This seems to be a national picture and not just confined to RGS.
4. *Are we analysing reasons for non-application to Y12 from our current students?*
We are doing this - a significant number simply want to move - others may not reach the required academic standard or wish to take differing subjects. Students are being supported in their decision making.

b. Admissions

Governors noted the attempts to widen the access to Y7 at RGS. The school has invested in the Frog platform – providing free online preparatory resources to Y5/6 students in receipt of pupil premium who live within the catchment area.

The Head reported that only 3 families had logged in

Governors asked.

1. *Have we asked Y5 teachers to provide log ins to the appropriate students?*
We have not but we have advertised this to the local schools. JMW agreed to explore with local heads how we could ensure that this resource reaches those students for whom it is intended.
2. *What % of our in-catchment population are in receipt of FSM?*
Between 32 and 39% - the number at RGS is lower – between 8-11% - suggesting we are still not reaching all students in this group. JMW was asked to think about how he and the school could reach out to those more marginalised families. One suggestion included taking former FSM students back to primary schools to talk to Y5 students, another included utilising the community officer prefect.

c. Pastoral Matters

The Head shared the data on exclusions numbers. Whilst the 2022 to 2023 data suggested a lower number of days, more students have been excluded compared to last year (38 vs 36).

Governors asked

- i. *How many are repeat offenders?*
Very few
- ii. *What is the impact of the exclusions?*
It is hard to measure the impact, but we are very clear that certain behaviours will not be tolerated – such as active vaping (rather than being in possession), verbal abuse and fighting. JMW reported a general decline in civility in the school.
- iii. *How can we restore this?*

Positive communication throughout – between and across all groups, modelling of good behaviour and restorative conversations with students supported by strong relationships with staff.

d. Ofsted Report

The Head reported no negative feedback from parents following the publication of the report and the letter sent from him and the Chair of Governors – in fact numerous positive messages of support.

There have been no new concerns regarding staff behaviour towards students, but the Head confirmed a robust approach towards any concerns that had been raised.

Governors asked about the general approach to year groups who have a poor reputation for behaviour (eg current Year 10) and the potential for this ‘rub off’ on the peer group as a whole. The Head reported that there was an approach of positive reinforcement for all students, but discussions had specifically occurred around the avoidance of ‘branding and generalisations’ about groups from the staff team.

e. Academic

The school day remains under review – this was highlighted in the Ofsted report – and consultation between stakeholders continues. SEND remains an area of focus, with a need to ensure a graduated approach in all lessons to ensure that students with SEND are enabled to make the same progress as their peer group.

f. Pastoral Developments

Governors were interested to hear of the Y10 prefect roles.

Considering the poor reputation of the year group – has the uptake been good?

Yes – with a large number coming forward and roll modelling exceptional behaviour.

The HOY rotation is now embedded – so HOYs will move with their year group through school. This has been well received by staff and students, with staff reporting increasing efficiencies because of the continuity – and hence an ability to focus on the relevant interventions and building strong relationships with student groups.

g. IT strategy

Members of staff and governors had visited Dame Allen School, and plans are in place for phase 1 of our IT upgrade in school.

Governors asked that the Head consider carefully the goal for IT use within school– and how this would support a unified approach to teaching and learning (incorporating IT) across the school – ensuring that the IT development planned over the next years enables this to be delivered. This will be considered in detail in the curriculum committee.

ACTION JMW to produce IT strategy

7. Finances

a. Final Income and Expenditure Report 2022

ROH presented the report (with supporting papers). Governors noted the 109k in year deficit for 2022/23 – which is a consequence of

- i. Significant unpredictable variability in energy costs (resulting in a 100k overspend on energy despite government support)
- ii. Supply teaching staff costs amounting to 102k compared to the budget of 60k

b. Energy Costs Update

GL shared a presentation made available to governors in the supporting papers. Re energy costs the Board were pleased to learn of the 25-30% reduction in gas use over the past 3 years as a direct result of the energy saving measures identified and implemented by GL and the premises team, with an estimated reduction in electricity use over the same period of 10-20%.

Energy costs for the forthcoming winter are expected to be lower than last year, but the absence of government support may offset any savings.

Governors were delighted to hear that the pool cover appeared to be realising significant saving, and pool costs were expected to be further reduced following the installation of the new pool pump.

c. Budget update for 2023 to 2024

ROH informed the committee that the start budget had been submitted. This had been scrutinised by the F+P committee (over several meetings) and was the best estimate of the current position and forecast. He asked governors to be aware that changes were likely to occur and would be implemented in response to changes – and reassured the Board that the F+P committee will continue to meet frequently and as required to ensure appropriate financial management.

d. To receive proposal re lettings arrangements Ripon AFC.

Ripon AFC have approached the school for a contract to enable them to block book the 3G pitch for a 3 year period, utilising the site as their home ground – during which time their own site will be developed. Paper 07d summarised the position.

The proposal had been discussed in detail at the F+P, and boarding committees, with consultation within the SLT. The Board noted that without engaging in any formal arrangement, the club could choose to book the pitch for matches and training using the usual booking system, as per the community use agreement.

The proposed arrangement is a block booking for weekend matches and training, which guarantees a fixed income over 3 years. Negotiations regarding site security, behaviours and financial remunerations have already occurred.

Concerns have been raised regarding the potential impact on Johnson House and girl boarders.

Following a detailed discussion, it was agreed (14 for, 1 abstention) that the proposal be worked up on the proviso of:

1. Agreement between RGS and Ripon AFC regarding behaviours of players, coaches and supporters.
2. The school will employ a member of staff to be present during matches (funded by Ripon AFC).
3. RGS must maintain the ability to cancel the agreements and there must be a break clause if the arrangement is not working.

4. Spectators will not be allowed to gather in the area around Johnson House next to the 3G changing rooms.
5. The school will take further measures to improve screening between the 3G pitch and Johnson House
6. A robust monitoring process will be put in place.

The financial benefit of the arrangement will be a capital investment of 25k to support extension of the staff carpark and provision of increased spectator areas; a 10,000 PA income for the rental of the pitch (Saturday and Sunday afternoons), and contributions to the 3G pitch sinking fund and the RGS development fund all totalling 107k over 3 years.

The Board agreed that the wellbeing of our boarders on the school site is our priority and confirmed that any threat to this or evidence of deterioration would be proactively monitored for and responded to effectively. This monitoring will be managed through the Estates Committee.

e. Capital Expenditure Approvals

GL presented the update on the capital programmes

- i. The replacement of the pool boiler which has been completed – funded by government grant of 55k and managed by Andy Hogg
- ii. IT enabling works – this is part of the 100k PA over 3 years upgrade – being managed by Andy Hogg and Jon Slator.
- iii. Staff/Classroom project – funded by Jepson Foundation grant will take place over the summer – to provide useable meeting and teaching facilities in previously redundant rooms.

EJ confirmed that she would be writing to all staff in the finance and premises teams to thank them for their efforts over the last 12 months.

ACTION EJ

8. Strategic Matters

a. End of year position on

i. Governor's Action Plan

EJ shared the action plan and discussed progress to date. Governors were keen to ensure that this remains relevant following the recent Ofsted and will be updated in the autumn term once the SEF has been revised.

ii. Strategic Development Plan

The SDP will be reviewed over the summer – with a view to focussing on fewer key areas – SEND, behaviour and culture, wellbeing and teaching and learning. The new SDP will be presented in the autumn term and strands allocated to appropriate committees.

iii. Estates Development Plan

The EDC presented the updated plan – all acknowledging that future projects have been clearly identified and prioritised – the limiting factors being finances at the present time. Despite the constraints the plan will be kept live, and the strategy will prioritise projects which have the highest impact on students and

staff in school. External funding sources are being sought – and may enable delivery of projects.

iv. Staff Wellbeing Strategy

The Board thanked AE for her ongoing work in this area. Whilst no strategy has yet been produced – the Head was clear that this work would be incorporated into the SDP – and described current projects in place to support wellbeing. Governors were pleased to note that staff workload is being addressed – with particular focus on enhancing resource to the pastoral team. The potential contract with Ripon AFC will also deliver a carpark improvement.

b. Future Governance Arrangements

JMW and EJ reported no developments – discussions were still ongoing between local grammar schools and will be furthered in the Autumn Term.

c. School Uniform

EJ had received an email from the school council asking for permission for students to wear shorts in the summer.

All agreed that it was appropriate to ask the SLT to undertake a review of the school uniform to ensure that the summer provision is fit for purpose.

ACTION – JMW to coordinate uniform review

9. Safeguarding

AW presented the comprehensive report that had been submitted prior to the FGB (paper 09). Particular emphasis was on the major steps regarding processed for safeguarding and the assurance provided by these in terms of identification, reporting and responses. Governors were highly complementary of the work led by HKE.

Governors were assured of the ability of the school to respond to safeguarding issues by understanding the expansion of the trained DSL team to four - including one non-teaching member of staff - meaning that there is even more flexibility to be able to respond urgently to issues.

10. To agree Governor Standing Orders

The minor changes to the Standing Orders and Code of Practice (relating to the election of chair and vice chair of the board, and management of hybrid meetings) were unanimously approved.

11. To receive nominations for Co-option to the FGB

Statements of interest were submitted by Eric Medway, Matthew Bean and Andrea Edmondson. All have served at least one term on the Board and their contributions valued. It was agreed by the Board unanimously that all should be appointed - EM and MB for a full term, AE for 1 year (at her request)

12. Election of Vice Chair of the FGB

Eric Medway was proposed by MB and seconded by EJ. There were no other nominations. Eric was thanked for his continued commitment to the work of the Board, and personally thanked by EJ for his support to her. His appointment was unanimously approved.

13. To agree meeting dates for the next year

EM was thanked for circulating this. Pending one alteration the dates were agreed and will be published in the calendar.

14. Governors' Committee Meetings

a. Admissions Committee

2 meetings have occurred since the last meeting - there had been agreement to purchase licenses for familiarisation material for Y5 in catchment students in receipt of pupil premium, in an attempt to increase the number of in catchment students taking the entrance test. The analysis of Y7 entries had demonstrated that RGS was leading the way in terms of diversity.

Detailed discussion occurred regarding the administration of the boarding offers - following instances where potential delays in boarding offers being made by NYCC had resulted in students accessing places elsewhere.

b. Boarding Committee

MB summarised the minutes – following concerns raised by the AHB last term, a following meeting between MB, EJ, JMW and CD had occurred - issues raised were discussed. MB confirmed that national minimum standards for boarding were being met and interventions to ensure reasonable workloads for staff had been delivered.

c. Curriculum Committee

The minutes were summarised in paper 14aiii. EM highlighted to the board the data review undertaken of attainment and progress across the school, with analysis of the predictions for GCSE and A levels submitted by HODs. Updates regarding teaching and learning strategies had been shared - and committee members had received detailed feedback on the outcomes of departmental reviews (RE and MFL). The committee, as part of its responsibility to safeguarding, asked the Head to take the next steps in terms of disciplinary action for the minority of staff who persistently fail to register students in their lessons.

d. Finance and Personnel Committee

It was noted that since the last meeting there have been 3 F+P meetings – which has been a response to the financial uncertainty and concern. This is a demonstration of good governance and has enabled governors to be abreast with all developments in real time. Focus has been given to producing an accurate start budget, but also prioritising money saving - with a focus on cost savings (maximum saving with minimum impacts), fundraising and accessing alternative sources of funding.

e. Pastoral Committee

In TCTs absence EM drew governors' attention to the high quality data reporting that is now fed into the pastoral committee - enabling clear monitoring of trends and patterns. Heads of Year had presented to governors - all highly complementary of the pastoral structure and support and the leadership from the Deputy Head (Pastoral). They all demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for their roles and had clear targets and ambition for further improvements. Unsurprisingly all cited time as a major constraint - but in addition the committee had agreed that support in terms of supervision for pastoral leaders was required - given the sensitive and serious issues they deal with.

15. Health and Safety

DW shared the report (paper 15) he had submitted prior to the meeting. He had met with GL and visited the school - where he had spent time reviewing the policies, risk assessments accident reporting systems and staff training. During the visits he has been assessing the culture

- and governors were pleased to hear that the culture of H&S being relevant to all is being embedded in a similar way as was done for safeguarding. Whilst the H&S committee has not met recently, GL explained that there has been a focus on day to day discussions, especially in high risk areas - with embedding of good practice. This was observed by DW and also commented in recent external visits.

16. Policy for Approval

None

17. Governors with specific areas of responsibility

a. Inclusion

HS reported her plans to meet with the inclusion manager – and prepare the SEND report for the Autumn Term.

b. CEIAG Governor

TC reported that he had met with the careers team - he was confident that the provision in house as well as that resourced externally meant a breadth of training and offerings to suit individual student needs. The work experience programmes for Y10 and Y12 had been successful with high uptake across both year groups and very positive feedbacks from employers and students

18. Complaints

None

19. Governor Training

Governors were asked to update EM on any completed training. Governors were referred to the NYCC training resources [Governor Training | CYPInfo \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/cypsinfo).

20. FGB Self Review

EM explained that he would be compiling the combined self-review forms (via MS Forms) and circulating following the meeting. Governors were asked to complete this prior to the summer break.

21. Off site visits and activities for approval

None - it was noted that 3 parties were undertaking the World Challenge Expeditions later in the summer.

22. Calendar

Governors were reminded of Speech Day (20/7/23) and the Commemoration Services (21/7/23) - as per the diary.

23. Any Other Business

Steve Chaplin was thanked for his service to the Board over the 8 years he has served.

24. Next Meeting – Monday 16th October in school starting at 7pm

The meeting closed at 2150 hours.