



# Ripon Grammar School Governors

## Full Governing Board Meeting

Monday 20<sup>TH</sup> March 2023, 1900h

### MINUTES

#### Governors present:

Vicki Barton-Brown (VBB), Matthew Bean (MB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Ian Charlton (IC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Adele Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) [Chair], Siny Jayan (SJ), Eric Medway (ERM), Robert O'Hare (ROH), Victoria Pang (VP), Helen Stiles (HS), Josh Stott (JS), Alan Watson (AW), Jonathan Webb (JMW).

**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, and in particular Victoria Pang – who is the elected staff governor to the Board. It was noted that since the last meeting the Chair 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 Steve Chaplin (SC) – who tried to attend via MSTeams but technical failures (RGS side) prevented attendance

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

None

Governors were reminded of the confidential nature of matters relating to agenda items 7 and 8.

#### 3. Minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 5 December 2022.

The minutes were approved – proposed by AE, seconded by MB.

#### 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. 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 discussion included:

##### a. Numbers on Roll and Recruitment

The numbers on roll has reduced to 917 since the last meeting. There have been 4 students leave due to relocation (the Head confirmed that destination schools had confirmed attendance) and 1 convert from day to home education.

Since the last meeting Year 9 testing has occurred with a high number of 22 students achieving the required standard. If all these apply for a place, oversubscription criteria will be applied – as our PAN for Y9 is 130 only (with 118 already on roll).

For recruitment into the sixth form, a smaller number of current Y11 students have applied than normal. This is not unexpected, with several students not likely to achieve the required grades. *Governors asked how these individuals were being supported* – they are being supported by the Y11 and careers team in post 16 options and all have plans.

A high number of offers have been made to external applicants (116). Governors noted that the ratio of boys to girls was 2/1. *Governors asked why this would be?* It is unclear at this stage but reflects patterns of applications across North Yorkshire this year.

#### **b. Estates**

Governors noted that current planned projects are on hold due to the financial situation. A proportion of the 44k allocated from the Jepson Trust has been used to make improvements to 2 rooms in Bishopton House which will be able to be used for meeting rooms for staff and students. The pool boiler project is ongoing, and the pool roof is being upgraded by NYCC.

The Head reported ongoing matters relating to low grade vandalism in school. *Governors asked how this is being addressed.* The Head reported planned assemblies, monitoring, and implementation of sanctions – and governors declared a zero-tolerance.

#### **c. Pastoral Matters**

The Head reported the focus on positive behaviour, merit awards with targeted interventions to reduce suspensions and detentions, with a re-focus on school values.

EJ has delivered 3 assemblies on vaping plus 1 to the sixth form on the dangers of ketamine. Feedback has been positive, and discussions have been able to continue within tutor time and PSHCE. In line with guidance, the sanction for possession of a vape is no longer a fixed term exclusion.

Attendance figures of 95.8% compared to national average of 90.4% were pleasing. *Governors asked how attendance now compares with that pre-covid* – and were informed that figures are still lower but improving from the trough level of 91% which occurred during the peak.

*Governors asked what steps were being taken to improve this further* – general focus on lesson lateness, follow up of adhoc absences but target interventions to support persistent absences.

#### **d. Boarding**

An audit against the National Minimum Standards for Boarding has been completed in January 2023 – with full compliance in most areas. Governors noted the concerns expressed by NYCC re fire compartmentation in School House. NYCC have completed a fire survey but no recommendations have been received yet. A risk assessment is in place. Governors were keen to be able to review the recommendations.

**ACTION – GL to chase report – for discussion with relevant committees (EDC/H&S)**

With a projected increase in boarding numbers, and a high proportion of female applicants, the Head explained the likely need for structural changes to boarding accommodation over the

summer. Whilst governors were concerned regarding the financial impact; they welcomed the news of the higher numbers of applications. *It was agreed this would be reviewed later next term when a proposal would need to be presented to the F+P committee in the first instance.*

**ACTION – proposal for boarding accommodation changes to go to F+P/EDC**

**e. Academic**

The school day remains under review – in relation to CPD, teaching and learning. AE reminded governors that this featured strongly within the staff wellbeing survey.

Governors asked for the outcomes of the formal review to be reported back. The Head was asked to ensure that all stakeholders were consulted in school via various committee meetings. It was noted that discussion within departmental meetings had not been consistent.

**ACTION – school day review to be prioritised.**

**f. Staff Wellbeing**

Following the F+P meeting the Head had reviewed staff absence data. Taking out the staff with long term absence, the data for ad hoc days is not higher than usual.

Governors asked:

*Why such a high spend on supply?* This is because of a higher-than-expected number of staff on long term sick.

*How are they being supported to return to work?* HR, occupational health is fully involved.

*Have we explored taking out insurance against staff sickness/supply cover?* We have and the costs would be prohibitive.

**7. Finances**

**a. Final Income and Expenditure Report 2022**

ROH presented the report (with supporting papers). Governors noted the month-on-month deterioration in the in-year balances, caused by a) significant cost of supply staff (60k) and b) unprecedented energy costs, despite the energy saving interventions. It was noted that energy usage has reduced compared to last year (38% less gas used compared to this time last year) and a 20% reduction in energy use over the winter period.

The F+P committee have received regular monitoring reports, and met regularly – many measures have been taken to reduce costs, discretionary spends have ceased.

Despite this the in-year balance has gone from -£50k predicted in the start budget to -£120k.

**The Board thanked the work of the entire finance and leadership teams in delivering this work.**

Governors asked:

*Have we got as much information as we can regarding energy costs* – YPO procure the energy on behalf of the school – meetings with this team and GL have provided reassurance to GL that we have as much information as possible, and the levels of accuracy for budget predictions are high.

**b. Start Budget 2023/2024**

EM presented paper 07b(i). Following discussion at the F+P meeting, governors, SLT and IT managers met to discuss the need for investment in IT infrastructure over the coming years.

Without this, the school will not be compliant with DfE technology standards, but moreover the current provision would be unfit for purpose. After detailed evaluation the group concluded that a well-researched estimate of £360k would be required over the next 3 years to upgrade the IT provision, with 100k to be included in the budget for 2023-24 for IT development.

This was AGREED by the Board

The start budget, which was been reviewed in detail by members of the F+P committee was discussed in detail. Including all the cost saving measures described, this represents a deficit budget of c£102k.

A confidential minute regarding mitigation strategy is recorded separately.

**c. To note approval of boarding fees 2023/2024**

The boarding fees for 2023/2024 were agreed prior to the meeting. The boarding fee proposal (paper 07c) had been reviewed in detail at the F+P meeting, and a recommendation made to the FGB. An urgent decision was required, prior to this meeting, as the lack of fee release had resulted in 2 application withdrawals. The recommendation was circulated to all members of the board, and following an email discussion, the proposal had been approved (14 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention) and the fees have been released to parents.

In approving the fees, governors asked for consideration to be given to the upgrade requirements of the fabric of School House.

**d. Catering Contract**

GL presented paper 07d to the board. The school has been satisfied with the contract provision by the current providers (CH&Co). Despite initial teething issues, the service provided by the company is good – with a stable staff group, a very effective head chef and a track record now of responding to feedback. The school has a good working relationship with the management team. Exercising the option of extending the contract for a further 2 years will result in a 15k investment into catering equipment in school.

*Governors asked about feedback from students* – this has been mixed but extensive. The school council and the boarder's council have met with the catering teams and discussed concerns, raised suggestions. These have been responded to, and the relationships continue. The general feedback is that the food represents good value for money.

Whilst some governors expressed concern that the food for the boarding students still required further attention, the recommendation was AGREED.

**ACTION – MB to pick up catering issues for boarders in Boarding Committee Meeting.**

**8. Strategic Matters**

**a. Feedback from Ofsted March 2023**

A draft report has been released to School – a response has been made and a final report will be published during April.

EJ thanked the staff team for their efforts and cooperation with the whole process. She acknowledged the length of the process (6 weeks since initial visit) and the impact on staff wellbeing and morale. It was agreed that once the outcome had been published that she would feedback concerns to Ofsted.

**ACTION – EJ**

**b. Future Governance Arrangements**

Confidential Minute

### **c. Staff Wellbeing**

AE presented slides summarising the outcomes of the staff wellbeing consultations. Whilst there was a high amount of very positive feedback, themes regarding workload, morale, communication, behaviours were present.

AE and EJ have fed back the detail of the analysis to the SLT and will be delivering a workshop to the whole staff team on the next training day (17<sup>th</sup> April).

Governors thanked Andrea for her huge efforts with this work.

It was agreed that Staff Wellbeing will feature on every committee agenda and will be considered in the approval of all new policies, and decisions.

## **9. Safeguarding**

The NYCC safeguarding audit, which has been reviewed in detail at the pastoral meeting was shared with governors. Mrs Helen Keelan-Edwards was thanked for the work in compiling this. The audit was approved by Governors.

The safeguarding update was presented by AW, governor for safeguarding, who was thanked for preparing paper 9d, which was available prior to the meeting for review.

Alan has spent time with the DSL in February. During this time, he was able to provide assurance on issues including site security, and provision for students with additional needs. Key updates included the utilisation of CPOMS to monitor interventions, the introductions of the late on site monitoring, training regarding safety, external visitors providing assemblies on online safety, mental health and wellbeing, stress management and vaping. Parental involvement is high, enhanced by the half termly safeguarding bulletin.

Governors were reassured that visits from the NYCC SEA and the NYCC Safeguarding Advisor had been positive and delighted that the verbal feedback from Ofsted regarding safeguarding was satisfactory. AW reported he would be spending one afternoon each half term with the DSL and continue to report back to the FGB.

## **10. Governors' Committee Meetings**

### **a. Admissions Committee**

2 meetings have occurred since the last FGB (22.2.23 and 22.3.23). Other than the updates regarding admission numbers to L6, Y9 and boarding (discussed at item 6a) there were no other questions.

### **b. Boarding Committee**

MB summarised the minutes – noting that concerns had been raised by the Assistant Head (Boarding) during the meeting around staffing, environment, and quality of accommodation. A separate meeting has been arranged between the Head, EJ, MB and the AHB to discuss this further. The outcome will be presented to the next boarding meeting.

**ACTION EJ/MB**

### **c. Curriculum Committee**

The minutes were summarised in paper 10a (iii). ERM highlighted to the board the data review undertaken, comparing the academic achievements and progress of students at RGS with 24 other schools of a similar profile. Yet again students at RGS have ranked highest for progress at GCSE (P8) and 9<sup>th</sup> for attainment (A8). Governors agreed that this was remarkable, and whilst academic progress is just one facet of the education we strive to deliver, is worthy of celebration. It was

agreed that ERM would write to the staff team to advise them of this but also thank them all for their contributions to this success.

It was also agreed that EJ would ensure that this was shared with parents.

**ACTION - EJ**

**d. Finance and Personnel Committee**

It was noted that since the last FGB meeting there have been 4 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. ROH had nil to add given the discussions referred to in paragraph 7 except to ask governors to be aware that the committee recognises that the school must operate within its financial means, and not be reliant on additional income to deliver routine daily business. All agreed.

**e. Pastoral Committee**

TCT summarised the highlights of the most recent meeting. He drew governors' attention to the high numbers of issues reported regarding health and wellbeing for both staff and students. CPOMs is being used to support the work of the safeguarding and pastoral teams and the committee to extract data to analyse month on month trends, evaluate the impact of interventions and draw out potential areas where additional resource or change in practice may be required.

**f. Estates Development Committee**

SC reported that the committee had spent time walking around the estate and reviewing the fabric. The Estate Strategy is a working document that describes need and prioritisation. Whilst resources currently limit any spends in this area, there is a clear decision management tool to enable works to be allocated when funding allows.

**11. Health and Safety**

GL and DW reported that the school Health and Safety Committee has been established and will meet termly. DW as H&S governor will be invited to this meeting.

All accidents and near misses are investigated, and learning points shared. Each of the high-risk departments in the school have undertaken H&S self-assessments with action plans. Training has been enabled, and uptake has been positive.

Governors were pleased to hear that the recent H&S audit undertaken on 23 March by the school insurers judged the school in 12 areas. All areas were deemed effective – but 2 areas were rated as demonstrating best practice. A formal report is awaited. The Board thanked GL and the premises team for their efforts in this area.

**12. Policy for Approval**

The staff pay policy was approved.

**13. Governors with specific areas of responsibility**

**a. Inclusion**

HS has meetings planned with the Inclusion manager next term. She confirmed that she would be providing support in response to Ofsted feedback, but that her visits into school earlier in the term where she had met students, observed learning and reviewed resources were very positive.

**b. CEIAG Governor**

TCT reported that despite the economies, the level of provision is still excellent. He is due to meet at the mid-point of the year.

**14. Complaints**

None

**15. Governor Training**

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

All governors are required to complete [Prevent](#) training

**ACTION – all to complete by 1/5/23 – and confirm to ERM**

**16. Off site visits and activities for approval**

None

**17. Calendar**

No additional notifications

**18. Any Other Business**

The student equality council have written to the SLT asking for permission to use pronoun badges in school. These will be specific badges, designated for school use. SLT have been supportive of this, and governors likewise.

**19. Next Meeting – Monday 10th July in school starting at 7pm**

*The meeting closed at 2145 hours.*