



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board Meeting

Monday 5th December 2022, 7:00pm

MINUTES

Governors present:

Vicki Barton-Brown (VBB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Steve Chaplin (SC), Ian Charlton (IC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Adele Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) [chair], Siny Jayan (SJ), Eric Medway (ERM), Robert O'Hare (ROH), Josh Stott (JS), Alan Watson (AW), Jonathan Webb (JMW).

In Attendance : Graham Livesey (GL).

1. Welcome and apologies for non-attendance

The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting, and in particular the new governors to the Board. It was noted that since the last meeting she had met with JMW regularly - a combination of face to face, virtual and telephone meetings, totalling 16 hours. 4 governors had attended tea with boarders prior to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Helen Stiles and Kiran Fernandes (Work Commitments).

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 10 October 2022

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

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

a. Staff governor vacancy – the chair wrote to all staff after the last meeting inviting expressions of interest. There have been none. Richard Grime has spoken to colleagues.

ACTION – JMW to pursue this with staff

b. The chair confirmed that a check had been made on the destination of pupils leaving the school to ensure that, where relevant, they were enrolled in their next school. This had been done as part of the SCR check.

5. To receive nomination for co-option to the FGB

David Winspear, former parent governor, submitted a statement to become a co-opted member of the Board. It was noted that David has particular expertise around health and safety and safeguarding. It was unanimously agreed that David would be appointed for a period of one year – with a view to extending to the full 4-year term on mutual agreement. David will be asked to be the Health and Safety Governor for the Board.

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

Governors asked about the sixth form open evening.

The Head reported that early feedback was positive. Of concern to governors is the high number of Y13 students who will leave boarding at the end of 2023 – and whether these will be replaced.

Governors asked if those who have expressed an interest in boarding at or following the opening evening will be followed up?

The Head confirmed that they are all followed up – with letters from him and then ongoing contact via the Sixth Form Team.

Governors asked for those not accepting places to be contacted to confirm reasoning.

b. Duke of Edinburgh Coordinator

Governors were delighted to learn of the appointment of Dr Smith as the new D of E Coordinator. This is a cost neutral development, with the costs to those enrolling on the courses offsetting wages.

Questions included: *Can we be assured of the numbers enrolling to ensure this is cost neutral, given that some students have already enrolled outside the school?*

We have no certainty but numbers expressing interest are high – the new incumbent has considerable expertise and experience, and we expect uptake to rise. There has been much enthusiasm from students.

c. Strategic Development Plan

As agreed at the last FGB the focus of the report was on the Strategic Development Plan. JMW led governors through the detail of the SDP – particularly discussing the improvement priorities – the intent, implementation, and progress.

Areas of discussion included:

- **Quality of Education**

Digital Literacy – JMW explained the need for likely capital investment to enable the software that is needed to advance this. Governors asked about the need for an IT strategy – planning forwards for the next 10 years to enable development of processes relating to cyber security, computer replacement plans but also training and development of staff. *ACTION – JMW to lead this.*

- **Behaviour and Attitudes**

Members of the Board were keen to understand the detail of the description of 'low level disruption – and the implications that this was cohorted behaviour moving through the school – with concerns as to how this is addressed.

The Chair reminded governors that this is discussed in detail via the pastoral meetings and would be subject to ongoing review and assurance. JMW described the nature of the behaviours – which in isolation are trivial but can be disruptive to others and impact on teaching and learning as well as the culture of the School. It is particularly attributable to Y9 and Y10.

Governors asked

'What focussed interventions are in place?'

'Is this reputation for certain years impacting on those students who are not deviating from expected standards of behaviours?'

JMW assured governors of the tailored interventions occurring via form tutor time, assemblies, group work with the pastoral teams (including the school counsellor) and individual interventions. He was very clear that this was not 'the whole year' and therefore there was much emphasis on positive reinforcement to individuals and in cohorts. JMW expressed his confidence in recording with data systems now enabling sensible tracking – so that trends can be detected and proactively managed. Interventions for poor behaviour are being reviewed – JMW and the SLT are keen that exclusion be the very last resort – with other constructive interventions being more valuable. Governors were pleased to hear this.

Governors asked, *'Do students feel comfortable reporting poor behaviour to staff?'*

JMW reported that the methods of reporting are wide. Recent pastoral discussions with students and the student survey have confirmed that they know who they can speak to. Reporting of incidents by students has increased – and there have been no incidents that have come to attention where it was felt that there had been 'a fear of reporting'. There have been no episodes reported where students have felt compromised by reporting. Governors were pleased to hear that those individuals making reports of 'serious' issues are followed up by form tutors or pastoral leaders to ensure their wellbeing.

- **Personal Development**

Governors asked about the student voice. JMW reported the recent student survey (GUNY) that had been undertaken but also the development of small group surveys focussing on particular areas, the feedback students are being asked to give as part of departmental reviews which triangulate with this, and the mentoring and 1:1 sessions in place during Form Tutor Time. Governors asked about the opportunity for parental engagement and welcomed the restoration of some face-to-face parents evenings which may enable this further.

- **Leadership and Management**

Governors asked about the development of our middle leaders, especially new HODs, and how they are supported. JMW reported on the peer mentoring that is in place with support from SLT. It was agreed this could be progressed further by ensuring specific CPD for middle leaders to enable the skills to be further developed and supported.

7. Safeguarding

A report for safeguarding was presented by the Headmaster. The DSL and team are making good progress and interacting openly and regularly with the safeguarding team and the School Local Authority Advisor.

The recent safeguarding visit has been positive.

Governors asked about current safeguarding priorities which JMW explained still relate to the site. Other queries included:

The locking of the allotment gate. This occurs shortly after the start of the school day, meaning that students have to walk down Kirby Road and around to school along the public footpath. *Governors were concerned this caused more of a safeguarding risk than it prevented.*

JMW reported that the gate does have a camera and buzzer on it which students can press. Whilst there is a principle that if students are late they should enter via the main drive, for the most part the gate is opened to allow students to come on to site (particularly those in lower school). The gate is locked during the school day to prevent public entry to the site.

Does the new gate on the school drive that is planned stop any entry to the site?

No – people can still walk up the path to Bishopton House – but this is visible from the reception and the Head's study – and is also monitored by CCTV – so there is good visibility of this.

Given all the advances – do you feel that there is a culture of safeguarding in school – and if so why?

JMW responded that the school feels different. It does not feel like a prison – but we know who is here at any one time – with well-rehearsed procedures for visitors. Staff and students are comfortable challenging (governors reported that on visits they have seen this). Reporting is now routine – and reviewing of data is part of our routine monitoring in school. Students and staff now call out poor behaviour – and it feels like students expect this.

Governors asked JMW to thank the staff team for the work and noted that AW has agreed to take on the role of safeguarding governor from now.

8. Financial Matters

a. Budget Monitoring Report

ROH presented the monitoring report for October 2022. He reported a further deterioration in the financial position relating to

1. Increase in supply teaching costs – high sickness rates
2. Increase in staff costs in boarding – due to sickness
3. Catering – higher food costs resulting in reduced overall income
4. Energy costs

A lengthy discussion followed around mitigation plans. A financial risk register has been developed and the F&P Committee members have asked to be sent the monthly monitoring reports as soon as published, with ad hoc meetings to be arranged if there are new developments. A series of cost saving options has been developed and is being discussed, the priority being to preserve the educational experience. GL and JMW are also exploring alternative income streams including charitable funds and the financial situation is being advertised to parents, with direct requests for contributions to the Development Fund.

Governors asked about the costs of running the swimming pool. GL advised governors that there is a current piece of work looking at this and how running costs could be reduced. All governors were clear that the educational provision and co-curricular offering from the pool was far-reaching and therefore would like to explore options. However, it was agreed by all that this had to be considered in the list of cost saving measures.

ACTION – the F+P committee will continue to review the situation – and review detailed options appraisals – and any decisions affecting the strategic operation of the school would be brought to the FGB for consideration and discussion and decision.

b. Boarding Fees for 2023

GL submitted a short paper immediately prior to the meeting outlining the current position. It was agreed, as per the last F&P meeting, that this would be taken through the F&P Committee for detailed review before an option is presented to the FGB for decision. It was noted that the current instability in the financial climate made early decisions virtually impossible, and so all offers to boarders will cite this year's fees with a note that the fees for next year will be confirmed.

9. Strategic Matters

a. Staff Wellbeing

AE reported the work she was leading to develop the wellbeing strategy. She has been able to meet with 27 staff in school and deliver a questionnaire specifically around wellbeing, challenges, and their ideas for improvement. She has met now with Headmaster and then with EJ and TCT.

The staff engagement has been high – overwhelming themes have been around their love of teaching and working in the school but alongside this frustrations about workload. Numerous suggestions for improvement have been made – many of which are simple.

ACTION A report will be collated by EJ and AE which will be shared.

b. Estates Strategy

The estates strategy (paper 09b) was circulated prior to the meeting – a summary presented by SC and supported by ROH. This important strategic working document provides a framework for planning, prioritisation, and decision making around estates management and development but also a operating procedure for approving capital estates projects.

EJ thanked SC, ROH and GL for their hard work on this. The document was approved.

c. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – Governance arrangements (see Confidential Minute 09c)

10. Curriculum Statement

The Curriculum Statement (paper 10) was outlined by ERM. This has been discussed in detail by the Curriculum Committee. The Board approved the statement, as recommended.

11. Governors Annual Report

EJ thanked Committee Chairs for their input into this. The report, subject to minor amendments was approved. *ACTION ERM to upload to website*

12. Membership of Governor Committees

Following discussion with individuals, and review of the skills audit, the committee membership (as per Paper 12) was approved. It was agreed that DW would be asked to take on the role of Health and Safety Governor. Alan Watson has agreed to take on Safeguarding; he has a wealth of experience to support this.

13. Governors' Committee Meetings

a. Finance and Personnel Committee (21/11/2022)

The focus of discussion had been around the uncertain but also deteriorating financial position. There had been significant discussion around staff attendance management and the high levels of sickness. Staff appointments were reviewed, and feedback on leavers exit interviews was reviewed – with all the leavers leaving to either progress their career, or for family reasons.

b. Boarding Committee (12/10/2022)

The minutes of this meeting were available to governors. MB reported that the boarding medication audit had been completed. A review of achievement and progress data had been undertaken for boarding students, comparing them to day students – their progress was at least in line with day students – given that boarders are regarded as a 'vulnerable group' this provided assurance on academic progression. The house tutor system within boarding is being reviewed by the Senior House Parents. The Boarding Strategy will be presented to governors at the next meeting of the Boarding Committee.

c. Pastoral Committee (19/10/2022)

TCT summarised the minutes (Paper 13c) The last meeting included a detailed review of the reports being generated by CPOMS. Data being produced is helpful to review trends and numbers and governors had felt that the data sets to be presented at each meeting would add a strong layer of assurance to the existing reporting structures. The new reporting systems across CPOMS and Bromcom have been refined to enable more accurate reviews of trends, meaning that the current data appears very different compared that previously reviewed. However, governors were confident that the new systems would be much improved.

Vaping was discussed at length as a cause for concern with a higher than expected prevalence across Year groups in school. Concern was expressed that students were unaware (or not appreciating) the risk.

It was agreed that targeted assemblies will be delivered to year groups by a member of the medical profession.

There had been significant discussion around the student voice. GUNY had been completed and data analysis will be completed prior to the next meeting. Y11 student focus groups are being held to gain their opinions regarding safeguarding.

Governors were pleased to hear how impressive the start had been by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) with a clear plan with progress markers.

d. Estates Development Committee (9/11/2022)

SC presented highlights of the last meeting (paper 13d) – describing the minor change in TOR for the group to enable clear oversight and management of estate project decisions. Regarding the future performance space/hall development, the committee had reviewed the Stage 2 report produced by the architects and agreed that the project should be progressed to the stage of pre-planning advice to inform any future decisions and considerations regarding the location of the project.

A review of the capital programme for 2022/23 had occurred – budgetary constraints had limited expenditure to reactive maintenance and servicing only but there have been minor investments relating to energy efficiency (pool cover) and site security (safeguarding). External funding (Jepson Trust) is being applied to for the funding of the classroom projects.

There had been discussion around the investment in the electric gate and the benefits of this – plus concerns regarding students climbing over the fences along Clotherholme Road which has been raised as a safety risk – students are being educated on this with a focus on safety.

e. Curriculum Committee (16/11/2022)

ERM had submitted a summary of the minutes (paper 13e). The meeting had discussed a number of issues but in particular support for students taking additional exams for high stake courses would be enabled, resources permitting. Public examination data was reviewed in detail – with excellent results across the board and high numbers of the highest grades in both A level and GCSE, and very good progress 8 scores for vulnerable groups compared to their peers. Areas for focus include A level history, GCSE French, and the gender gap across all subjects – which still exists – girls making particularly exceptional progress compared to the boys – who make very good progress.

Assurances around teaching and learning and evidence of quality was presented by the Assistant Head (T&L), with a refocus on meaningful CPD and the use of the appraisal system in school. The curriculum statement was examined in detail and recommended for approval by the FGB.

f. Urgent business from Committees

None

g. Health & Safety Issues

None

14. Governors with Specific Areas of Responsibility

a. Child Protection & Safeguarding

EJ reported that she had been in regular contact with the DSL. There had been no new safeguarding issues to report. The DSL is making remarkable progress with her 90-day plan.

b. CEIAG Governor

TCT had not met with the careers team since the last meeting. It was noted by the Board that Mr Walker is now leading careers in school. Governors asked about the support he was being given and were assured that the necessary expertise was being bought in as needed to bridge any gaps.

c. H&S Governor

No report was available, but GL reported that the H&S committee would be meeting later in the term, but there were no incidents to report.

d. Inclusion Governor

There was no report available.

e. Staff Welfare

Covered in 10c

15. Complaints

ERM reported that a parental complaint had been heard by a governor panel and had been resolved satisfactorily. Recommendations had been passed to the School.

16. Governor Training

A whole FGB safeguarding training evening has been arranged for Tuesday 10th January – to be delivered by the LADO.

The NYCC training courses have been circulated to governors.

17. Policies for Approval

Publication Scheme – the RGS publication scheme, mirroring the model policy from NYCC was approved.

18. Off-site visits needing approval

None

19. Calendar

Governors were reminded of the invitations to the Carol Concert (6/12/2022) in School, and the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols (13/12/2022) at Ripon Cathedral.

20. AOB

EJ thanked all for attending – and for the work of the Board over the last 12 months.

21. Next Meeting – Monday 27th March in school (with MSTeams option) starting at 7pm

The meeting closed at 2130 hours