

**Minutes of a meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School,
Penrith, held on Thursday 12th October 2017 at 6.00pm in Room E1.**

Present:

Mrs G Gravett (P)	Mr M Bauer (CoG)
Mr P Buckland (Head)	Ms S Warner (S)
Miss R McMann (Clerk)	Mr A Worth (S)
Mr R Shephard (CoG)	Dr T Castles (P) (Chair)
Dr E Mawson (Deputy Head)	Mrs T Boving-Foster (P)
Mrs J Nicol (CoG)	Ms J Mills (CoG)
Mrs K Rae (CoG)	

Visitors: none

11 Governors in attendance.

Quorum per article 114 – 8 Governors
(one half of the governors holding office rounded up to the nearest whole number)

GbS – Governor by Statute
MaG – Member appointed Governor
CoG – Co-opted Governor
S – Staff
P- Parent

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted for Mr Leveson and Mr Hansford (work commitments) and Mr Catterson (ill)

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

None

3. Any changes to the declaration of Business Interests

Miss McMann has updated the log and displayed this on the website as per legal requirements. Mr Bauer stated that he has resigned from his director position at Impact Housing.

4. Welcome and the Way Forward

Dr Castles extended welcomes to the two new Governors and they gave a brief overview of their background to the rest of the Governors. Thanks were extended to Mrs Gravett for her sterling work as Chair of Governors and Dr Castles thanked her for staying on as a Governor.

Dr Castles informed the Governors that he would like at the end of the meeting for all non-staff Governors to stay back and discuss what they are prepared to give in their roles, given that most people have incredibly busy professional lives and also how they envision the Governing Body working over the coming year. It was confirmed that the staff Governors were spoken to before the meeting and that they are happy with this arrangement.

5. Minutes of the Governors Meeting Held Thursday 29th June 2017 FG201718(1)

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes from the last meeting were a true record. They were signed by Dr Castles.

6. Matters Arising

a) Link Reports / Department Visits

Dr Castles questioned the rationale behind compiling Link Reports every five terms and if this was the right length of time? Miss McMann stated it has been this way since she has been employed by the school and it was up to the school / Governing Body to deem the appropriate length of time. Mr Buckland feels it is about maintaining a balance between showing departments the Governors are taking a keen interest versus the time required to do a good job. On balance, he felt that five terms was about right.

It was also reported that the form would be looked at and revised to make it a simplified version. Mrs Nicol volunteered to have a first look at this and bring it back to a Full Governors' meeting. **See actions.**

With regards to department visits, Dr Castles re-enforced that he is very keen for Governors to visit their assigned department when they can. He would like a positive focus to these visits but if there is an issue to go straight to Mr Buckland to resolve it.

b) NGA Membership Renewal

The Gold membership, which the school currently subscribes to, is up for renewal at a cost of £260 per year for the Gold membership. Dr Castles stated he wanted to obtain some feedback to see if it was a service worth paying for. Mrs Gravett

reported that the upgrade to Gold membership was done when times were turbulent so that support services and legal advice could be accessed via a telephone service.

Mr Buckland reported that he uses a service called, The Key, which Heads of Department have access to. As this service is already paid for and would not cost anything additional to have Governors access it, he was happy to send around log-in details. This led Mr Worth to question if the school is duplicating? Mr Buckland confirmed this is a possibility.

In light of this, it was decided that Mrs Gravett, having had the most experience with the NGA service, would look at The Key and see how much overlap there is and judge if the Governors' should renew the NGA subscription. Miss McMann will also enquire about all Governors' being able to access the NGA. **It was agreed that rather than bring this back to another meeting, the Governors were happy to accept Mrs Gravett's recommendation.**

7. Reports from Sub Committees

a) Finance and Pay Committee held 2nd October 2017 FG201718(2)

Mrs Rae presented the headlines from the meeting, including an update on the policies reviewed, the audit, an improved year-end surplus of £111,000 and that the potential financial crisis point has been moved on for another year. Mr Buckland informed the Governing Body that finances still remain very tight.

Mrs Boving-Foster questioned if the budgets include the extra form. This was confirmed to be the case. Mr Bauer asked if the committee see more detailed sheets showing the accounts and budgets. Mrs Rae confirmed this was the case and said she was happy to bring something more detailed to the Full Governing Body if other Governors would like to see them. It was decided that the trust is placed in this committee to look at the detail but if individual Governors wanted to see the sheets Miss McMann would circulate them. Mr Shephard confirmed he would like these sent.

There was a short discussion around the process in the event the school runs into a deficit. In response to Ms Mill's question about accessing support, Mrs Rae stated it was the responsibility of the school and Governing Body to set the budget and if it is known that will expend the budget, it must be flagged up. Usually, the school would be given two years to sort this out with no alternative but to really cut costs. If this was not achieved the school would be forced to merge.

Dr Mawson expressed that she felt the school needed to plan and take a very proactive approach to stop this from happening. Mrs Rae countered that she felt the school has done this over the last two to three years and part of the issue is that 85% of the school's costs are on staff. Dr Castles offered that now is the time the school should and is looking to raise revenue. Additionally he added that Mr Chappell has to show the worst case scenario but is confident that the school and Governing Body are doing the right things. Mrs Nicol felt that the Governing Body has been very proactive with this over the last three years. It was confirmed in response to Mr Bauer's question, that there is directors insurance.

b) Education and Standards Committee held 27th September 2017 FG201718(3)

In the absence of Mr Hansford, Ms Mills presented the minutes. The headlines for these minutes were that the Safeguarding Policy is to have a major overhaul in line with external changes and that the numbers entering Sixth Form this year are down slightly. It was reported that this represents a national picture.

Given the numbers of those entering the Sixth Form is down this year, the Governors had a short discussion on this topic. As per the minutes, the number of those taking apprenticeships has increased and this represents a national trend. Mr Buckland feels strongly that the school needs a state of the art facility and really sell the school's USPs. Ms Mills felt that the Sixth Form experience is also about the transition into adulthood and this needs to be emphasised in any future plans for buildings etc. Dr Castles felt that the school has to accept it is an academic selective school and look at this from the outreach work done to attract children from primary school. Mr Buckland agreed with this, adding QEGS should be the beacon for academia and in reality there just is not the money to fund anything other than this.

8. Exam Results FG201718(4)

At the request of the Education and Standards Committee, Dr Mawson provided a presentation which not only looked at the data, but also focussed on the issues and what will be done to tackle them. Dr Mawson went through the previously circulated presentation under the caveat that the data is provisional, as it was only released one day ago and does not take into account any re-marks, which there have been a large number of in the school. Particular credit was extended to the Maths department.

An additional document (Appendix 1) was circulated and this detailed the type of analysis that is continually going on in school to assist in identifying a wide range of issues and dealing with them. One of the biggest issues is managing four options, which is something

the school is keeping a close eye on and will be reviewed. It was reported that there is a strong feeling from staff that students should take three options which would mean more time to teach each subject.

With regards to A-Level results, the data is highly similar to last years' but again this is provisional at this stage. AS Levels, for the subjects that have these exams, have demonstrated that Year 12 are making excellent progress. Overall with both, KS4 and KS5 there is a gender differentiation which is something which the school is addressing.

Questions and comments, during and after the presentation were as follows:

- *Is it appropriate for the Maths department to be sharing best practices with a subject that would be taught very differently, for example, more arts based ones (TB-F)?* The sharing of knowledge is more based on strategies, early tracking of students, assessments and so on rather than the teaching of the syllabus (EM).
- *Given it does not look as if the school has done so well in terms of progress this time, how does the school stand with OFSTED (KR)?* It has been agreed that a school will not be judged on one set of results, rather they would look at the results over the last three years. This year's results are a 'blip' year (EM).
- *Given the above, does this represent a national Grammar School 'blip' year (KR)?* No it does not represent a Grammar School blip (EM). However, must be mindful that the school is still the best school in Cumbria for attainment, as it should be (PB).
- *If the mock assessments produce bad results, is there potential for an option subject to be dropped (TB-F)?* Students are looked at on an entirely individual basis and no blanket decisions would be made. Furthermore, most of the students will have gone through three-quarters of their learning in these subjects, so it would not necessarily be right to drop a subject at this stage (EM). The students are always put first before any statistics (PB).
- *The press release should still focus on attainment (AW)* It was confirmed that this was the case (PB).
- *What is the starting point for students in terms of progress when they enter the school (RS)* Students come in with a KS2 grading from primary school (EM).
- *Bearing in mind the lack of control the school has over the grading at which the children come in at, this forces a focus on teaching and learning (MB).*

Dr Castles thanked Dr Mawson for providing an informative presentation in line with his request. Mrs Gravett suggested that a letter of praise and thanks be written on behalf of the Governors to the Head of Maths. Dr Castles agreed with this and asked for any other departments to be flagged up. Dr Mawson stated that Art and German had also had excellent GCSE results and thus, should be included. **See Actions.**

9. SIP FG201718(5)

It was previously agreed that this item is a standing item on all Full Governor agendas. Mr Buckland informed the Governors that he intends to bring an update on both the two year and one year priorities to the December Full Governors' meeting. There were no questions or comments.

10. Make-up of Sub-Committees

Dr Castles stated that this would be discussed after the meeting with non-staff Governors and he had obtained consent from the staff Governors.

11. Masterplan FG201718(6)

Mr Simpson, 10 Architect, has requested that some feedback be given from Governors on the three previous circulated Masterplan options. These notes will be condensed in to a three-dimensional model proposal. The history of this was relayed by Dr Castles, for the benefit of the two new Governors.

Prior to the meeting, Dr Castles asked Mr Buckland to present to Governors the option he favoured. This is option 1, for the following reasons:

- Creates a Sixth Form which is at the heart of the school but with its own identity.
- It integrates the best with the USPs of the school
- Cuts down on energy costs
- New Astroturf pitch, which could be an additional source of income for the school.

However, Mr Buckland did state that the proposal could in fact consist of a combination of all three options. A lengthy discussion followed with the following feedback given:

- It is difficult to get head around which is the best option (TB-F)
- There is a view not to sell the Sixth Form block but instead utilise all the land the school has. The rationale for this is that the Sixth Formers enjoy being separate and can get away from the school. Additionally, having everything on the site the main school is on will make the space more crowded, which could put more stress on students (AW)
- Above point was countered, stating that most students are already at this site in any case to be taught and is it not stressful having to go back and forth between sites? Moreover, there are significant safeguarding issues with having a separate Sixth Form site and also cost implications of having to have it staffed to alleviate some of these safeguarding issues (EM & PB)

- Selling the Sixth Form would raise a lot of capital to fund a new build, which is new and more modern. The current Sixth Form block was deemed unfit for purpose in 2003 (TC)
- There is not the capital to make the current Sixth Form habitable (PB)
- Logistically, option 2 is the better – concern is the main school is tight on classroom space (AW).
- Perhaps the current Sixth Formers would not like to be on the same site and will never convince them otherwise, but they are here for a short time and it will attract new students (TB-F)
- It is important to get the vision right. Releasing the money from the sale of Sixth Form to build something bespoke is a good idea (MB).
- It was disappointing that only 6 members of staff turned up for the meeting (MB)
- Was not enough notice for the staff meeting (AW)
- Countering the above two points, by the end of the meeting all staff who attended were in agreement (PB)
- There is a much wider issue in that there is a need for a documented vision for everyone to be displayed. This does not have to be detailed (1-2 pages). Once a vision is agreed, the masterplan then becomes a necessity. (RS)
- The plans were incredibly difficult to read - there should have been a summary at the end. What is more interesting is the staff feedback as it appears that many staff are clueless. The website lacks any kind of vision / strategy – this is vital and need to get everyone’s “buy in” in the first instance (RS)
- In answer to the above, there is no money to update the website. There are a lot more staff who are in support – those in favour tend to say nothing, it is those who oppose who speak up (PB).
- Whilst the external provider has given complex drawings and plans, these would not be shared with the parents / the public (EM).
- Must feedback to Mr Simpson that these are too complicated (TC).
- Feels that cannot make a decision based on these options alone – an explanation would be necessary, particularly from Mr Simpson’s point of view (KR).
- There is no timescale for a decision to be made. However, a decision was made to involve staff in order to be open. This is the only document there is and it is unclear what vision the Governors and staff have so it is necessary to go through this process and thus, is keen it does not drag on for too lengthy a period of time (PB).
- In mind with the above feedback, would it be sensible to organise a special meeting for Governors and staff with Mr Simpson to look at these plans to see the angle from which this is coming from (GG)?
- A danger of involving the wider staff as Mr Buckland and 10 Architect could become pulled in too many different directions (MB).

- With the exception of the safeguarding element, this is an operational decision as opposed to a strategic one and thus Governors cannot make a decision on which option is best. Thus, Mr Buckland should be entrusted to present one option to the Governors and they can build upon it (KR).
- Would like an explanation of how option 1 would work on a practical level and the context of why it is the best option in Mr Buckland's view (RS)
- This becomes strategic, however, when it is funded (JN)

Drawing the discussion to a close, Dr Castles felt that the main issue is whether or not the key stakeholders want the Sixth Form moved to be part of the main school and if so, how would this be achieved? He added that he felt the detail could wait as it is clearly causing angst and thus, a step back needs to be taken. In order to end the debate and confusion over the potential sale of the Sixth Form, a vote was taken. Governors were asked if they were in favour of selling the Sixth Form block as had previously been discussed when Mr Kirkup was Head.

Votes for: 8

Votes Against: 2

Abstentions: 1

Therefore, the motion is carried.

To conclude this item, Mr Buckland will ascertain if Mr Simpson is free to attend the meeting on 7th December to provide more insight. If not, another meeting will be arranged.

12. Headteacher's Report FG201718(7)

Mr Buckland confirmed that all had read the report. Questions and comments were invited:

- *How many children sat the entrance test (TB-F)?* 233 with 6 to take it tomorrow.
- *What about children who are ill on the day of the test – are concessions made for them (AW)?* If they have a doctors' note the school is obliged to keep arranging a testing date.

13. Notices

There were no notices. Mrs Nicol gave an overview of the Governor Healthcheck that was circulated prior to the meeting. Mrs Nicol emphasised the following:

- Only 6 completed the survey out of 11 potential respondents – whilst this is over half it is still a disappointing return.
- The form itself leant towards looking for improvements.

- iii. It is not intended to criticise the Headteacher – it is the Governing Body’s collective responsibility to challenge and scrutinise.

Dr Castles added that in order to take the Governing Body forward, feedback is vitally important and urges all Governors in future to complete tasks like these.

Closing the meeting, Dr Castles expressed his thanks to Mr Buckland and Dr Mawson for bringing highly informative information to the meeting and taking the time to explain and answer questions on it.

14. To Consider Any Items to be Minuted Separately

None

15. Items to be Added to the Next Agenda

- SIP
- Link Report form if ready

16. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 7th December 2017 at 6.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Action Points:

New link report form to draft – Mrs Nicol –FG201718(AP1)

Letters of thanks to the departments who had highly commendable results – Dr Castles / Miss McMann – FG201718(AP2)