



SPRING TERM 2020

MINUTES of the meeting of the Governors of Holmer Green Senior School held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday 1 April 2020 at 18.30.

PRESENT

Miss E. Ginger (EG)	Miss J. Kirkpatrick (JK)
Mr S. Barrett (SB)	Ms F. Kiss (FK)
Mr P. Davies (PD)	Mr S. Pilgrim (SP)
Mrs T. Ellis (TE)	Mrs E. Starling (ES)
Mr A. Green (AG)(Chair)	Mr J. Leftwich (JL)
Mr E. Hillyard (EH) (Headteacher)	Mrs L. Swain (LS)
Mr A. Jones (AJ)	Mrs A. Thomas (AT)
Mrs H. Jones (HJ)	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs L. Jackson (LJ)	Director of Finance, HR and Resources
Ms A. Moorish (AM)	National Governance Association
Mr P. Tang (PT)	Deputy Headteacher
Ms E. Walker (EW)	Clerk

ABSENT:

Ms M. Selby-Boothroyd (MSB)	
Mrs A. Lee	Apologies received and accepted
Mrs S. Khan (SK)	
Mrs S. Stewart (SS)	

NB. Governors' questions are highlighted in *italics* throughout these minutes.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged that, whilst not ideal, this was the best way of holding a meeting and adhering to the Government requirement to stay at home and keep away from others due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

1

REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN

Angie Moorish was welcomed to the meeting as a follow up to the Review of Governance which had taken place in May 2019.

Angie Moorish reported that she had looked at the Governing Board's RAG-rated Action Plan as well as considering the responses from the recent Evalu8 survey. She welcomed questions from the governors.

Mr Hillyard stated that it appeared from the recent survey outcomes that the following were priority areas for the Governing

ACTION

Board to address:

- 1:1 conversations with individual governors about their contributions to the work of the Board.
- A 360 degree evaluation of the contribution of the chair.
- Improvements in the induction of governors.

Angie Moorish reported that

- there are surveys available from various providers which would enable the evaluation of contributions by individual governors and the chair to be addressed.
- there has been good progress in other areas. She noted that the Governing Board had considered, and agreed not to pursue at this moment, splitting the Members from the Trustees and not to instigate a compulsory rotation of governors in committees.
- whilst she understood a Skills Audit had been completely recently, it would be useful to undertake this exercise annually.
- there had been a slightly different combination of governors responding to the initial and more recent audits.
- In terms of local PR, it might be beneficial to continue developing links within the local community.
- It is considered to be beneficial to governors to have members of the SLT presenting to the committees and this is a practice which may be helpful to be extended.

Mr Leftwich joined the meeting at 18.40

Next Steps

Angie Moorish would write up her conclusions in a summary report and, once moderated by the NGA, she would send back to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to be more widely shared.

**AM
EH/TG**

The Chair thanked Angie Moorish for attending the meeting. She left at 18.45

2 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following item was notified as an item of Any Other Business:

- Update on the School's response to the Covid-19 virus outbreak (to be covered as part of the Headteacher's report – item 4)
- Governance decision making and contingency arrangements (item 10.1)
- Governance administration (Item 14.1)

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no other interests declared however, the following standing declarations were made:

- Mrs Starling is a governor at Highworth Combined School.
- Mr Davies and Mr Green have Local Authority affiliations.

4 REPORT OF STUDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

Governors received and noted the report from Abigail Lewis, Year 13 student. They asked that their thanks be reported back to Abigail for her thoughtful and informative report.

EH

Will we receive a report on student welfare?

Mr Hillyard stated that this would be part of his Headteacher's report (see Minute No. 5 below). It is planned to get the Year 13s together for some sort of celebration when this is possible.

A governor commented that the Sixth Form Management Team have been working extremely hard to keep an eye on the welfare of students but also to support those applying to university through UCAS, apprenticeships and with other options.

Governors thanked Mrs Golding, Miss Harrison and staff generally for their additional efforts during a very challenging time for students, staff and the wider community. Mr Hillyard agreed to relay the governors thanks to these staff.

EH

5 REPORT OF HEADTEACHER AND SEF

Governors received and noted Mr Hillyard's report, which had been written prior to the enforced school closures.

Mr Hillyard stated that there had been a very positive start to the school community's reaction over the current situation with lots of examples of people supporting one another. However, with prolonged social isolation the school was currently looking at ways to support families as they begin to feel the pressure of financial, well-being and health matters. As such, a survey will be circulated to parents and students to try to understand any of the well-being issues being felt in order for the school to respond to these needs. It is important to understand any issues that staff might also be facing as they continue to work from home with their own pressures of looking after family members.

Weekly emails are circulated to pupils and parents. Mr Hillyard apologised for the over-sight of not always copying governors into these emails but would do so in future. The school is trying

EH

hard to take an ethical stance in relation to paying staff and this extends to contracted services with whom negotiations are on-going.

In terms of learning, more work is being placed on the website. The school is moving towards streaming live lessons but this will not be rolled out until all safeguarding concerns have been addressed. Feedback from parents appears to be that shorter pre-recorded lessons would be more beneficial than worksheets.

Mr Hillyard stated that he was considering postponing the rolling out of the second trial year of the two week Autumn half-term break and additional 3 INSET days due to the amount of learning time that students are losing currently. The intention is to survey staff and parents about this in the first instance.

Can parents and staff be reassured that they will not be penalised for already having holidays booked within the previously-scheduled extended Autumn half-term holiday?

Mr Hillyard said that he was aware that there would probably be split opinion about this. Some parents may find themselves in a very difficult financial position and to ask them to manage another week with their children at home might be very difficult for them. If the half-term is limited to one week, where at all possible, staff and parents will be asked to try and reschedule holidays as it will be imperative to reclaim some of the lost academic time.

A governor thanked Mr Hilliard for the clarity and informative nature of the emails that he has been circulating on a regular basis to parents.

It has been very regrettable to learn of the first death to Covid-19 of a child of secondary school age. Has the school considered what the impact of this news might be on the students at HGSS?

Mr Hillyard explained that he has considered how the school will respond to a death within the school community and how it will support families in these circumstances. As part of the response to student welfare, the school counsellor remains employed and is continuing to support students – offering virtual counselling sessions. Some consideration is also being given to bringing back assemblies and Mr Tang is doing some work in this area to help keep the school community together.

What about staff welfare?

All staff have been informed that if they experience any difficulties then they are able to talk to him, Mrs Jackson or Ms Plascott.

How many pupils are currently in school and have you experienced any resourcing issues?

There were 10-12 pupils in on the first day and this has now decreased to 5-6 per day. The Junior School who are sharing our site have had similar numbers. There will be only 2 pupils in school over Easter. Staff are covering supervision on a rota basis and numbers in school are being kept to a minimum.

Do we have clarity about the assessment arrangements yet?

Mr Tang reported that the School is awaiting this guidance but it is inevitable that there will be an impact on staff and students.

What is the impact of the current situation on the expansion project and on the school admitting additional numbers in September 2020?

Mrs Jackson reported that the only significant cost relates to catering as the contract states that they can claim for loss of income when the school is closed. Innovate have now furloughed their staff and HGSS is in negotiation, with legal support, about the payment of loss of income. It is likely that 80% of these costs will be reclaimed from the government.

In terms of trips, there have been many cancellations but the majority have been postponed until next year. Any costs have been met by RPA insurance.

In terms of the expansion, this is carrying on as per the schedule. Site surveys will be carried out over the Easter holidays, ensuring that appropriate social distancing measures are in place. The meeting of the Planning Committee, due to be held on 23 March 20, was cancelled and the school is waiting to hear from Buckinghamshire Council (BC) about next steps. If planning is approved over the next two months then potentially the work can proceed according to the same work schedule.

Mr Green reported that the Council is unwilling to take delegated action over this matter because objections have been made. He would continue to chase.

If we are unsuccessful with the planning application, what contingency arrangements do we have in place? What will happen regarding the additional forms for September 2020?

Mr Hillyard explained that the two additional forms will still be arriving in September 2020 as the work on site last year had been to enable this to happen. However, it would not be possible to admit additional pupils going forward as the school site would not have the capacity. This will be a problem primarily for the Local Authority who need to find other spaces for these children.

Mr Davies offered support with negotiations if needed.

Mr Hillyard updated governors about other aspects of school life as follows:

MFL – this department is currently being supported by the MFL department at Sir William Borlase’s Grammar School to support pupils primarily in Yrs 9,10 and 11. One of the less experienced members of the MFL team is leaving and will be replaced by a new experienced teacher in the new school year.

Drama – a member of staff is currently supporting part-time and the new Head of Performing Arts will commence in September 2020.

Deputy Headteacher – the process of recruiting a Deputy Headteacher/ Deputy Headteachers continues.

Governors thanked Mr Hillyard for his report.

5.1 GOVERNOR DAY PLANS

Governors noted that the Governor Day planned for 24 June 2020 has been postponed.

6 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

6.1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record. They would be made available for inspection in school and signed at a later date.

6.2 MATTERS ARISING

6.2.1 HEADTEACHER’S REPORT – RIDDOR (Minute No. 3.2)

Mr Hillyard acknowledged that previously RIDDOR was not being

reported correctly. A new system is now being used, hence there has been an increase in numbers. PE and Science have forms to report accidents correctly, e.g. in after school fixtures/clubs.

LP – section 14 add in a mix of internal events to show the range on offer.

Add in gender data:

6.2.2 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT – PUPIL GENDERS (Minute No. 3.2)

Mr Hillyard provided the following information in respect of the gender of pupils per year group.

	Current						
	Year 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y10	Y 11	Y12	Y13
Number of males: females	118:93	89:63	90:83	89:66	76:68	36:31	27:33
% of males: females	56:44	59:41	52:48	57:43	53:47	54:46	45:55

	Previous		
	Y11 2018/19	Y11 2017/18	Y11 2016/17
Number of males: females	80:70	69:77	73:61
% of males: females	53:47	47:53	54:46

6.2.3 REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN (Minute No. 3.4)

Governor report – this was emailed out to parents following the last FGB meeting.

Newsletter - a governor had yet to volunteer to write a paragraph summarising governor activity for the newsletter.

All governors

6.2.4 EQUALITIES AND COHESION POLICY (Minute No. 8.2)

Mr Hillyard confirmed that the requested change had been made and this policy had been uploaded to the website. The Trip Form had also been amended to reflect equalities.

7

GOVERNOR MEMBERSHIP

ACTION

Governors noted

- the appointment of Mrs Anna Lee (Staff Governor);
- that the term of office of Mr David Greenwood (Community Governor) had ended on 22 March 20;
- that the term of office of Miss Jacqui Kirkpatrick (Staff Governor) was due to end on 24 May 20.
- that the term of office of Mr Alan Jones (Community Governor) was due to end on 12 July 20.
- the application to become a community governor from Mr Gareth Davies.

Community Governor

The Chair reported that he and Mr Hillyard had held a remote meeting with Mr Davies and they felt that his experience in the private education sector and knowledge with HR matters would make him an asset to the Governing Board. He was local too and had two children at HGSS.

It was agreed

- to appoint Mr Gareth Davies as a Community Governor with immediate effect;
- to consider the reappointment of Mr Alan Jones at the next FGB meeting;
- that Mrs Jackson would instigate a Staff Governor election process via electronic means.

LJ/LS

Next agenda

LJ

8

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr Hillyard requested volunteers to review the SDP a year on to see if they felt it was still fit for purpose to keep the school on track. Any governor interested was asked to notify him via email. He would then arrange 1 or 2 meetings (maximum duration of 1 hour each) to discuss.

All governors

EH

9

COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1

FINANCE, PREMISES, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2020 were noted. Mr Jones, Chair, highlighted the following matters which had been discussed by the committee:

- the full impact of COVID-19 is too early to assess fully but reassuring that reserves are good.
- the current year forecast – noting that the school is anticipating an end of year surplus.

ACTION

- the potential impact of COVID-19 on expansion plans.
- the merits of separating out audit functions from this committee.
- Software migration over to SAGE is on track.

Mrs Jackson reported that the transfer to SAGE had gone smoothly despite the unusual circumstances. The first payment run will be on Friday 3 April 20.

Mr Jones reported that he had been in dialogue with Mrs Jackson about a number of matters.

Are you planning to circulate this dialog to the rest of the committee?

Mr Jones agreed to do so.

AJ

9.2 PEOPLE AND PERSONNEL

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were noted. Mrs Swain, Chair, highlighted the following matters which had been discussed by the committee:

Careers

The Committee had discussed whether to devote a link governor role to monitoring careers provision at school or whether to have careers as a focus at a future Governor Day.

It was agreed that careers provision should be the focus of a future Governors' Day possibly in September/October 2020.

EH

Complaints Policy

The Committee had agreed a revised version of this policy. Mr Hillyard explained that the policy now included a stage in which he, and the Chair of Governors, would meet with complainants. This had been very successful and had enabled complaints to be resolved earlier than would previously have been the case. He reassured governors that complainants would still be able to escalate their complaint for consideration by a Complaints Panel of governors if they were unhappy with the outcome of the previous stage. If they remained dissatisfied, the final stage of the process would be for the complainant to contact the Education Funding Agency (EFA) which would consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State.

It was agreed to approve the Complaints Policy.

9.3 LEARNING AND CURRICULUM

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 were noted.

9.4 HR RELATED PANELS, COMPLAINTS PANEL AND DISCIPLINE COMMITTEES

These Committees had not needed to meet.

9.5 MAT WORKING PARTY

This Working Party had not met.

10 GOVERNOR REPORTS**10.1 CHAIR**

The Chair reported that he had not taken any delegated action.

**Governance Decision-Making and Contingency Arrangements
(Any Other Business)**

The Clerk advised the Governing Board to consider adopting alternative means of decision-making in exceptional circumstances, including the current situation when Government Guidance is in place regarding staying at home and social distancing.

It was noted that

- the chair's current delegated powers (as prescribed in the Scheme of Delegation) are fairly limited and it would be beneficial to broaden these.
- wider decision-making measures including via electronic means (email and video conferencing) would be very beneficial.
- governors have delegated powers and functions to the Headteacher for the internal organisation, management and control of the Academy (including the implementation of all policies approved by the Governors and for the direction of the teaching and curriculum at the Academy).

A governor stated that it is important, in exceptional circumstances like these, for the Governing Body to discuss and agree delegated decision making and contingency arrangements should they be necessary. This is important to ensure that individuals making decisions are protected, that all governors are kept informed appropriately and that decision making is representative.

ACTION

The Chair reported that he had yet to take any decisions on behalf of the Governing Body but were he to do so, where a meeting is not possible because of the urgency of the matter, then he would ensure that this is reported back at the next meeting.

Governors discussed whether, in the circumstances, the Chair ought to report back to the governing body sooner than this because of the infrequency of meetings.

Following a discussion, the following was agreed:

- Decisions of the Governing Body would be permitted through the use of video conferencing, email and other electronic means. The Standing Orders would be amended to reflect this.
- Any urgent decisions, where a meeting of the full governing body is not possible, would be made by the Chair of Governors having consulted with a representative group of governors to comprise – the Headteacher, Vice-Chair and Chairs of Committees. No quorum would be required for these decisions, but consultation would be required with a minimum of one committee chair and the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher if he were unavailable).
- Any decisions taken under delegated powers would be reported back to the full governing body as a matter of urgency.

Clerk

TG

TG

10.2 DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Swain, Development Governor, reported that the Safeguarding training for governors has been rescheduled to take place on 1 July 2020, prior to the FGB meeting.

All governors to note

Mr Hillyard reported that this training would still be able to proceed virtually if face to face meetings were not possible.

10.3 SAFEGUARDING

Mr Pilgrim reported that he had met with Mrs Hawkins, Designated Safeguarding Lead. He had been reassured that appropriate procedures were in place. He would circulate his visit report to the governing body.

SP

<p>Mr Hillyard reported that the Government had issued guidance for schools to amend their safeguarding policies, with the addition of an addendum, to cover them in the current situation when children were not in school.</p> <p>Governors approved the Addendum to the Safeguarding Policy.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>10.4 SEND</p> <p>It was agreed to defer this item in the absence of Ms Selby-Boothroyd, SEND Governor.</p> <p>Mr Hillyard reported that an action plan had been developed based on the outcomes of the recent SEND Review. SEND will be a focus for the next meeting of the Learning and Curriculum Committee.</p>	<p>MS-B</p>
<p>10.5 DISADVANTAGE</p> <p>It was agreed to defer this item in the absence of Ms Selby-Boothroyd, Governor for Disadvantaged students.</p>	<p>MS-B</p>
<p>11 OTHER MATTERS</p>	
<p>12 POLICY REVIEWS AND APPROVALS</p>	
<p>12.1 POLICIES FOR ACCEPTABLE USE AND REMOTE WORKING</p> <p>Mrs Jackson reported that it had been necessary to adapt the Acceptable Use Policy and create a Remote Working Policy with guidelines for students and teachers. It had only been possible to finalise these policies earlier today and they had yet to be circulated to governors. She reported that the policies are not contentious but will ensure that everything is covered by the change in arrangements for student learning as necessitated by the current situation. She asked that the policies be circulated to governors and for governors to indicate by email, by the end of the week, if they were happy for them to be adopted.</p>	
<p>It was felt that it was important for such policies to be considered by all governors. Following consideration of a workable procedure, it was agreed that the policies would be circulated as a matter of urgency and that each governor would consider them and feedback their approval, or otherwise, via the email thread by the end of the week. Any governor needing more time to consider the policies was asked to let Mrs Jackson know.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>All governors</p>

13 DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

Governors noted that the next meeting would take place on 1 July 2020 as per the agreed schedule of meetings. The way the meeting would be conducted would be relayed closer to the date of the meeting.

TG/ Clerk

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 GOVERNANCE ADMINISTRATION

A governor expressed concern at the piecemeal manner in which papers for this meeting had been circulated. He asked that in future all papers be circulated at least 7 days in advance of the meeting and that anything else, which is not genuinely urgent, is deferred.

Mr Hillyard apologised that it had not been possible, under the current circumstances, to ensure that all paperwork had been circulated within this timeframe. He endeavours to have papers circulated two weeks ahead of the meeting date but this had been difficult for this meeting with so many other pressures on staff time at the moment.

It was agreed that

- in future all papers for meetings would be circulated in one batch at least 7 days in advance of the meeting date, unless an urgent matter needed to be brought to the governors’ attention.
- The calendar of governing body meetings would be reviewed next year to ensure that there is sufficient time to enable committee minutes to be produced and circulated to all governors with the FGB meeting pack.

EH/TG/Clerk

LJ/Clerk

15 EVALUATION OF MEETING

Governors reflected and agreed that the meeting had:

- focused on urgent matters and ensuring that the school community, including vulnerable groups of children, are safe and that the school has the resources to enable learning to continue in some form.
- allowed participation by all governors virtually.

The meeting concluded at 20.00

Signed Date

CHAIRMAN