



AUTUMN TERM (2) 2024 MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

MINUTES

Date Wednesday 11th December 2024
 Time 18.30
 Place Holmer Green Senior School

PRESENT:

Tony Green (TG) – Chair	Roy Kamp (RK)
Ed Hillyard (EH) – Headteacher	Sue Latham-Lewis (SLL)
Claire Asare-Archer (CAA)	Paula Myburgh (PM)
Paul Davies (PD)	Steve Pilgrim (SP)
Kirsty de Groot (KDG)	Beccy Roberts (BR) – to 8pm
Michelle Edwards (ME)	Victoria Strutt (VS)
Jeremy Hunt (JH)	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lynda Jackson (LJ)	Director of Finance, HR and Resources
Jenny Knight (JK)	Governance Professional
Sarah Lary (SL)	Deputy Headteacher
Jim Leftwich	Member
Mike Salem	Member
Sarah Towers (ST)	Assistant Headteacher
Alan Wooller	Assistant Headteacher

APOLOGIES Melissa Miller (MM)

NOT PRESENT:

Action Support Challenge

Governors’ questions are highlighted in *italics* throughout these minutes.

Item	Discussions and Decisions Made	Actions
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting started at 18.53. TG welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the late start, due to the AGM over-running. Apologies were accepted from Melissa Miller. 	
2	<p>Notification of Any Other Business</p> <p>EH – Incident at School</p>	

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3	<p>Declarations of Interest against this agenda</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest, either new or against items on this agenda.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of the FGB Meeting held 9th October 2024 and Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governors approved the Minutes as an accurate record. <p>Actions and Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JK to look into NSPCC Managing Allegations training. EH confirmed the number in the ARP from Year 7 is 1. Other actions complete. 	JK
5	<p>Governor Membership</p> <p>JK confirmed that the following Governors have been re-appointed by Members on a new four-year term (11/12/24 – 10/12/28):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria Strutt Sue Latham-Lewis <p>Liliana Minton has resigned as Governor but offered to stand as a Member, for which she was appointed in the AGM.</p> <p>LJ to update these details with Companies House and GIAS.</p>	LJ
6	STRATEGIC PLANNING	
6.1	<p>Report of Student Management Team</p> <p>The report had been circulated. Students were not present at the meeting. TG thanked the students for their report. There were no questions.</p>	
6.2	<p>School Improvement Partner Presentation</p> <p>SL presented on screen, highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Improvement Partner visit Sept/early Oct to give fresh eyes on the quality of education at the school. The partner (who is also an Ofsted inspector) visited 40 lessons, spoke to students for their opinions and undertook corridor walks. The aim was to check for consistency of T&L across school. He also worked with HoDs on their curriculum, to see if they could talk with passion and integrity about it. The partner was tasked to give a high level of challenge, to help move the school forward. There was lots of positive feedback, including T&L non-negotiables (entry & exit, starting work, active participation) and higher level of challenge for coasting students. He saw that progress had been made on what students knew and what they remembered, using techniques such as quizzes and mini whiteboards. He saw lots of good teaching, adaptive teaching and commented on skillful staff, well-paced lessons, positivity and good relationships with students. He felt HoDs were inspiring and students knew how lessons should 	

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	<p>be structured and how greater consistency was the aim across the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongest areas were English, RS and PE, with the biggest improvement in Science. • Areas for development were Maths (teaching, not outcomes) and MFL, where greater consistency is required eg in the use of mini whiteboards. This comes down to quality of teachers' questions (meaningful and challenging) and better quality modelling and scaffolding for the diverse school population. He also wanted to see these departments open up to greater risk and engagement from students. • Maths specifically needs to improve on checking for understanding and MFL on the use of target language. • The partner looked at training plans and is working with Maths and MFL HoDs. • There is a robust schedule of learning walks and coaching in place. 113 learning walks have taken place so far this term, all of which are recorded so data can be analysed. VEO software is used to video positive examples and share with colleagues. <p>Q – You mention use of whiteboards, but what about laptops? A – There is a blended approach. Both are used as we don't want to lose traditional methods. MFL was using laptops a bit too much.</p> <p>Q – Do teachers know the learning walks are happening? A – No. We don't want show lessons. We go into the lesson for about 20 minutes and then feedback afterwards.</p> <p>Q – Was Business Studies also looked at by the SIP? A – No, but they are coming back in April and it will be included then.</p> <p>Q – How will you increase student involvement in class? A – Teachers will use random selection instead of 'hands up'. Every student has to be ready to answer a question if asked. A mark for engagement in learning (scale of 1-4) is given to each student.</p>	
6.3	<p>Disadvantaged Report 2023-24</p> <p>The report had been circulated. AW highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been a very successful year for Disadvantaged students (19 in this group) in terms of outcomes. • P8 was +0.39 (cf +0.40 for all students) with an A8 score of 40.6 (cf 49.6 for all students). • Disadvantaged students significantly outperformed LA non-PP students, national PP students (-0.57 P8) and national non-PP students. This was a massive success. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous year was a very different picture and this coming year is different again, because it is about individual challenges. However, School is trying to replicate what was done this year as it clearly reaped rewards, while still being aware of individuality. • Staff really know their Disadvantaged students. • Student Voice is used to understand barriers to learning. • Resources are always accepted, to try to ensure equity – whether this is for uniforms, funding for trips, transport etc). • There has been a 111% increase in Disadvantaged students going on trips and 15% of all places on trips are reserved for them. • The T&L non-negotiables in lessons (eg effective lesson starts, challenge & support) have been really effective for Disadvantaged students. • There were no exam deferrals this year: every child sat every exam, sometimes having been picked up from home by staff. • Pastoral support for this group is key, making sure that they have every support they need. • Easter school was run with a focus on Disadvantaged and High Prior Attaining children. • Revision evenings were run for Disadvantaged children and their parents, giving effective strategies to use at home. • SLT mentoring also took place. • Last year attendance for Disadvantaged students was 82.5% but so far this year it is 90%. • Priorities for this year: to close the attainment gap; to maintain the P8 gap; to make co-curricular opportunities statutory for Disadvantaged students. <p style="background-color: #00FF00; padding: 2px;">Governors congratulated AW and his team for the massive achievement and thanked him for his passion and commitment.</p>	
6.4	<p>Disadvantaged Strategy Plan 2024-27 The plan had been circulated and was approved.</p>	
6.5	<p>Report of Headteacher and SEF The report had been circulated. EH highlighted:</p> <p>Leadership Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment process complete, with two DHTs in place from January (ST and AW) and one external appointment joining in April (Pastoral DHT). One AHT will be in place from January (Miss Golding) and one external appointment joining in April. SL become Senior DHT. • House system to be implemented when the new Pastoral DHT is in place. 	

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	<p>Mobile Phone Policy A further change is needed. Currently gate-to-gate (phones off and in bags). However, students are still tempted to use them and this is affecting attention, behaviour and performance. A pouch system is proposed (magnetic pouch so phones cannot be accessed during the day, unlockable at a docking station when leaving the site). Parents will be asked for a contribution to the cost.</p> <p>Exceptional Performance Policy A new policy is proposed for those who contribute significantly to communities outside school, e.g. England Hockey.</p> <p>Behaviour Ladder It is proposed to implement this for a clearer system of rewards and sanctions. Examples will be given at the next FGB meeting.</p> <p>ATL Scores Attitude to Learning scores have been brought in to show progress particularly in the younger years. It is hoped that the numbers will reduce (1 is perfect) over the year as students understand expectations and engage better in class.</p> <p>Staff Survey There was a small increase in the response rate this time and some positive improvements were demonstrated in staff wellbeing.</p> <p>Rank Order This will be used for the first time at the end of this term for Year 11 and at February half term for Years 7-10. The list will not be published; parents and students will only find out their own position.</p> <p>Oxbridge Applications There have been 4 applications to Oxford, of which 3 have progressed through to final interviews. This shows real aspiration. The Brilliant Club is being run for Disadvantaged students to get them aspiring to the possibilities.</p> <p>Q – There is no figure for suspensions in Autumn 2. Is it higher or lower than previously? A – The final number will be added at the end of term. After the incident yesterday the number will have increased above the previous figure.</p> <p>Q – There has been a behaviour focus this year, so some increase in numbers is to be expected, but what is behind the bullying figure which is already at 60% of last year’s total year figure?</p>	

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	<p>A – This is an increase, but it is complicated by the fact that we report both substantiated and unsubstantiated figures. The former is a lot lower as the definition of bullying is not always understood and proving it is sometimes a challenge, so both are reported now. The new DHT Pastoral will be tasked with finding a better way of reporting bullying. Where bullying is proven, we act on it.</p> <p>Q – Are the changes in teacher:pupil ratios significant (page 16)? A – No, they are only minor. School is pretty consistent here.</p> <p>Q – How often does the website get checked to ensure it meets DfE guidance? A – Annually</p> <p>Q – Regarding the change to the mobile policy, why is this only for Years 7-10 and why does it need to wait until June? A – Capacity is needed to bring in this system and police it. It will be Years 7-11 from September but it was felt that there is no point doing it for Year 11 for their last six weeks. There is a survey coming out to parents regarding mental health and social media use. We are also looking at Sixth Form, with a recommendation that they may not use phones during lesson periods (even if free periods) – only at lunch break and after school. Pouches will not be provided for Sixth Form as this stage is about learning to manage phone use and have some freedoms that weren't available previously.</p> <p>Q – What is the cost of the pouches? A – There are different ways of doing it. They could be rented at £6 annually or bought at £22 for the rest of the time at school. TBC which system will be used.</p> <p>Q – Is the smartphone ban 'using a sledgehammer to crack a nut'? For example, when there is an incident at school that is filmed on phones, could they be useful in providing evidence? A – No. Smartphones have generally caused far more problems than they have helped. By making them inaccessible, schools who have used this system report an improvement in progress as students are less distracted. Chiltern Area Partnership of schools is surveying young people and parents at the primary schools about mobile phone use too.</p> <p>Q – Smartphones are a national crisis but hearing the message from parents often falls on deaf ears. How often do you talk to the students about this? A – Probably not enough and we will do more. It does need to come from parents too (not just schools' responsibility). We need to take hearts and minds with us on this journey so that students understand why we are doing it and the impact it has on learning. This is why it will take until June to implement. The staff impact will also be interesting.</p>	

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	<p>Governors were supportive of the move to using phone pouches and approved the new mobile phone policy.</p> <p>Q – Is the 99% attendance rate realistic for the exceptional performance policy?</p> <p>A – This is to make sure grades don't slide. The attendance figure does not include the time they are away doing their high performance programme.</p> <p>Governors approved the introduction of the exceptional performance policy.</p>	
6.6	<p>Staffing Appraisal</p> <p>The report had been circulated. EH highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 new staff are currently on probation but will fit into the other pay groups once they complete their probation period. <p>Governors approved the staff appraisal.</p>	
6.7	<p>Site Update</p> <p>LJ had circulated a report and also tabled a CIF contributions paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid 1 is for Boilers in the Technology Department and the pipework and radiators throughout the Tower Block and the Main Block, all of which are no longer fit for purpose (£910k project). • Bid 2 is for roofing works to DT and Humanities (£410k project). • It is not known whether additional school contribution will make the success of the bid more likely but there is a points system for % contribution. • School is recommending a 5% contribution which would amount to £55k from the school development fund for both projects. <p>Q – Do the rooves to be replaced have solar panels on them? Could they, in the future?</p> <p>A – No. The solar project starts in January and doesn't include these rooves, but solar panels could be put on the new rooves at a later date.</p> <p>Q – Can we spend more than is available in the development fund, e.g. from reserves?</p> <p>A – Yes, but there are other potential demands on that money such as work to the library or a 3G pitch.</p> <p>Q – Has this gone through FPH&S?</p> <p>A – The proposed projects went through FPH&S but the figures and proposed contributions have only just been received so they are being brought to FGB for approval as the deadline for CIF bid submissions is tight.</p>	

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	<p>Q – If the bid is unsuccessful, what happens? A – School can appeal and this has been successful before. Alternatively, it can be resubmitted the following year. School feels uncomfortable recommending a contribution of more than 5% given the other demands on finances.</p> <p>Q – Will there be an efficiency factor from the heating/pipework? Could the resulting energy saving cover the contribution to the project? A – Potentially. If the bid is successful, a full design will be completed and the extent of cost savings will be understood.</p> <p>Q – Why are the figures coming so late in the day without time for consideration? A – The criteria for the CIF bids is only released at half term. We have done well to get three full tenders completed since then and the figures have only just been received.</p> <p>Q – Can other projects such as the library be funded through the school development fund? A – No, these would have to be funded from reserves as costs are too high. We have to bear in mind forthcoming demands on finances such as the lagged NI funding and next year’s staff pay review which it is suggested may not be funded.</p> <p>The Chair of FPH&S recommended 5% as a reasonable contribution. Scoring can be reviewed at Easter once results are known. Governors approved a CIF bid contribution of 5%.</p>	
6.8	<p>Management Accounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monthly reports had been circulated. There were no questions. <p>Management letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit findings had also been circulated, having gone through FPH&S. All items (which were low risk) had been dealt with including 2 Trustees who were not listed on GIAS. <p>Internal Scrutiny Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The document had been circulated, having gone through FPH&S. This will be submitted with the accounts next week. There were no questions. 	
6.9	<p>Risk Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The document had been circulated, having been through FPH&S. There was one change, adding external forces (weather) as a risk. Governors approved the risk register. 	

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7	COMMITTEE REPORTS	
7.1	<p>HR Panels, Complaints Panels, Student Discipline Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Governor Warning Panels had been held and relevant Governors were thanked for their time working on these. • One PEX had been issued but then rescinded so a panel was not necessary. • Due to an incident at school yesterday, a further PEX has been issued along with three further GWPs. There is also a 15+ day suspension review and a parental complaint panel in the new year. • Governors were encouraged to get involved in these to spread workload. An email will be coming out asking for governors to support these. Training will also be provided where necessary. 	
7.2	<p>FPH&S Committee</p> <p>SP reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finances covered in Auditors report to Members and papers circulated to both Members and FGB. • This year's finances have been very positive and the school is left in a healthy financial position. • Leadership structure changes were agreed and have been actioned, as outlined in the Headteacher's Report above. <p>Q – Did the Auditors comment on the level of Reserves being too high?</p> <p>A – No. In fact they are at a better level (15%) than last year (19%) and with plans for spending some of them.</p>	
8	GOVERNOR REPORTS	
8.1	<p>Chair</p> <p>TG reported that a H&S check had been conducted and the report went to the FPH&S Committee.</p>	
8.2	<p>Development</p> <p>Nothing to report.</p>	
8.3	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>MM was not present but has been into School for a safeguarding visit and will report back at the next meeting.</p>	
8.4	<p>SEND</p> <p>PD had circulated his SEND report and highlighted the particular challenge that growing parental demands and expectations are an increasing workload for the SEND team.</p> <p>Q – Are the SEND network dates listed for 2025? Could the day and time be varied to allow all SEND parents the opportunity to attend?</p>	

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	A – Dates are all for 2025. PD to update the document to clarify this. The network meetings are usually on the same day and time to fit in with the hours of a part time team member and to avoid taking the SENCO out of class. They are always oversubscribed so an additional meeting at another time may be organised in future.	PD
8.5	Disadvantage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BR had circulated her report but had left the meeting at 8pm. • There were no questions. 	
8.6	Careers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BR had circulated her report but had left the meeting at 8pm. • There were no questions. • PD thanked BR for two excellent reports. 	
9	POLICY REVIEWS AND APPROVALS	
9.1	Equalities and Cohesion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy had been circulated. • There were no comments and the policy was approved. 	
9.2	Sex & Personal Relationships Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy had been circulated. • There were no comments and the policy was approved. 	
9.3	Attendance Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy had been circulated. • Page 5: First paragraph regarding exceptional circumstances needs a reference to the regulations. LJ to amend this. • The policy was approved subject to this change. 	LJ
9.4	Staff Code of Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document had been circulated for information. • Adjustments had been made to cover the new requirements for school to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. • There were no comments. 	
9.5	Conflict of Interest (Exams) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document had been circulated for information. • There were no comments. 	
9.6	Equalities Policy (Exams) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document had been circulated for information. • There were no comments. 	

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	OTHER MATTERS	
10	Headteacher's Performance Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HT PM Panel met. The next meeting will be held on 8th January 2025. 	
11	Open Evening Parent Survey & Action Plan The results of the parent survey about the open evening had been circulated with an action plan. This was the first physical open evening for five years. It was a success and well received. Numbers were well managed. Q – Is one open evening enough for the demand? A – There isn't capacity to run another one. There was space for 210 attendees, though some Y5s come as well as Y6. Year 5 SEND students need to make earlier decisions. Q – Could more students be used to give tours and provide directions as the site can be complicated to navigate? A – Yes, although student safeguarding needs to be factored in too. Governors suggested they could help at the next open evening.	
12	Dates and Times of Meetings Next meeting: Weds 5 th February 2025, 6.30pm (6pm informal catchup to be agreed)	
13	Any Other Business Incident at School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EH updated Governors on a serious incident that happened on site yesterday, involving a fight which may have started on social media outside school. All students involved are physically fine. SLT worked on the incident until late last night, commencing the investigation. The main participants were not on site today. There is no definitive answer about the correct sanctions for those involved. Due process must be followed and evidence collected, mitigating circumstances considered etc, striking the right balance between acting quickly and taking time to understand the full picture. However, it is clear that a number of Governor panels will be required and Governor time would be greatly appreciated in January to resolve these matters. One person recorded and shared footage of the incident and this was widely shared around the school community. A note was sent to all parents as incorrect rumours were spread. No weapon was involved in the incident. 	

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	<p>Q – If a younger student feels vulnerable after an incident like this, what does School do to support?</p> <p>A – There are legalities that must be considered, for example those involved cannot be sent home without a sanction and an investigation is required in order to issue the right sanction. Instead they must be isolated within school. Medical aspects are dealt with first. For anyone feeling vulnerable, school counsellors are available. The issue was covered in scheduled assemblies this morning, flagging support and expectations. This also went to the tutor teams. Pastoral staff are also on hand to help. Most of the 1300 students were not there when the incident happened, so it has only been ‘seen’ via social media. There is also an aftermath for staff, some of whom had to use restraint techniques which are not enjoyable. There will be a consideration from this about whether more staff should be restraint trained. Other avenues of support are also considered in these situations, such as the PEAR network/SUSU (Stand Up Speak Up).</p> <p>Q – Are students involved who are in the same class moved?</p> <p>A – It depends, on a case by case basis. Reintegration meetings after suspensions will look at timetabling and possibly also restrictions on where students can circulate at break/lunchtimes. Investigations are still ongoing and details can’t be discussed. Governors involved in panels must have no prior knowledge of the case.</p> <p>EH affirmed that these sorts of incidents are not usual at HGSS. The most important thing is that the behaviour must change and a firm line therefore needs to be taken, or the wrong message is sent out to others.</p> <p>Thanks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EH thanked all those Governors who have attended School for visits and written reports – for their time and support. • EH also thanked LJ for an excellent audit, with very few recommendations made, indicating strong financial health and procedures. • TG wished everyone a very happy Christmas and passed on Governors’ thanks and wishes to all the staff. 	
14	<p>Evaluation of Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors agreed that the meeting had been conducted appropriately and effectively in terms of SIP priorities and student outcomes. 	

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Minutes approved by the Governing Board:

Signed
Mr T Green – Chairman of the Board

Date