



Minutes
Surrey and Sussex (SAS) Hub LGB Meeting
12 December 2019 at 4 pm
Brantridge School

Present: Ken Cowdery, Chair (KC)
Philip Knights, Deputy Chair (PK)
Alison Livesley, Assistant Chair (AL)
Andrew Falk, Governor (AF)
Diana Puica, Staff Governor (DP)
Sherie Harris, Staff Governor (SH)
Amme Hayter, Staff Governor (AH)
Julian Short, Governor (JS)
Angela Drayton, Principal, St Dominic's School (AD)
Dafydd Roberts, Principal, Brantridge School (DR)
Janet Tremble, Principal, Grafham Grange School (JT)

In attendance: Diane Brazier, School Business Manager (DB)
Vicky Perry, Deputy Headteacher, St Dominic's School (VP)
Emmet Murphy, Deputy Headteacher, St Dominic's School (EM)
Karma Hardin, Management Accountant (KH)
Susanne Wicks, Clerk (SW)

Prior to the start of the meeting, governors received a presentation from Danielle Harry (Assistant Head of Education, Brantridge School) on the curriculum at Brantridge School and the changes that have been made to ensure it meets the expectations within the new Ofsted Framework. Governors also received a presentation from Rob Chowns (DSL, Brantridge School) on contextual safeguarding in SEN settings. The presentations have been uploaded to GovernorHub.

1.	Opening	
1.1	Attendees and apologies for absence Apologies were received from Catherine Drummond, Martin Lowthian, Liz Simmons and Joanne Yarlett.	
1.2	Chair's Remarks The Chair welcomed EM who will be on a full-time secondment as Vice-Principal at St Dominic's School whilst VP is on maternity leave.	
1.3	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations made.	

1.4	Minutes of the Previous Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.	
1.5	Matters Arising There were no matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.	
2.	Governance	
2.1	Chair's report KC welcomed comments and questions on his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. At the request of PK, KC updated governors on efforts to fill the two vacancies on the LGB; although there had been some interest, neither candidate had progressed their application. SW described the attempts made to find candidates through a variety of routes but noted the geographical spread of the three schools presents a challenge. KC encouraged all governors to think about any potential candidates they may know in their network and suggested that there may be possible volunteers within the OHC&AT family.	
2.2	New Portfolio Guidance arrangements and Business Cycle Received and acknowledged.	
2.3	Governor Declarations of Interest SW undertook to contact those governors still to complete a declaration of interest and skills audit form.	SW
2.4	Skills Audit Analysis The Chair advised that the collation of the returns had highlighted a couple of gaps to be addressed either by the LGB as a whole or by individual governors. However this year's focus will be on curriculum and contextual safeguarding so developing skills in those two areas will be a priority.	
2.5	Keeping Children Safe in Education Governors confirmed they had read the guidance published in September 2019.	
2.6	New Ofsted Inspection Framework Noted.	
2.7	Appointment of Chair, Deputy Chair and Assistant Chair The LGB agreed to recommend that the Board of Trustees appoint KC, PK and AL as Chair, Deputy Chair and Assistant Chair respectively for this academic year.	
3	Governors' Reports / Observations	
3.1	Review of Portfolio Governor Reports	
a.	<u>PF1 Ethos, Vision and Strategy</u> KC referred to his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and highlighted the following items:	

	<p>The renewed and continued focus on the curriculum;</p> <p>The need for governors to be seen as leaders;</p> <p>The Chair of the OHCAT Board, Jay Mercer had visited St Dominic's School and had seen the portacabins and understood the concern felt by everyone about their continued use.</p>	
b.	<p><u>PF2 Teaching and Learning</u></p> <p>KC advised that Cath Drummond had adopted this portfolio but could not attend this meeting. He noted the need to find a governor with educational expertise in order to carry out this role, particularly in the context of the increased focus on curriculum in the new Ofsted framework.</p>	
c.	<p><u>P3 Finance and Resources</u></p> <p>Liz Simmons was not present, so PK gave a brief report of the portfolio meeting that he had also attended. He advised that the budget for Brantridge and Grafham Grange Schools is not stable which is cause for some concern. KC observed that the situation is made more challenging by the varying level of fees, which impacts on financial planning for each of the schools. However, integration between the schools and OHCAT's Finance Team is much improved with systems and reports now much more clear.</p>	
d.	<p><u>P4 Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Child Protection</u></p> <p>AL presented her report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and flagged that at Brantridge School the areas of focus are contextual safeguarding, anti-bullying and pupil and staff mental health and wellbeing. AL reported that a new initiative has been introduced where pupils take on a mentoring and support role for their peers.</p> <p>KC reported that the residential provision at St Dominic's School had been inspected in November 2019 and had been judged Outstanding. The report is available here. On behalf of the LGB, KC extended thanks to all staff and particularly the residential care team for this outcome.</p> <p>KC reported that Jo Yarlett, who could not attend this meeting, had submitted a report earlier in the day which had been uploaded to GovernorHub. JT undertook to check on the bullying issues flagged in the report.</p>	JT
e.	<p><u>PF5 Business Development and Marketing</u></p> <p>JS presented his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and highlighted that:</p> <p>The numbers on roll predicted at the previous meeting had been achieved, with good numbers of future admissions coming through the pipeline. Whilst there was some concern about taking on more pupils in a short period of time, all three Principals have reported that the infrastructure is working well and the physical restraints are being managed, but the main challenge is around staffing, particularly therapists and teaching assistants, where there is reliance upon agency staff. JS suggested that governors continue to monitor staffing levels as schools grow to ensure needs are being met.</p> <p>In response, AD advised that a system of moving teaching assistants from temporary to permanent staff has been developed which is proving positive, as it enables the school to establish if staff are suitable to work in this setting. She reminded governors that staffing</p>	

	<p>levels vary according to pupil numbers and recruitment is an ongoing challenge, but reassured them that all therapeutic needs were being met. However, she acknowledged that staff sickness absence was a challenge.</p> <p>JT added that at Grafham Grange School, the challenge around the scarcity of therapists is being met in a variety of ways. For example, a mental health and wellbeing adviser and a talk therapist have been appointed from January 2020 and staff are being trained to develop their skills where needed. DR reported that a Speech and Learning Therapist has been appointed to Brantridge School but the Occupational Therapist has resigned so a replacement will be recruited.</p>	
f	<p><u>PF6 HR and OD</u></p> <p>KC introduced his report and highlighted key issues as follows:</p> <p>There is a greater focus on staff wellbeing, especially where staff absence is increasing. JS asked what governors could do to support staff and JT suggested that they visit the school to get to know staff and show them what a governor does. KC reminded all governors to carry out a learning walk at least once per year in order to learn about the school and raise their profile. JT suggested that a visit could be carried out before or after a portfolio meeting, or that governors could arrange a visit at a convenient time and noted that it would be important for governors to be able to show Ofsted inspectors that they know the schools well, beyond the written information that is received.</p> <p>JT gave feedback on the support provided to staff by Lisa Watkins, OHCAT's Occupational Health Nurse, who delivered a presentation to the Governors' Conference in October. AD also reported that the independent visitor for the residential provision at St Dominic's School will also be visiting Brantridge School and staff will be able to book appointments with him. AD explained that he understands the challenges faced by staff and can be very helpful to them in working through issues.</p>	
3.2	<p>KC gave a verbal report on the meeting of the Pay Committee on 10 October 2019 and thanked all three Principals for the high quality information provided which enabled him to offer robust scrutiny to the recommendations made. He reassured governors that the process had been undertaken very thoroughly.</p>	
4	Procedure Approvals	
4.1	<p>OHCAT Policy Updates</p> <p>Governors noted the policy updates approved by the Board at their meeting on 28 June 2019. All policies are available on GovernorHub.</p>	
4.2	<p>Procedures Requiring Approval</p> <p>Governors approved the Brantridge School Behaviour Procedure.</p>	
4.3	<p>Progress update on reconciling procedures with new policies</p> <p>KC observed that the governors are not receiving many policies to review and approve. AD responded that some will be presented in the near future, and reassured governors that there were no compliance issues to be concerned about.</p> <p>DB undertook to send KC a full list of policies and procedures for each school, and to highlight where action by the LGB will be required.</p>	DB

5.	School Principals' Reports	
5.1	<p>Brantridge Report / Dashboard / Q&A</p> <p>DR welcomed comments and questions from governors and matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>PK raised his concern that the financial future of the school is contingent upon increasing the number on roll and on levels of funding from West Sussex County Council. DR responded that the picture is less pessimistic than it may appear, with genuine desire on both sides to reaching an agreement on funding, with good support from OHCAT officers. He explained that a key issue is the timing around a placement by West Sussex who tend to seek to place students in maintained school before considering Brantridge which they still see as an independent school. He acknowledged that numbers must increase to ensure long-term sustainability but pointed out that this year's budget was based on 45 students and the 45th child will join the school in January 2020.</p> <p>JS suggested that there may be other ways in which the local authority could assist the school to secure financial viability, such as achieving economies of scale through procurement. KH advised that the OHCAT Finance Team carries out this role.</p> <p>KC challenged the number of behaviour incidents on the Dashboard (59) as compared with the lower rates last year which DR attributed to the increased number of students which has almost doubled from 28 to 44. However, he acknowledged that there has been there has been some challenging behaviour which can hard to manage, particularly where agency staff have not been appropriately trained.</p> <p>KC asked how the school ensures that each area of the curriculum is equally strong and DR replied that progress is being made to ensure the offer is broad and balanced; once that has been achieved the focus will shift to further developing those areas.</p>	
5.2	<p>Grafham Grange Report / Dashboard / Q&A</p> <p>JT welcomed comments and questions from governors and matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>JT reported that the school had started to use the Sleuth behaviour tracking software, which was providing useful information to staff but the reporting module needed to be refined, and she would be looking at how it has been set up for Brantridge School. She highlighted that the school has two new year groups (6 and 7) which equates to 16 new pupils and that incidents requiring use of restraint had halved since this time last year, due to the MAPA training undertaken by staff.</p> <p>KC queried the apparent drop in quality of teaching from summer to autumn and JT undertook to check the data was correct as the grade has increased from 3b to 3a. JT reminded governors that the teaching staff includes two trainee teachers, one NQT and one NQT + one year and confirmed that, for those teachers judged to be at Grade 4, support is in place. SH described the peer to peer support being undertaken by teachers in order to improve teaching and learning.</p> <p>At the request of KC, JT described the work underway to develop the curriculum offer to align with the Ofsted framework.</p>	JT

	<p>AD queried the levels of sickness absence shown on the Dashboard and JT confirmed that 11.43% is correct, and explained the reasons for the absences which were not work related.</p> <p>KC asked about the impact of having a substantive SLT in place and JT confirmed it was very positive and working well, enabling senior staff to take a strategic, longer-term view instead of focussing on operational issues.</p> <p>JT noted that Grafham Grange faces the same challenges with regard to funding levels as others do, partially due to the financial circumstances in which local authorities find themselves.</p>	
<p>5.3</p>	<p>St Dominic's Report / Dashboard / Q&A</p> <p>AD welcomed comments and questions from governors and matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>In response to governors' questions, AD explained how the school has successfully managed the increase in pupil numbers and demand for places in terms of staffing and resources. She described the works undertaken to increase classroom space, which has better distributed the students and created adequate space in the learning environment. She also emphasised that care has been taken ensure that students' needs can be met, and further increases in numbers have been deferred until September 2020 by which point the infrastructure will be able to manage a further intake.</p> <p>AD advised that the main focus going forward will be the review of the regional team structure, which will link to staffing, number of classes and the current and future numbers on roll to ensure there is appropriate resource to keep pace with the growth.</p> <p>KC reported that on a visit he had undertaken, a staff member had described the scale of the impact of staff absence on all staff and asked if there were any improvement in the rates of absence. AD explained that there had been a number of long-term absences this term and gave the reasons for them. She advised that from January, staff will be required to call her directly to report an absence, as well as using the current reporting method, which should have a positive impact. In addition, the OHCAT HR Team have supported the school in using the sickness absence toolkit to follow up sickness absence appropriately which has been helpful, although the school also plans to further improve its return to work interview process.</p> <p>SH pointed out that staff suffering with mental health issues may find it hard to report their sickness and to talk about how they are feeling, and AD described the extensive support in place for all staff. However, she described the impact and disruption caused by staff absence on both the staff and student body, and noted the need for her to ensure the wellbeing of all staff.</p> <p>In response to a question from KC, VP described the work done and being undertaken to ensure the curriculum offer meets the requirements of the new Ofsted framework and AH described the extent of the impact upon all staff over the last term.</p>	

6.	School Finances and Funding
6.1	<p>Brantridge 2018/19 and latest Management Accounts</p> <p>KH summarised the year end position, presented the report for up to October 2019, and welcomed comments and questions. Matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>Governors noted that the current year’s budget is based on 45 students, which will be achieved in January 2020 and that a deficit of £42K was projected but has already reduced and will reduce further. KC explained that the variance in forecast was achieved through savings in the staffing budget.</p> <p>AL asked, if the school’s previous position had been that there needed to be 60 students as a minimum to ensure its sustainability, but it was ticking over with 45 on roll, was the issue around the school’s reserves position or the levels of funding? KH explained that there are currently some students on roll with a higher level of funding but this would decrease as they move through the school, so the financial strategy must plan for how the loss of income is managed, and the three year forecast to be produced in February would look at the longer term impact of the shrinking levels of funding.</p> <p>Governors acknowledged the need to consider the decrease in income and that Principals must be creative in their approach to saving money and generating income. They agreed that there should be some discussion on how the schools will look in three years’ time, and what the staffing and curriculum offer will be.</p>
6.2	<p>Grafham Grange 2018/19 and latest Management Accounts</p> <p>KH summarised the year end position, presented the report for up to October 2019, and welcomed comments and questions. Matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>KH advised that the number on roll has increased from 39 to 40, against the 45 projected in this year’s budget. Governors noted that although the November report shows that the forecast deficit has reduced there remains some pressure and challenge to reach a break-even position.</p>
6.3	<p>St Dominic’s 2018/19 and latest Management Accounts</p> <p>KH summarised the year end position, presented the report for up to October 2019, and welcomed comments and questions. Matters discussed are as follows.</p> <p>KH reported that number on roll is 119 with more to come in January, against the 120 in the approved budget.</p>
7.	Strategic Matters for Review / Discussion
7.1	<p>Schools’ Three Key End of Year Improvement Goals</p> <p>At this stage, governors moved onto a table with the Principal of their school for a short discussion about the priorities for this year. At the end of the session, each group gave feedback on the key end of year improvement goals as follows:</p> <p><u>Brantridge School (DP)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils; 2. Continued focus on staff and pupil wellbeing;

	<p>3. Continued negotiations with West Sussex County Council about funding to ensure the long term sustainability of the school.</p> <p>It was also noted that it would be useful for the school to have increased challenge and support from governors, for example staff governors could visit each other’s schools. Governors agreed this would be a good idea, and undertook to explore this further.</p> <p><u>Grafham Grange School (PK)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve financial stability through an increased pupil roll, which could be achieved by expanding the age of children admitted. 2. Reduce reliance on agency staff through improved levels of staff sickness absence. 3. Provide outreach support to SEMH students in mainstream schools. 4. Improve grading for teaching to 2c from 3a. 5. Expand and improve the therapeutic offer to students through the development of current staff, who could offer external support, creating an income stream. <p><u>St Dominic’s School (AH)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage the closure of the residential provision, particularly the impact on staff and students most directly affected. 2. Embed the restructure of management and regional teams. 3. Ensure the new curriculum is in place and being used across the whole school. <p>Governors agreed to review progress on those priorities at this time next year.</p>	ALL
7.2	<p>Schools’ Three-Year Financial Plan and Strategy Updates</p> <p>DB advised, as previously mentioned, that the next forecast will be provided to governors in the spring term. In response to governors’ concerns about the long-term financial sustainability of the schools, DB reminded governors that Brantridge School started last year with a deficit of £300K, which was addressed through hard work and tight management and measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on admission of additional pupils; • Tireless work with OHCAT’s Finance and Supplier Teams to get the best value on contracts and spending; • Imposition of a spending freeze which did not impact on outcomes, but meant money was only spent where needed to ensure the health and safety of the school community. <p>The year ended with a £190K surplus, and in spite of the challenging financial landscape, many improvements had been made to the school facilities. DB reassured governors that it is possible to improve a school’s financial circumstances without a negative impact on learning or safety, as shown at Brantridge School.</p> <p>KC thanked DB for her summary, and all staff for the amount of work done to achieve a positive budget position.</p>	
8.	Calendar	
8.1	<p>Forthcoming School Events</p> <p>Governors asked to be kept informed about school events that they could attend, and noted that they are sent schools newsletters.</p>	

8.2	<p>Dates of LGB and Portfolio Meetings</p> <p>KC reminded governors to arrange portfolio meetings if they had not already done so.</p> <p>Governors noted the dates of future LGB meetings and agreed that the autumn term meeting in 2020 would take place earlier than this meeting.</p>	
<p>9 Any Other Business</p>		
9.1	<p>AD reported that DB had started a new job as the Head of Estates and Facilities for OHC&AT on 9 December 2019. On behalf of all Principals and governors, she thanked her for her hard work and commitment to improving the schools for the students. KC also added congratulations to DB on her new role.</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm.

Signed: Date:

Ken Cowdery, Chair of LGB