

Minutes
Surrey and Sussex (SAS) Hub LGB Meeting
11 March 2021 at 4 pm
Held virtually via GoToMeeting

- Present:**
- Ken Cowdery, Chair (KC)
 - Julian Short, Vice-Chair, Parent Governor (JS)
 - Sarah Baker, Parent Governor (SB)
 - Leigh Edser, Governor (LE)
 - Martin Lowthian, Parent Governor (ML)
 - Amme Hayter, Staff Governor (AH)
 - Vicky Perry, Acting Principal, St Dominic's School (VP)
 - Diana Puica, Staff Governor (DP)
 - Dafydd Roberts, Principal, Brantridge School (DR)
 - Janet Tremble, Principal, Grafham Grange School (JT)
 - Mike Wood, Governor (MW)
- In attendance:**
- Liam Cranford, Staff Governor (GG) Designate (LC)
 - Sharyn Purewal, Management Accountant (SP)
 - Susanne Wicks, Clerk (SW)

1.	Opening	
1.1	<p>Attendees and apologies for absence</p> <p>KC welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly LC, for whom it was the first LGB meeting and AH for whom it was the first meeting following her return from maternity leave.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Angela Drayton.</p>	
1.2	<p>Chair's Remarks</p> <p>KC extended thanks to staff, pupils and families at all three schools for the way they have adapted and coped during this very challenging time.</p>	
1.3	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>LE declared that her daughter attends St Dominic's School.</p>	
1.4	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and would be signed by the Chair as soon as possible.</p>	
1.5	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>A summary of the matters arising were circulated with the papers for the meeting.</p>	

2.	Governance	
2.1	<p>Chair's report</p> <p>KC introduced his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and highlighted that this would be his last meeting as Chair and as a Governor as he had resigned with effect from the end of term. KC also noted that there are new governance arrangements in place which impact on the frequency of portfolio visits.</p> <p>There were no questions or comments.</p>	
2.2	<p>OHCAT Governance Documentation</p> <p>Governors noted the revised governance documentation approved by the OHC&AT Board and available to view on GovernorHub.</p>	
2.3	<p>OHCAT Statutory Accounts</p> <p>The clerk advised that the 2019-20 statutory accounts had been submitted by the deadline and were available to view on the OHCAT website.</p>	
2.4	<p>Governor training/development</p> <p>The clerk undertook to collate this year's skills audit returns into one matrix and to alert newly recruited Governors about training resources available to them.</p> <p>KC sought ideas and views from the LGB on any training they would find useful. SP undertook to provide a short finance briefing to MW.</p> <p>JT suggested that the LGB may wish to undertake a session led by Grafham Grange School's Mental Health First Aiders.</p> <p>Governors agreed that an induction session should be arranged for early next term, in view of the number of new Governors recruited recently, and as a refresher for current Governors. This would include a safeguarding briefing from Jackie Van-West, OHCAT's Director of Safeguarding. The clerk would arrange a suitable date.</p> <p>The clerk undertook to share this year's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' with all Governors who would confirm when they had read it.</p>	<p>SW</p> <p>SP</p> <p>JT</p> <p>SW</p> <p>All</p>
3	Governors' Reports / Observations	
3.1	Review of Portfolio Governor Reports	
	<p>KC invited portfolio leads to make comment on their respective portfolio areas. Matters raised are detailed below.</p>	
	<p><u>Portfolio 1 – Ethos, Vision Strategy</u></p> <p>KC introduced his report of the visit to Grafham Grange School and remarked on how well the school has coped with the challenges presented by the pandemic, supporting not only students but their families too. He observed the calm and safe atmosphere prevalent in school and ML echoed his comments, noting how positive feedback from his son has been.</p> <p>KC highlighted that the school expects only one leaver to be NEET this year and gave further details of the individual's circumstances. He commended the school for this achievement.</p>	

	<p>JT advised that as the school roll increases, more teaching space will be needed, which she has raised with the Deputy CEO. There is budget set aside to convert the bungalows to teaching space.</p> <p>JT confirmed that first few female pupils to join the school have been into school for assessment. Three places have been offered and two accepted, both for Year 7. JT added that the teaching provision will also need to adapt as more pupils join the school, to meet a wider range of both academic and SEMH needs.</p>	
	<p><u>Portfolio 2 – Teaching & Learning</u></p> <p>MW presented his report following his meeting with Danielle Harries at Brantridge School and remarked on how comprehensive the curriculum and wellbeing support offer is.</p> <p>MW noted that that the portfolio includes a large number of issues to be covered and asked if there were scope to reduce them. SW reassured Governors that the guidance was intended to be just that; a guide and that portfolio holders should identify priority areas to be covered in consultation with colleagues in the schools.</p>	
	<p><u>Portfolio 3 – Finance and Resources</u></p> <p>JS fed back on the meeting he attended at St Dominic’s School with SP and VP. He reported that the school is in a very robust financial position with a budgeted year-end surplus of £300K due to lower expenditure and increased fees. The projected reserves will amount to approximately £2M, so they had discussed how some of the reserves would be invested to improve the learners’ experience. VP reported that she is drafting a five-year strategy which amalgamates the estates works needed with the budget and the school development plan. The £300K surplus will be added to the budget for the planned summer works which she described in full.</p> <p>JS noted that for all three schools, the ability to invest in sites will depend on future income projections, which are not always reliable due differing fee structures. In order to inform the planning process, SP will be undertaking some financial modelling to enable schools to monitor the impact of a changing cohort on their budget.</p>	SP
	<p><u>Portfolio 4 – Health & Safety, Child Protection & Safeguarding</u></p> <p>LE was pleased to confirm that she had been able to visit all three schools this term and observed that they have continued to provide high levels of support for all learners whether at home or in school. LE undertook to share her reports to be uploaded to GovernorHub. She also commended the schools for their hard work to support student and staff wellbeing.</p> <p>LE noted the need to ensure that all Governors have undertaken up to date safeguarding training and asked that Governors send her an update of their training via the clerk. The clerk also noted the previous discussion about a training session next term which would include a briefing from Jackie Van-West.</p>	LE All
	<p><u>PF5 – Business Development & Marketing</u></p> <p>JS confirmed that he had met with Sarah Kennedy, and was pleased to report good growth in numbers, especially at Brantridge School.</p>	

	ML and JS confirmed that they had reviewed St Dominic's School's Admissions Procedure and made comment where appropriate.	
	<p><u>PF6 –HR & OD</u></p> <p>SB thanked JT for providing a full overview on HR. She commended the school for its mental health support provision and looked forward to receiving further data from Edupod as it develops over time. SB welcomed the roll-out of Mental Health First Aid training to parents at Grafham Grange School.</p>	
4	Procedure Approvals	
4.1	<p>OHCAT Policy Updates</p> <p>Governors noted the policies agreed by the OHCAT Board in January 2021 which can all be viewed on GovernorHub.</p>	
4.2	<p>Policy / Procedure Schedule</p> <p>VP reported that Therésa Jones is compiling a policy schedule for St Dominic's School which may be of use to others and undertook to share with colleagues. The Chair asked VP to thank Therésa for her hard work on this task.</p>	VP
4.3	<p>School Admissions Procedures</p> <p>DR and JT undertook to share the procedures for Brantridge and Grafham Grange Schools with JS and ML for comment.</p>	JT DR
5.	School Principals' Reports and Dashboards	
	KC thanked all three Principals for all their hard work in pulling together the reports and answering questions that arose prior to the meeting and welcomed comments and questions.	
5.1	<p>Brantridge Report / Dashboard</p> <p>No further questions or comments raised.</p>	
5.2	<p>Grafham Grange Report / Dashboard</p> <p>No further questions or comments raised.</p>	
5.3	<p>St Dominic's Report / Dashboard</p> <p>No further questions or comments raised.</p>	
6.	School Finances and Funding	
	KC thanked SP and schools for the reports circulated prior to the meeting and welcomed comments and questions.	
6.1	<p>Brantridge Management Accounts</p> <p>With regard to the projected deficit, JS suggested that it was due to current numbers on roll, but if the budget were amended to show the projected increased number on roll, the additional funding would mitigate the deficit, so asked if, in reality, the budget was expected to be in deficit at year-end.</p>	

	<p>DR acknowledged that pupil numbers were the key factor in terms of the budget and explained that six children were due to join the school in January but could not do so because of the lockdown which had impacted negatively on the budget.</p> <p>He noted that the budget is based on 54 pupils, and there are likely to be 52 on roll after Easter. In order to mitigate the deficit a soft spending freeze has been imposed.</p> <p>SP gave further explanation of the school's position in terms of the levels of funding that the students attract in school and echoed DR's comments about the impact of the six additional pupils not joining in January. She explained that there are increasing numbers of boys joining the school that need 1:1 support which must be accounted for in the budget appropriately. Currently there are eleven learners on roll who bring increased funding due to their need for 1:1 support. The additional income is offset upon salary costs, but it is not the children requiring 1:1 support that have impacted on the budget, rather the delay in admitting the number of pupils assumed in the original budget.</p> <p>LE suggested that it would be useful for Governors to see the accounts as they would have been had the epidemic not happened and SP undertook to look into if that could be done.</p> <p>At the request of the Chair, DR explained the practical impact of the soft freeze and Governors questioned if it were necessary given the school's strong reserves position and that the issue appeared to be one of timing rather than genuine financial difficulty. DR reassured Governors that he was in frequent discussion with colleagues in Finance and all involved were working as quickly as possible to move the school out of a deficit position. Governors looked forward to receiving April accounts which should hopefully lead to the lifting of the soft freeze. JT and VP offered support to DR if needed.</p>	
6.2	<p>Grafham Grange Management Accounts</p> <p>The Chair commended JT for successfully moving from a projected deficit budget to a projected surplus, with healthy reserves.</p>	
6.3	<p>St Dominic's Management Accounts</p> <p>Covered in the finance portfolio report.</p>	
7.	<p>Strategic Matters for Review / Discussion</p>	
7.1	<p>Updates on Covid-19 arrangements/planning for spring and summer term</p> <p><u>Brantridge School</u></p> <p>DR reported that most of the cohort was in school before 8th March and nearly everyone returned this week. Staff undertake lateral flow tests twice a week at home and all West Sussex special school staff were offered the vaccine just before half-term, with the second dose to be delivered around the end of April.</p> <p>The bubble system remains in place for the remainder of this term but will be loosened in the summer term if safe to do so. As much activity is taking place outside as possible, with a continued focus on mental health and wellbeing, although the lockdown has drastically reduced the opportunity for activities outside of school.</p> <p>At the request of the Chair, DP reported on staff morale which she described as good but noted how much staff are missing being able to interact with and support each other, for</p>	

	<p>example during break and lunchtimes. SB noted that her son has been positive when asked about his school day.</p> <p><u>Grafham Grange School</u></p> <p>JT reported that staff have been vaccinated, with home testing also taking place. A bubble system was never introduced in school as it would have been too challenging for the boys to observe and it was agreed to be more important to keep things as normal as possible. The pupils are feeling the impact of the reduction in outdoor physical activities. She noted that a measure in place to be taken forward to next year is the splitting of the Year 8 group into two to give them more room as it has had a positive effect on the year group.</p> <p>In terms of negative impact, JT noted that the reward system has been used much less as the boys can't get out and about. However, she stated that staff, students and families have all coped extremely well and worked together to enable the school to run smoothly.</p> <p>ML extended huge thanks to JT and her team for clear, frequent and appropriate communication with families and for ensuring his son has felt safe and reassured. LC added that staff feel happy and supported and were glad to be in school.</p> <p><u>St Dominic's School</u></p> <p>VP reported that things have gone well during this challenging time and remarked that some students have thrived in a more restrictive and repetitive environment. One of the key challenges facing the school has been negotiating a successful route out of lockdown and back to increased social interaction. The increase in numbers after 8th March was not huge but has reduced pressure on staff to provide full curriculum remotely as well as in class. From a parental perspective, JS welcomed the online offer and also thanked VP and her team for the excellent communication with families.</p> <p>AP echoed comments made about the challenge for staff to provide online and in-school teaching and welcomed the return of all students.</p> <p>VP reported that at the Inset Day at the end of January she shared some parental feedback with staff which gave them a real morale boost, some of which she had also shared with Governors in the papers for this meeting. JS suggested that feedback should be shared with Ofsted when next inspected.</p>	
<p>7.2</p>	<p>Lessons Learned from Covid-19</p>	
	<p>KC welcomed the comments made about the pandemic having led to people working together as a community and asked if there was anything else that would be taken forward into 'normal' life.</p> <p>AP noted that the dramatically improved online offer could be used in the future for cover, for events such as snow days and for homework. VP agreed and added that the virtual technology has been positive in engaging hard to reach families or those that are unable to come into school, and its use would continue.</p> <p>JT reported that the pandemic has led to opportunities for staff development and also described how virtual meeting technology has improved engagement by colleagues in local authorities in meetings such as annual reviews.</p> <p>The Chair asked LE and MW if they had any experiences to share from their respective schools. LE agreed that she had observed improved communication from colleagues in RB</p>	

	<p>Kingston, although not higher levels of attendance at meetings. She reported that, at Dysart School, some changes made would continue to ensure that learners get the best out of the school day.</p> <p>LE commented that the high numbers of students on-site during the lockdown at all three schools was testament to how highly staff were trusted to keep children safe.</p> <p>MW commented that whilst communication with families has always been strong at Carew Academy, the new methods of communication will continue, and remote learning will be part of curriculum delivery in future.</p> <p>In response to question from MR, both JT and VP expressed confidence in this year's formal accreditations and confirmed they were both monitoring emerging Government guidance very closely.</p>	
8.	Calendar	
8.1	Calendar of LGB and Portfolio Meetings	
	Governors noted the calendar for the remainder of this academic year.	
9	Any Other Business	
9.1	Recommendation of Chair for the remainder of this academic year	
	It was moved by KC and unanimously agreed to recommend the Board of Trustees appoint JS as chair of the LGB for the remainder of the academic year 2020-21.	
9.2	Recommendation of Vice-Chair for the remainder of this academic year	
	There were no volunteers for the role. JS invited anyone interested in the role to discuss it with him outside of the meeting.	All
9.3	Thanks to Outgoing Chair	
	<p>On behalf of all Governors, JS extended huge thanks to KC for his ten years' of service as a Governor and Chair, his effort, commitment and input to the role.</p> <p>VP added to JS's comments, thanking KC for being such a committed Chair of Governors at St Dominic's. She described KC as integral to the school community and described how he had made a difference to the lives of students, advocating on behalf of the school, and staying calm on all occasions which had been enormously reassuring to both she and Angela Drayton.</p> <p>DR echoed VP's comments about Ken's cool, calm and collected approach and described his balanced, positive and supportive manner, whilst setting appropriate challenge. DR noted that KC's immense professionalism was only matched by the amount of work he had done for all three schools and described working with him as a privilege.</p> <p>JT added her thanks, describing how working with KC has been a two-way street in terms of communication and noting how easy he has been to work with, which had been a pleasure and a privilege.</p> <p>KC thanked everyone for their kind comments and wished all three schools well for the future, commending both staff and Governors for their commitment and dedication to working for the good of the children.</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm.

Signed: Date:

Ken Cowdery, Chair of LGB