

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNORS OF MOUNT GRACE SCHOOL

Held on Monday 23rd May 2011 at 6pm

Present	Fadeka Ayoola Peter Baker (Head) Lesley Bloomfield Anne Brennan Chris Cardell-Williams	Colin Daniel (Chair) Vicky Horn Christine James Linda king Diane Merrill Elaine Moore	Jane Moorman Dave Redington John Taylor Hannah Turner Steve Wright
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In attendance: Robert Blythe (Clerk)

These minutes remain confidential until approved at the next meeting.	
<p>1. Welcome, to receive apologies for absence and to consider any conflicts of interest: The Chair opened the meeting at 6:05 pm. Apologies were received from Peter Bonner and Jan Southwell. No conflicts of interest were declared.</p>	
<p>2. To receive notification of any other urgent business: No items were received.</p>	
<p>3. To Approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting (7th February 2011 previously circulated.): The minutes were approved with one amendment – on page one, in item 4, part 7.1, the name of Dawn Gamble was replaced by Barbara Crawford as Head of Inclusion.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising from those Minutes: Item 8.b: Governor Training: School Governance is reducing the number of courses it is able to run and the Chair is not confident that a cluster training event could be arranged before the end of term.</p>	
<p>5. To up-date on Academy Status: The Head up-dated governors on events since the last meeting as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools that were deemed good with outstanding features were eligible to convert. • Our March inspection deemed us satisfactory with good features meaning that our application could only proceed if we gained sponsorship from another school. • Discussions with Dame Alice Owen School took place. • In early April, the DfE announced that a letter of support, as opposed to sponsorship, would suffice. • A draft letter of support was agreed in principle with Dame Alice Owen School. • Our application is proceeding and a decision is imminent. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A board meeting at the DfE would decide each case on its merits. • Approval would be subject to the settlement of the squash club lease and finalisation of the letter of support from Dame Alice Owen. <p>Questions from governors established the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dame Alice Owen School has been an Academy since April. • Feedback from non-teaching staff expressed concerns about pensions, terms and conditions and employee status. Generally, staff are somewhat fearful, especially those with long service records. • Feedback from teaching staff contained some positives but concerns include pay, conditions, union recognition and pensions. Overall, teaching staff are quite negative and fearful. <p>However, it was noted that concerns over pensions and possible resultant strike action is an entirely separate issue to academy status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parents' meeting was organised but only 1 parent attended. Governors wondered whether this was due to disinterest or our inability to enable parents to understand the issues. • The terms and conditions for our non-teaching staff are related to our Foundation School status and are better than HCC levels. A decision will need to be taken whether we should continue with them at this level or to revert to HCC's. <p>It was agreed that an additional meeting of the Governing Body will take place, perhaps during the second week after half-term to decide on Academy Status. The date will be circulated by the Chair.</p>	<p>HR Committee Agenda item</p> <p>Chair to action.</p>
<p>6. To receive an up-date on the Squash Club lease:</p> <p>The Head informed governors that progress has been slow but the lease is likely to be finalised by 1st August, 2011. A meeting is scheduled in mid-June involving all parties, including solicitors and the Chair of Governors at which a schedule for the repairs and dilapidations would be agreed so that the lease can proceed.</p>	
<p>7. To receive an up-date on the school's response to the Ofsted Inspection:</p> <p>The Head tabled the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that includes actions related to the inspection. He recommended that discussions should concern the school's reaction to the report and the school's actions in response to the report.</p> <p>a) The school's reaction to the Inspection report:</p> <p>The Head reminded governors that as Chair of HASSH (Herts Secondary Schools Heads' Association) he had written a letter some time ago that was signed by 45 heads to the lead inspector of Ofsted expressing their lack of confidence in the judgements that would be made by inspectors due to the restrictions of the revised framework. The letter urged Ofsted to give greater consideration to the context in which schools worked.</p>	

<p>During the inspection, the school site looked excellent, students behaved impeccably and staff conducted themselves in a very professional manner. However, many of the school's good features are not reflected in the report. It appears as though the inspectors had made up their minds before arriving on-site based on attainment data, even though our data is 2% below the national average and value added is 1002. The inspection team did not speak to many key people in the school, such as the Head of Inclusion.</p> <p>The Chair was interviewed and noted a completely different style to the last team.</p> <p>b) The school's response to the Ofsted Inspection: Despite the above concerns, the school recognises that it must address the concerns raised by the team in their report. Consequently, pages 2, 3 and 4 of the SIP contain 5 targets related to Ofsted action points, including OF5, Independent Learning, which the school had already identified in the SIP.</p> <p>It is intended to complete the Plan within 12 – 15 months, by which time the school could receive a monitoring visit from Ofsted.</p> <p>Governors debated how best to monitor the implementation of the Plan and how the GB can become more effective in carrying out its role as critical friend by challenging the school. Ideas included allocating governors to policies within committee meetings to gain more in-depth knowledge, visiting the school more frequently to get to see policies in practice and producing a GB Action Plan.</p> <p>Governors also noted some good aspects within the report, such as the high level of satisfaction expressed in the Ofsted Questionnaire, noting that we were a good school a week before the inspection and that situation prevails.</p> <p>It was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the SIP would be an agenda item for every committee meeting, ii) the Head will amend the SIP to indicate which committee would monitor each action area, iii) Fadeka Ayoola will join the PA Committee iv) Chairs of Committee will be responsible for ensuring minutes contain sufficient information on discussions and decisions v) Progress towards implementing the SIP will be an agenda item for every GB meeting. vi) 	<p>Committee Chairs to action</p> <p>Head to action</p> <p>Chairs to action</p> <p>Clerk to action.</p>
<p>8. Questions and Comments on the Headteacher's report: Governors liked the breadth of the report and its headings such that the Head agreed to maintain this format for his future termly written reports.</p> <p>Questions and comments clarified the following points:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The secure bike sheds are well received. • Surplus revenue from catering is being used to improve canteen facilities. • Links with Chancellors are important for VIth Form provision and should continue beyond the period of leadership change. • Subsidiaries to vulnerable VIth Form subjects such as music or German are important to ensure they continue, otherwise expertise would be lost along with the capacity to offer them as choices in future. • The number of exclusions is reducing, reflecting the success of the school's inclusion, behaviour and rewards policies. • A second modern foreign language will be taken by Year 7 students, whereby the current 3 periods of French will be replaced by 2 periods of German and 2 of French (although some children with SEN might be withdrawn for additional literacy, as happens at present). 	
<p>9. Governor Business:</p> <p>a) To receive reports from:</p> <p>i) Resources Committee including ratification of the 2011/12 School Budget:</p> <p>The Chair tabled the minutes of their meeting held on 16th May and referred governors to the proposed budget, which may change if we convert to academy status. The headlines are that we would not be losing any staff despite it being a difficult year ahead.</p> <p>Asked about the legal proceedings regarding the ski company that went into liquidation, the Chair explained that we are among a number of schools affected by this and although we are likely to receive some recompense, it will take time and he has asked the Head to produce a report to see what we can learn from the event.</p> <p>Regarding lettings charges, governors supported the school's stance to increase the charges for the Zumba classes from the Community rate given to them owing to their success and commercial nature.</p> <p>The proposed School Budget was approved.</p> <p>ii): Pupil Achievement Committee</p> <p>Speaking to the minutes, Vicky Horn highlighted their discussions on signing-off the 2010/11 SIP, the Behaviour Policy and the government White Paper.</p> <p>iii) Human Resources Committee:</p> <p>Dave Redington reported that since their discussions on 28th February the Complaints issue and the staffing absences have been resolved. Their next meeting is 20th June.</p>	<p>2011/12 School Budget approved.</p>

<p>b) Governor Training: If a training event cannot be organised for the summer term, the Chair intends arranging one for the autumn term.</p> <p>c) Any governor visits: John Taylor attended the Careers Evening and was impressed by the event and noted the enthusiasm shown by students. He felt that the importance of core subjects such as English and maths should be emphasised for students who, for example, showed a keen interest in architecture but referred to their Design & Technology studies whereas businesses and further education establishments require abilities in the core areas too. Chris Cardell-Williams attended the event and echoed John's comments.</p> <p>The Head would appreciate a written report from John.</p> <p>d) Ratification of any policies The following policies have been reviewed by Committees and were ratified by the Governing Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Equality Policy • Racial Incidents • Anti-Bullying • Governor Links • Sex and Relationships • Gifted & Talented <p>The following policies have been up-dated by HCC and were adopted by the GB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing • Capability • Harassment & Bullying • Safer Recruitment 	<p>John to action.</p> <p>Policies ratified</p> <p>Policies adopted.</p>
<p>10. Any Other Business: Security: It was noted that staff do not wear ID badges and the Head agreed that this will be addressed in some form. Asked about student awareness of stranger danger, the Head replied that issues of personal safety are regularly featured in assemblies.</p> <p>Agenda Items: It was noted that the agenda is constructed without reference to members of the governing body. The Chair said that there are many issues that need to feature on them but that if a governor wished to raise an item, he would welcome suggestions by e-mail and would then decide whether to include them.</p>	<p>Head to action.</p>
<p>11. To confirm the date of the next meeting: The next meeting will take place in June, to be circulated by the Chair. The meeting closed at 8:26 pm.</p>	