



BIRCHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL
 Parsonage Lane Bishop's Stortford CM23 5BD
 Company No: 07791971

Minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting of the Academy Trust Governing Body held remotely via Teams on Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 19.00

| | Name | Category | End of Term |
|---|---|-----------|-------------|
| | Ruth Crowland | Community | 06.03.25 |
| | Alison Wilson | Community | 14.03.23 |
| | Leigh Lloyd-Warren | Community | 22.01.24 |
| | Jane Mansfield | Community | 22.01.24 |
| | Fred Gray – Vice Chair | Community | 08.12.24 |
| * | Jim Winter | Community | 06.07.24 |
| | Ruth Bamlett | Community | 14.03.23 |
| | Catherine Gater – Chair of Governors | Community | 13.07.24 |
| | Charlotte Sear | Community | 22.01.24 |
| | Richard Townsend | Community | 03.03.24 |
| | Vacancy | Parent | |
| | Jane Wach | Parent | 09.09.24 |
| | Gill Turner – Vice Chair | Parent | 04.12.22 |
| | Hilary Scotcher | Parent | 30.06.22 |
| | Lisa Watkins | Parent | 30.06.22 |
| | Vacancy | Parent | |
| | Chris Ingate – Principal | Staff | Ex-Officio |
| | Ross Noblett | Staff | 01.04.23 |
| * | Claire Pressland | Staff | 02.11.24 |
| | Lee Bothwell | Staff | 30.06.22 |
| | Vacancy | Co-opted | |
| | Nicola Coop – Finance Director | Advisory | |

* Denotes absence

Also Present

Charlie Gilbank – Deputy Principal

Sam Stopps – Deputy Principal

Ivan Shepherd – Clerk

| Item | | Action |
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| 1. | Welcome and receive apologies for absence No apologies were received prior to the meeting. | |
| 2. | Declarations / pecuniary interests There were no declarations of any new pecuniary interests, gifts or hospitality. There were no interests declared that related to matters being discussed at this meeting. | |
| 3. | Notification of any urgent business not covered in this agenda No AOB was put forward. | |

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| 4. | <p>MLM and action points Governors AGREED that the minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 03.03.21 were a fair reflection of that meeting.</p> <p>Action Points from 03.03.21 AP1 – Any governor who wants to join the working group addressing inequality, teaching & learning and behaviour to contact the CoG and SS Completed</p> <p>AP2 – Clerk to inform HfL that AS has resigned as a governor. Completed</p> <p>AP3 – Clerk to inform HfL that RC’s term as a parent governor has come to an end and that she has been appointed as a Community governor. Completed</p> | |
| 5. | <p>Principal’s report The Principal’s report was circulated prior to the meeting for governors to review and attend the meeting with questions. The key points of discussion were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils and teachers are more confident post the Easter break. Morale is good but it’s very busy and the whole school have to take things slowly. Governors SUPPORTED this approach by the school. • The Principal told the meeting that there some positives to come out of virtual learning and that these should form part of a cultural change going forward. The Principal told governors that middle leaders rose to the challenge during the pandemic and that this was particularly impressive. • Governors AGREED that FGB meetings should remain virtual until the autumn term, however it might be possible to hold committee meetings face to face during the second part of the summer term. • The catch up requirements for pupils are very different and a “one size fits all” approach won’t work. Data has been collected and the school have allowed that to inform them of the correct approach. The data showed that SEND and DA pupils have been impacted the most and a plan to support these pupils is in place. • A summer school for Yr.6 into Yr.7 will be run more details to follow. • The number of students on roll is growing Yr.7 is a bulge year and 6th form numbers are in growth. • An internal appointment to Assistant Head has been made. The appointee was the outstanding candidate; the Principal noted that all applicants researched the role in depth and impressed at interview. The Principal added that the equalities plan was taken into full consideration when making the appointment and that an equalities analysis is being produced. • The governor safeguarding update has been completed and has been posted on the governor Teams channel. There were no questions • A H&S visit will take place in the second half of the summer term. • The governance strategic plan was discussed; the plan was set aside at the start of the pandemic in order that operational matters could be focused on. Governors AGREED that the decision not to focus on the strategic plan during the pandemic was the right decision. | |

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| | <p>Governors AGREED that the autumn term is the right time to develop and start to implement an annual strategic plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governors discussed the educational landscape both on a local and national level and the impact that it will have on Birchwood. The impact of the new secondary school which is due to open in September 2021 and the DfE’s policy of moving schools into MAT’s formed part of this discussion. Governors AGREED that Birchwood needs to have its place in the local community and that the whole school must pause for breath post the pandemic in order that correct rather than rushed decisions are made. CGk told the meeting that teachers are working very hard on Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) and that a communication is going out to Yr. 11 and 13 parents explaining the methodology. Grades will be assessed honestly; assessment data and evidence will be retained should an appeal be received. Yr. 11 and Yr.13 have responded very well to the challenge, are focused and are working hard. The CAG policy is operational and has been sent to the curriculum authority, it will also be viewed by the curriculum committee. Staff attendance is very good at the moment; therefore very little cover is required. A governor suggested that recognising those staff who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic / CAG process would be a good thing to do. The Principal AGREED with this. The Principal told the meeting that in a normal year teachers are paid by the exam boards to mark exams, this year they are being asked to do this as part of their job. In turn the exam boards are refunding around 25% of the fees paid by schools, the view being that exam board are retaining 75% for doing very little. A governor confirmed that the school pays exam boards £110k per year. The Pastoral report was included within the Principal’s report. SS told the meeting that he would highlight some of the important areas. SS told the meeting that the Equalities / Misogyny report has been received well and a number of recommendations have been made. SS told the meeting that Yr.13 want to make this their legacy and have put real drive and purpose behind it. Governors AGREED that equalities training is a must. Governors expressed their desire to know more about the report and to really get behind it. It was suggested that the equalities link governor should take this on. SS told the meeting that the report is empowering and that the whole school community have joined in supporting the “Everybody is Welcome” initiative. The Safeguarding link governor told the meeting that he can pick this up as part of his remit when he makes a Safeguarding visit on the 12th May. It was suggested and AGREED that equalities should be part of the strategic roadmap. SS told governors that behaviour since returning to school in September 20 has been very good, the number of “on calls” has halved, adding that the students have been a real credit to themselves and the school. With the right planning governors can come into school for a monitoring visit. SS is running a training session on the 19th May 21. | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QA is up and running, this is being done with a “light touch” at the moment. • School trips and extra-curricular activities are beginning to return. • Curriculum in relation to the whole school and catch up has had detailed focus. The differing literacy needs in relation to the incoming Yr.7 has become a key priority. <p>Finance Update</p> <p>The management summary was circulated prior to the meeting for governors to review and attend the meeting with question, the key points discussed were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a small in year deficit caused by the impact of the pandemic, although there is an overall surplus that will carry over. In summary the finances are healthy. • The resources management self-assessment summary has been completed and returned to the ESFA. • A benchmarking exercise has been completed, the key point to be drawn from this is that Birchwood has a slightly higher than average class size and a slightly lower ration of teachers to pupils than recommended. • A schedule of virements will be posted on the governor portal. The Finance Director told the meeting that the virements had been agreed in the F&E committee and needed to be ratified at FGB. The virements were RATIFIED. • The Finance Director told governors that there are two write offs, totalling £1,500, which had been agreed at the F&E committee and which needed to be ratified at the FGB. The Finance Director outlined the circumstances of the write offs adding that the decision was taken as a last resort. A governor asked how many write offs the school make each year. Governors were told that usually there are one or two per year. GT told the meeting that as chair of the Finance committee she is comfortable and that everything had been done to reclaim the money. Under the circumstances writing off the debt was the best option. Governors RATIFIED the write offs. | |
| 6. | <p>Safeguarding Audit and H&S update</p> <p>This was covered within the Principal’s report</p> | |
| 7. | <p>Committee updates</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <p>The key points discussed were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC told the meeting that the literacy strategy for the incoming Yr.7 is a priority, a lot of work has been done on this and she will be meeting with members of the SLT to finalise action points. The Principal told the meeting that a lot of thought and time has gone into working up a literacy strategy, which was the right approach. • RC echoed this telling the meeting that curriculum as a whole has needed lots of focus. <p>Finance</p> <p>The key points discussed were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lettings policy and should some discounts be offered. • The current cleaning contract is 3 years plus 2 and should a tender process be started. The Finance committee decided that the current company give good service and offer value of money. | |

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| | <p>The Finance committee agreed to retain the current cleaning company. GT told the meeting that a best value check form has been posted on the governor portal. Governors AGREED with the decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors were told that the Finance Director has decided to resign. GT told the meeting that the finances are in a much better condition now than they were when the Finance Director started at Birchwood. Governors wanted to place on record their thanks to the Finance Director for her exceptional work whilst she’s been at Birchwood. <p>Estates The key points discussed were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and safety is compliant • Boiler work has been completed • LED lighting has been installed in the car park • Yr7. Recreational space has been updated • The planning application for the detached playing field is ongoing. <p>AP1 – Clerk to add detached playing field to the agenda of the next FGB meeting</p> <p>Personnel The key points discussed were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality. | Clerk |
| 8. | <p>Articles of association The following documents relating to this were circulated to governors prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Framework • Member Role Description <p>GT explained that the first change in the make-up of the governing board, which was a legal requirement, has been completed and that the board is just waiting for approval from the DfE.</p> <p>The second part is for governors / trustees to decide whether or not to establish an independent group of members. This is not a legal requirement; however it is a “strongly preferred”.</p> <p>Governors AGREED that the target date for creating an independent group of members should be the AGM which is due to be held in December 2021.</p> <p>Any independent group of members will include the CoG. Governors should consider whether or not they would like to be a trustee or member and make that preference known to the CoG and GT</p> <p>AP2 - Governors to consider if they would rather be a trustee or member and inform the CoG and GT</p> <p>The governance Steering Group is due to meet soon and take forward the appropriate actions</p> | All Govs |
| 9. | <p>Link governor update Safeguarding (FG) This was covered earlier in the meeting and there was nothing to add.</p> | |

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| | <p>SEND & DA (RC) This was covered earlier in the meeting. RC told the meeting that a full SEND review has taken place and that document will be placed on the governor portal / Teams channel</p> <p>Health & Safety (RT) This was covered earlier in the meeting and there was nothing to add.</p> <p>Career Link (AW) The career link report was circulated prior to the meeting, the key points covered were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AW had received some feedback from Yr.11 regarding career advice. • AW will carry out some observations. • The competition for apprenticeships has increased because some employers have stopped offering them. • Yr.11 destinations are favourable. • Progression planning within the careers department needs to be reviewed. | |
| 10. | <p>Membership of the governing body There are two parent one co-opted governor vacancies. Governors AGREED to advertise for parent governor in September when the there is a group of new Yr.7 parents.</p> | |
| 11. | <p>GDPR Nothing to report</p> | |
| 12. | <p>Policy Management CGk told the meeting that all policies are up to date. Those that are due to be ratified have been posted on the governor portal / governor Teams channel.</p> | |
| 13. | <p>Chair's Report The CoG had received one piece of correspondence from a parent /carer regarding a fixed term exclusion, this has been resolved with the correspondent.</p> <p>The governors strategic / projects plan document (Gantt chart) for 21/22 needs to be updated to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction training • Governor self-evaluation • Equalities review <p>The CoG told the meeting that there is a new governor area being created on the school website, there will be space for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor documentation • Blogs • Governor pen portraits / profiles | |
| 14. | <p>Dates of future full governors meetings all start at 19.00 13.07.21</p> | |

Meeting closed at 20.47

Signed:

Date:

Catherine Gater – Chair of Governors Birchwood High School

Summary of action points

AP1 – Clerk to add detached playing field to the agenda of the next FGB meeting

AP2 - Governors to consider if they would rather be a trustee or member and inform the CoG and GT