



GOVERNORS' MEETING

Minutes of the meeting on 16 September 2021 in College's Bridge Café

Present: Mr Andy Clarke, Mr Peter Cooper, Mr James Miller (Chair), Felix J Smithson,
Rev Kina Robertshaw, Mrs Danielle Thompson, Mrs Catriona Ward, Sarah Woodall
(8)

In attendance: Mr Robert Gorman (Clerk), Mr Phil Tranter (Vice Principal),
Mr Ken Hopkins (Chair, Heart of Mercia MAT)

The Chair announced the resignation of Graham Biggs from the Board due to increased work pressures.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Adrian Allan, Prof David Langley, Mrs Vicky Orsmond, Mr Andrew Roberts, Ms Beth Rudolf,
(5)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND GIFTS

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2021

The minutes were approved as an accurate record. It was noted that Sarah Woodall had been granted leave of absence since June.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Student Governor confirmed that SRC activities were picking up slowly.

5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chair indicated that a Search Committee meeting would be needed in the near future and, asked any Governor interested in joining the Committee to contact himself or the Clerk. A Governor to lead on Equality and Diversity would also be needed.

6. CLERK'S REPORT

Board strength now stands at 13, including the Principal, and Student Governor. A new 1st Year Student Governor would be elected in early October. The Clerk suggested that the annual declaration forms be circulated by email, and Governors were in agreement.

The Governors' Self-assessment of Governance was discussed. The Chair felt that, in view of the absence of face to face discussion since the first Covid lockdown, the length of the present questionnaire and the high proportion of newer Governors, there may be little value in the exercise and use of the assessment be deferred to later in the year.

Governors were reminded that the most straightforward to access meeting and other documents on the Governors' Shared drive was via the link 'Governors' Documents' at the foot of the College Website homepage. Printing of documents from the Shared drive to a Governor's home printer could be done if required.

The Clerk went on to outline the Board Attendance statistics for 2020/21. The aggregate attendance at HSFC full Board meetings, adjusted for one leave of absence, was 91.3%, last year 86.2%. A schedule of individual attendance statistics was circulated. By way of benchmarking, interim attendance statistics gleaned from the Clerks' network, based on returns from roughly one third of colleges, gave an average attendance at governors' meeting for 2019/20 of 83.8%, within a range of 63% to 96%.

7. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Principal informed Governors of two recent 'Anti-Vax' demonstrations outside College premises in the previous week, which would probably be reported in local newspapers. The Vice-Principal indicated that more than 60% of teenagers in Herefordshire had been vaccinated, with further mass open-access vaccination for young people planned locally for 28 and 29 September.

College security in view of Covid measures around ventilation was discussed. The College management team had made considered decisions about Covid measures, and maintaining the welcoming character of the College. Governors **supported** the Principal in this.

The Principal presented his report, and confirmed that HSFC staff absence continues to be relatively low. The average number of days absent moved to 2.2 in 2020/21, from 3.9 in 2019/20. This is low compared to public services figures of around 5 days per year. In response to a Governor's question, the Principal confirmed that during the year there had been 2 instances of significant long-term sickness. There are currently no members of staff on long-term sick leave.

The Principal, indicating that Enrolment would be dealt with fully later in the meeting, confirmed that numbers were in line with previous years and College targets, although the pattern may have changed. This year will see a large number of vocational courses commencing after A Level courses commence. The aim is to put the interest of the student above statistics. In response to a Governor's question about future funding of BTECs, the Principal confirmed that no more was known.

The College had nothing more about the expansion bid submitted in June. Governors will be informed if and when.

A copy of CEO's Trust Message for September had been circulated. Schedules of possible Inspection questions for Governors had been uploaded to the Shared drive a guide for Governors' consideration. The Chair referred to an article in the Spectator which listed the 80 schools and colleges that had secured most Oxbridge entries in the 2020 cycle. HSFC, despite being non-selective unlike the vast majority of institutions listed, came 19th - an outstanding achievement. The list is attached. [The Chair mistakenly attributed the research to the Sutton Trust.] The Student Governor praised the College's support programme.

Calendars of fixtures and events for Music, Musical Theatre, Sports and Drama are available in the Governors' shared area, and the Principal encouraged Governors to attend.

Turning to the 2021 A level results the Principal said that results and appeals at HSFC went well, although results, including %A* and A, were inconsistent nationally, but the College could feel pride that we have acted with integrity assessing realistic rather than inflated grades. HSFC students can take A Levels where A and A* may not be expected. Only 2 students did not get their first choice university place. The Principal added that pass rates for GCSE and Vocational courses were both good.

The Chair felt that results of the last 2 years had been flawed and seen by the general public as questionable, but should return to normal standard as soon as possible, and not over 3 years as some had suggested. This was also the view of the SFCA. Governors were in agreement.

Governors **NOTED** the report.

8. **FINANCE REPORT**

The Principal, in the absence of the Finance Director, presented a commentary prepared by the Finance Director covering:

The Summary Financial Results for the year to 31 August 2021, already circulated, indicated that the results were prior to audit and pension scheme adjustments. The external auditors would begin work in October.

Net Surplus for HSFC was £271k against a budgeted £112 deficit. Expenditure on Catering, IT and Premises had all increased.

Earnings before Interest, Taxation, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) for HSFC looks very positive with a surplus well in excess of the £710k budget, helped by additional funding received during the year.

Other key performance ratios included Payroll cost % to Income of 69%. Referring to the HSFC Balance Sheet, the Commentary indicated that it remains healthy.

The ESFA's Financial Health measure, using a combination of 3 financial ratios, has been continued, and calculated as 'Outstanding'.

In response to a Governor's question about the pay award, the Principal confirmed that 1.1% is being proposed by the SFCA to the unions.

The Commentary noted that 2021/22 budget is based on 2125 students. Pay award is not yet known, budget based on 1%. Employer National Insurance and Pension Contribution levels are also uncertain.

Ken Hopkins informed Governors about the MAT, and growth areas.

Governors **NOTED** the Summary Results for the year to August 2021, and the Commentary.

9. CONSIDERATION OF 2020 LEVEL 3 LEVEL 2 RESULTS

The Principal had already provided information in his report. Schedules of 2021 results by subject for level 3 and Level 2, BTEC and GCSE had already been circulated, together with a commentary from the Vice Principal.

The schedule of Initial A Level results by subject indicated a pass rate of 99.5% overall, with 63.2% A* to B. The schedule of Level 2 GCSE results, where grades awarded were the CAGs, indicated a pass rate of 75.5% grade 9 to 4, 0.7% more than last year.

8 administration errors have been found by the College, and the Boards have now changed the grades CAGs at Stage 2. No grades were changed on appeals to the Boards regarding poor grading or inaccurate marking, which is a credit to the Teaching staff.

Governors **NOTED** the report.

10. CHANGES TO CURRICULUM AND COURSE MASTERFILE

A Commentary by the Vice Principal had already been circulated, noting that there were no major changes to Level 3 and Level 2 courses for 2021/22.

Only one new course for this year: Level 3 History of Art will be introduced at Easter.

Governors **SUPPORTED** the changes.

11. ANALYSIS OF ENROLMENTS

The Vice Principal presented various schedules and briefly outlined enrolment statistics over the last few years. The breakdown of students by Programme of Study at 13 September indicated 2163 students on roll.

The College's analysis of Year 11 enrolment from Main Partner schools, yielding 46% of the year's cohort of 1075, was discussed. Visits to schools continue, previously restricted to virtual communication. A vocational subject booklet has been put together.

Overall numbers of New Students Enrolling at 1155 were slightly up on last year at this stage, and demonstrated an application conversion rate of 86.12%, last year 79.59%.

The detailed Analysis of New Students Enrolling 2017-21 highlighted increased enrolment from partner schools, but a slight decrease in enrolments from Worcestershire. The number of enrolments from schools in Wales decreased by 7.3%. Numbers enrolling from Earl Mortimer were very pleasing. The Vice Principal was very happy with the position overall.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal and his team for achieving a very good result in very challenging circumstances, and Governors **NOTED** the report.

12. RETENTION 2020/21

The Principal presented Retention statistics for 2020/21 noting that retention remains at a relatively high level, in spite of all, at 93.4% for Start to June and 96.1% from Nov to June, with last year 2019/20 94.0% and 96.0% respectively.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ken Hopkins informed Governors about the background to the MAT, and current changes.

The Student Governor relayed items discussed at Student Representative Council (SRC), which the Principal responded to:

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| Smoking regulations | - Difficulties understood about outside smoking arrangements, and students spilling out of designated area. Will be reviewed later in year. |
| Outdoor seating area | - May need relocating, will be reviewed. |
| Barrs Court School | - School looking for integration on a 'Beacon' project. Principal and Governors were supportive. |

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21 October 2021, at 6.00pm.