

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GIRLS SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00pm on Tuesday 19 September 2017

Parent governors:	Community governors:	Staff governors:
Susan Cottam (SC)	Royden Gothelf (RG)	Kay Excell (KE)
Rebecca Hanley (RH) (Chair)	Debbie Lane (DL)	Heather Price (HP)
Alan Jenner (AJ) (V.Chair)	Uzo Nwamu (UN)	Violet Walker (VW) (Headteacher)
Kim Longman (KL)	Penelope Martin-Smith (PMS)	
Rebecca Peer (RP)		

In attendance: Hilary Furey (Clerk to the Governors)

1. Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest

- 1.1 Those present were welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Al-Doujaily, Mr Ward and Ms Ford.
- 1.3 No pecuniary or personal interests were declared in the business of the meeting by those present.

2. Election of Chair

- 2.1 The Clerk asked for nominations for the role of Chair for the current academic year. The current Chair, having nominated herself for the role, absented herself from the meeting so that a frank and open discussion could be held. In the absence of any other nominees RH was proposed and seconded. RH accepted the election as Chair for 2017-18.

ACTION: RH was elected as Chair for the 2017-18 academic year.

3. Election of Vice Chair

- 3.1 The Chair asked for nominations for the role of Vice Chair for the current academic year. The outgoing Vice Chair did not wish to stand again for the role. The Chair nominated AJ for the period to 31 December 2017, due to the imminent restructure of the Governing Board and AJ accepted the nomination. The Chair noted that it was less than ideal to have two Parent governors in the Chair and Vice Chair roles and asked governors if there was any objection to this. No objections were raised.

ACTION: AJ was elected as Vice Chair for the autumn term 2017.

4. Minutes of the meeting of 10 July 2017

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 10 July 2017 were agreed and signed by the Chair of Governors as a true record of the meeting.

5. Report on Chair's action

5.1 No Chair's action was reported.

6. Headteacher's report.

- 6.1 A level data was tabled and **a governor wanted to know how Queen Elizabeth's School had performed against other schools within the borough.** The Headteacher told governors that all schools had declared their A level results but not all had published GCSE information therefore it was not certain that this could be compared yet, however the borough had produced two sets of tables (with and without Grammar school data) regarding Pass rates showing that Queen Elizabeth's School was top of both. With respect to A levels, governors heard that grades had improved significantly and the average grade had increased to a Grade B. The ALPS score at the end of 2016 had improved from ALPS 7 to ALPS 3 (Excellent) and placed the school within the top 25% nationally. This had improved yet again in the current year to ALPS 2 (Outstanding) which placed the school in the top 10% nationally. The Headteacher told governors that the target was to reach ALPS 1 (Outstanding). Students had achieved better than expected results based on GCSE outcomes and teaching was very good, although with still too much variation within departments and across the school. ALPS scores for Music and Physics were relatively poor. Music is delivered for our students at Woodhouse College, and while Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School carry out Quality Assurance exercises, there is little opportunity for influence on teaching. In response to a question, the Headteacher told governors that the cohort for Physics was small compared to other sixth forms, and strategies for Physics teaching would be discussed in a forthcoming meeting.
- 6.2 Governors discussed subjects which performed more or less well and wanted to understand results for English Literature at A level. The Headteacher said that the coursework module had generally been downgraded when moderated. Some student papers for other modules had seen some difference in results following re-mark requests. Students had generally performed better in exams than in coursework. The Headteacher was not yet ready to say what impact re-marks would have on ALPS. Governors heard that there had been a discussion within the English Department as to whether to ask for all work to be re-marked but it was felt that all could potentially be downgraded. The only student to achieve lower than expected results saw a slight improvement after re-marking and where students had asked for their work to be re-marked this had been done with grades for three students improving. Governors discussed whether subjects were linear at AS level and if there would be a coursework component in A levels. Concern was raised as to whether issues with lower than expected grades were inherent in the new syllabus. Further to a suggestion that the Headteacher might speak to other schools' English Departments, DJS said that he had been in contact and that, whilst three QE pupils received improved re-mark results, it was felt appropriate to accept that results were due to the new syllabus.
- 6.3 **The Chair asked how numbers for 6th form compared to the previous year and wondered what would be considered the ideal number in 6th form.** The Headteacher said that there had been an increase in numbers enrolling for 6th form and that the ideal number would be 250 girls in Years 12 and 13. **A governor noted that just 30% of Year 11 students had stayed on into 6th form and wondered if more able students had chosen not to stay.** The

governor went on to say that she had been in school on exam results day and had seen a number of distressed students who had not achieved expected results and were therefore told that they would be unable to go into 6th form. The Headteacher explained that, initially, there had been no capacity to offer re-take GCSE Maths in order to allow a number of girls to remain in the school. However, during the day, it had become possible to amalgamate two classes of Maths into one group, thus allowing for a re-take class to run. Governors were told that a lot of things happen on exam results day and that a change of decision had meant that more girls were able to remain at the school than had earlier been expected. However, due to low take-up, PE, Economics and Spanish would not run in 6th form. Governors understood the school's higher expectations for admittance to 6th form but it was noted that 20% of students did not achieve 5 A*-C grades and a governor felt it was unfortunate that the school was not able to accommodate their needs. The Headteacher said that the school was offering a BTEC Health and Social Care pathway which had achieved good results at KS4 and was an alternative to the traditional A level route. Unfortunately, no students had opted for this course though it was felt that it would be offered again in the following year with a different style of promotion to attract students.

- 6.4 **A governor wanted to know the destinations of those students who did not remain at the school, given compulsory education up to 19 years of age.** DJS said that post-16 pupils could not all be catered for at each institution. Offers were dependent on possible provision. The school had collected destination information on Results Day and this would be shared with governors.

ACTION: DJS to provide destination information for Year 11 leavers to governors.

- 6.5 **The Chair wanted to know what the school could offer to encourage those students who achieved A*/A grade at GCSE to remain at the school in order to create prestige in the 6th form.** The Headteacher suggested that the ALPS indicators show that the school had performed increasingly better and that generally the best recruiter to a sixth form is the quality of its outcomes. Since certainly from 2012 to 2015 sixth form results had declined year on year to ALPS 7 (Poor). In the last two years results had significantly improved to the highest standards. Time was needed to embed improved learning and teaching and give confidence to families regarding sustainability of improvements. **The Chair wanted to know how this information was being communicated**, suggesting that students may feel pressure to go elsewhere although it was understood by a governor that only one girl would be going to Dame Alice Owens School. In response to a query the Headteacher said that a larger 6th form could offer more subjects, and might also offer places to boys, which might guarantee that courses would run. However, the Headteacher stressed that difficult decisions were having to be made for the school so that courses were viable and would satisfy EFA and Ofsted scrutiny. It was not necessarily the case that large numbers were needed, but numbers needed to be sensible. It was suggested that the school's USP might be in offering more individualised support for students. This was already being addressed through the pastoral care process with a new Head of 6th form doing everything that needed to be done. A suggestion was made regarding offering places to boys in 6th form, as in Finchley Catholic Boys' School where places have been offered to girls, and a question was raised as to whether it was best to retain the identity of girls. A governor said that this conversation had been had

previously, as well as discussions about the viability of a 6th form. The Headteacher responded to this suggestion by telling governors that she was making 6th form viable by reducing subjects and, where possible, amalgamating groups such as Years 12 and 13 for Art, and that she felt the school would be diminished in its purpose without a 6th form.

After discussion, it was agreed that it was better to value quality over quantity with steady growth over a 5-year period towards a 250-strong 6th form. The Headteacher told governors that the school did not have overstaffing issues, as was the case in the previous years. She had been able to use teachers where subjects had been dropped in areas of second specialism to reduce financial issues and others arising from use of Supply staff. **A governor suggested that the current year 9 could be the target cohort.** A suggestion was made that an anonymous questionnaire be handed out on Certificate Evening on 15th November 2017 to establish the reasons for decisions to leave, and also for those new arrivals to the school. Governors were told that the current strategy was working, as borne out by the ALPS 2 score, and **one governor asked for more specific information regarding the relatively poor performance of Physics over a 4-year period.** The Headteacher agreed to speak to the governor outside the meeting.

ACTION: VWR to speak to UN

- 6.6 Further to a query regarding KS4 results, the Headteacher said that English results were phenomenal but that Maths was not what it should be, although not bad nationally. Given that students are taught in mixed ability groups for English but set for Maths, providing students with more personal teaching, girls should be doing better. The Headteacher told governors that she was looking forward to things working differently this year as there was a new team in place which would have an impact. **The Chair wondered if there was an issue around the number of sets or whether more differentiation might be needed.** DJS said that this had been the case previously but had been demoralising and had not led to a sense of achievement. The Headteacher said that the new Acting Head of Maths would be carrying out a review and **the Chair suggested that governors make Maths and Science a key focus for the current academic year.**

ACTION: Governors' focus for 2017-18 to be Maths and Science.

- 6.7 In the Double Science provision, split by core and additional learning, it was noted that students scored lower on core content taught in the previous year than in more recently taught additional content. A restructure of Y11 form groups with specialist Science Tutors would help in allowing teachers to re-visit topics with their form groups and the Headteacher said that teachers were working hard to get through core content by the end of October to allow mock exams to provide a trial run at the 'real-life' exam experience in December. MDY told governors that the school had taken a leap forward this year but that there was room to make more improvement in Maths and Science to bring it more into line with other subjects. In response to a query MDY explained that there had been a bigger split in students taking higher level (57%) and foundation level (43%) papers this year, with the higher level paper requiring an 18% score to achieve a grade of 4. The Headteacher said that 18% was the average across all subjects, whereas the average for Maths was possibly 13% and students needed to be strategically entered for higher or foundation papers to ensure individual success. **The Chair queried the gap in attainment**

for the current year, noting that attainment scores for girls at QE had been greater than the national attainment for disadvantaged pupils. MDY said that the gap had increased by 4% in Foundation level Maths, however it was noted that QE students were outperforming others nationally and were on a par with last year and all were moving up. The Chair said that the overall picture was good and offered congratulations to all concerned.

- 6.8 **A governor asked for an update on the sports hall.** The Headteacher explained that the water issue had been resolved but told governors that the issue with the swimming pool had not although this could be managed. Unfortunately, however, the air unit in the swimming pool was broken and a quote for £30k had been received. It was suggested that any hirers be told that the swimming pool would not be available until January but that they would be kept updated. The roofworks were due to complete on 27 November, although other matters, such as guard rails on the roof, were waiting for permissions which the Barnet Mayor was helping to expedite. Governors were reassured to learn that electronic gates separating the school from the grounds had been fitted making the perimeter safe. Electronic tagging of internal double doors had been completed during the summer break which would allow different zones of the school to be locked down, should this be required, and all staff would be issued with a fob.
- 6.9 **A governor wanted to know if there were any staffing issues.** The Headteacher said that the school was currently advertising for a Head of Maths, an English Teacher, a Textiles Teacher and a Cover Manager. A Facilities Manager was in place and would split his on-site and remote-working time 3 days/2 days per week. **A governor wanted to know why the school was recruiting a Head of Maths now.** The Headteacher explained that the previous Head of Maths had secured a job late in the term so it was felt to be too late to go to advert at that time. A member of the Maths team was currently Acting Head but had said, at the moment, that she did not want the role on a permanent basis.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for her report.

7. Policies for approval

- 7.1 There were currently no policies for approval and the Clerk was asked to compile an updated list of policies.

ACTION: the Clerk to compile an updated list of policies and schedule for review.

8. Governance matters

- 8.1 a) Reconstitution – a reconstitution paper and comments from a lawyer had been circulated to all governors and the Chair said that her preferred option was Option A. Governors were reminded that the prime motivation behind reconstitution was the Government's recommendations, following the Birmingham Trojan Horse matter, to separate the members and Trustees in order to provide an extra layer of safeguarding. Members would appoint Trustees and, more significantly, build in a limited number of terms. For example, 3 terms of 3 years, or 2 terms of 4 years, 4 years being the usual length of a term of office. In addition, it was recommended that the Chair serve no longer than 6 years in the role. The Chair asked governors for their

comments. **A governor wanted to understand the process by which the Governing Board sanctioned obtaining legal advice and asked whether a law firm had been retained by the school.** Governors were told that the school had a retainer with a firm of lawyers based on HR provision who also had a team of specialists in governance. In response to a query concerning when discussions had taken place in respect of decision-making on the use of school funding for legal advice, a governor understood that the Finance Committee would usually take decisions to seek legal advice. The Vice Chair told governors that, in the same way that the Headteacher would take decisions on behalf of the school, the Chair would take Chair's action on behalf of the Governing Board where, as in this case, time was of the essence in respect of reconstitution. Governors were informed that the Chair had invited Committee Chairs, the Vice Chair and the Headteacher to a meeting during the summer term to discuss reconstitution and an executive decision to seek legal advice to ensure that the proposal was within legal guidelines. In response to a question about the costs of changing the Articles of Association written in 2011, the Chair said that she did not think that the cost should prohibit going ahead with best practice. The Chair responded to a question about the role of associate governors on the Governing Board, stating that whilst Associates can be given a vote as a member of a committee, the limitation is that they must be in a minority, for example, 2 Associates and 3 Governors. An Associate may not have a vote on the Governing Board and, in fact, could be considered as advisers who are brought on board for their particular skills or knowledge and/or for a specific project, and for a defined period of time, the term of office for an Associate being from 1 year to 4 years. At present, there was a lack of accounting, building and premises knowledge amongst the Governing Board. **The Chair of the Achievement & Behaviour Committee wondered if there should be a limit on the number of Associates.** The Chair suggested that a process of natural wastage be employed, for example in the case of parent governors where the number was currently large and stated that there should be two elected governors within this category, whilst all other categories would be skills-based appointments. It was suggested, however, that parents with particular in-demand skills by the Governing Board might be appointed as Co-opted governors as, indeed, might members of staff. A question was raised as to whether this was a conflict of interest and, after discussion, it was agreed that it was not. It was stressed, however, that parent governors should not make up more than 49% of the Governing Board and, with the possibility that two Co-opted governors might stand down or their terms of office end, this would lead to the Governing Board being parent-heavy. The Chair asked governors to let her know if they had any contacts with relevant skills that might be approached and a query was raised as to whether the Chair thought there were sufficient numbers of such people within the local community. The Chair said that she had been in touch with some organisations that had put forward CVs of those who had expressed an interest and the existing members would meet shortly to look at these with a view to appointing a minimum of three members. The current arrangement is that the members, Violet Walker, Rebecca Hanley, Debbie Lane, Alan Jenner and Susan Cottam, are also Trustees and it was proposed that the number of members remains at 5 or, as a minimum, 3, with a preference for the former. The separation of both groups will allow for more objectivity and RG offered to stand as a Trustee, adding that he had served on the Governing Board for 10 years and felt that it would be good for the group if he took up a different position. After a lengthy discussion, the Chair proposed that the Governing Board approve the decision to reconstitute and asked if there were any reservations or objections.

As previously mentioned, the Chair's preferred option was A, with a reconstitution date of January 2018. A governor felt that this was ambitious, with which the Chair agreed, adding that it was important that the Governing Board showed that it had adopted best practice recommendations. In response to a question the Chair would suggest a date for a meeting of the Reconstitution Working Group. **A governor was interested in hearing what Staff thought about the proposal particularly as there would no longer be Staff governor representatives on the Governing Board, and wondered if there could be more transparency and openness.**

The Chair said that meetings of the Governing Board were open to anyone who wanted to attend, although without the right to participate in the meeting. The issue of how this information was communicated to staff, parents and others was raised. The Chair agreed that this should be made possible and added that in future all staff should be aware that they could communicate via the three currently named staff governors. Additionally, the Chair suggested that all policies should be sent to staff for information prior to ratification by the Governing Board, allowing time for feedback and any issues to be raised and felt that this could be done through the staff link governor which the Headteacher confirmed was currently the case. It was also agreed that approved minutes of the Governing Board meetings should be displayed in the Staff Room and also on the school website. **A Staff governor felt it would be useful if there were two representatives who could be relied upon and the Chair requested that she be allowed to attend a staff meeting to explain the situation to staff.** The Headteacher reminded governors that she was also a staff governor representative and therefore it was helpful for staff to be aware of that.

The Chair asked for a show of hands in the matter of splitting individuals from being both a Member and a Trustee. **The Members voted unanimously in favour.**

ACTION: the Clerk to ensure copies of approved minutes appear in the Staff Room and on the school website.

- 8.2 b) Reorganisation of Committees – the Chair told governors that her proposal for the reorganisation of committees was that a Governing Board meeting be held each half-term with the School Development Plan (SDP) as the main driver of the meeting to allow governors to check on any changes. This proposal would decrease the number of meetings and increase governors' awareness of what is happening in terms of the school's development and strategy. In addition, 3 Finance Committee meetings, which would be separated from Premises, would take place throughout the year and the Chair suggested that this proposal be trialled from December until the end of the academic year and, if successful, to be continued. A governor felt that whilst this was a good idea, it could mean that there were more agenda items in individual meetings and was concerned about the amount of time available for discussion and opportunities for governors to reflect on their role in terms of peer support and mentoring. The Chair agreed that this needed some further consideration and wanted to ensure that the school's Senior Leadership Team were in agreement with this suggestion. In response to a question the Headteacher said that she felt there was a lot of repetition and overlap in meetings and that fewer meetings with more people in attendance might be preferable. **A governor said that meetings needed to have a strategic focus, rather than discussing operational matters and suggested that there be 7 meetings throughout**

the year with additional link governor responsibilities of termly link visits.

It was suggested that a support group meeting be held to allow governors to report back against the SDP and the Chair proposed that additional meetings be built into the meeting schedule with twice-yearly Open Mornings for governors to have contact with the school during its working day. Another governor asked that meeting papers be circulated earlier to allow time for reading and digesting information. **A governor felt that it was necessary to have committees in which coaching and peer support could be offered but which would be lost within the new structure.** The Chair said that if the reconstitution was agreed she would propose that a working party meet before half-term. After discussion, governors **agreed** to experiment with the new committee structure. The Headteacher said that the Finance and Premises Committee must be a separate committee and could not be subsumed and the Chair would check this with a view to discussing Finances in relation to the school audit.

ACTION: Committees to continue to meet as previously scheduled throughout the autumn term and to trial a new meeting structure from January to July 2018, with a working party to meet by October half-term.

- 8.3 c NGA Code of Conduct – this item had been deferred from the summer term meeting. Governors **agreed** to adopt the NGA Code of Conduct and those present signed a document to show their acceptance.

ACTION: The Clerk would send a copy of the NGA Code of Conduct to those governors not present and would request agreement at the earliest convenience.

- 8.4 d Governor meeting schedule – dates for the Governing Board, AGM and committees had been circulated for the autumn term. The Clerk was requested to check possible meeting dates against the school calendar from January to July 2018, and to share with the Chair prior to circulation to all governors.

- 8.5 e Potential governors - as mentioned previously, the Reconstitution Working Group would review potential governor CVs at a meeting to be arranged shortly.

- 8.6 f Governors noted the end of term of office on 5 June 2017 for Sue Johnstone as a Parent governor.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 **The Chair requested that Communications be added to the SDP as a main point.** It was felt that communications to a range of audiences, including parents and staff, could be improved upon. The Chair told the Headteacher that she understood that the school was concentrating on, and succeeding in, getting things right and felt that this needed to be communicated to parents and others. The Headteacher said that she had told the Chair of governors at their meeting the previous week that she would write to parents after Open Evening to let them know the school's Summer results, attendance and successes of Open Day, how students and staff had settled in to the new year and to remind them of Diary events; the timing of the letter was not raised at that meeting as an issue. The Chair suggested that it was part of the Governing Board's responsibility to raise the issue of communications with the Headteacher and wondered if 'soft' communication, such as letters to thank staff and pupils, or

end of term celebrations, might be used to tell everyone how well they were doing. The Headteacher said that she had thanked staff both at the end of term celebration and had also emailed them. The Headteacher also said she celebrated results on the first day of term with staff and on the next days of the first week as students arrived in assemblies. **A governor wondered if someone with a PR background might be a helpful addition as an Associate governor.** A governor suggested that more communication might create a 'buzz' around staying on into 6th form, with any information to parents regarding trips, clubs and events being welcomed, especially where their own daughter(s) might be involved. The Headteacher and Deputies told the governors that letters and information regarding trips, visits, events and other year group specific information was already sent to the families of relevant year groups and that all such communications are largely emailed home; only very occasionally were letters hand delivered by students and letters sent home are on the website for reference. MDY said that the extra-curricular timetable was currently being compiled. A fortnightly or half-termly newsletter was suggested by a governor in order to report on a range of aspects, possibly including introductions and welcome to new staff, results and (This does not make sense since there would not be news on new staff either fortnightly or half-termly) Governing Board news. Governors were told that a range of communications were used by both students and staff, including taking photographs to accompany student reviews following trips and visits for uploading to the school website, and that digital communications were the future for students. It was the Headteacher's view that a weekly newsletter written by her to families was not the best use of her time regarding communication since there were live news and events updates on both the website news and events page and the school Twitter Feed on the website homepage. The Headteacher said that whenever she writes to families, at least twice each half term, she signposts families to the school website for live news and current events information. The Headteacher also said the Calendar on the website has information regarding events for each day during the whole year, ahead. **A suggestion was made by a governor that a link in an email was more likely to encourage families to access the website and would promote relationship-building between school and families.** The Headteacher said that it was planned to signpost and support families to access the website using screen shots at information evenings; these could be sent home too. An agitated governor stated that good leaders communicate. **The Vice Chair said that the Headteacher had been very successful in improving standards and suggested that governors wanted to see this fact celebrated and shared with families, with regular updates on how things were changing.** It was agreed that newsletters and information might also be sent from the Chair of Governors and the Chair agreed to draft an information update on progress made over the last two years. The Headteacher said she would be writing to all families on Friday 20 September and in the future on the first day of the Autumn term rather than wait for a settling in period. In addition, communications as a point of focus would be included on the SDP according to the governors' request.

ACTION: The Headteacher would write to families on the first day of each Autumn term. The Chair of Governors would draft an information update; the Headteacher would add 'Communications' as a point of focus on the School Development Plan and remove this once it was agreed that communications overall had improved.

Part 2 (Confidential) business

13. Confidential matters

13.1 There were no confidential matters to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Summary of action points

Action (and relevant section of minutes)	Owner
To provide destinations of Year 11 leavers (6.4)	DJ
Headteacher to speak to governor regarding progress and achievement (6.5)	VW
Governors' focus for 2017-18 to be Maths and Science (6.6)	All
Clerk to compile an updated list of policies and a schedule for review (7.1)	Clerk
Clerk to ensure copies of approved minutes appear in the Staff Room and on the school website (8.1 a)	Clerk
Committees to meet as scheduled for the autumn term. New meeting structure to be trialled from January 2018. A working party to meet by October half-term (8.2 b)	Chair/Clerk
Clerk to send NGA Code of Conduct to governors not present for agreement (8.3 c)	Clerk
Headteacher to write to families on the first day of the Autumn term. Chair of Governors to draft information update; Headteacher to include 'Communications' on SDP (9.1)	Headteacher/Chair

Outstanding items from Dec 2016 meeting

Action (and relevant section of minutes)	Owner
Consider creation of standalone Scheme of Delegation document from financial procedures, ToRs etc (and decisions of GB for anything where there is currently no formal agreement regarding delegation) (10.7)	Chair and Headteacher (in liaison with Clerk, Finance Team, governors)