

Minutes
Surrey and Sussex (SAS) Hub LGB Meeting
26 November 2020 at 4 pm
Held virtually via GoToMeeting

Present: Ken Cowdery, Chair (KC)
 Leigh Edser, Governor (LE)
 Andrew Falk, Governor (AF)
 Diana Puica, Staff Governor (DP)
 Dafydd Roberts, Principal, Brantridge School (DR)
 Julian Short, Governor (JS)
 Janet Tremble, Principal, Grafham Grange School (JT)
 Mike Wood, Governor (MW)

In attendance: Vicky Perry, Deputy Headteacher, St Dominic's School (VP)
 Sarah Baker, Parent Governor (Brantridge) Designate (SB)
 Sian Clarke, Management Accountant (SC)
 Susanne Wicks, Clerk (SW)

1.	Opening	
1.1	<p>Attendees and apologies for absence</p> <p>KC welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular SB who would be appointed parent governor by the Board of Trustees in December. He outlined some ground rules to be followed by all participants to ensure the virtual meeting ran smoothly.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Amme Hayter, Sherie Harris, Angela Drayton, Cath Drummond and Liz Simmons.</p> <p>Martin Lowthian did not attend the meeting.</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> <p>The clerk undertook to contact those who have not completed an annual return.</p>	SW
1.4	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 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>Matters arising were circulated with the papers for the meeting.</p>	
2.	Governance	

2.1	<p>Chair's report</p> <p>KC shared his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and highlighted some key points as follows:</p> <p>Angela Drayton has given notice of her retirement at the end of this academic year. Governors agreed to celebrate her time at the school at a future meeting when she is able to attend.</p> <p>Three Governors will stand down at the end of this term: Liz Simmons, who has been finance governor for about five years does not wish to be reappointed; Cath Drummond, whose term as a parent governor (Brantridge) will end in December; and Andrew Falk, who will not seek reappointment when his term ends in December.</p> <p>KC thanked Liz and Cath for their hard work and commitment over the years.</p> <p>KC reported that Andrew has been involved with St Dominic's School for over ten years, as a clerk then a Governor and KC thanked him, not only for his tremendous work as a Governor but also, from a personal perspective, as a support to him in his role as Chair.</p> <p>VP advised that the school wanted to commemorate the amazing contribution made by AF to the school community so have decided to introduce the Andrew Falk Award for Community Contribution to the annual prizegiving which will be awarded to a Key Stage 4 student.</p> <p>AF thanked both KC and VP for their kind words and wished all three schools well for the future.</p> <p>There were no questions or comments.</p>	
2.2	<p>Governance Arrangements / Targets</p> <p>See item 7.3.</p>	
2.3	<p>Skills Audit Analysis</p> <p>The clerk would contact any Governor who had not completed an annual skills audit form.</p>	SW
2.4	<p>Governor training/development</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
2.5	<p>Keeping Children Safe in Education Updates</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
2.6	<p>Governance Handbook October 2020.</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
2.7	<p>Chair and Vice-Chair Recommendations to the OHCAT Board</p> <p>It was unanimously agreed to recommend the appointment of Ken Cowdery as Chair and Julian Short as Vice Chair of the LGB for the academic year 2020-21</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 noted that much continues to be dominated by the impact of Covid-19 and the schools’ response to it.</p> <p>Another issue emerging as schools become more and more embedded into the OHCAT family is that all schools understand and contribute to the organisation’s overall ethos and vision. KC noted that the LGB may pick up on that later in the year. The current OHC&AT strategy and a useful one-page summary can be viewed on GovernorHub.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop the three to five-year plans and KC will work with Principals over the next couple of terms to identify how schools can shape their own strategies as part of developing their curriculum and resources.</p>	KC
	<p><u>Portfolio 2 – Teaching & Learning</u></p> <p>No further comment.</p>	
	<p><u>Portfolio 3 – Finance and Resources</u></p> <p>KC reported that he led on this portfolio with some support from JS. There was some discussion on the impact of Covid-19 upon finances and it was positive to note that schools benefitted financially due to savings made on budgeted expenditure including staffing, curriculum and operating costs. However, this academic year will see increased expenditure due to the pandemic, for example on PPE and the cost of mitigating higher levels of staff sickness absence. Those costs will be recorded appropriately so that any negative impact on the budget later in the year may be seen in context.</p>	
	<p><u>Portfolio 4 – Health & Safety, Child Protection & Safeguarding</u></p> <p>LE confirmed that she had been able to visit Grafham Grange School and would visit Brantridge School before Christmas. She thanked both schools for sharing information and responding to questions.</p> <p>AF had nothing to add to his report other than to flag that there were no issues causing concern.</p>	LE
	<p><u>PF5 – Business Development & Marketing</u></p> <p>JS detailed the numbers on roll at each school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brantridge School: 41 on roll, three offers pending • Grafham Grange School: 46 on roll, one more to start soon, one application pending. • St Dominic’s School: 149 on roll and one assessment underway. <p>JS commended all three schools for continuing with assessments and admissions in very challenging circumstances.</p>	
	<p><u>PF6 –HR & OD</u></p> <p>KC had covered this portfolio. He emphasised how well staff have coped through the pandemic despite the high levels of absence but noted that Governors must be mindful of</p>	

	<p>the additional stress they are facing, although there have been additional measures put in place to support their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>DP reported that, at Brantridge School, staff have welcomed the changes made to reduce pressure on them, particularly the suspension of formal lesson observations. JT reported that at Graham Grange, lesson observations have continued but no negative impact has been observed and she felt it was important to give support where needed.</p> <p>DP confirmed that each school has adopted Edupod this academic year, but it is currently only available to limited members of staff at this point. KC noted that he looks forward to seeing the software in action, which will assist the schools' mental health leads to plan, manage and evaluate their mental health support strategy.</p> <p>KC sought feedback from Principals on how staff have coped during the pandemic and both JT and VP commended their staff for their hard work and resolve during this difficult time, working cohesively and flexibly to ensure minimum impact on students and the continued smooth delivery of the curriculum.</p>	
3.2	Pay Committee Recommendations	
	KC confirmed the Committee, comprising he and JS met on 8 and 15 October. The information presented by Principals ahead of the meeting was very comprehensive and both KC and JS were assured that the processes adopted by schools were robust and compliant with relevant policies.	
4	Procedure Approvals	
4.1	OHCAT Policy Updates	
	Governors noted the policies agreed by the OHCAT Board in July 2020.	
4.2	Procedures Requiring Approval	VP DR JT
	KC confirmed that he has asked Principals to create a programme of local policies and procedures for LGB to sign off by next LGB meeting.	
5.	School Principals' Reports and Dashboards	
	KC welcomed comments and questions.	
5.1	Brantridge Report / Dashboard	
	No further questions or comments raised.	
5.2	Grafham Grange Report / Dashboard	
	No further questions or comments raised.	
5.3	St Dominic's Report / Dashboard	
	No further questions or comments raised.	
6.	School Finances and Funding	
6.1	Brantridge Final Accounts 2019-20 and September Management Accounts	
	KC flagged that the school ended the year with a financial health grade of 'Outstanding' which shows remarkable progress over the last few years. SC also reported that the	

	<p>OHCAT Reserves Policy has been amended and the target number of days' reserves has been reduced from 90 to 45-60.</p> <p>With regard to the September management accounts report, Governors acknowledged that relatively little can be discerned just one month in but noted that the increased student roll would be factored into the budget going forward.</p> <p>KC suggested that the year-end target might be more challenging to achieve due to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, but DR reassured Governors that it's not unachievable. SC reported that a year-end surplus is budgeted, and the current deficit position is due to the implementation of some one-to-one support required for a student on a short-term basis, so the position should be better in next month's report.</p> <p>Noting the relatively low ratio of expenditure on staffing, LE asked if DR has any concerns about current levels of staffing. DR replied that there some vacancies to be filled and recruitment is underway. The key challenge for staff at the moment is covering colleagues' absence rather than vacant posts. When all posts are filled, the percentage spend will increase.</p> <p>DR confirmed that consideration is being given on how to spend some of the reserves for the benefit of the students and outlined plans to introduce some animals to the school in January, for both enrichment and therapy, which would also be a real attraction for prospective families. He confirmed that staff are soon to undertake training and are benefitting from advice from colleagues at Nightingale Community Academy which has a working farm.</p>	
6.2	<p>Grafham Grange Final Accounts 2019-20 and September Management Accounts</p> <p>KC noted that this school also ended the year with a financial health grade of 'Outstanding' which also represents remarkable progress over the last few years.</p> <p>With regard to levels of staffing, JT advised that the school did not fill one vacant post last year in order to make savings, but all posts are now filled, and staffing levels are appropriate.</p> <p>As admissions increase, JT will seek to spend some of the reserves to support the curriculum, purchase a new minibus and carry out works to the premises. The works include moving the Music Room and converting the bungalows into five classrooms to enable the school to accommodate up to 70 children. JT will also be exploring the submission of a CIF bid to cover the cost of £125 - £140K. In addition, some works will be needed to adapt the toilet and changing facilities in readiness for co-ed provision.</p> <p>LE suggested that JT contact the Rotary Club about part-funding a minibus. JS suggested she also contact a local Ford dealership to see if they might donate a minibus.</p>	
6.3	<p>St Dominic's Final Accounts 2019-20 and September Management Accounts</p> <p>KC noted that this school ended the year with a financial health grade of 'Good'.</p> <p>LE asked about plans to spend some of the reserves and VP reported that a CIF bid has been approved for the transformation of the Lodge for the use by the Sixth Form. In addition, the school will be improving the perimeter fencing and a conversion of Phoenix House is planned. Furthermore, there will be works needed to Science, IT and Food Tech classrooms as part of the expansion of the curriculum offer.</p>	

	<p>Noting the lower than budgeted expenditure on staffing, LE sought reassurance that the levels are sufficient and VP advised that there are quite high numbers of agency staff, some of whom may become permanent. She advised that staffing levels are healthier than the ratio would suggest and that some posts are being kept vacant as part of the restructure, on which VP is working alongside the Deputy CEO, Laurie Cornwell.</p>	
7.	Strategic Matters for Review / Discussion	
7.1	<p>Updates on covid-19 arrangements/planning for autumn and spring term</p> <p><u>Brantridge School</u></p> <p>DR reported that there have been no cases of Covid-19 in the school community and praised all staff for their resilience and willing approach. They have welcomed changes and proved their ability to work flexibly, adapting their practice where required. Student attendance has been good.</p> <p>Most of the groundwork to ensure a safe and smooth return to school in September was done in June, with just a few tweaks made.</p> <p>SB confirmed that her child feels safe in school and she praised the levels of information and feedback provided by the school.</p> <p><u>Grafham Grange School</u></p> <p>JT reported that there were three confirmed cases of Covid-19 at the end of the October half-term which led to a partial closure in first week back. It was decided that Years 10 and 11 should stay at home and the other year groups were rotated to manage the absence of 50% of staff. JT noted that there was no negative feedback from families following the partial closure and regular contact was maintained with students during that time, including doorstep visits when needed. SLT decided not to implement a bubble system due to risks it may exacerbate some students' anxiety.</p> <p>JT noted the need to keep everyone as safe as possible in the run-up to Christmas to try and minimise the need for self-isolation over the Christmas break and into the new term.</p> <p><u>St Dominic's School</u></p> <p>VP reported that, in terms of the safe operation of the school, much remained the same as it had been in the summer term. However, after half-term a phased response to confirmed cases was implemented and the school was very clear with staff, students and families on the changes to be made. VP noted the important of clear communication with families to alleviate anxiety and confirmed that would continue.</p> <p>VP reported that the student transport provided by Surrey CC and Bracknell DC does not always allow social distancing and the school has written to both this week to alert them to the impact of their failure to follow the rules. JS recommended VP write to the appropriate Cabinet Member to resolve this issue and he and VP undertook to discuss this further outside of the meeting.</p> <p>JS commended the efforts of staff and welcomed the daily communication from the school to keep parents in the loop. LE echoed those comments, noting that the school has struck the right balance in terms of communication.</p>	VP & JS
7.2	Principals' 90 second Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer Presentations	

	<p>At the invitation of the Chair, DR, JT and VP gave a short presentation outlining their school’s Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer. KC welcomed comments and questions.</p> <p>SB confirmed that she receives regular contact from the school and particularly welcomed the support given by the Mental Health Adviser. She noted that the school is pragmatic in its approach to therapy, evaluating where something does or does not have an impact and making changes where appropriate.</p> <p>DP expressed her view that DR had described the Offer very well and noted that teachers work together to achieve the best outcomes for each pupil. If something doesn’t work, they move on to something else.</p> <p>MW stated that, in his view, all three Offers were robust and appropriate for the setting.</p> <p>JS confirmed that, from his perspective as a parent, VP’s presentation was an accurate description and reflected his experience. He welcomed the regular communication from his child’s teacher whose approach is very supportive when issues arise.</p> <p>KC made some general comments about the high quality of all three Offers which gave some reassurance to Governors, particularly at a time when they could not visit the schools. He encouraged Principals to celebrate both the Wellbeing and Safeguarding aspects of their offer, as they are so closely linked.</p> <p>LE asked how students are made aware of what is available for them and JT reported that safeguarding is discussed openly so they know how they are kept safe. DP gave an example of how her class had a discussion recently about counselling and those engaged in counselling shared their experience with their classmates. This helped to remove any stigma and supported those who may be apprehensive about accessing support. SB noted that therapy must be seen as supportive rather than punitive and welcomed the open approach to discussing it.</p> <p>VP highlighted the need to have a flexible needs-led curriculum which can be adapted as when needed to meet the challenges students may present. She noted the value in daily tutor time every day where common themes and issues are addressed. She confirmed that the Safeguarding Team has a high profile in school and the boys know how to access help.</p> <p>All Principals undertook to send their Local Offer to the clerk for uploading to GovernorHub.</p>	<p>VP DR JT</p>
<p>7.3</p>	<p>Discussion: Effectiveness of SAS Hub Model</p>	
	<p>KC asked Governors to consider the effectiveness of the current model of the LGB in the context of the number of vacancies and the absence of a regional leadership structure. He raised two key questions for discussion and points discussed are summarised below.</p> <p>1. Without a regional leadership team, is a joint LGB still appropriate?</p> <p>KC gave a brief history to the formation of a joint LGB, noting that the regional portfolio leads did not have the time to give to the LGB, so portfolio meetings were carried out individually at each of the three schools.</p> <p>LE commented that LGB meetings at Dysart School are the same duration as this LGB’s meetings and noted the benefits to learning how different schools are dealing with things, which could be equally useful for Principals. She acknowledged that covering three</p>	

	<p>schools may be challenging for portfolio work but noted that she had not found it too onerous to cover two schools during this term.</p> <p>DP echoed LE's comments, stating that she felt the current structure worked really well and it was useful to see how other schools operate and face challenges.</p> <p>JT pointed out that all three Principals keep the information they provide very concise and welcomed the chance to hear from DR and VP.</p> <p>JS echoed the comments, agreeing that the three-school model was working well. He suggested that portfolio meetings could be combined (either in terms of school or portfolio areas) to save time, and VP supported that suggestion. LE pointed out that this could work in some areas but may not be appropriate for safeguarding and teaching & learning.</p> <p>KC suggested lots of reasons why they work better separately. 1,3 and 5 fit in well together so could be taken at one meeting. SG does not.</p> <p>2. How do we manage whilst we are lower in governors?</p> <p>KC outlined his suggestion to introduce two working groups to cover the six portfolio areas and Governors agreed this could be a good way to manage LGB business whilst additional Governors were recruited. KC, JS and LE would discuss this further outside of the meeting.</p>	KC LE JS
8.	Calendar	
8.1	<p>Calendar of LGB and Portfolio Meetings</p> <p>Governors approved the calendar for 2020-21, noting that there may be some changes in the light of the previous discussion.</p>	
9	Any Other Business	
9.1	No items were raised.	
9.2	KC wished all Governors and staff a pleasant and happy Christmas.	

The meeting closed at 6.05 pm.

Signed: Date:

Ken Cowdery, Chair of LGB