

BEAUMONT SCHOOL (Company Number 8104190)
MINUTES OF MEETING OF GOVERNORS HELD ON
Thursday 26th May 2016 at 7.00pm

Governors Present:

Alison Wallis (“AWa”) (Chair), Liz Hitch (“EHi”) (items 7 – 16), Martin Atkinson (“MAAt”), Mike Cameron (“MCA”), Gary Kellett (“GKe”), Lianne Sherwood (“LSH”), Ian Johnston (“IJo”) (items 8 - 16), Catherine Hopkin (“CHo”), Torie Stewart (“VSt”), Cate Davies (“CDa”), Natalie Moody (“NMo”), David Lee (“DLe”), Karen Trounson (“KTr”), Rena Prindiville (“RPr”) and Hannah Henry (“HHe”).

In attendance:

Simone Kilka-Green (“SKi”)

Clerk to the Governing Body

Actions Agreed at the meeting:

	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
1	HHe to review the school’s complaints file and report to the next meeting.	HHe	Next meeting
2	AWa to pursue the discussions further with JMI about the best way to put the proposal on self-evaluation into effect.	AWa/JMI	For the next meeting
3	MCA to prepare a further paper for the July FGB meeting regarding the existing Multi-Academy Trust structures, to be circulated as an early paper so that questions can be circulated by email in advance of the meeting.	MCA	ASAP
4	EHi to ensure that a statement is put on the website that parents should contact the school if they need any additional support in accessing school events and information and also that an up to date version of the Action Plan is put on the website.	EHi	ASAP

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Alex Hall (“AHa”) and John McAlister (“JMI”); consent was given to their absence. All other Governors were present at the meeting. Liz Hitch and Ian Johnston had both sent apologies for anticipated late arrival at the meeting.

In AHa’s absence as Chair of Governors it was agreed that AWa would chair the meeting.

2. Declaration of any conflict of interest foreseen in relation to agenda items

and undertaking to declare any that arises in the course of the meeting- Governors were reminded that anyone with a conflict of interest must declare it, withdraw from the meeting and take no part in any discussion or decision on the matter. None were declared.

Actions

3. To receive notification of any other business for item 15

No business was raised.

4. Approval of minutes of the meeting on 15th March 2016 (including Part 2 minutes) and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 15th March 2016 were agreed as drafted.

The action points from the meeting were considered as follows:

	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Update
1	Parent Governor vacancy to be discussed at the next meeting.	FGB	Next meeting	On agenda.
2	The issue of whether e-safety training for Governors is needed to be reviewed at the next meeting.	FGB	Next meeting	On agenda.
3	SKi to send out by email the amended notes of the Extended Meeting on 24 th February 2016 to Governors for their information.	SKi	ASAP	Completed.
4	JWe to be requested to include a breakdown of interest payable to HCC within the Project Budget.	SKi/JWe	ASAP	Completed.
5	Governors to email any suggestions for the self-evaluation of the Governors and the Governing Body after the meeting.	All	ASAP	Completed and on agenda.
6	Freedom of Information Policy, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and Privacy Notice to be reviewed at the next meeting.	FGB	Next meeting	On agenda.
7	CTL Committee to appoint a new SEN Governor at its next meeting.	CTL Committee	Next CTL meeting	Completed, LSh has taken on the role.

The Part 2 confidential minutes from the meeting on 15th March 2016 were also approved as drafted.

5. Student and House Leadership Update

It was noted that an email update on student and house leadership had been sent out before the meeting by email. Governors thanked Laura Hawkins for her work on that.

6. Committee reports and updates:

A. Resources

Governors had considered the minutes of the last Committee meeting which had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were no questions arising.

B. Community, Teaching and Learning

Governors had considered the minutes of the last Committee meeting which had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were no questions arising.

7. FAB Project

a) Update (verbal) on the progress of the FAB Project

b) Consideration of the updated Project Budget

Governors had considered the detailed update which had been sent out by AHa by email in advance of the meeting, together with the Project Budget spreadsheet.

MAt reported that in relation to the ongoing discussion over certain changes proposed by RLF/Ashe to address an issue with the calculation of certain costs/fees (which relate to double-counting when factoring the value engineering exercise into the contract sum), a meeting was held on Tuesday with RLF who explained out how the double-counting/matriculation errors arose. MAt informed Governors that at the meeting RLF did not

propose a solution to deal with the mistake, and suggested that the error was not identified by the consultant team – it was however accepted by RLF that the school had no responsibility for it. RLF were asked by the school to provide a proposal as to how this will be remedied.

EHi arrived at the meeting.

It was noted that Julie Wells (the School Business Manager) has done outstanding work on this project and it was as a result of her questioning the figures repeatedly, until she was provided with a satisfactory answer, that this error came to light.

The school's approach to this was discussed and as a point of principle it was noted that the school is not prepared to (and cannot) meet any additional cost itself, and this has been made very clear to RLF. SKi reported that the project manager has put forward a proposal and offered to attend this meeting to explain the position to Governors. Governors agreed that the FAB group has been doing an excellent job on this, it has the position in hand and Governors supported that continuing.

On the other areas of the project, MAt reported that Ashe is still on target for the school to have beneficial occupation of the new classrooms on 15th August 2016.

SKi reported that just as the meeting commenced an email was received from Lambert Smith Hampton informing the school that Charles Church had signed the S106 Agreement that day. It was agreed that this was excellent news and a step in the right direction. It will release the S73 planning consent which will then enable the school to regularise its reserved matters planning consent.

The timing of the construction of the access road was discussed. It was noted that this is in the hands of Charles Church and HCC has no idea why Charles Church has been delaying on this project for so long. The impact on the school's ability to access the car park (necessitating further work (and costs) in constructing an access through the school site) and the impact on the school's ability to let the new facilities commercially, were noted with disappointment. It was also noted that as the school is not a party to the contract between HCC and Charles Church it is unable to take any steps to seek to progress the access road. The longstop date in the purchase contract is December 2016 and HCC will not take any enforcement steps until after that date.

Governors were pleased to note that the contingency is still holding and thanked the FAB group for all its work.

8. Chair's Update including:

a) Update on BSV and STASSH discussions on Educational Trusts

EHi confirmed that discussions within the BeauSandVer consortium for a BSV Trust continue. The solicitor instructed by the 3 schools (at a shared cost of £2,000) has produced draft articles of association, which SKi and AHa have reviewed in detail.

The principle is that the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at each of the three schools will be the directors of the trust company, the trust will not have any powers in relation to the individual schools and all decisions have to be unanimous. It was noted that when the articles are finalised they will be brought to an FGB meeting for approval.

EHi explained that it is not anticipated that the existence of the trust will change the current arrangements, it is being viewed as a formalising of the existing arrangements and it can be used for marketing purposes. It was noted that there will not be any financial advantage for the three schools.

IJo arrived at the meeting.

EHi reported that the St Albans and Harpenden secondary schools (STASSH schools) continue with the discussions about setting up a St Albans Trust, and there was a meeting of Heads and Chairs of Governors in May to discuss this further which LSh attended. EHi expressed the view that this will be a longer process than the BeauSandVer discussions as there are many more schools involved.

It was noted that the perceived benefit of a STASSH trust is also in relation to marketing as the St Albans and Harpenden Schools brand is very strong.

b) Parent Governor Election, results of the last election and discussion and agreement on the timescale for the next election

It was noted that there had been some exchanges of emails amongst Governors following the parent Governor election process in March. Concerns were expressed about what was perceived to be a small proportion of parents casting votes, and questions were raised about whether this was partly due to the way in which the voting is administered and the requirement for double envelopes etc.

SKi had sent an email with a detailed analysis of the way in which the election is administered and in particular the fact that because the voting has to be secret under the articles of association, the double envelope system is the only way to achieve that. It was noted that the numbers of votes from parents was as high as, or possibly higher, than at other schools.

It was agreed that the current election system would therefore continue.

The resignation of a parent Governor during the last election process was discussed and it was agreed that in order to open up the election to the parents of the incoming Year 7 students joining in September 2016, it would be fairest to delay the next election until the Autumn Term when KTr has agreed to hold the election for her position, slightly earlier than the current end of her term of office.

The provision in the articles of association which states that the total number of Governors (including the Principal and any Deputy Headteacher(s)) who are employees of the Academy Trust shall not exceed one third of the total number of Governors was discussed. It was noted that the current position is that there are 5 community, 6 parent and 6 staff Governors in post.

SKi confirmed that the articles of association do not state the effect of being in breach of this provision. All decisions of the Governing Body remain valid and have full effect. SKi reported that the advice from the solicitor at the time that the articles were drafted was that a breach of this provision did not have any effect but that it was a position that the Governing Body should seek to rectify.

It was noted and agreed that when the parent Governor election is held in the Autumn Term then the position will be rectified.

c) Appointment of a Governor to review the school's complaints file and report to the FGB

HHe volunteered to take on this role and that was unanimously agreed. HHe agreed to review the complaints file and report to the next meeting. *HHe*

d) Discussion of ways to carry out a self-evaluation of the Governors and the Governing Body

It was noted that following the last FGB meeting a suggestion had been put forward by JMI on how to carry out a self-evaluation of Governors and the Governing Body which had been circulated to Governors by email before the meeting as follows:

- the chair allocates pairs of Governors to interview each other with the aim of splitting non-execs and execs, elected and non-elected etc.;
- ahead of - or just after - a formal management meeting, the pair meet for 10-15 minutes and run through a short questionnaire;
- each Governor asks the other something like;
'tell me [three] things you feel you have contributed to Beaumont's Governance team',
'tell me [three] things you feel you could do to improve how you contribute',
'tell me [three] things we might do better as a team';
- the responses are written up, agreed and sent to the chair;
- the chair and Head review from exec/non-exec perspective and feedback collectively or individually,

as appropriate, taking care to build on the interview points only.

- The process is repeated every 6 months but the pairs are changed.

This suggestion was discussed at length and it was agreed that whilst an opportunity for self-reflection is valuable, the process should not be time consuming and bureaucratic and if it can be combined with another event such as the annual Extended Meeting then that would be preferable. It was also agreed that the purpose of the self-evaluation should be clear as it is not intended to be a process that evaluates the individual contributions made by Governors.

AWa agreed to pursue the discussions further with JMI about the best way to put the proposal into effect.

AWa/JMI

e) Discussion of changing the times of FGB meetings to commence at 6.30pm and dates for meetings in 2016-17

EHi reported that the meeting dates for 2016-17 are being finalised and will be distributed to Governors after half term.

The proposal to change the timings of FGB meetings to 6.30pm instead of 7pm was discussed, it being noted that it was proposed on the basis that later meetings can at times lead to a reduction in the quality of the discussions due to tiredness.

Some Governors indicated that this would cause them issues in returning from work in London, and also with childcare, and it was noted that this has to be balanced against the fact that late meetings mean that it is a very long day for school staff.

After a long debate the following was agreed:

- FGB meetings will commence at 6.45pm; Committee meetings will commence at 6.30pm.
- Chairs will try to ensure that all meetings are for a maximum of 2 hours and one way of achieving that is that comments on policies will be circulated by email in advance of the meetings.
- Timings will be included on agendas to assist Chairs in ensuring that the meetings do not overrun.

The position will be reviewed periodically to check whether these measures are working.

9. Head's Report

EHi updated Governors on the SEC2 programme, which is HCC's school expansion programme. EHi reported that at the HCC Cabinet meeting on 16th May the expansion of the school by 30 students with effect from September 2018 was approved. Approval was also given for Hitchin Girls' School and Hitchin Boys' School to each expand by an additional 45 students, and Rickmansworth School by an additional 30 students, all with effect from September 2018.

EHi explained that the next stage of the process is for:

- a) the school to negotiate the terms of a Funding Agreement with HCC, that is in the process of being drafted by HCC's lawyers and is expected very soon. EHi and MAt are due to meet with the HCC Officer concerned on 15th June.
- b) the school also needs to seek the consent of the EFA to the expansion and although several attempts have been made to contact the EFA to find out about the process, the EFA has not yet responded. EHi confirmed that she will pursue that.
- c) the school will also need to consult with stakeholders about the increase in the PAN with effect from September 2018.

It was noted that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting are on the HCC website and it is therefore in the public domain but it was agreed that, until the position with the EFA has been resolved, the school will not make any public announcements.

Governors had considered the SEF and supporting documents which had been circulated before the meeting and had no comments. Governors had also reviewed the draft Plan for School Improvement (“PSI”) for 2016-17 which had also been distributed prior to the meeting. EHi confirmed that she and the Leadership Team are happy with how the PSI has been drafted and how it fits within the committees’ monitoring. It was agreed that the PSI draft will be reviewed in detail and approved by each of the Committees at their next meetings.

EHi encouraged Governors to attend the various events next term including the Drama Club Lower School Show on the 14th and 23rd June, the Sports Awards on 22nd June (to which Governors have been invited), Rob’s Festival on the 25th June, the Summer Concert at St Paul’s Church on the 19th July and Sports Day on the 18th July.

Governors had noted the email sent before the meeting about the remembrance ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the coach crash in France involving students from Beaumont and Verulam schools.

EHi reported that the school is currently fully staffed for September, it was noted that the deadline for teachers’ resignations is not until 31st May.

10. Multi-academy trusts – discussion of the school’s options

Governors had considered the detailed paper prepared by MCa in which the different trust arrangements open to the school are set out and the structure explained. It was agreed that this is a very complex area and Governors thanked MCa for the paper, which is very clear.

There then followed a lengthy debate about the issues raised in the paper and the following points were made:

- As an outstanding school there is an argument that the school should be working with other schools to share best practice and the significant question is how long can the school maintain itself as a Single Academy Trust (“SAT”) and what are the risks to the school of remaining a SAT?
- Given the political agenda in this area, it is possible that unless the school decides how it wishes to proceed in the short term, then the options open to it will be reduced as all the other schools in the country will be having similar discussions. The school may then have no option but to join another Multi-Academy Trust (“MAT”) at which time its ability to influence how that has been set up would be reduced, or non-existent. On the other hand the school may prefer to join an existing MAT. It was generally agreed that the school should be in a position to take advantage of early opportunities if they present themselves.
- There is funding (in the region of £50-100,000) available to schools who set themselves up as a MAT with a view to becoming a sponsor. It was noted that some schools have set themselves up in that structure but have not yet taken on another school within it, but they have defined the parameters of e.g. how many other schools could join the MAT.
- The stated aim of the Government in encouraging schools to form MATs is to encourage schools to be ‘successful and sustainable’ however it is not clear how many schools need to be part of a MAT for that to be achieved. It was agreed that some modelling could be done to find that out what level that is and it was noted that some of the bigger MATs have failed, so getting the right size is crucial. The Government has suggested that 5000 students is sustainable i.e. 4 schools the size of Beaumont or 12-16 primary schools.
- The biggest issue for the school at the current time is that there is no capacity within the current Leadership Team to work on this or to consider sponsoring another school. It was agreed that it is not sensible to alter the school’s status, and add complexity to its structure, unless there is a financial or other gain for the school. It was noted that the practicalities of forming a MAT with other schools should not be under-estimated, for example each school may work on different financial and other systems all of which would have to be integrated.
- The Umbrella Academy Trust option has the advantage of each school retaining autonomy and separate funding agreements but then the success of that will depend on the individual funding arrangements.

It was agreed that this is a very complex area and is not just for the Governing Body to decide, the school needs to be in agreement with the approach. Governors were concerned to ensure that the school is in control

of its own future which means taking a strategic decision as soon as possible on the way forward. The importance of this decision is also underlined by the fact that once a school has entered into a MAT it loses its own separate legal identity and cannot leave that MAT without a direction from the Secretary of State.

It was agreed that the Governing Body and Leadership Team need to look carefully at where they want the school to be in 5 years time so that a decision can be made on:

1. Whether the school should remain a SAT or be part of a MAT, either one that the school forms or by joining an existing MAT; and
2. What other schools the school would want to be in a MAT with.

The agreed aim was to decide the way forward in July, it being noted that this may be a decision on which it is not possible for the Governors to make a unanimous decision, and it may have to be taken on a vote.

MCa agreed to prepare a further paper for the July FGB meeting regarding the existing MAT structures so that that can be considered further. It was agreed that this paper will be sent out as early as possible before the next FGB meeting so that questions can be raised and discussed by email. *MCa*

EHi reported that the question of MATs has been discussed at STASSH meetings. The general view expressed there is that schools are not rushing into making a decision on the way forward.

Governors thanked MCa for his excellent work on the paper.

11. Safeguarding – update

AWa confirmed that, as Safeguarding Governor, she audited that the school's Single Central Record on 24th February 2016 and found it to be up to date. It has also been audited by HCC.

AWa informed Governors that there has been a focus by Ofsted on ensuring that all employees in schools have 2 references on file. It was noted that this is not a legal requirement but it is something which Ofsted has required of schools. EHi confirmed that most staff have 2 references on file. A character reference is being sought for those employed on or after 1990 who do not have a reference on file. Earlier than 1990 is too historic and is felt to be of little value.

Governors agreed that the school's approach is sensible and it was endorsed by the Governors.

AWa reported that the school holds weekly meetings on safeguarding and all child protection cases in the school are carefully monitored. EHi reported that there are no issues on safeguarding which Governors need to be aware of.

12. Update on the progress of the Equality Objectives Action Plan and approval of the update Action Plan

Governors had considered the Action Plan, which is an appendix to the school's Single Equality Scheme, a copy of which was distributed at the meeting.

EHi reported that on the two actions within the plan:

1. Ensure that parents who speak English as an Additional Language are able to access all school events and information – this will be addressed by the addition of a statement on the school website to the effect that parents should contact the school if they need any additional support. EHi will ensure that is put on the website and that an up to date version of the Action Plan is put on the website. *EHi*
2. Increase access to disabled toilets in school – this is in the process of being addressed as part of the FAB project.

13. Policies – consideration and approval of the following policies (bearing in mind the responsibility to carry out an equality impact assessment in accordance with the school's Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010):

a) Freedom of Information Publication Scheme (due March 2016) – also incorporating the previous Freedom of Information Policy

Governors had considered the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme which had been distributed prior to the meeting. It was agreed that there was no need for an additional Freedom of Information Policy and the publication scheme was approved as drafted with one amendment to refer to the Staff Code of Conduct instead of the Staff Conduct Policy.

b) Privacy Notice (due March 2016)

Governors had considered the Privacy Notice which had been distributed prior to the meeting. The notice was approved as drafted.

c) Whistleblowing Policy (due June 2016) (recommended by the Resources Committee)

Governors had considered the Whistleblowing Policy, which had been recommended for approval by the Resources Committee, and had been distributed prior to the meeting. The policy was approved as drafted.

d) Safer Recruitment Policy (due June 2016)

Governors had considered the Safer Recruitment Policy which had been distributed prior to the meeting. The policy was approved as drafted, with a review date of June 2017 to bring the review in line with Herts for Learning's review date.

It was agreed that none of the policies/documents approved at the meeting have any disproportionate benefit or detriment and do not contain any discriminatory statements or adverse impacts. A statement to this effect will be included in the documents as confirmation they have undergone an equality impact assessment in accordance with the school's Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

14. Governor Development Co-ordinator Update and discussion of whether Governors need esafety training

LSh reported that exclusions and safeguarding training is mostly up to date, those Governors who need training have either booked a course or plan to do so.

It was noted that Ofsted's expectation is that all Governors will have had PREVENT training. This is because it is seen as a safeguarding matter. SKi confirmed that there will be sessions held at the school which Governors can join and she will email the dates to Governors when they are fixed.

The question of whether training was required on esafety was discussed. It was agreed that Governors are well informed of how the school deals with this and so a training session is not necessary.

15. To receive any other business as notified in item 3

There was no additional business raised.

16. Date of next meeting

FGB – Wednesday 13th July 2016 and 7pm

There being no further business, AWa declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Signed:
Chair of Governors

Dated:.....