

**Meeting Minutes for the Board of Governors Meeting
Swanmore College 2024/25
16th December 2024
via ‘Teams’**

Present	In attendance	Apologies
Kyle Evans (KE) (from 17.15)	Amanda Griffiths (GRS)	Nicola Fisher (NF)
Justin Jamieson (JJ)	Mandy Sadler (MS) – Clerk	Matthew Moore (MM)
Phil Harris-Bridge (PHB)		Tina Paskins (TPa)
Helen Horn (HH)		Bex Perryman (BP)
Kyle Jonathan (HDT) (Head Teacher) (from 18.00)		
Dave Mason (DM)		
Ian Mills (IM) (Chair)		
Saheed Onisemo (SaO)		
Tracey Quitek (TQ)		Absent
Danya Rageb (DR)		Jez Bird (JB)
		Jon Phillips (JP)

Meeting Started at 17.03pm

Item	Subject	Action
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Everyone was welcomed to the extraordinary BoG an online meeting via Teams, which would focus on one item – the Staff Questionnaire which was to be led by PHB and GRS. KE arrived at 17.15 and HDT at 18.00.</p> <p>Apologies were received from NF, MM, TPa and BP. JB and JP were absent. The meeting was quorate throughout.</p>	
2	<p>Declaration of Pecuniary Interests</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p>	

<p>3</p>	<p>The Governor’s Staff Questionnaire – Autumn 2024</p> <p>The Survey Outcomes Report – Key Findings (PHB)</p> <p>The SLT Prioritisation (GRS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing Initiatives from Autumn 2023 to continue - New Initiatives proposed <p>PHB had shared the report on the outcomes of the staff survey November 2024 in advance of the meeting. PHB recapped the position leading up to this report. The last survey had been undertaken in autumn 2023. At that time, staff had been told there would be 2 surveys a year. However, it took some time to collate the responses, for SLT to consider what actions were needed and to get these in place. The outcomes had been shared with staff in March 2024. The challenge for the current year was to reduce the time to 3 months. The importance of being able to demonstrate the impact of actions taken in response to the survey outcomes before another survey is started. PHB asked governors to consider during the presentations whether 1 or 2 surveys should be planned in future. PHB noted that the engagement rate of staff had increased from 50% to 76% and staff were continuing to engage with the process in work with SLT. 82% of the respondents were teachers and 72% support staff.</p> <p>KE joined the meeting 17.15</p> <p>PHB summarised the outcomes of the survey outcomes in a powerpoint presentation shared during the meeting. The following key points were made;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responses to the statements were broadly a similar pattern to the previous year however, they were slightly less positive this time. • Positive outcomes were seen to the statements relating to working in college including being a part of the staff team and a commitment to improving outcomes for pupils. • The reason behind the slightly less positive response to the statements is unclear. This could relate to the higher response rate capturing a wider range of views or because the new completers felt less positive about the statements. • There were a significant number of statements scoring values of 1.0 or +1.0 which is good news. • In 2023 there were focus groups from the staff this time there were insight meetings. Staff were given the opportunity to meet PHB individually or in small groups. 24 staff took this opportunity (15 teachers and 9 support staff) double the number in 2023. During these meetings all the themes were explored. Each person had their own views. One of the most significant areas which gave a negative response related to lack of time to do the job well. Staff felt that the job was never ‘done’. They try to get ahead in the autumn term which means working very hard with the aim of reducing pressure in the next two terms. It was observed that this pressure is felt across education, it is not a college issue. • Communication was also frequently referred to. Staff wanting to know the ‘big picture’ and where they fit in. • Others observed that they work at 100% capacity all the time and that tasks and roles taken on temporarily tend to become permanent, adding to the workload. • The location of tutor groups in relation to the teacher’s main classrooms was reported to be an issue by many. This led to a rush to start period 1, which often started late therefore not giving a good start to the day to pupils or staff.
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- The inconsistent application of the behaviour policy was of concern to a number of staff who perceived a lack of support from the school management and a resulting increase in workload.
- Staff also expressed concern about the demanding / aggressive bullying behaviour they experienced from some parents. This had a negative impact on their enjoyment of being at the college.
- The pastoral team staff reported that their accommodation is very hot making it an uncomfortable working environment.
- The majority of the points raised by staff during the face-to-face discussions were in the spirit of 'we could do better'.

Some quick wins could come from;

- Reviewing the tutor group locations.
- More consistent application of the Behaviour Policy.
- Review the working environment for the SEND Team.

All governors were invited to share their views on the survey outcomes. The main observations and points raised were;

- All governors felt that there should be one survey a year allowing time for the responses to be collated and reviewed by SLT. This would keep the workload associated with the survey more manageable and planned actions focused on key priorities could then be incorporated into the College Improvement Plan (CIP). It would also avoid survey fatigue.
- Classcharts data should provide SLT with data relating to behaviour incidents which could form the basis of research before deciding how to respond to the Behaviour Policy inconsistency.
- Internal communications has improved but there is scope for further improvement. It was acknowledged that some people like more information than others.
- Information gathered from parental and staff surveys on behaviour should be triangulated to include all views when determining the best response.
- The location of the tutor groups and the impact on period 1 had come up in 2023. There are logistical considerations for the Heads of Year if rooms are moved and this is why things were kept as they were. It is important to look at this again so that the start of the day runs smoothly.
- A question was asked as to the triggers leading to aggressive behaviour from parents. It would be useful to understand the patterns before looking for actions to address this.
- A suggestion was made to further embed a culture of open feedback with opportunities to raise concerns through a real-time operational approach.
- It was worrying that staff were not comfortable accessing well-being and mental health support. Some staff indicated that they were concerned about the response they would get.
- The matter of aggressive behaviour from parents was further discussed. GRS confirmed that there are posters (similar to those seen in the NHS) aimed at reducing aggressive behaviour but this is clearly not working and needs further attention.

- A question was raised about support staff being allowed time off for medical appointments and also that one staff member reported dreading coming into school which was very worrying.

GRS then talked the meeting through her powerpoint presentation on the SLT response to the staff survey 2024. SLT were disappointed with the response and felt they needed to understand the outcomes more clearly. The three lowest scoring areas were sub-divided to allow for more detailed analysis.

HDT joined the meeting 18.00

Information for staff on the support available for mental health concerns had been shared in various forms but the historical cultural issues around this continued to impact on staff. In the past well-being was led in a different way and had been seen as a 'tick box' exercise. Staff felt that information they shared had not been treated confidentially leading to a culture of distrust which was hard to overcome. There are staff who still think the staff survey is not anonymous although it is.

It was good to see that there are some positive responses and that there are things that SLT are getting right from a staff point of view.

Previously focus groups met after school this limited who could attend as it was after working hours when some staff were not available. The Insight meetings with PHB were held during the day, which is a positive move.

GRS confirmed that staff well-being is an absolute priority and is now being led by a different member of staff so is on a more positive trajectory.

These points were discussed, and governors made the following observations.

- Workload has a direct impact on well-being so actions to address the question of 'time' and workload should have a positive impact.

Q: Are there any national benchmarks for this data to give an idea what was 'good' or not.

A: (GRS) College has previously paid for a survey from the DfE. The results did come with contextualised data for comparison; however, this was expensive and often did not focus on the data needed so has not been done recently.

Q: Have managers been given any development or training on managing mental health for staff?

A: Not yet but this is on the list of actions for SLT. The right resource first needs to be identified to enable managers to be consistent in their response and support.

- One governor shared their experience of cultural change in the workplace which had taken 3 or 4 years to establish. Educating line managers had been key to this as well as visible communications and the provision of volunteer mental health first aiders amongst the staff team. Sharing mental health stories had had a strong impact on culture change.
- GRS responded to the potential quick win of changing tutor group locations by explaining the reasons for the current arrangements. This allowed Yr leaders to get to all of their tutor groups in 20 minutes. This helped to ensure consistency in expectations for behaviour and uniform. Changes to this could result in 50 teachers needing to move and there would be negative impacts from this mainly for the Yr Leaders. However, as this has come up again as an issue, SLT will need to revisit it.
- Parents' behaviour towards staff was an on-going issue and has worsened in the last few weeks. GRS is drafting a letter to parents about this but wants to get the tone and wording right, so it is taking some time to write. Some of the worse incidents had been investigated and there were found to be reasons

why the parents were so upset but their reaction, often in front of their children, was extreme and threatening to staff, which is unacceptable.

- Communication seems to be the underlying cause in most incidents. This is being looked at so that email responses and telephone calls can be answered as quickly as realistically possible within other workload pressures. Teachers can receive 100 emails each evening from parents and pupils.
- GRS is trying to meet face to face or call parents back in response to issues. This personal approach has a positive impact, but each one takes time (30mins – 1 hour).
- There are plans to develop communication skills for staff through training.
- Overall, the aim of SLT is to further develop the culture within the staff team that 'if you speak, we will act' and if it is not possible to do anything then this will be explained to staff.

Governors were then offered the opportunity to discuss what had been shared.

Q: If there is no response to an email this can lead to frustration. Is there any data on the email systems to show how quickly emails are responded to?

A: We are moving to full visibility on email inboxes and social media. Inboxes will be monitored so that turnaround time can be checked.

Q: Do staff use an autoreply message on their inboxes as this may reassure parents that their email has been received?

A: Staff receive a huge volume of emails from a variety of sources including CPOMs. We need to understand the problem to deal with it appropriately and to manage parent expectations. There is a 2 day turn-around expectation on email responses, however, it is not possible to set aside time during the day to deal with emails so staff respond to these in the evenings.

The Headteacher noted that parents often think that SLT are not interested but there had to be a hierarchy for dealing with questions and concerns which means that most matters should be dealt with before reaching SLT.

It was noted that the parent's attendance at parent forums was often low, so parents did not take up the opportunity to share their views and to hear from college. GRS advised governors that one of the middle leaders was undertaking some research on meeting models to see if there were any others that could be more effective. Focus groups are being considered and GRS will call parents back if they have indicated an interest in joining one of these.

JJ shared some graphics with governors on understanding and dealing with mental health matters and offered to share these further if useful.

One governor shared their experience of a communication system used by Barton Peverill which was very effective another suggested that a group comprising of staff, parents and governors could help to develop relationships and to influence views and opinions of parents.

The discussion was drawn to an end and the outcomes summarised.

PHB said the outcomes of the 2024 survey would be shared with staff in early January. The next survey would be planned for autumn 2025 and staff would get an explanation as to why there would be only one survey each year. There would be further engagement with staff over the more challenging issues with the message that this was not as a result of intransigence but the need to fully understand the issue. There will be a half termly assessment of actions and priorities (you said / we did). There would also be investigation into ways to benchmark the survey outcomes.

GRS summarised, confirming SLT's commitment to getting things changed, adding that having a governing board that would listen was extremely helpful. There are ideas

Item	Subject	Action
	<p>although some money may need to be spent to address some of the issues. If technology is used, then there needs to be someone to run and manage this.</p> <p>PHB and GRS were thanked for their hard work on this and their presentations to this meeting.</p>	
4	<p>Governor Appointments</p> <p>SaO had been introduced to the Board at the last BoG meeting following a parent governor election. The Chair advised that JJ would be standing down as parent governor on the 13th January 2025. SaO would commence his term as parent governor from 14th January 2025.</p> <p>ACTION: Clerk to amend the governor records on HCC and Gov Hub and to advise college so that GIAS records can be amended.</p>	Clerk
5	<p>AOB</p> <p>IM reminded all governors that they needed to send their Link Governor Excel Spreadsheet to the Clerk so that these can be compiled by BP next term.</p> <p>ACTION: Outstanding link governor visit returns to be sent to the Clerk by 6th January 2025.</p> <p>IM hoped that everyone would get a chance to enjoy the festivities over the holiday period and to have a good rest.</p>	All governors
	<p>Next Meeting Full BoG - 11th March 2025 Steering at 4.15 followed by BoG at 5pm (note slightly earlier start due to pupil presentations).</p>	

Meeting ended 18.50

Summary of Actions Carried forward to March meeting

Reference	Action	When	Who
16/12/24 Item 4	Clerk to amend the governor records on HCC and Gov Hub and to advise college so that GIAS records can be amended.	14/1/25	Clerk
16/12/24 Item 5	Outstanding link governor visit returns to be sent to the Clerk by 6 th January 2025.	6/1/25	All governors