

Rye College Full Governing Body Meeting

3 September 2013

MINUTES

A meeting of Rye College Full Governing Body was held on Tuesday 3rd September 2013 in Rye College Learning Resource Centre.

PRESENT: Jane Burnett (JB); Ian Bryan (IB), David Cooper (DC), Sarah Glen (SG), Anita Hollowday (AH), Jo Kirkham (JK), Nicola Midgley (NM), Allen Mills (AM), Hazel Russell (HR), Angela Soderberg (AS).

IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Savory (PS), Sally Welch (SW) [Clerk].

1. Chair's Introduction

- 1.1 Noted:
- a) the Chair welcomed Governors back after the Summer break; thanking Governors in advance for their continued commitment to working together to support the College.
 - b) the Chair welcomed Nicola Midgley, Head of School, to her first Governing Body meeting and introduced Peter Savory, prospective new Governor, who was observing the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interests

- 2.1 Noted: that no member(s) of the Governing Body had declared an interest in relation to any item(s) of business on the agenda.

3. Election of RCFGB Chair

- 3.1 Noted: the Clerk chaired the meeting for this item.
- 3.2 Received: paper RCFGB/1, a nomination in writing proposing Jane Burnett as Chair.
Proposed: DC (in writing)
Seconded: HR
- 3.3 Resolved: that Jane Burnett (JB) be elected RCFGB Chair for the 2013-2014 academic year.
- 3.4 Noted: the Chair took over the meeting at this point.

4. Election of RCFGB Vice Chair

- 4.1 Resolved: that Angela Soderberg (AS) be elected RCFGB Vice Chair for the 2013-2014 academic year.
Proposed: JB
Seconded: DC

5. RCFGB Terms of Reference

- 5.1 Received: paper RCFGB/3, RCFGB Terms of Reference.
- 5.2 Noted: the Chair reminded Governors of the importance of acting as a collegiate body in order to promote transparency and that Governors should bring any issues of individual concern promptly to the Head of School and Chair to be dealt with.

5.3 Resolved: to approve the Terms of Reference as set out in paper RCFGB/3.

Code of Practice

5.4 Resolved: to re-adopt the Code of Practice for Rye College Governors for 2013-2014.

Governing Body Meeting Dates

5.5 Noted:

a) Governing Body meeting dates for 2013-2014 as set out on the agenda.

b) the Chair informed Governors that an additional meeting was proposed for Tuesday 1st October 2013 to consider the College Improvement Plan and Governing Body Action Plan for 2013-2014.

5.6 Resolved: that the Governing Body would meet on Tuesday 1st October 2013.

Governor Recruitment

5.7 Noted: that an advert had gone out for three new Governors for Rye College, specifically seeking skills in estates/buildings maintenance, finance, and HR. The closing date for applications was Monday 16th September 2013.

6. Finance and Personnel (F&P) Committee

Election of F&PC Chair

6.1 Received: paper RCFGB/4, a nomination in writing proposing Hazel Russell as Chair.
Proposed: JB (in writing)
Seconded: AS

6.2 Resolved: that Hazel Russell (HR) be elected F&PC Chair for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Election of F&PC Vice Chair

6.3 Received: paper RCFGB/5, a nomination in writing proposing Allen Mills as Vice Chair.

6.4 Resolved: that Allen Mills be elected F&PC Vice Chair for the 2013-2014 academic year.
Proposed: JB (in writing)
Seconded: IB

F&PC Membership

6.5 Resolved: the membership of the F&PC for 2013-2014 as follows:

- HR - Chair
- AM - Vice Chair
- AS - RCFGB Vice Chair
- IB
- DC

F&PC Terms of Reference

6.6 Received: paper RCFGB/6, Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers for Finance and Personnel Committees of Local Governing Bodies of the Rye Academy Trust.

- 6.7 Noted: that the Terms of Reference and Delegated Powers had been drafted by the RAT Board and were intended to be ratified at the Board's 24th September 2013 meeting subject to any views expressed by the Local Governing Bodies.

F&PC Meeting Dates

- 6.8 Noted: F&PC meeting dates for 2013-2014 as set out on the agenda.

7. Governors' Discipline Committees

- 7.1 Resolved: that the following Governors would be willing to be called upon for Governors' Discipline Committees: JK, HR, AM, IB, in addition to the Chair, although it was noted that in order to preserve independence in the process, the Chair could not be involved in any committee of which they had any prior knowledge. Training would be arranged through Governor Services.

ACTION: Clerk to arrange Governor training as soon as possible.

8. Minutes of the meeting of 18th June 2013

- 8.1 Received: the minutes of the meeting of 18th June 2013.
- 8.2 Resolved: to approve and sign the minutes as a correct record.

9. Head of School's Report

- 9.1 Received: paper RCFGB/7, the Head of School's report, detailing:
- the Head of School's vision, aim and the core principles the College will work towards over the next three years to achieve excellence.
 - a review of the key areas of accountability to enable the core principles to be achieved.
 - a review of the exam results from summer 2013.
 - an introduction to the objectives and key performance indicators for the College Improvement Plan.
- 9.2 Noted: the Chair invited the Head of School to take Governors through the report.
- 9.3 Noted:
- a) that the external validation from Ofsted in the overall judgement of 'Good' and the College's performance in summer 2013 results, had highlighted the areas of best practice and the actions required to secure further improvement across the College to ensure that it receives an Ofsted grading of Outstanding in three years' time (2016).
 - b) that the vision, aim and core principles had been shared with all staff at today's INSET event for the purposes of collective ownership and internal verification of standards. The core principles would serve as the benchmark for measuring performance at an individual, team and College level - encompassing the Governing Body's contribution to supporting excellence.
 - c) in order to facilitate the support and challenge provided by the Governing Body in terms of accountability and celebrating successes, Governors would in future be allocated to a Community. This will rationalise the number of Governor monitoring visits and keep Governors' links to departments whilst enabling Governors to explore how objectives in the CIP are being achieved.
 - d) there will be an accountability framework (contained in the Head of School's report) underpinning the work across the College to ensure that there are clear lines of communication from the classroom to the SLT and Governing Body.

The strategic leadership provided by Assistant Principals will be underpinned by the work being done by all members of the community. Middle leaders will be empowered to bring about change in their areas.

e) that the nine core principles link to the six sections of the College Improvement Plan, making explicit the behaviours necessary to achieve Outstanding status. Each of the six areas – which also show an aspect of the associated Ofsted criteria – will have its own set of success criteria (currently under consideration by the SLT team) which are set out for the next three years and for the KPIs by which progress towards the goals can be measured. Governors would therefore be able to question under the six headings. The CIP would be shared with Governors at the next Governing Body meeting.

f) Governors' first point of contact in future therefore, would be the Assistant Principal for their community who would be responsible for organising the programme for Governors' visits and it was confirmed that subject areas would be briefed regarding altered arrangements.

g) that Governors were free to decide whether to visit in pairs or individually and should liaise between themselves to agree. The 1st October 2013 meeting would be used to discuss the deployment of Governors across Communities in further detail, the expectations for monitoring visits and the frequency, and the reporting of findings to Full Governing Body.

h) in addition to the work with the Communities, the role of Governors will be enhanced through working in partnership with the Student Voice and Parent Voice Champions to be appointed from Rye College staff to put Governors in closer touch with the views of all key stakeholders.

i) that the format for questions and reporting of Governors' visits would be updated before visits commenced.

j) that the Governing Body's direct communication with parents and carers would be facilitated by the introduction of a Governors' newsletter to be published three times a year and greater use made of the Governors' Facebook page.

In response to Governors' questions:

- 9.4 Noted: on how SLT accountability will be ensured: the Head of School informed Governors that she would be meeting with the Assistant Principals regularly, both individually and as a team, concerning their areas of strategic responsibility, to discuss any emerging issues or themes across Communities, and to share information across departments.
- 9.5 Resolved: to agree the allocation of Governors to Communities. Governors welcomed opportunities under the new structure to take a wider cross-curricular view whilst at the same time retaining departmental links, which were valued by Curriculum Leaders and Governors alike.

Analysis of Exam Results for Summer 2013

- 9.6 Noted:
- a) that the deadline for requesting re-marks was 20th September. The percentage of students achieving 5+A*-C including English and Maths currently stood at 60% against a national average of 50 + %.
- b) the Head of School advised Governors that it was intended to hold the exam analysis meetings for each Community on the same day, enabling Governors to attend all the meetings on one day and to detect any common themes. A schedule was being prepared and Governors would be consulted for their availability. DC expressed an interest in also attending the meeting for Technology.
- c) that further reporting on vulnerable groups would follow further analysis of the relative performance of each vulnerable group relative to both national and in-school cohorts. However, a significant gender gap could be reported with girls outperforming boys by 14%. This pattern was repeated in all the data sets relating to the whole cohort. Science and MFL were two areas where the gap between boys and girls is significant.

d) it was noted that Moderators' reports had been received for some subjects. The reports for Art and Photography were very positive. Those for Geography, French and Spanish contain helpful points from the exam board to individual subject leaders suggesting changes and improvements to practice. In some subjects there appeared to be clear misunderstanding of what was required from students to access the third level of marking in exams and departments would be directed to refer back to the sample materials available from the exam board to support moderation within departments.

e) that students' writing skills in English did not appear to be translating into History and Geography and this would be explored in the exam analysis meetings.

f) reported views of some staff at INSET about the negative impact of the aspirational target for students to achieve four levels of progress

g) it was noted that the Head of School would be commissioning an independent review of the Humanities, Languages, Design and Technology and Science focusing on leadership and management, curriculum provision and quality of teaching.

In response to Governors questions:

9.7 Noted:

a) the Chair drew Governors' attention to the Minutes of the 18th June 2013 meeting which recorded assurances provided to Governors about the predicted outcomes for summer 2013 results. To what extent was the leadership of individual departments felt to have impacted on performance? The Head of School responded that the results did bring into question the leadership in some areas and this would be an area for review to determine whether the right people are leading core and foundation subjects. Departmental INSET time tomorrow would be used to analyse the data behind the outcomes using a question set prepared by the Head of School, as well as to celebrate successes and discuss how successful strategies in some areas can be replicated across the school

b) on reasons for the degree of variation in the results, the Head of School responded that the difference between prediction and outcome has a long tail, including variability in quality and accuracy of marking and feedback, which Ofsted had commented upon, and a leadership issue in some areas as to how some subjects gather and analyse data. The College's marking policy has been in place for some time but was only reinforced last year. Ofsted's comments had focused on the need to demonstrate student progress as a result of following teachers' written and verbal feedback and advice. Again, Curriculum Leaders would be asked to consider how predictions/forecast grades are arrived and processes for moderation of classes across a department.

c) concern was expressed at the low figures for A* and A in triple Science (from a cohort of 25 students entered for the exam), which were very important for some subjects for further and higher education. The Head of School agreed that attainment should be 100% and currently did not reflect students' ability levels. These able students had been identified as a vulnerable group requiring intervention. Following on from this, Governors questioned therefore, whether the strategy to change from GCSE to BTEC had been partially unsuccessful? The Head of School responded that students predicted to attain the BTEC had been successful but that this had been intended as a short-term fix only. The focus overall needed to be on ensuring the right academic pathways and support from Year 7 onwards to enable all students to make the right choices and Governors would be invited to contribute towards future debate of curriculum issues.

d) Governors congratulated the Head of English on the significant improvement from 58% in 2012 to 78.7% in 2013.

9.8 Noted: the Chair thanked the Head of School for her comprehensive report and Governors looked forward to further discussion of the College Improvement Plan and their role in supporting further improvement at the next meeting.

10. Pay Policy

10.1 Received: paper RCFGB/8, the draft Pay Policy for the Rye Academy Trust.

10.2 Noted:

a) that a RAT Board Working Group had been meeting during the summer break to formulate the new pay policy which the Trust needs to adopt as close to 1st September 2013 as possible so that staff know from the start of the academic year how their performance is to be assessed and how that will impact on pay progression decisions. The final draft document would be presented to the RAT Board for ratification on 24th September 2013.

b) the Chair advised Governors that consideration was on-going regarding arrangements for associate staff and the policy will be further revised to address this.

c) that the Governing Body had spent insufficient time on performance management last year and the establishment of the new F&PC would address this going forward.

d) the Chair invited the Head of School to outline key salient points from the new policy.

10.3 Noted:

a) that previously, teachers had been subject to an annual review and progression up the pay scale had been largely automatic (irrespective of performance) to a certain threshold. In future, pay progression would be based on performance and arrangements for providing individual staff with regular, constructive, feedback on their performance against targets would need to be applied throughout the year, coupled to an annual appraisal which would determine a recommendation regarding salary increase to the Governing Body. This will put a greater onus on the reviewer to ensure that targets are robust, achievable and make a wider contribution to the school community, as well as significant responsibility in determining recommendations for pay progression.

b) the previous limit of one incremental pay point each year is removed with individual teachers now able to be recommended for accelerated pay progression based on performance.

c) that although the new STPCD comes into effect on 1st September 2013, pay decisions which take effect on 1st September 2013 must be in accordance with the requirements of the 2012 document.

d) under the new arrangements, individual teachers would be able to remain on the same salary point without being put through the procedures for capability or disciplinary, although the reasons for a 'no progression' determination would be expected to be discussed with the individual teacher and supports put in place to address any issues of concern.

e) that the policy sets out the criteria for judgements to be made about how individuals might move through the pay scale with all judgements expected to be rooted in evidence.

f) that the policy removed the requirement for teachers moving between schools to be appointed on the same pay point as they were on at their previous school and introduces a requirement for the teacher's prior evidence of performance management to be made available to their new school.

g) that non-consolidated awards (cash amounts up to £2.5k) could be used to reward one-off contributions.

h) that the new policy would require a change to the established culture of target setting with enhanced accountability for performance and impacts on pay progression. The Head of School would be running a workshop for staff on the new Policy.

In response to Governors' questions:

10.4 Noted:

a) on the ability to impose a cap on the number of increments awarded each year against budget: it was confirmed that the model policies (from which the RAT Policy is derived) do not allow decisions to be based on the financial constraints of the school.

This created concern at the potential implications for budget of a high number of recommendations for salary increases in any one year.

b) on the process for considering salary recommendations: it was confirmed that the F&P Committee would be presented with an anonymised sample of targets to moderate as part of Governors duty to ensure equitable, robust, and challenging targets are being set across departments and that performance is being managed effectively across the college.

c) it was noted that the ability to offer competitive salaries for new appointees would be influenced by the distribution of existing staff within the salary scale.

d) it was noted that the Head of School is required to present a three-year forecast of salary spend to the Director of Business Development to inform budget setting which would take into account predicted salary progression.

11. Governing Body Development Priorities

11.1 Received: paper RCFGB/9, Rye College Ofsted Report.

11.2 Noted:

a) the positive endorsement of the governance of the College.

b) the Chair thanked all Governors for their contribution to achieving this judgement.

c) that a meeting had been arranged with ESCC Governor Services for 12th September 2013 to discuss their training package. Governors were invited to send any suggestions for training requirements to the Clerk.

d) a Governing Body Action Plan was being drafted and would be brought to the next meeting.

12. RAT Update

12.1 Received: paper RCFGB/10, a summary report of business considered by the RAT Board.

13. Studio School Update

13.1 Noted: that the Studio School would be contained in future reports of the RAT Board.

14.1 Health and Safety

14.1 Noted:

a) that there were no issues of significance to report.

b) a delay to the addition of the porches to the new student entrance to the Tech block which would be added at half-term.

c) the Director of Business Development had briefed staff on car parking and arrangements for the safe movement of students around campus during construction of the Studio School.

15. Any Other Business

RAT Conference, Saturday 14th September 2013

15.1 Noted:

a) the Chair informed Governors that the focus of the Conference would be on clarifying roles and responsibilities of the RAT Board, Local Governing Bodies and Executive Team in order to further the Trust's objectives. The Conference would be facilitated by Dr Alan Norley, Transformation Through Education Ltd. The Conference programme would issue shortly.

b) apologies from Sarah Glen.

End of Year Reports

15.2 Noted: AM would speak to the Head of School outside of the meeting to discuss the format for end of year reporting to parents on student progress.

16. Date of Next Meeting

16.1 Noted: that the Governing Body would meet on Tuesday 1st October 2013 at 6.00pm.

Meeting closed: 20.00