

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body of Stormont House School held on Tuesday 7th November 2017

The meeting opened at 5.30pm.

Present:	Mr Bernard Hawes (BH)	Co-opted Governor – Chair
	Ms Lynn Dalton (LD)	Co-opted Governor – Vice Chair
	Mr Kevin McDonnell (KM)	Head teacher
	Ms Claire Napier (CN)	Staff Governor
	Ms Hannah Lilley (HL)	Co-opted Governor
	Dr Hans-Christoph Hirt (HH)	Local Authority Governor
	Ms Ann Hollingworth (AH)	Parent Governor

In attendance:	Ms Carol Weston (CW)	School Business Manager
	Ms Frances Jessie (FJ)	Deputy Headteacher

Apologies:	Ms Emma Kingsley (EK)	Parent Governor
	Ms Katie Foster (KF)	Staff Governor

Absent:	Ms Mary Slocombe (MS)	Parent Governor
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Clerk:	Elizabeth Bart-Williams	HLT Governor Services
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PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

1. Attendance

- 1.1 Welcome: The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, especially the SIP – Ms Helena Burke. All members present introduced themselves.
- 1.2 Apologies and Consent for Absence: These were accepted as listed above. Ms Kingsley was reportedly working on the Children in Need project. It was noted that Ms Slocombe has not attended meetings for a while. Governors agreed to wait until her term runs out on 10th March 2018, and proactively look for a replacement Parent Governor in the meantime.
ACTION 1: school to recruit a replacement Parent Governor.
- 1.3 Declarations of Interest: None
- 1.4 Register of Pecuniary Interest: This was not available. **ACTION 2: Clerk to resend by email to all governors.**

The chair stated that the order of items on the agenda had been rearranged to allow the SIP and members of the Senior Leadership Team to leave once items requiring their input had been discussed

2. SIP report – by Helena Burke

The School Improvement Partner (SIP) – Helena took Governors through the Annual Summary (SIP) report dated August 2017.

Overall effectiveness: the SIP informed the meeting that there were no surprises in the report. Based on evidence received, the school's judgement of being Outstanding is supported by the SIP. The ambitious head teacher continues to lead effectively, especially in light of recent changes; and through the unusually high staff turnover. Teaching is typically outstanding and remains an area of focus for

the head teacher who is not satisfied with just being outstanding. There is a real desire to improve in areas of pedagogy.

Outcomes are always a challenge as cohorts vary year on year, but it is clear that progress is being made and continues to be very positive, as is behaviour, personal development and well being. This is evident as soon as one enters the school.

Categorisation: the school remains very strong and 'Outstanding', except for the 6th form provision which is rated Good.

Achievement:

Clear achievement in 6th form – whilst students were still unable to achieve a Level 1 in English or Maths, most students have made small steps of progress. All Yr. 12 students attained a qualification and 5 improved or gained a GCSE in English.

KS4 – Yr. 11 cohort had a very unusual high mobility rate which impacts on 5-year progress monitoring. Nevertheless, there is slightly lower than usual entry and slightly lower departure KS4 APS, but progress is still very secure in the context of the changing national GCSE specifications. No cause for concern. A forensic review of individual progress is useful and indicates that more work is required in assessment and teaching.

KS3 – the school is now consistently using the Primary Fundamentals statements along with tracking progress which will be developed further. It is also very encouraging to note that a small number of pupils are attaining national levels.

Teaching & Learning: this is typically 'Outstanding' and supported by evidence through the year. The Headteacher wants to recognise the skills and talents in teachers and middle leaders and the work they do in this area – this is a sign of maturity of leadership. The whole session of T&L during the SIP inspection was led by the teachers and this is very impressive. This represents a significant shift and how the pedagogy has improved over the years. This was a joy to observe and report back. There is a real ownership in the team and members expect to 'fly' this year.

To ensure a robust judgement, it is important to keep up the current work and to be secure around the supporting evidence, so that the good work that is being done can be evident to OfSTED.

Personal development, behaviour & welfare: this is graded as Outstanding. Attendance is very strong, with low persistent absence. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and effective, and exclusions are very low in comparison with other special schools. It is evident that the school compares favourably with mainstream schools.

Leadership & Management: the school is securely 'Outstanding' and the degree to which the Headteacher allows others to lead is commendable. Members of the SLT continue to grow in confidence, zeal and passion.

Suggested priorities for this year include developing the curriculum and pedagogy, wellbeing for staff & students and to secure the financial position of the school.

Governor Questions to the SIP

1. Does the SIP have any input during an OfSTED inspection? **Answer:** Yes, at the request of the Headteacher, the SIP will turn up and answer any questions from the inspectors.
2. What aspects of wellbeing should be priority for the school? **Answer:** Focus should include the additional pressures on staff working in a special school; and maintaining confidence that staff are looked after. It is important to get staff views on the things that work and those that don't, and to include these in feedback.

The Headteacher added that it is important to be secure in the knowledge that students are okay. The focus at the moment is putting weight behind team working and building relationships.

3. Why was the staff turnover so high last year? **Answer:** Last year's turnover was more significant, mainly due to temporary contracts of T.A.s who move on either to go into teaching or other things. Turnover with teaching staff has been low, although a permanent DT teacher has not been recruited despite several attempts.

The SIP stated that other schools are struggling to fill vacancies as well, especially with tighter budgets and the lack of good candidates available. This should not be viewed as a major problem but other ways to fill positions should be considered e.g. some schools pool their resources. **ACTION 3:** After a discussion, it was agreed that the Senior Leadership Team should compare notes with the SIP and prospective schools with which resources can be pooled.

4. Governors usually worry about the self-assessment measures – is the SIP confident that SEF criteria are accurate? **Answer:** yes – all self-assessment work has to be in line with the borough-wide SIP program for all primary, PRU and secondary schools; and the measures are in line with OfSTED criteria. SIPs have robust conversation with schools, offering challenge and support. The SIP reports have to be evidenced and scrutinised by the HLT's school improvement team before they are issued to schools. Governors should watch out for terms like 'the school reports' which indicate that there has not been any evidence of the claims made by the school.

5. How much scrutiny is given to the Governing Body? **Answer:** The 3rd SIP visit is around Leadership & Management and some schools request conversation with governors. However, the Headteacher did not ask for any work to be carried out with this GB, as it appears that governance is robust.

The Headteacher pointed out that the SEF remains a useful document to assess GB effectiveness.

6. Does the School appear too aggressive in ambition? The school has been Outstanding for 3 Ofsted inspections and is constantly on the move and won't rest on its oars? **Answer:** It is evident that the school is ambitious, but not too ambitious. The Headteacher has had conversations with the SIP where he suggests how to use tools to embed best practice and ensure that the staff know how to use such tools. The Headteacher is very aware of the appropriate pace of progress and this is commendable.

7. Are there any identified weaknesses? **Answer:** There is a big shift happening around T&L, and even though this has changed a lot this year, greater evidencing of assessment and tracking would be beneficial. It should remain a good focus for next year especially in terms of testing the degree to which all staff understand it. The new, young ambitious leaders should also be supported to embed best practice.

8. How far away is the 6th form provision from becoming Outstanding? **Answer:** That is hard to say. 6th form grading is distinct from the main school grading, and one has no impact on the other. The Headteacher stated that the school has been considering Ofsted criteria in its SEF and continues to equip pupils. The Chair stated that the school is aware that pupils remain in education, but can't prove they go into jobs. The SIP agreed that there appears to be a lot of evidence in different pockets which need to be collated. This could also include evidence of what happens in pupils' lives after they leave school and what is happening in the next stage of their lives.

9. Was there any evidence of good financial reporting, as governors have started to put some suggestions together in the resources committee? **Answer:** Clapton School readily comes to mind, but it would be useful to see current practice before recommending.

Governors thanked Helena for her robust reporting and she replied that it had been an absolute pleasure.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Action Taken

3.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 11th July 2017 were agreed for accuracy, apart from a typing error on Page 4, paragraph 1. The minutes were **AGREED** and signed off by the Chair of Governors.

3.2 Matters arising from the minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda:

Actions from previous meetings:

Date/Action No.	Details	Status
8.11.2016; Action 1	Chair, Vice Chair and Y Packer to discuss YP's role on the GB.	Meeting held. YP has now resigned. Closed
8.11.2016; Action 3	CW to compile up to date record of governor training	Log compiled – CW to update governors at GB meetings. Closed
8.11.2016; Action 4	Chair and Vice Chair to discuss staff survey results with the staff governors.	Outstanding: in hand, awaiting survey summary. Headteacher to deal
21.3.2017 Action 1	Chair to explore sharing SHS survey model with the Council	Invitation has been sent, but the Councillor is very busy. Outstanding
21.03.2017	Safeguarding training to be arranged for all governors	Outstanding: Chair to deal
11.07.2017 Action 1	CW to confirm KF's start date as staff governor	Ms K Foster was confirmed as Staff Governor on 9th December 2016. Closed.
11.07.2017 Action 2	Chair, Vice Chair and Headteacher to recruit individuals to fill the co-opted governor vacancies	Still looking to recruit suitable candidates with the needed skills set. Outstanding
11.07.2017 Action 3	T&L to progress KUDOS and report to the GB	Outstanding
11.07.2017 Action 4	T&L to progress SHS Baccalaureate and report to the GB	Outstanding
11.07.2017 Action 5	LD and CW to update the website during the summer holidays	Completed – but It was noted that the Curriculum Statement is not up to date. Incorrect content to be removed and content made less time-specific by CW, for the next T&L meeting on 4th December.
11.07.2017 Action 6	CW to circulate the Schedule of Policies	A list of HLT's HR adopted policies is available; schedule carry forward. CW to provide to strategic leadership meeting on Monday 13th Nov
11.07.2017 Action 7	Headteacher to finalise and circulate the SEF	Closed
11.07.2017 Action 8	a. LT and LD to compile a 'Crib sheet' for governors b. BH and KM to compile a summary of questions from the Key c. LT to circulate the DfE document – Keeping Children Safe in Education to governors	a and b: Crib sheet and the summary of questions to be considered at the meeting on 13th November. Ms Jessie to circulate the DfE document. Outstanding
11.07.2017 Action 9	Headteacher to provide a detailed report of absences for the Chair and Vice Chair	Outstanding – Headteacher to deal.
11.07.2017 Action 10	Chair to email Safeguarding Policy to all governors	Outstanding – Chair to deal
11.07.2017 Action 11	Headteacher to send T&L Policy to LD for agreement by the Committee	Ongoing – T& L to recommend approval to GB
11.07.2017 Action 12	CW to set committee dates and forward to the Chair and Vice Chair	All dates have been agreed and in the diary. Schedule sent out. Closed

3.3 Any urgent action taken since the last meeting: None.

4. Main Business- School Self Evaluation and SDP Responsibilities

4.1 School Self Evaluation

- Review draft Summary Self Evaluation Report: This had been updated by the Headteacher and circulated to all governors. The Chair reminded governors that this is a key document with which all governors should be familiar. OfSTED could ask governors how they know the evaluation is accurate, what challenge is provided and the evidence to support the self-evaluation.

The Headteacher took members through a short summary of the SEF. He pointed out that it is similar to a condensed annual report; and is similar in structure to Clapton School's report. Some of its strengths include a summary of context, not too many acronyms and an overview for governors. The front page provides an overview of the initiatives undertaken since the last inspection and the impact they have had. Other pages include key points relating to each of the OfSTED criteria – this excludes the 6th form, the judgement of which sits outside the main inspection criteria.

The structure is in line with the SIP annual report and the School Development Plan, broken down for easy understanding by governors. The school is relentlessly focused on improvement, and this means there are still a number of priorities on which the school is working, including the more accurate tracking of pupil progress.

Governors hold SLT to account through challenge and support to improve the delivery of teaching and learning within the school and that development priorities are aligned to the vision of the school. More detailed governance work is carried out through the Committees, with summarisation and approval at GB meetings.

A noted weakness is the work of link governors – e.g. visiting the school and looking at the specific subject of their link role and reporting back to the GB. It is also important to evidence the changes in delivering teaching and learning by governors completing "Book Looks" and "Walkthroughs".

Governor Observation: The Chair observed that most of the SEF relates to T&L and some Governors may feel it does not apply to them. However, T&L is governed by finance and it is important to ensure that value for money is received from the various interventions used. It is therefore necessary to review T&L from both the teaching aspect as well as from the financial aspect – is it at the expected level, what evidence exists to back this up? SEF is for all governors, not just those on T&L. Governors must be able to evidence effective T&L, and demonstrate an understanding of how the school arrived at their judgement. Governors were encouraged to study the document and direct any questions to the Headteacher.

ACTION 4: Governors to understand how all 3 docs – SEF, SIP report and SDP align and the evidence which supports this.

- Preparation for OfSTED – Governors agreed that an Ofsted readiness file would ensure that essential documents/information are ready if/when required; rather than working towards an OfSTED inspection.

Governors agreed that the next step is to identify what key documents are needed by the GB ~~need~~ and where they are located. It was suggested that these documents include high-level GB reports; SDP, budget and how it is spent especially on interventions (this must be successfully evidenced by pupil data), PPG, knowledge of pupil progress, assessment and attainment; safeguarding e.g. policy and how managed; what policies link into safeguarding? It was **AGREED** that this will be finalised at the SLT meeting on Monday 13th November and circulated to all governors.

It was suggested that a summary be prepared with all the important information, - the idea behind the Crib sheet.

4.2 Review of pupil data on attainment and progress: The Achievement Summary document, which had been circulated earlier was discussed. The Headteacher stated that with the change in the GCSE qualification and with many of the Stormont accreditations accruing few or no points, points scored is no longer an indicator of pupil progress. Therefore using National Data does not clearly show which pupils have made progress and those that have not. Data needs to be looked at in a different way. One source of evidence is comparing progress of current cohort with previous ones, measuring their starting points in Yr 7 and tracking progress against this anchor at the end of Key stage 3. The school has sound methods of tracking progress, and is now reviewing attainment a bit more closely in terms of what they have learnt or are able to do after each lesson

The report will go back to T&L and reviewed alongside the SDP, so any specific questions should be forwarded to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Governor Question: Page 20 of the Achievement Summary indicates that some Year 12 pupils don't do some of the subjects through the school at all, so difficult to carry out observations?

Answer: this will be discussed in more detail at T&L and reported back to the GB.

Governor Question: re baseline KS3 assessment, some pupils come with higher grades, is it worth doing a test similar to Y7 to determine baseline grades? **Answer:** all baseline assessments are to be reviewed, especially the tools being used to determine them. This will be closely reviewed at T&L.

Governor Question: all special schools must struggle with assessment – what do other schools do? **Answer:** Finding other special schools with the same pupil profiles is not possible and therefore we have to develop our own assessment methods. Students have different profiles, so standard measurements don't appear to work. It is difficult to track progress to the untrained eye. Failing to appreciate the input and output from both student and teacher is a weakness when assessing progress. Tracking progress from KS3 to KS4 and an expectation of what progress should look like for individual pupils is proving to be a challenge. School leaders would consider comparing notes with other special schools if that was possible but the link with the Ashley school in Lowestoft may be developed for this purpose.

Governor Question: as the draft report will be evaluated by the T&L in detail, will governors receive a high-level summary at next GB meeting? **Answer:** yes, the current draft is very detailed and not required to be approved by the GB. A summary of the key points and measures/achievements will be provided for the GB's information and consideration.

- 4.3 Review progress report on the School Development Plan and each Committee's role in monitoring and evaluating: Governors **AGREED** that all committees must ensure that the Whole-School Priorities which have been allocated to them are regularly reviewed, and the GB is updated as required.

Governors also **AGREED** that Teaching & Learning Committee will be responsible for strategic leadership of: the APE Curriculum, Visible Learning and Student/Parent Priorities while the Resources Committee will oversee Wellbeing and Improved Efficiency & Effectiveness.

5. Policies for Ratification/Approval

The SBM circulated a list of HLT's Policies for adoption by the school. It was **AGREED** that the HR policies which are applicable to the school and require no amendment be adopted. These included the **Whistleblowing Policy and Staff Pay and Appraisal Policy**.

The Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, which had been circulated earlier, was described as very comprehensive. It was **AGREED** that the policy be adopted as a working document on the understanding that the Chair and Ms Jessie meet to finalise the contextual data.

ACTION 5: Policy to be uploaded onto the school website – by the SBM;

Chair to circulate policy to all governors

Chair and Ms Jessie to finalise any necessary contextual data.

6. Governing Body Membership & Administration

6.1 Membership of the Governing Body and Committees: Members discussed the current membership in line with the Instrument of Government; and considered the current membership which has 2 co-opted governor vacancies and 1 extra staff governor. Members **AGREED** that it is important to consider the skills set of the GB, including the identified weaknesses in filling the vacancies. Members also considered reducing the number of parent governors from 3 to 2. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk check if there is a statutory minimum number of parent governors and report back.

It was also **AGREED** that governors set up an information desk at the Parents evening on 28th November with a view to recruiting parent governors. AH and LD agreed to attend, the Chair would also try to attend.

6.2 Election of Chair of Governing Body and Committees: The Chair pointed out that one of the identified weakness of the GB was that Governors were not prepared to chair meetings at both committee and GB levels and there is a shortage of finance skills. There was no nomination for the Chair, and the incumbent was subsequently re-elected for another year.

The Chair informed members that it is important that a new Chair and Vice Chair be found, as he has been Chair for many years now. In the interest of transparency and good governance, he would continue as Chair for another year, on condition that the GB look for a successor.

Vice Chair – Ms Lynn Dalton was returned unopposed for another year.

Committee Chairs – had already been elected at the Committee levels. The Chair reminded members of the need to rotate from next autumn.

6.3 Election/Confirmation of Link Governors: the following were elected as Link Governors:
Finance: – Dr. Hirt; Careers: Ms Hollingworth; Student Voice: Ms Lilley;
Curriculum: Ms Dalton and Safeguarding: the Chair, Mr Hawes.

6.4 Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation: this had been circulated in advance and the content was agreed. Governors **AGREED** that the layout needs to be revised.

6.5 Governors Code of Conduct: the content was **agreed**. It was also agreed that a Welcome Pack for all new Governors which will link into induction of new governors be prepared. It was **AGREED** that the Chair will work with the Vice Chair and Ms Lilley to put this together.

6.6 Review of Skills Matrix: this had already been done in advance of this meeting.

7. Headteacher's Report

This was circulated in advance to all members. No question was raised – the Chair suggested that any questions that arise later should be sent directly to the Headteacher.

8. Reports from Committees and Working Parties

The minutes of the most recent Resources Committee were considered and apart from the dates for the future meetings should be 2018 not 2017 were accepted.

9. Governor Training:

Members were reminded to forward details of all training attended to Ms Weston. The Chair informed members that the next Annual Governors Conference will be held on 3rd March 2018.

10. AOB

10.1 The Chair reminded members that new rules governing the retention of personal and confidential data come into effect in 2018. Currently governors use personal e-mail addresses to receive personal and confidential information from the school. It is each governor's responsibility to delete this information when it is no longer required. Members discussed this and the implication for governors. It was suggested that the school set up new emails for Governors on

the school server, so they do not have to use personal emails for governance. The Governors Code of Conduct will also be revised to include responsibility for compliance with data protection rules. All individual governors will need to sign this code of conduct to show they accept the responsibilities associated with being a governor. **ACTION 6:** Ms Lilley to review the Code of Conduct and forward to the Chair as soon as possible.

10.2 Ms Napier gave a report on staff wellbeing and ongoing work in building teams/improving interpersonal connections: following meetings between the Headteacher, Ms Napier, Ms Foster and the Union representatives. 5 main areas were identified and it was agreed to focus on 1 at a time. The building of the team including the input from all the staff should impact on all the areas identified; Ms Napier and Ms Foster agreed the action plan; staff KISS views were agreed with the Headteacher who is being held accountable for these. One of the initiatives is to review the Behaviour Policy with a view to including the card system and the non- negotiables. This is going very well and is evident in the playground, low exclusion rates and this succinct document shows actions being taken. All interventions are working very well.

CPD: the team has had a lot of discussion with the Headteacher, resulting in a whole-school calendar. Staff feel no longer overloaded and the calendar will be matched up with the whole-school calendar to ensure even allocation. Staff feel that they are being heard/listened to.

Governor Question: how much say do the staff have in the CPD on offer?

Answer: discussion is ongoing with staff to identify the CPD they would like which will be passed on to the Headteacher.

Social activities have also been introduced, and the Social Committee, headed by Ms Napier has planned a Christmas party and other various activities such as thank you drinks for staff, badminton classes etc. A calendar will be produced. The Wellbeing work with Des is also going well, and the impact is already being felt.

Governor Question: were there no social meetings before?

Answer: the few social meetings had been ad-hoc and previous events were not well communicated. These are now more organised and focused on getting to know each other. Members realised that the move from Mount Pleasant into a bigger space meant that staff are more distant from each other. The Headteacher confirmed that the income generated through his work with other schools is now going into a pot for staff well-being, and the school budget is not being deployed for this.

It was suggested that Governors be included in the social events.

Playground: restorative approaches, card system, comprehensive rota, zonings on the playground with allocated adults are all working well with more activities going on. Staff skills set are considered in allocating duties, and staff allocations are published on the Notice board. Governors noted that this was useful for visitors, supply staff and parents.

Communication: The PST manager role is working well, with the SENCo. A good referral process is in place, impacting referral/interventions system.

Timetabling: this is going very well. TAs are present at annual reviews/parent evenings and scheduled planning times for departments are more inclusive so teachers and TAs can work together. The annual review process is completely changed and more organised, rather than sporadic.

Governor Question: who decides the progress/achieved?

Answer: progress is monitored against targets and deadlines and the team can identify if/when progress is being made.

Governor Question: Are staff given the opportunity to comment?

Answer: yes – all staff have an input. All sections of the Plan are considered and put into practice based on staff comments.

Governor Question: what is the timeframe for obtaining staff views, and can the GB receive an update in the next meeting?

Answer: this will be done as soon as possible, after staff deliberation, and Ms Foster should be able to report back to the GB in the March meeting. **ACTION 7:** Chair to include on Agenda for the next GB meeting.

Governors thanked Ms Napier for the comprehensive presentation.

The Headteacher circulated a documentation on staff wellbeing at Stormont House and informed members that the introductory session which was held on 2nd Nov 2017 had received very positive feedback.

- 10.3 The Chair confirmed that he had received the resignation of Ms Yvonne Packer by email; and thanked YP for her contribution to the GB, dedication and time over the past years.

Urgent Business: There was no urgent business for consideration.

11. **Dates of Future Meetings**

All meetings start at 5:30pm

Tuesday 20th March 2018

Tuesday 12th June 2018

Monday 19th November 2018: school feels Mondays much better, than Tuesdays. Subsequent meetings will therefore hold on Mondays.

Part 2: Confidential – Main Business: None

The meeting closed at 8:36pm.

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Signed: Chair of Governors

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Date