

Colyton Grammar School

Minutes of the Governing Body – Part One

Date of Meeting: Thursday 11 December 2014

Venue: Room 16

Present:

Governors	Mr P Anderson, Dr C Bastin, Mr G Davis, Rev H Dawson, Lt Col T J Dyer, Mr A Eaton-Hart, Mr P Evans, Mr G Hayne, Mrs S Hopkins, Mrs L Linnell, Mr M R Marsh, Mr B Merrett, Mr B Salter, Mr R Scott and Mrs F H Wilkinson
Staff	Mr M Cronk (Item 1 only)
Visitors	None
Secretary	Mr S R Cook

Mr Cook took the chair for items 2 and 3.

1. Curriculum Presentation: Changes in ICT

Mr M Cronk gave a presentation on the changes in ICT – see the attached Powerpoint presentation. He focused on the following:

- The disapplication of ICT from the National Curriculum in September 2013 and the introduction of Computing from September 2014
- The presence of ICT skills in other subjects
- ICT is no longer taught as a discrete subject, with the possible potential for a drop in ICT skills for each new Year 7 group over the next few years
- The need for joined up approach across subjects to ensure that all students develop the necessary ICT skills
- The creation of an ICT Working Party within school which has identified the key ICT skills that students require and how these will be delivered by different subjects
- The benefit of acquiring and using these skills within the context of work in other subjects
- Some of the barriers to delivery of ICT skills, in particular access to hardware and the availability of rooms and staff understanding, knowledge, confidence and skills
- The national political support behind the development of computing within schools

In response to Mrs Hopkins, Mr Cronk explained that the Working Party did not consider that databases are essential for students to complete work in other subjects. In response to Lt Col Dyer and Mr Eaton-Hart, Mr Cronk explained how computer programming and the use of the Raspberry Pi fit into the computing curriculum. He also outlined the introduction of Computer Science as an A Level from September 2015.

In response to Dr Bastin, Mr Cronk explained the school policy is currently not to set homework which expects students to have access to IT at home. Mr Evans outlined some of the issues of providing iPads in school. Mr Cronk also outlined the possibility of providing another room with cheaper Raspberry Pis to support the A Level Computer Science programme, rather than a full IT room.

In response to Mrs Hopkins, Mr Cronk outlined how the original ICT curriculum was built around Microsoft Office, rather than addressing the needs of students. He expressed support for the decision to drop ICT in favour of computing.

Dr Bastin thanked Mr Cronk for his helpful and informative presentation.

2. Disclosure of Interest

Dr Bastin declared an interest in Item 3 and Mrs Wilkinson declared an interest in Item 5. There were no other disclosures of interest.

3. Election of Chairman

Mr Cook drew the attention of the Board to the information sent out prior to the meeting regarding the receipt of two nominations for the role of Chair, and in particular the need to approve the procedure necessary in the case of a contested election.

Proposed by Lt Col Dyer, seconded by Mr Marsh and unanimously agreed that the draft procedure for the election of a Chair and Vice Chair should be approved.

Mr Merrett indicated that he had withdrawn his nomination for the role of Chair.

In accordance with the procedures agreed above, Dr Bastin then left the meeting.

Following a show of hands, Dr Bastin was unanimously elected Chair for the academic year 2014/15, and he re-joined the meeting.

In response to Lt Col Dyer, Dr Bastin indicated that the Chairs Committee will bring forward further proposals on governor succession planning to the next meeting, with particular reference to the Chair and Vice Chair.

4. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs S Burns-Price and Mrs V Wells.

5. Election of Vice Chair

In accordance with the procedure agreed under item 3, Dr Bastin reported that the only nomination received for the role of Vice Chair was from Mrs F H Wilkinson. Mrs Wilkinson left the meeting at this point. Following a show of hands, Mrs Wilkinson re-joined the meeting and was informed that she had unanimously been elected Vice Chair for the academic year 2014/15.

6. Approval of Minutes of Meeting held on 10 July 2014

These were approved and signed.

7. Matters Arising

Mr Merrett asked if formal Minutes of the brief discussion on the building project problems at the recent Training Evening could be circulated.

There were no other matters arising.

8. Headteacher's Report

Mr Evans drew the attention of the Board to the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

He focused on the Pre-Ofsted Visit report which had also been circulated prior to the meeting, outlining the rationale for inviting two qualified inspectors to undertake an in-depth visit, including lesson observations and meetings with various groups of staff and students, in order to be prepared for an Ofsted inspection. He emphasised the importance of this visit as the last Ofsted inspection occurred in 2007.

He then focused on the lesson observations, noting that the inspectors agreed with the judgements of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) observers who accompanied them. He pointed out that over the last year, 66% of lessons observed by members of SLT have been outstanding, but during the recent visit this picture was not upheld. The report suggested that many staff were “playing safe” and did not take the opportunity to impress inspectors during the short ten minute visit. He outlined plans to help staff develop strategies for ensuring that inspectors see the normal outstanding quality of teaching, even if inspectors visit their classroom for only a very short time.

In response to Mr Marsh, Mr Evans confirmed that the short ten minute observation is Ofsted’s current mode of operation and the school has to ensure that staff can operate effectively within this framework.

In response to Mr Davis, Mr Evans explained how the paired lesson observations confirm the judgement of SLT co-observers and contribute to the judgement on leadership and management, but do not replace the inspectors’ judgement on the quality of teaching as observed on the day of the visit.

Mr Merrett congratulated Mr Evans on undertaking this exercise in order to prepare the school for an inspection, and supported the idea of considering the inspector who lives locally as a potential governor.

In response to Mrs Hopkins, Mr Evans confirmed that a real inspection would involve similar length observations.

In response to Lt Col Dyer, Mr Evans explained that the team would generally only be interested in the portfolio of evidence to support lesson observations if they felt there was a mismatch between the judgements of the inspector and the SLT observer.

In response to Mr Merrett, Mr Evans indicated that it was unlikely he would repeat the exercise in the near future, but there are issues to be worked through as a result.

Mr Davis reported that while the report was undoubtedly a useful exercise, staff are also under strain because of the confusion over national curriculum and exam changes and other issues. Rev Dawson reflected on similar challenges in primary schools.

With reference to his main report and in response to Mrs Wilkinson, Mr Evans outlined the challenges in determining the number of students who are likely to be offered a place in Year 7, and the decision this year to identify separately those in Category B who are almost certain to gain a place as they fall within the first 124 candidates.

9. Chairman’s Report

Dr Bastin reported that he had been in regular contact with the Headteacher and the Business Manager.

He referred to in particular to:

- The complaint to Ofsted about bullying of a Year 10 student which proved to be malicious
- The issues with the building programme
- The recruitment of a replacement Headteacher.

10. Headteacher Recruitment

Taken under Part Two Minutes.

11. Pre-Ofsted Visit Report

See Item 8 above.

12. Exam Review

Mr Evans drew the attention of the Board to the Exam Review which had been circulated prior to the meeting, and which had already been considered in detail by the Admissions, Learning and Standards Committee. He focused on the following:

- The similarities in the pattern of A Level results at another selective school where Mr Evans recently assisted with the headteacher's performance management
- A Level Issues relating to grade inflation, tightening criteria, the quality of marking and the loss of January modules
- Issues relating to grade boundary changes and the quality of marking and moderation at GCSE
- The benefit to be gained from the decision to drop one GCSE and give more time to Science, English and Maths which was implemented in September 2013
- Specific issues relating to the particular cohorts involved

Mr Davis commented that despite the slight dip in results, Year 13 gained access to the courses they wanted, including significant numbers gaining entrance to Oxbridge and medicine courses. He also commented on the high level of support given to Year 13 to enable them to achieve these outcomes.

Governors asked Mr Evans to pass on their congratulations to staff on the achievement of these results.

Mr Evans provided the following quote from a letter recently received from a Year 13 leaver:

"... studying alongside people from other schools has made me realise just how well I have been taught. Of course, had I not gone to Colyton I probably never would have considered applying to [Oxbridge]; now I am here, it has really made the difference between struggling and managing the work.

"It is no exaggeration to say that my experience of Colyton informs almost everything I do here - whether it's a drive to sample every extra-curricular activity available, or a little voice in my head telling me to "question the question" as I begin my essay."

"Perhaps it's only once you get out of the Colytonian "bubble" that you appreciate how thoroughly you have been prepared for further education.

So, thanks - belatedly - to you and everyone at the school. I miss it!"

13. School Development Plan for 2014/15

Mr Evans drew the attention of the Board to the review document for the School Development Plan for 2013/14 and the proposed School Development Plan for 2014/15, both of which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He explained that each committee that has met this term has considered the sections which fall within the committee's terms of reference and recommended that the Board approve the relevant sections.

Proposed by Mrs Linnell, seconded by Mr Marsh and unanimously agreed that the School Development Plan for 2014/15 should be approved.

14. Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year Ending 31 August 2014, Audit Completion Report and Letter of Representation

Mrs Wilkinson drew the attention of the Board to the documents which had been circulated

prior to the meeting. She explained that the Finance and Resources Committee have recommended that the Board approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements which had been considered at their recent meeting. She also reported on the meeting which she and Mr Cook had attended with Francis Clark at the conclusion of the recent audit.

She then drew attention to the Audit Completion Report recommendations on internal controls: the Responsible Officer checks now include a review of the headteacher's expense claims and controls are in place to ensure the accuracy of the Fixed Assets register.

She then outlined the purpose of the Letter of Representations and recommended that it be signed.

In response to Mr Merrett it was agreed to include a graph showing the positive trends in Year 13 leaver destinations in next year's report.

Proposed by Mrs Wilkinson, seconded by Mr Marsh and unanimously agreed that:

- (a) the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2014 should be approved
- (b) the Audit Results Report from Francis Clark following the completion of their audit should be noted. Action had been taken immediately on the two low risk observations/recommendations included in the report.
- (c) the Letter of Representations should be signed.

Governors expressed their thanks to Mr Cook and his team for their work in managing the school's finances.

15. Value for Money Statement

Mrs Wilkinson drew attention to the Value for Money Statement which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

16. Funding Update

Mr Cook reported on the Grammar Schools Heads' Association (GSHA) Seminar held at Westminster on 15 October. In the region of 20 MPs had been present, together with other Westminster staff such as researchers. The session, which involved presentations from the GSHA, headteachers and also Mr Cook, had been useful in raising awareness among MPs about the ways in which academies are funded, and also about the special pressures on selective and successful schools.

MPs expressed a commitment to taking these issues further, and the GSHA has subsequently developed a proposal to limit the flexibility of local authority School Forums to shift money away from core pupil funding by setting a national minimum funding level.

He also commented on the recent Devon Association of Secondary Heads (DASH) meeting where serious opposition was voiced about the changes to post-16 funding to support schools such as Colyton who operate large academic programmes.

Finally, Mr Cook commented briefly on information received today regarding proposals from the F40 Group for a new formula led distribution to local authorities, but indicated that it is too early to assess the advantages and disadvantages of these suggestions.

Dr Bastin reflected on the challenge facing the Finance and Resources Committee over the next few years in responding to the funding situation. Mr Merrett reported on a recent very positive conversation with a parent in limited financial circumstances who indicated that parents would be willing to give more via the Friends of Colyton Grammar School scheme. Mr Evans outlined the recent discussions on these issues at the Finance and Resources

Committee, including the need to balance requesting more funds from parents with alienating people by asking too much. It is planned to circulate a letter to parents in 2015 suggesting a range of options, including a proposed “midpoint” donation of £30 per month. Mr Merrett commented on the importance of raising awareness of the need for regular, additional funds.

In response to Mr Eaton-Hart, Mr Evans and Mr Cook clarified the legal situation regarding the school charging for education and requesting voluntary donations.

Mr Cook briefed the Board on the £275,000 surplus on 2013/14, which includes c£150,000 as a result of the various cost savings decisions taken during the year in addition to the £67,000 budgeted surplus and other funds relating to educational visits and activities which are not available for general school purposes. The savings reflect the proactive approach taken by governors in the light of the projected reductions in funding.

17. Alumni Relations and Fund Raising

Mr Scott referred to the preceding comments by Mr Evans relating to the Friends of Colyton Grammar School scheme. Work continues on developing the alumni database. Mr Scott also outlined proposals for ensuring that the school can benefit from potential legacies.

18. Succession Planning Statements

Dr Bastin drew the attention of the Board to the paper which had been circulated prior to the meeting, which outlined the statements made by each committee in relation to succession planning.

He then drew attention to the paper which had been circulated for Item 6 of the Annual General Meeting relating to the re-appointment of “Other Governors” appointed under Article 50.

In response to Mr Merrett, Dr Bastin and Mrs Wilkinson confirmed that the criteria for appointing governors include ensuring there is the appropriate range of skills available.

In response to Lt Col Dyer and Mrs Linnell, it was noted that it is beneficial not to have large numbers of governors being appointed at the same time. Mr Cook confirmed that the Trust can appoint up to two Co-opted Governors, and can also reduce below the current size providing other thresholds are met.

It was agreed that the Members should be recommended to re-appoint the following governors for a further period of four years, with effect from 1 January 2015:

- Dr C Bastin
- Mr G Hayne
- Mrs L Linnell
- Mr M Marsh
- Mr B Salter
- Mr R Scott
- Mrs F H Wilkinson

19. Link Governors’ Report

Reports were received as follows from Link Governors:

(a) Business and Enterprise (Mrs L Linnell)

Mrs Linnell reported on a visit to the Business Studies team, including observing a Year 11 group prior to and during a registration period. She commented on the exceptional behaviour of students prior to the teacher arriving and the well established routines during registration. She commented on the purposeful behaviour and participation of students in the Business Studies lesson she attended. She also commented the department’s Summer 2014 exam results and the proposed changes to the A Level programme, and also drew attention to the growing number of students pursuing business related higher education courses. Mrs Rew had highlighted the success of the two Colyton teams coming 1st and 2nd in the recent regional finals of the ICAEW business game competition and their progress to the national finals.

(b) Creative and Expressive Arts (Mrs V Wells)

In the absence of Mrs Wells, there was no report for Creative and Expressive Arts.

(c) English (Mr R Scott)

Mr Scott reported on support he has provided for an Extended Project student in relation to the First World War. He also commented on the extremely positive performance of students on the Headteacher selection panels, including the impressive and highly professional discussions.

(d) Humanities (Mrs S Hopkins)

Mrs Hopkins reported on a recent visit which included a meeting with Mr Gregson and then a Learning Walk involving Year 7 Geography, History and RE lessons and a Year 13 RE lesson. She also commented on the issues facing the RE department as a result of the national decision to drop the popular Philosophy and Ethics course in favour of RE.

(e) Maths and Science (Mr B Merrett)

Mr Merrett reported on the frustrations resulting from the recently announced delays to the new Maths A Level and changes at GCSE. He also reported on successes in the Maths Challenge programme and preparation for the STEP exams.

He also commented briefly on a further visit organised by Mr Smith which included visits to a large number of Science lessons.

(f) Modern Foreign Languages

Following the end of Mrs Williams' term of office in October, it was agreed that Mr Eaton-Hart should become the Link Governor for Modern Foreign Languages.

(g) Sport (Mr M Marsh)

Mr Marsh reported that he has not attended a meeting with the PE staff as a result of the disruption caused by the building programme. He has, however, been present at a number of fixtures.

(h) Technology and ICT (Mr B Salter)

Mr Salter reported on the outcomes of a standardisation course attended by Mr Cronk, and the challenges of developing a new course in a very short time.

Mr Cook reminded the Board that it had been agreed that if a Link Governor is not able to attend a Board meeting then a written report should be provided.

20. Capital Projects Update

(a) Academies Capital Maintenance Fund (ACMF) Project: Cottrill Hall and Changing Rooms

Mr Cook and Mr Salter drew the attention of the Board to the Minutes of the Chairs Committee meeting held on 12 November 2014 and the subsequent meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 1 December 2014, when a number of serious concerns regarding the performance of Devon Contractors were discussed.

Mr Cook reported that as a result of a number of meetings with TFQ (the school's architects) and senior directors from Devon Contractors, the following changes have been put in place:

- A senior director is acting as Contract Manager, following the removal of the previous manager
- In addition to regular site inspections, TFQ are now meeting regularly with a senior director to ensure that performance is satisfactory
- Devon Contractors have produced a new programme for the completion of the Cottrill Hall, with a planned finish date for the internal works of 15 February 2015 and for the external works of 22 February 2015

- Devon Contractors have submitted a formal Notice of Delay. TFQ have advised that there is some substance to the issues raised in this request. They are of the view that the planned finish dates in February are challenging but achievable.
- The school has accepted the revised completion dates, subject to verification by TFQ and confirmation from Devon Contractors that they accept that there will be absolutely no flexibility in the revised dates.
- Following a meeting earlier today, Devon Contractors are also putting place an additional Contract Manager, with the senior director maintaining a close strategic overview. The Site Foreman will also be leaving in January, and the possibility of a finishing foreman being appointed for the last part of the project is currently under discussion.

As a result, there is an increased pace of work on site, and TFQ are satisfied that appropriate standards are being achieved.

Mr Salter commented on the very positive support from TFQ in reaching a satisfactory solution to the serious issues that have arisen.

Additional mechanical and electrical costs in order to ensure the new hall meets required standards in terms of heating and ventilation have used up much of the contract contingency, but despite this the project remains within the overall school budget.

The new changing rooms at the Sports Centre were handed over to the school on 28 November and have been in use since then. After a number of pre-handover meetings most of the items on the snagging list were resolved and the final finish is satisfactory. The surface of the pathways leading to the new west entrance is being kept under review as there is some concern that this may break up with heavy use involving studded boots etc. The architects have advised that due to planning permission conditions relating to the nearby trees there are no alternative options. Additional paths to link the new changing rooms to the All Weather Pitch and to make a new entrance to the west playing fields across Green Lane have been taken out of the contract and alternative quotations have been sought from Northcott Buildings Contractors and Cornell Construction.

(b) Take Five and Site Workshop

Mr Cook reported that after some very significant concerns over the delay and quality of the Take Five and Site Workshop projects, the buildings were finally handed over at half term. These concerns had, however, prompted the high level meetings referred to earlier. Devon Contractors have now provided an outline plan for rectifying the large number of issues, and negotiations are in hand to agree when and how this work should be carried out.

The extension to Take Five has made a very significant contribution to the effective operation of the school restaurant and students are very positive. In the same way, the new Site Workshop, which is now fully equipped, is proving to be vast improvement for the Site Team.

Both projects will be completed well within the overall budget of £239,000.

(c) Staff House

Mr Cook referred the Board to the Minutes of the Finance and Resources meeting held on 1 December 2014, when he had outlined the proposal for submitted a revised bid for the Staff House project under the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) scheme which has replaced the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund. In particular he drew attention to the clear new focus on condition (as opposed to expansion) and the earlier submission date of 19 December. Successful bids will be notified in March 2015.

Governors examined the plans for the revised project which were made available at the meeting.

The Finance and Resources Committee had ratified the decision of the working group to appoint R G Spiller as the preferred contractor for the scheme following a Stage One tender process, in order to enable full tender negotiations to be completed.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Mr Salter, seconded by Mr Marsh and unanimously agreed that the school should make a maximum contribution of £250,000 towards the project. Other identified sources of income include a commitment of £20,000 from the Parents' Association and the use of the Devolved Formula Capital Grant for 2015/16. A Salix loan will be sought for the energy saving elements of the bid, as this strengthens the submission, and the Wolfston Trust will be approached to support the Science lab elements. In response to a number of governors, it was agreed to explore additional targeted fundraising for this project.

In response to Lt Col Dyer, it was agreed that if the bid is not successful then consideration would need to be given to alternative strategies for addressing the shortage of science accommodation and the need for improved staff accommodation.

21. Responsible Officer's Report

Mrs Hopkins drew the attention of the Board to the report for the Autumn Term which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mrs Hopkins drew attention to the new section dealing with the Headteacher's expenses claims and Charge Card transactions. It was noted that no concerns had been raised.

22. Financial Statements for Period Ending 31 October 2014

Mr Cook drew the attention of the Board to the Financial Statements for the period ending 31 October 2014, including the attached detailed narrative, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Board expressed satisfaction with the financial statements.

23. Register of Interests

Mr Cook confirmed that the annual update of the Register of Interests had been completed, with returns from all governors. The register is published, as required, on the school website.

24. Committee Reports

(a) Admissions, Learning and Standards Committee

Mr Scott referred the Board to the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014, focusing on Mrs Fitzhenry's presentation on changes in arrangements for Special Educational Needs, the Exam Review and the School Counsellor's report

(b) Chairs' Committee

Dr Bastin referred the Board to the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2014, focusing on a range of issues.

(c) Finance and Resources Committee

Mrs Wilkinson referred the Board to the Minutes of the meetings held on 2 October and 1 December 2014, focusing on the draft Financial Statements and the building programmes.

(d) Staffing Committee

Mrs Linnell drew the attention of the Board to the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2014, focusing on governor training and performance reviews.


Dr Bastin suggested that the programme for the future governor training events should be kept flexible to ensure that there are opportunities to address issues relating to the recruitment and induction of a new Headteacher.

25. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

26. Next Meeting

Wednesday 25 March 2015 at 6.30pm.

Signed:		(Chairman of Governors)
Date:	25. 3 15	