

Full Governors Meeting

16th October 2024 at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School

Item and Description	Notes
<p>1. Welcome, apologies and quorum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introductions and welcome b. Receive and agree whether to accept apologies c. Confirm whether the meeting is quorate (this can only be a quorum of designated PEF members) d. Confirm resignations or term of office end e. Elect a chair f. Declaration of Interests and/or Conflict of Interests 	<p>Attendees: Peter Croft, Owen Price-Jones, David Marchant, Sarah McGrath, Joe McGraw, Chris Pyle, Maggie Robson.</p> <p>Resignations: Due to other work commitments Mark Pannone has resigned. MR – we are all very sorry to lose Mark from the team and wish him well in his career.</p> <p>DSM – Apologies on the late circulation of documentation. Due to the nature of the content, it was imperative not to drip feed information. Touching base with all relevant individuals at QEGS (RR) & CLLT (LL) to ensure sensitive content was factually correct/signed off took precedence.</p> <p>MR – Neil will not be joining today because he objected to the lateness of paperwork, for which DSM had apologised when they were circulated. The meeting is still quorate.</p> <p>Declarations of interest: PRC, OPJ, BJ.</p>
<p>2. Curriculum Subject Offer 2025 Onwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - QEGS Curriculum 2025 	<p>For GCSE our students must choose four subjects out of 11 (Art, Music, Drama, Geography, History, Design Technology, Food & Nutrition, Computer Science, French, German and Physical Education) to study alongside core subjects. This is a small field of subjects compared to many schools.</p> <p>GCSE Summer 2024 results told us that boys performed massively lower than girls (nine-tenths of a grade lower).</p> <p>Whilst keeping in mind our values and ethos, we need to expand our offering so we have a diverse range of challenges and career paths for all students. Extending our subject will support to bridge the gender performance gap.</p> <p>Having looked in detail at what other high-performing schools offer and reviewing our curriculum direction we feel offering GCSE Business Studies and GCSE Media Studies would benefit our pupils and would provide greater breadth of offer.</p> <p>Nationally GCSE Business Studies is a highly popular choice. In 2024, it was the most popular option GCSE entry after Humanities and Art. This course would offer a good progression to our A-Level Economics course and we propose offering from 2025.</p> <p>GCSE Media Studies would appeal to many of our young people who are strong at and enjoy English but do not want to go down a practical subject route. This would also support with literacy work for those who have struggled in English. Media Studies would offer an excellent progression to an A-Level in Media Studies and Sociology. We would review next year but aim to introduce Media from 2026 or 2027.</p> <p>For our GCE A-Level curriculum students currently choose three subjects from: English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, Mathematics (Further), Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Economics, Politics, Geography, Environmental Science, Geology, Art, Drama, Music, Design Technology and Philosophy.</p>

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	<p>Like GCSE we have a gender performance split. We are sadly also seeing students applying for other Sixth Forms in the local area due to their subject interests/pathways.</p> <p>Considering the local A-Level offering in detail we would like to offer additional subjects to benefit the future of our Sixth Form: Sociology (2025?), Media Studies (2026/27?) and eventually Computer Science (2206-28).</p> <p>MR – Are there teachers internally that will be able to deliver these? I am thinking about the nature of the content we are coming on to later in this meeting.</p> <p>DSM – Yes, for Business Studies and we have a keen interest at both levels. Discussions internally indicate this is a good step forward. Our current A-Level Economics course is Economics with Business. Our plans to develop our GCSE Business course might result in our current Economics offer splitting into a separate Economics and Business Studies course in three or four years. Sociology may be more tricky as we would need specialists to deliver the very best education for the children. There is potential to recruit in 2025 but this may need to be in 2026 when looking at the wider picture. We are setting a direction of travel, not a set timeline. We aim to hopefully have one new GCSE and one new A-Level next year and will focus on quality/delivery.</p> <p>MR – Just to add, equipment costs need to be considered, for example, the Mac Suite.</p> <p>DSM – It is important for me to move forwards and not sit still for the next five years. We need to set the strategy and follow this effectively, even if we have to adapt.</p> <p>CP – Is the aim to grow the Sixth Form or the subject range at A-Level?</p> <p>DSM – There is capacity to increase our numbers in Sixth Form – technically we have the capacity for approximately twenty more students. We also have to think of any funding implications. Something to make you aware of - in English literature and Geography there are currently low in each class. This is where viability comes into play, but if we had decided not to run these classes then there could have been a potential risk of twelve students leaving QEGS. We also know our students leave to do Sociology and are aware that friends leave with them. We need to think more around retainment.</p> <p>There is certainly room for improvement even though our Sixth Form offer is broad in many respects. Our delivery model is solely on A-Level courses and other schools offer a blend of A-Level and other Level 3 courses. We need to think of our short to longer term offerings to open more defined pathways for our young people.</p> <p>Computing would be desirable to offer at KS5, however results need to be sustained at KS4 initially. At the earliest we are looking at 2027 as this area has received a lot of curriculum support and we need to think how we could introduce this successfully.</p> <p>Governors agreed with the proposed changes.</p>
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<p>3. Restructuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- First Curriculum Model- Overall Restructuring Costs- QEGS Three Year Budget – Approved in July 2024- Restructuring - Rationale	<p><u>FIRST CURRICULUM MODEL</u></p> <p>OPJ – Model +8 hours?</p> <p>DSM – I have taken estimated guesses for next year in relation to staffing, trying to marry curriculum demand with the number of staff in the building. This is not finished or refined.</p> <p>PRC – This is surplus 8 hours. The next column is equivalent of another new full-time person.</p> <p>OPJ – In the blocks e.g. Y7 the total number of lessons/classes is greater than the number of classes in a week. Is DT fudged as they are on a rota?</p> <p>SM – What are the numbers in the final table (purple)?</p> <p>OPJ – Y10 & Y11 numbers in orange, are they identifying something?</p> <p>DSM – Explanation of the changes</p> <p>SM – Is the purpose of this to help improve grades? DSM – Yes, plus curriculum and viability.</p> <p>SM - From memory some subjects which are achieve really well had the highest grades? Are we displacing from the wrong area maybe?</p> <p>DSM – Yes and I hear this. The number of students who sat this was much lower, which resulted in increased pressure on the team. Reviewing data and listening to children’s feedback indicated that this was their 4th subject and was just chosen as an extra. This is a pragmatic guess at where pupil numbers may shift.</p> <p>SM/OPJ – Are we trying to solve a different problem?</p> <p>PRC – Hypothesising. History, Geology, German and French are pretty consistent.</p> <p>DSM – At the moment it is all up in the air. We may see a shift from some subjects. Are we going to see enough and classes reduce? We may be wrong currently but we need to think of future impact and this is why we talk now.</p> <p>OPJ – Are there other courses we could look at?</p> <p>DSM – A conscious decision has been made not to drive people away.</p> <p>OPJ – Ok, are these the best options?</p> <p>PRC – There are not that many GCSEs available that count – the options list is very low/disheartening. Law, Latin, classical, travel, statistics and env science.</p> <p>DSM – The creative side is very well covered with Drama, Art, DT, Food. We have an issue to address with academic boys not pushing themselves to their full potential. Business Studies may jump out to these individuals, whereas Media Studies is more left</p>
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field. This may support English learning. We need to provide the breadth of opportunities for students then position our staff accordingly to their strengths around this.

Note: All agreed that everyone is happy with the direction of travel and there are no fixed timelines.

DSM – If anything changes, it will be highlighted.

STRATGIC & FINANCIAL UPDATE

Note: Governors were taken through the presentation which will be presented to all staff in November 2024.

Curriculum

- Current GCSE issues: Underachieving boys, limited and traditional choice.
- Proposal: GCSE Business Studies (2025), GCSE Media (2026/27).
- A-Level Issues: subject offering does not reflect popular national choices, student retention.
- Proposal: A-Level Sociology (2025 – if possible), A-Level Media Studies (2026/27), A-Level Computer Science (2028?).

Budget

- School spending peaked in the UK in 2015-16.
- There were changes to spending/inflation alongside the changes to government. There was a gradual decline through the May government.

Funding

- According to the Bank of England, £1 in 2021 = £1.20 in 2024
- In 2023-24 teachers got a 6.5% pay rise, 3.5% was budgeted by school
- In 2023-24 grants were allocated on the basis of the number of pupils in a school with different per-pupil rates depending on age and other characteristics.
- In 2024-25:
 - Teachers are receiving a 5.5% pay rise.
 - Rolled into the national funding formula.
 - Schools have £600m headroom' - the rest has to be found.
 - Funding on a per pupil basis
 - Doesn't account for support staff pay.
 - A lot of our staff have more experience and are on higher pay scales which as a bigger impact on us.
- Funding vs reality has seen a huge disparity between 2021 and 2024. The difference between our three-year budget and where we are now is -£189,609. The forecast YOY is for this to keep increasing so we need to make changes now.

Proposals

We may need to address:

- Teacher contact ratio.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (teachers not support staff) – following guidance on the dfe website.• Class sizes.• Reduction in FTE.• TLR restructure & L&M time.• Other events – For example, the entrance test day. Is there flexibility for this to run on a normal working day (inset?) - this would also solve practical issues of a lack of staff availability <p>DSM – I want to ensure I keep everyone’s trust and don’t want to be that person who keeps making cutes YOY. This presentation is to provide full transparency of our current situation and be upfront with people on our journey together.</p> <p>Other schools are going through this type of consultation. Levels of funding are not at the levels they used to be. Inflation has gone up so much and teaching staff salaries have gone up 10% in the last 3 years.</p> <p>We need to make this work. I welcome any new ideas but I feel the conversations/ proposals have been exhausted.</p> <p>OPJ – I have no personal issue with the entrance test day moving, but do you worry about the number of people who won’t be able to make a normal working day? Would this reduce the number of children sitting the test?</p> <p>DSM – Other schools have done this and this hasn’t been the case. It could go either way and if children want to come parents will support them.</p> <p>OPJ – In the past we have been mildly accused of not wanting Penrith children here. How do working parents take time out to attend?</p> <p>DSM – This needs to be thought out in a lot more detail. We would also have to think about how we engage with Primary Schools. So many things to think of e.g. mini-bus shuttles, disadvantaged backgrounds. We should push an uptake and be more accommodating.</p> <p>OPJ – This would still generate a cost to us? E.g. mini buses.</p> <p>DSM – We could engage with the LA regarding empty places on service buses that our children won’t be taking up. A lot of consideration is needed. There are risks and we would like a healthy number of applicants. We don’t want to add to the ‘elitism’ we want to open our doors. Again, we also need to consider primary schools and work with them on how we position this. Note: 80 students who applied this year did not sit the test.</p> <p>DSM – If anyone in this group has any concerns, I need to raise this with the trust asap.</p> <p>SM – What are you going to do if staff don’t come forward for voluntary redundancy?</p>
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	<p>DSM – This is also a worry, there is risk all round. I want to avoid compulsory redundancy with increased flexibility from staff. They have supported us a lot already with teaching and cover, need T&L thinking.</p> <p>SM – PPA to 10% from September 2025, how does this work?</p> <p>DSM – This is 10% of the time you are teaching. (Technically a 52-period week timetable).</p> <p>OPJ – 51.6</p> <p>MR – I don't think there is much choice. I think going for it and hearing everything all at once is the right approach. But will this be a huge shock?</p> <p>OPJ – Hugely down to the individual here. How you approach/communicate this is more important as QEGS can't change the financial situation we are in by continuing as we are.</p> <p>DSM – Teachers are thinking about the students and their learning but finance will be in the back of their mind. People know things aren't straight forward and different control measures have been put in place, e.g. red days around cover.</p> <p>CP – Well done, I can see you are controlling the deficit and are climbing a huge mountain to get through this.</p> <p>DSM – Financially we are in the red zone at 82.5% for staffing costs. On average this should be 72-75%.</p> <p>CP – School vs trust? Is QEGS hiding behind the trust or taking full responsibility? Where do the drivers come from? Are the finance people within the trust dictating?</p> <p>DSM – QEGS are owning this, this is the reality of our budget in our school. There are people in the finance department of the trust questioning decision making. 'Available for Cover' held the line with strong opposition against the trust model. The trust ask very good questions regarding our staffing structure and we have had frank conversations around how things happen differently between other schools. Support staff at QEGS are understaffed and we can't just hire, we need to look at other possible routes e.g. apprenticeships.</p> <p>JM – Are you comfortable you are going to get the numbers coming forward for VR?</p> <p>DSM – Yes.</p> <p>JM – Will the statutory payment suffice?</p> <p>DSM – It is not a life changing sum of money. There are many employees heading towards the end of their career so may take the opportunity.</p> <p>PRC – Some may come forward for conversations around alternative solutions e.g. dropping two days next year.</p> <p>OPJ – How does this fit with the repayment plan.</p>
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	<p>RR – This is factored into our budget so we don't lose sight of this.</p> <p>OPJ – Can we choose not to pay this?</p> <p>DSM – This is being paid for by the trust and we pay them back. It has to be in the budget and we must pay it all back.</p> <p>OPJ – The comments/questions I think that may come back in the staff meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the 6% that we pay to the trust? Why does this increase?• Getting by but professionals now – HR/Estates/Computeam. CIF bid. Synergies on contracts. Share examples would be great so employees can relate.• Contact ratio – a perm change or a thing we need to do for x number of years?• Are we out of liability payments?• Ducked in the past. Perm – foreseeable in this gov. More planning and prep time in the future if we can afford. Need to push this as perm how things are.• Costs of a member of staff and costs of a cover lesson. Not inconsequential. <p>OPJ - Educational trips what is this?</p> <p>RR – Ignore this, it is confusing as this is in and then out. This will be changing in the budget moving forwards and recorded separately to avoid confusion. We spend a lot on trips and this skews figures.</p> <p>CP – Will there be a Union angle/presence at the briefing?</p> <p>DSM – There is a Trade Union forum meeting on the 24th Oct. Trust give a direction of travel meeting. They have been invited to the staff meeting on 5th November. All staff are invited to the meeting then support staff will leave for the second half of the meeting. This feels like the right time as we don't want upset/worries over the Autumn half-term.</p> <p>OPJ – Have part time staff been invited?</p> <p>DSM – I will check this and take advice on how we include/invite as appropriate.</p> <p>PRC – we will also check people on maternity etc.</p> <p>OPJ – It seems very unfair that someone previously has made a wrong decision and left us in bad debt resulting in our people paying for their mistakes.</p> <p>DSM – Yes absolutely but this is also a reflection of the state of education nationally that are driving massive problems for a number of schools. We are ahead of the curve making this sort of</p>
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	<p>action plan. We know of one school who has done this already and others who are taking action.</p> <p>JM – You are making the right call taking action now to hopefully save compulsory redundancy.</p> <p>Discussion amongst governors of how to best manage communications.</p> <p>DSM – It feels right to deliver the curriculum message alongside the restructuring content, it would be disingenuous to separate them as they link. We need to be pragmatic and set the direction for the future. We're making an organisational change to positively impact our future curriculum. This happens in other schools and many businesses. We have to get the balance right and the curriculum/children are at the forefront of our thinking.</p> <p><i>Note: Everyone agreed to keep these subjects connected as you can't really talk about one without the other.</i></p> <p>MR – When is the meeting?</p> <p>DSM – 5th November. CLLT HR will be there for support, Union Reps have been invited and Governors are also very welcome to attend. 20th November is the mid-point meeting where staff can engage if they wish to. This will be a drop in at lunch time or after school to raise any points/questions and there will be no set agenda.</p> <p><i>Note: Everyone is in agreement with the content being presented.</i></p>
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