

CBAT BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 8th December 2021 at 5:00pm via videoconference

Present: Nigel Riglar (Chair), Debbie Bird, Ruth Hollier (from 6.05pm), Judith Taylor, Stuart Wilson (Chief Executive Officer – CEO).

Apologies: Graham Ayre, John Gilbert, Barbara Green.

In Attendance: Emma Gray (Chief Finance and Operations Officer – CFOO), David Dale (Clerk).

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies received and accepted:

JG. RH had advised that she would be late due to work commitments.

3. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new declarations. The Clerk thanked those Trustees who had completed and returned their declaration of interests 2021/22 forms, and reminded those who have not done so to complete them as soon as possible.

4. Minutes of the meeting of 12th October 2021

Trustees considered the draft minutes of the last meeting and noted that they were an accurate record. It was **proposed** by JT, and **seconded** by DB, that the minutes be approved and signed, to be published on the Trust's website. This was **agreed** unanimously.

5. Action point checklist

The Clerk ran through the actions. Trustees noted that actions had either been completed or are covered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting. The CEO said that there is no underlying issue with attendance at the primary SDBs but that recruitment of Governors is ongoing. Headteachers have included updates on sexual abuse in schools in their latest reports to Trustees (item 9 below).

6. Matters arising

None.

7. Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation

It was noted that Trustees had agreed a minor amendment to the Responsible use of ICT policy (decision on 8th December 2021).

8. Trustee resignations and appointments

There had been no appointments or resignations since the last meeting.

9. Headteachers' reports

The CEO presented the reports for the period September-November 2021 and said that he had been through them with the relevant Link Trustees.

Berkeley Primary School – achievement data are positive, as was a recent phonics check; the number of free school meals pupils has increased due to the impact of the pandemic and some new admissions; the school has been allocated S106 funding for early years in respect of new housing development nearby; the school choir has been active and sang at the Dursley Christmas lights switch-on; a recent survey of parents was very positive, there were only 2 negative responses.

Marling School – high level of attendance maintained despite Covid; significant focus is being given to continuing work on anti-discrimination; strong action is being taken in response to any incidents and referred to other agencies where necessary; COVID absences had remained steady at 2-3% of pupils during the start of the autumn term, but a significant spike occurred at the end of term 1 (when rates in the local community were then the highest nationally) led to the partial closure of the school on the final day; premises – looking into new perimeter fencing to further improve site security.

Cam Woodfield Junior School – there has been a very positive report following an external review of teaching and learning, the CEO directed Trustees to the relevant documents on the school website and Trustees asked that their thanks and acknowledgement be conveyed to the Headteacher and staff for all their hard work (**Action:** CEO to pass on Trustees' supportive comments and thanks to the school); attendance figures are high but affected by some cases of persistent condoned absence; there are a relatively high number of pupils on the safeguarding log. Trustees noted that the school has been awarded the Gilt PSQM award which was led by the Science subject leader, Emily Hulme, and the assessor had commented very favourably on what has been achieved. Trustees asked that their congratulations be passed on to Emily and other staff involved.

Schools Heat Map – the CEO then presented the Schools Heat Map for discussion as a possible format for exception reporting on schools as the Trust grows. He explained that it is a simple colour-coded way of presenting the status of key areas of school operation from leadership and management through teaching and learning to facilities. The colours show lead/sustain/improve/repair/stabilise status (strong to weak) for elements in each key area. The format is at an early stage, the CEO will discuss it with Headteachers and develop it further.

Trustees gave some initial views on the format, generally supporting the principle of reporting by exception but wanting to ensure that core information on attainment is easily accessible, that details are provided where status is reported as weak (repair/stabilisation), and wanting to retain some brief written commentary for each school that would allow for other news and achievements to be presented (such as the CWJS science award). **Action:** CEO to develop and refine the exception reporting format for discussion with Headteachers, SDBs and Trustees.

10. SDB minutes and matters raised

Trustees considered the minutes of the following SDB meetings – CWJS 17th November 2021, BPS 10th November 2021, and MS 23rd September, 6th October and 15th November 2021. These were noted.

Trustees asked about the concerns reported in the BPS minutes (9.v) about IT problems experienced in September, the CEO said that this was a local authority issue and had been resolved. The school had received good support from the Trust. He reported that a member of the Trust's IT team was due to leave their post.

11. Recommendations from SDBs for decision

Trustees considered the recommendation from MS SDB to appoint Ian Townsend as a new Governor. The CEO gave details of the candidate's professional background and his meeting with him and the Chair of the SDB. It was **proposed** by NR, and **seconded** by JT, that Ian Townsend be appointed as a Governor on the Marling SDB. This was **agreed** unanimously.

The CEO also gave a brief report on progress with identifying and recruiting additional Governors at BPS and MS.

12. Website review (item 13 on the agenda)

The Clerk reported on the outcome of the recent external check on website compliance. He noted recent actions to update the Governance Statement to add the name of the Chair of the FARC, to update the register of Trustees' interests and attendance records.

He said that the only remaining action was to add the Memorandum of Association, as required under the Master Funding Agreement (MFA). When this has been done, the Trust's website will be fully compliant with all the publication requirements set out in the Academy Trust Handbook and the MFA. Trustees noted this information.

The Chair asked about any issues raised concerning website compliance for the three schools. The CEO said that a few minor points had been identified by the external review, and that he will check before the end of term to ensure that these had been addressed.

13. Scheme of delegation (item 14 on the agenda)

Further to the Board's decision at its last meeting to establish a Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, the Clerk advised Trustees that a minor change to the Scheme of delegation is required in order to clarify the respective roles of Members and Trustees in agreeing the terms of reference for any committees established, and to ensure that the Scheme is consistent with the relevant parts of the Articles of Association (Articles 100 and 101).

It was **proposed** by NR and **seconded** by DB that row 5 of the Scheme of delegation be amended to clarify that the Trust Board is accountable for approving the terms of reference of committees. This was **agreed** unanimously

14. Letter to Director of Education (item 15 on the agenda)

The CEO referred to his letter of 30th November that had been shared with Trustees and said that he had received a prompt reply with an assurance that the matter would be investigated by a senior officer from the local authority's schools team. Trustees noted that they would welcome a more detailed response in due course.

15. Safeguarding (item 16 on the agenda)

The CEO said that there were no urgent safeguarding issues to report, other than those already considered in the Headteachers' reports (item 9 above). For MS, he informed Trustees of proposed additional site access controls, including more perimeter fencing with access control technology, and the possibility of considering the adoption of part of Downfield Road. Trustees asked about the estimated cost of the additional controls and were advised that this would be in the region of £25,000.

16. Finance (item 17 on the agenda)

The minutes of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 18th November 2021 were

received and noted.

Three-year premiums strategy – for information. The CEO referred to the schools’ strategies for the use of pupil premium (and recovery premium for 2021-22) to help improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The strategies set out the challenges faced in each school, the intended outcomes and success measures, and actions across teaching, targeted academic support, and wider activities. He noted that Trustees have seen the strategy template previously, and can now access the completed strategies on Governor Hub. The strategies will also be published on the schools’ websites.

The CEO asked Trustees to review the level of schools’ contributions to central Trust funds. The contribution currently stands at 5% of the school budget, this is earmarked for the school rather than pooled. The CEO asked Trustees to consider the option of raising this to 5.5% which generate an additional £38k that could be ringfenced for emergency use across the Trust. He noted that Headteachers are open to this proposal, and asked for Trustees’ views.

Trustees asked questions about how this might operate and be allocated. It was suggested that Trustees would be responsible for allocating these additional central funds, in consultation with SDB Chairs and Headteachers. Unused funds could be returned to schools. The contribution could be increased from September 2022. Trustees indicated their support in principle for this proposal and asked for further details to be worked up for discussion with the schools. Action: CEO to prepare a paper for further discussion.

RH joined the meeting at 6.05pm.

17. Audit report item 12 on the agenda)

The CFOO reported that the Trust’s external auditor, Bishop Fleming, had completed their independent report on the Trust’s financial statements for 2020-21 and had presented the draft report to the FARC on 29th November. The outcome is another ‘clean’ unmodified audit with positive opinions on the true and fair nature of the accounts, free from any material misstatements, and confirmation that the Trust is a going concern. The covering letter highlights three control observations but these are all in the green category (unlikely to have any material impact).

Trustees asked questions about pension fund risks, fixed assets, and school balances. They were reassured that there were no irregularities or concerns.

The CEO informed Trustees that he had been advised by Bishop Fleming that the information on executive pay contained in the financial statements and Trustees’ letter is sufficient to meet transparency requirements set out in the Academy Trust Handbook, and that no additional publication is required.

Following this discussion, it was **proposed** by JT and **seconded** by RH that the financial statements and Trustees’ letter be approved and that the Chair sign and submit these on behalf of the Trust. This was **agreed** unanimously.

The CFOO advised Trustees of the requirement set out in the Academy Trust Handbook (Part 4) for Trusts to re-tender their external audit contract at least every 5 years, and the factors that should be taken into account when appointing the external auditor. She asked for Trustees’ approval to re-tender the external audit contract for a period of 5 years. It was **proposed** by JT and **seconded** by DB that the Trust re-tender its external audit contract, this was **agreed** unanimously.

18. People

The CFOO outlined a proposal to create the post of Operations Manager for MS to replace the

traditional Business Manager role and reflect the position of the school within the Trust with a central finance team. This had been discussed and agreed at the recent FARC meeting (item 12a in the draft minutes). The intention is to advertise the post externally. Trustees asked about the cost of the post and the CFOO explained that it is already in the MS budget at Grade 10 (point range 37-43) and affordable for the next 3 years, by which time it is expected that the Trust will have grown and that a greater proportion on the cost of the CFOO post will then be met centrally. Trustees indicated that they supported the FARC decision to create the Operations Manager post and proceed with the appointment.

19. Property

The CFOO briefed Trustees on progress with a number of issues including the replacement of windows at MS East Campus, roof repairs at all the schools following leaks during recent heavy rainfall, and the imminent CIF bids deadline. Trustees noted this information.

20. ICT strategy and operations

The CEO said that previously reported issues with IT services at the primary schools had now been resolved with the help of the Primary Operations Manager working across both schools. He noted that when the MS Operations Manager was appointed (item 18 above) they would join the IT strategy team. The MS IT team are working to move services to the cloud, BPS and CWJS will follow in due course. Trustees asked for assurance that the IT team continues to have the skills and capacity to support the Trust and its schools effectively, the CEO said that this was the case and we are also using external support as needed.

21. Data protection and privacy

No significant data protection breaches to report.

22. Beacon Secondary Academy

The CEO said that there is little to report at present. The meeting of the Project Steering Group has been postponed until the new year.

23. Other growth opportunities

The CEO reported that he has been actively pursuing a number of potential opportunities with primary and secondary schools in the county. Some are very keen to take discussions further and to undertake some collaborative work. Some general momentum has been given by a request from the Director of Education for all schools to consider joining a MAT when their Headteacher is replaced. Other momentum is likely to come from the results of recent Ofsted inspections where schools have found this to be a very challenging experience and may not retain their current rating.

24. Any other business

- i. **Teachers' Pay Policy:** The CEO reminded Trustees that in July they had approved a number of changes to this policy. He had now received the latest model policy from EPM and there were no significant changes. The pay scales for 2021-22 had now been shared with Trustees. It was **proposed** by RH and **seconded** by JT that the updated Teachers' Pay Policy, including the pay scales for 2021-22, be approved. This was **agreed** unanimously.

The CEO and CFOO both left the meeting at 6.50pm.

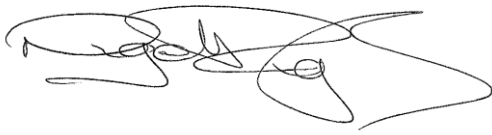
CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

ii. CEO salary range.

25. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 2nd February 2022 at 5.00pm (virtual).

The meeting ended at 7.12pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the date.

2nd February 2022