

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST**

***held on Wednesday 10th October 2018***

***at The Lansdowne Club, London***

**MINUTES**

Directors Present: Ms L. Adams Mr D. Bateson OBE

Mr A. Boddison Mr C. Bush

Mrs J. Cutchey Mr G. Peile

Mr M. Kerr

Members Present: Mrs H. Capron Mr R. Dool

Officers Present: Mr D. Hilton Mrs K. Jarvis

Mr C. Paskell Mrs J. Steel

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| Also Present: | Mrs R. Aldous | Executive Head of Grove Primary School & Westwood Primary School |
|  | Mr S. Bainbridge | Executive Head of Highfield Littleport Academy & Highfield Ely Academy |

**1.** **WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Ms Adams welcomed all present.

Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr Beswick, Mr G. Hely Hutchinson, Ms M. Lloyd & Mr Staite.

All present were asked to complete a declaration of interest form for 2018/19 and return it to Mrs Jarvis. No new interests were declared for items on the agenda.

**2. SCHOOL REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS:**

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the reports that Mr Bainbridge had provided prior to the meeting. He was asked to highlight areas of particular note:

**Highfield Ely Academy (HEA)**

Mr Bainbridge opened by informing Trustees that on October 3rd HEA had been the subject of a Section 8 Ofsted inspection. All were delighted to hear that this resulted in a strong ‘Good’ judgement. Mr Bainbridge added that the inspectors were particularly complimentary of the support of ALT and the work that Mr Bainbridge was undertaking to support special needs across the Trust. Mr Peile added that this was also praised in his interview with the lead inspector. Mr Bainbridge stated that the inspectors had acknowledged the recent restructure in leadership and partnership with LECA, and the improvement agenda that has been implemented to secure the curriculum and assessment process which will be embedded over the coming months.

* 21 students will be leaving HEA at the end of this academic year – HEA are mindful of the financial implications.
* Carry forward is £25k up on predictions.
* Attendance is better than average for special schools.
* Student progress and outcomes are good, with rigorous assessment processes now in place to evidence this. Questions raised during an external review last year around consistency have been addressed.
* AIGs, Ofsted and internal assessment have comparable views on progress.
* The three Pathways system was explained to trustees. Teaching has moved to teaching in bands according to need rather than age ranges. Curriculum booklets have been developed and parents are supportive. This has led to robust evidence being in place.
* Individual support for individual teachers needs embedding to ensure teaching can be outstanding throughout the school.
* Phase 2 of the building project at HEA is scheduled to commence in May 2019.
* HEA will be a Linc 19 pilot school for two years from September 2019. This will enable young adults to continue education until the age of 25. The LA have agreed to fund 10 full time places, which will ensure staffing (although the students will be housed at HLA until Phase 2 of HEA is complete). Mr Bainbridge informed trustees that the Ofsted team were unaware of the 19-25 provision at HEA and were unsure of how to inspect it. They took advice and eventually undertook a safeguarding inspection only.
* Mr Bainbridge has visited 10 ALT schools during the past year to assess and advise on SEN provision. 2 SENCO forums have been set up for the Ipswich and Cambs Hubs, with North Suffolk already having a strong network in place. Mr Bainbridge will attend meetings to advise colleagues.
* Pupils have an excellent attitude to learning at HEA, and teaching assistants ably support pupils and contribute to learning.

In response to questions, the following points were raised and answered:

* Ms Adams asked how core quality provision would be assessed for Linc 19 in the future. Mr Bainbridge expects that this would be covered by Ofsted under a separate inspection. Mr Boddison added that he expects guidance will be available in the new framework.
* Mr Peile advised Trustees that, following overwhelming support from heads at a recent senior leaders conference, the Trust is looking into the possibility of employing an educational psychologist to work across all schools.

**Highfield Littleport Academy (HLA)**

Mr Bainbridge reminded Trustees that both HEA & HLA are area special schools. One of the USPs of HLA is its strong links with LECA and the chance for pupils to work across both schools. This has led to some parents opting for HLA rather than HEA and has needed to be managed carefully.

* There are 68 students on roll, with a further 20 on the waiting list.
* There are plans for one class to be opened in April 2019 and a further class in September 2019.
* The official opening event held jointly with LECA was a success.
* Finances at HLA need careful management.
* Being able to draw from experience at HEA is a huge strength for a new school.
* The Pathways system for assessment and curriculum has been introduced at HLA, and will enable cross-school moderation with HEA.
* Processes are good, but need embedding.
* Mr Bainbridge explained that the LA are advocating a system called STEPS instead of Team Teach for minor restraint situations. This is being assessed at HLA, but Mr Bainbridge is unsure if this would be the correct course for Highfield schools. He explained some of the minor differences between the two programmes, and the time and resources it would take to roll out STEPS across the Trust.
* Parents of pupils who are able to work in LECA classes will be asked to sign a parental agreement before such links take place to protect both the pupil and the schools.

In response to questions, the following points were raised and answered:

* Mrs Cutchey asked how HLA manage recruitment in a growing school. Mr Bainbridge replied that it is sometimes difficult, but Highfield have always been good at ‘grow your own’ and are creative in their recruitment. Shared roles are advertised which offer greater opportunities for promotion across both schools. Experienced staff from HEA have moved to HLA, but senior leaders are always mindful not to reduce the high standards at HEA.
* Mrs Cutchey asked how far apart the two schools are. Mr Bainbridge answered that HEA and HLA are 5.5 miles apart – 10 mins by car. Resources are shared regularly, e.g. the hydro-pool, and it is planned that specialist subject teachers employed to work with older students in areas such as Science will be based at one of the two schools in fit-for-purpose teaching spaces, with pupils moving between sites.
* Mr Boddison expressed an interest in the split for MLD and PMLP students. He also asked whether Highfield used mixed models. Mr Bainbridge explained that Highfield HLA have been asked to take students who were unable to cope in mainstream schools due to anxiety issues rather than physical needs. This needs careful managing in the future, with HLA staff needing to visit and assess pupils before they are admitted. Mr Bainbridge stated that Cambridgeshire do not recognise mixed models and so these are only introduced in exceptional circumstances.
* Mr Bateson commented that there has been a 33% increase in requests for special school places recently, with not enough places available. This increases the importance of outreach work. Mr Peile added that current government policy does not allow for MATS to put forward a case to sponsor new special schools which is frustrating.
* Ms Adams asked for an update on the fire doors at HLA. Mr Bainbridge replied that he believed a solution had been found that meets all requirements.
* Ms Adams closed the discussion by stating that she, and other trustees, very much enjoyed the opening day, and it was interesting to see how interested and proud the LECA students were of their links with HLA.

***Ms Adams thanked Mr Bainbridge for attending and for his reports. She also thanked him for this work to support all ALT schools. She added that his passion for high quality provision for SEN students shone through.***

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the reports that Mrs Aldous had provided prior to the meeting. She was asked to highlight areas of particular note:

**Westwood Primary School (WPS)**

Mrs Aldous spoke passionately about Westwood Primary School and listed the following as strengths of Westwood:

* Data is strong, particularly KS2 and EYFS.
* The curriculum has been rewritten to allow an integrated day for EYFS, with engaging based learning. This is being progressed into lower KS1, and allows greater opportunities to embed learning. The curriculum has been bolstered by areas such as Woodland School, which includes opportunities for DT and social interaction.
* The school opening hours have been extended from 8am to 5pm, with numerous additional activities on offer.
* The senior leadership team are strong and supported by good governance that has been in place for a long time. This will be strengthened by merging with governors from Grove Primary School from this September.
* Monitoring systems at Westwood and Grove are the same, which allows for cross-school moderation.

Three areas of Development have been highlighted in the School Development Plan:

* Retain high attainment in Year 6 – five pupils in the current Year 5 have a high level of SEN which will impact results.
* Strengthen middle leadership throughout the school. Experienced MLs have been promoted, with current MLs being encouraged to fulfil their potential.
* Pupil premium at greater depth is a challenge, particularly in KS2 where there are high numbers of pupil premium students.

The following comments and questions were raised:

* Mr Bush stressed that the performance at WPS is exceptional as it sits in a deprived area. It is important to understand why Mrs Aldous and her staff are able to achieve this. The rate of progress over the years is unprecedented and disadvantaged pupils are achieving as well as other students. Mrs Aldous stated that she believes strongly in quality first teaching. Teachers are held to account and know, and are able to discuss in detail, individual students. There is an open feedback culture for teaching and learning reviews, which is strengthened by Assessment for Learning programmes and teaching exam literature in KS2. She added that the curriculum is enriched by additional offers, and teachers are able to be flexible with timetabling, with pupils working fluidly in groups.
* Mr Peile added that teachers at Westwood know where the gaps are, and are able to say what needs doing. Mrs Aldous said this is due to making sure teachers have the correct information about each student and the resources to address the issues.
* Mr Bush asked Mrs Aldous to describe her leadership style. Mrs Aldous stated that she advocates a nurturing style, which she models on the ground, and so builds leadership from the bottom up as well as top down. Staff know they are able to discuss things openly and are supportive of each other. Mrs Cutchey added that Mrs Aldous is very supportive and teachers have ownership with lots of good quality CPD.
* Mr Hilton added that the key point is quality first teaching, and teachers are able to attend progress meeting with ready solutions
* Mr Boddison asked why the attainment target is 80%, which is lower than national. Mrs Aldous explained that this is a realistic figure due to the high number of SEN pupils in KS2.

**Grove Primary School (GRS)**

Mrs Aldous opened her by reporting on the HMI visit that took place before the summer break. Positive feedback was received. HMI are due to return after half-term and are expected to recommend that an Ofsted inspection takes place in the new year. Mrs Aldous believes this would allow the school to become secure for a ‘Good’ judgement. Areas of strength were described as:

* The leadership team has grown into a dynamic team who have driven the new curriculum. They lead achievement teams that look at progress and quality of books, and have established a system of self-evaluation for book marking.
* KS2 results are good. The Year 6 teacher is very motivated and engaged with the journey the school is on.
* Parents (after being disillusioned when Ms Aldous started at GRS) are now an asset and very supportive. There is a strong Parents’ Forum group.
* The school has a well-used Facebook page, which allows the opportunity to sell GRS back to the community.
* The partnership with WPS is a strength for both schools, with supportive teachers who work as a team.

Areas for development:

* Need to improve KS1, Phonics and EYFS. Mrs Aldous is confident they will achieve national targets this year, but there was a considerable amount of turmoil last year with numerous supply teachers in KS1. EYFS staff are working alongside WPS staff on data and assessment.
* Teachers on UPS have been allocated middle-leadership roles that need to be embedded. They link to specific areas of the School Development Plan and are involved with Trust CPD.
* Staff are working on learning behaviours with pupils to promote positive leaders and the Five ‘Rs’.

The following comments and questions were raised:

* Ms Adams asked how far apart the two schools are. Ms Aldous replied that they are less than one mile apart.
* Mr Boddison asked about the high number of fixed term exclusions at 23. Mrs Aldous explained that this related to 4 or 5 children, one of which has resulted in a permanent exclusion.
* Mr Bush asked why there seems to be an issue with the progress data for writing. Mrs Aldous believes the data was inaccurately assessed in the past. New standards are now in place alongside the Trust programme for writing, which should see improvements.

Mr Peile offered his thanks to both Mr Bainbridge and Mrs Aldous for their work across the Trust. He asked his appreciation be placed on record.

Ms Adams thanked both executive heads for attending, and for the content of their reports. She stated that is was obvious to all how much they enjoyed their roles and this no doubt has had a positive impact on the schools they manage.

***Mr Bainbridge & Mrs Aldous left the meeting at this point.***

Ms Adams asked if Trustees had any further comments to make. All agreed with Mrs Cutchey’s comments that both were inspirational and exceptional leaders.

**3.** **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 12th JULY 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2018 were accepted as a true record with no technical corrections.

Mr Boddison raised the issue of mental health in light of the latest government report released. Mr Peile informed Trustees that the government report is at green paper stage, however the Trust has already undertaken steps towards positive mental health and well-being, including a pupil survey, and identifying priorities for each hub to address through a MH task group. Two findings from the pupil survey were that children are not sleeping well, but feel safer in school than they do outside of school. Marilyn Toft, the Trust’s Safeguarding Lead, is monitoring this area and will provide regular reports for the Board.

**4.** **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

Trustees were asked to note the minutes from Finance & Audit committee that met on 12th July 2018. They were further asked to note that the Remuneration & Personnel committee did not meet on this date.

***Trustees noted the content of the minutes from the Finance & Audit committee meeting held on 12th July 2018.***

Ms Adams asked all members if they were happy to continue their membership to allocated committees and links. All present confirmed that they were content to continue.

**5. CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Ms Adams informed Trustees that she had undertaken one chair’s action since the last meeting. This was to approve the appointment or reappointment of all chairs to local governing bodies following the governance restructure.

**6. DATA REPORT**

Mr Hilton took trustees through his report, answering questions as raised.

The first round of KS4 AIGs have been completed and were led by Mr Peile. Mr Hilton will provide the finalised KS4 data for the next meeting.

The primary school data shows concern around greater depth. Mr Hilton and Mrs Parke are working on this with schools. There are three Challenge 1 schools:

**Burrowmoor**: attainment is low. Mr Peile has met with the new head and plans are in place to improve Year 6 teaching. He is confident Burrowmoor has the potential to improve.

**Hillside**: progress has improved, but attainment remains low. There is concern over the consistency of moderation and the quality of teaching.

**Kingsfield**: Mrs Horn, executive head, is of the view that Kingsfield is improving.

Data for disadvantaged pupils was interesting to Trustees, as it has levelled out after an upwards trend in the last couple of years. Heads are being asked to consider the quality of intervention work, and whether it is being carried out by skilled personnel. Mr Bush pointed out that there are obvious variations in this area between schools in Challenge 1 and Challenge 3.

***Trustees noted the content of the data report presented by Mr Hilton and the work being undertaken to support areas of concern.***

**7. DATA PROTECTION REPORT**

Mr Paskell presented a report on progress by the Trust Data Protection Officer and schools to implement new processes to strengthen and embed data protection practices in order to comply with GDPR. Trustees confirmed that they had read the report with interest, and noted the work carried out to prepare for the independent audit scheduled for mid-October. Mr Paskell made particular reference to the fact that schools are well supported by Caroline Driver and, due to training, understand the level they need to work to. The report provided information performance indicators that show the Trust is aware of its responsibilities and is managing them well. Trustees were also asked to consider an update to the Records Retention Policy as given. This was approved.

Trustees were asked to note that there have been four data breaches recorded since the last meeting – all low level and therefore not reportable.

***Trustees noted the content of the report as presented, and approved the update to the Records Retention Policy. They asked that their thanks be passed on the Mrs Driver for her excellent work in this area.***

**8. Trust Development Plan**

Mr Peile took Trustees through the report that had been previously circulated. He made particular reference to the priorities for 2018/19, which have been agreed to improve attainment and progress in schools, achieve improvements in value for money given the increasing pressure on funds and to support schools in delivering on improvements in mental health across the Trust. He discussed the key activities that had been listed to implement the plan.

In response to a question, Mrs Steel explained how the free DfE Teacher Recruitment site will work.

***Trustees noted the activities proposed to be implemented in the 2018/19 Trust Development Plan as presented, and looked forward to hearing more on progress as the year progressed.***

**9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT**

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Peile was able to inform Trustees that a Director of Teachers and School Performance has been appointed to Mr Hilton’s team, part of whose role will be to challenge AIGs on standards of senior leaders. A good field of candidates was received and James Chester has been recruited.

Mr Peile added that the two newly appointed secondary advisers have started work this term, and have already visited schools, met staff, and taken part in AIG meetings.

Reference was made to the continuing work across the Trust to improve IT provision, including the exciting opportunity for ALT to be part of an Apple Device Pilot Project. Three schools, covering all ages of students, have been chosen as they have the correct infrastructure to support the project, have willing leaders and teachers who can take it forward and an existing vision to support the use of technology within their schools.

**Safeguarding**. Trustees were asked to note that the Trust safeguarding and pupil well-being policy approved by the Board and issued to schools in July 2018 remains fit-for-purpose following the publication of the updated DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance that was updated in September 2018. They were further reminded of the responsibilities of Board Trustees for safeguarding and that the Trust policy for schools must be supported by child protection procedures in each school that reflect the policy as well as the needs and priorities of their communities.

Mr Peile was also able to report that new entry systems have been introduced into the majority of schools, and the MyConcern software package is being used for the reporting and recording of incidents, as agreed at the last meeting.

Mr Peile thanked those Trustees who supported the Littleport Official Opening Event. Steve Barclay, MP, unveiled a plaque and students from both Littleport schools gave musical performances.

Mrs Cutchey praised the first Trust-wide professional development day held on 5th September 2018. She said she felt privileged to have been part of such an inspirational day, with 560 teaching staff in attendance.

The Board noted the content of the CEO report and the actions being taken across the Trust. They specifically noted the actions being taken to improve IT provision and the work to enhance safeguarding.

**10. TRUSTEE VISITS**

Mrs Jarvis outlined the proposals for Trustee visits to North Suffolk schools on 15th November 2018. Trustees will split into groups, covering two schools each, and coming together for a feedback session during the afternoon.

**11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No other business was raised.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 13th December 2018.

Trustees agreed that the meeting planned for 16th May 2019 should be moved to 23rd May 2019 to avoid a clash with SATs.