

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST**

***held on Thursday 14th February 2019***

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

**MINUTES**

Directors Present: Ms L. Adams Mr J. Beswick

Mr A. Boddison Mr C. Bush

Mrs J. Cutchey Mr G. Hely Hutchinson

Mr M. Kerr Ms M. Lloyd

Members Present: Mr R. Dool Mr S. Staite

Officers Present: Mr D. Hilton Mrs K. Jarvis

Mr C. Paskell Mrs J. Steel

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| Also Present: | Mrs D. Hawkes | Head of Burrowmoor Primary School |
|  | Mrs W. James | Head of Sidegate Primary School |
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**30.** **WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr Bateson and Mrs Capron.

Ms Adams welcomed all present. She opened the meeting by speaking about the sad passing of Mr Gary Peile, and how she came to know and work with him. Mr Bush followed this by talking about how he and Mr Peile established the Active Learning Trust, and how proud Gary was of all that had been achieved. This was followed by a period of quiet, personal reflection for all present.

No new interests were declared for items on the agenda.

**31. SCHOOL REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS:**

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

**Burrowmoor Primary School (BPS)**

Mrs Hawkes opened her report by stating that she had appreciated the phone call from Mrs Steel regarding Mr Peile – it was a personal touch that epitomises the Trust. She is enjoying working at BPS, but it should be recognised that the school is a big challenge and that it has “a long way to go”.

* Staff have been less resilient in recent years due to numerous changes, but there is now a strong ethos of teamwork that is starting to show results.
* KS2 are priority due to poor results last year, but the current Year 6 are already showing more promise. There were several behavioural issues in last year’s cohort.
* Need to raise BPS profile within the community.
* Have established new ways of filling gaps, eg pre-teach sessions.
* There is a high percentage of pupil premium students at BPS, whose individual progress is considered regularly at Pupil Progress Meetings.
* Ofsted priorities form the basis of the School Development Plan, eg developing & accountability. Middle leaders had only been allocated areas of responsibility two weeks prior to Ofsted visiting, therefore systems were not in place. This has now been rectified.
* Staff from Neale-Wade are supporting BPS.
* New Maths and English materials/schemes are being embedded and give a high level of challenge.
* Book scrutiny is working well in all year groups (apart from Year 2 where it is being re-evaluated), but will continue to be monitored.
* The Den has been established to support children who struggle in class. This is seen as a short-term measure for pupils, staffed with two skilled TAs. It is working well.
* Forest School provision has been increased, with more staff being trained.
* Results at greater depth will be a struggle this year due to the focus being on results reaching national average, however interventions are being introduced for more-able students.
* Improvement in parental engagement and support is a school priority. Parents do not see homework as their role. School are working on ways to motivate and encourage engagement, eg Family Workshops are being introduced.
* IT provision at BPS is poor. Mr Paskell is supporting school to establish the best way forward. Year 6 will be using facilities at Neale-Wade Academy to ensure the curriculum is met.

Mr Beswick asked why the current Year 6 are seen as an easier cohort to work with. Mrs Hawkes replied that there are fewer behavioural issues this year, and last year there was a distinct lack of support from families.

Mr Beswick asked what measures are in place to encourage parental engagement. Mrs Hawkes spoke of plans to improve communication through the weekly online newsletter, a closed Facebook account and email and texting facilities.

Mr Boddison asked about the provision for SEN, particularly in relation to The Den, and whether there is a danger of this becoming internal exclusion. Mrs Hawkes stressed that The Den is a time limited option for the majority of students, although one child who is awaiting a special school place is there full-time at the moment as the classroom is an inappropriate setting for him.

Mr Boddison asked about the two permanent exclusions, and whether there was any interaction between SEN and behaviour. Mrs Hawkes explained the two cases to the satisfaction of Trustees.

Mr Staite asked if schools within the Trust swap knowledge and good practise on parental engagement. Mr Bush replied that they do – Mrs Hawkes agreed, but has not explored this option yet.

Mrs Cutchey asked if school are confident that staff are now able to deliver Maths to KS2 (given last summer’s poor results). Mrs Hawkes replied that she is confident in Year 4 and 6, with other year groups improving. The Trust are supporting by providing Dave Baker to support staff where needed.

Mr Kerr asked about work taking place with Neale-Wade. Mrs Hawkes listed PE support, a VP working with a newly appointed AH, IT and Science depth of knowledge for Year 6, and more-able pupils attending sessions at NWA.

Mr Bush reminded all that BPS has been a difficult school to move on, but staff now seem to be enthused. He asked Mrs Hawkes what the key issues are that will affect plans. Mrs Hawkes sited behavioural issues, gaps that already exist (eg Year 4 writing), and lack of TA support as areas that could impact plans.

***Ms Adams thanked Mrs Hawkes for attending and for her report.***

**Sidegate Primary School (SPS)**

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the report that Mrs James had provided prior to the meeting. Mrs James opened her report by stating that she was pleased with the KS2 results, but disappointed that KS1 results were lower than national figures. Trustees were asked to note:

* KS1 are working on “getting it right”. This includes secretarial skills that encourage the imagination, thereby increasing memory skills and develop firm scaffolding.
* The Power of Reading Scheme has had a huge impact on writing as well as reading.
* 30% of pupil premium students have diagnosed SEN, which gives a complicated picture. All teachers are aware of PP students and constantly focus on them.
* Budget constraints have meant that the number of TAs has been reduced (no redundancies necessary) and TA deployment is considered carefully.
* Teachers in Year 5 & 6 are released to work with small groups of children.
* Staff mentor children.
* A Family Liaison Worker covers attendance issues.
* SPS are proud of their curriculum and work hard to keep it broad and balanced, whilst making sure it reflects the most recent Ofsted guidance.

Mr Hely Hutchinson asked if Mrs James could expand on the budget constraints. Mrs James said that there has been no effective budget increase for eight years. School work closely with Mr Paskell, and accurate predictions have enabled school to avoid redundancies whilst reacting to the need for reduction of staff. However, there are some staff looking to take the next step in their career so the budget can be a juggling act. SPS have a large carry forward of £270k, but they have been ‘saving’ in recognition that there are potential problems to be addressed in the next two years. Mr Paskell added that there are uncertainties for all schools around pay awards eg 2% pay award is not expected to be funded and teachers pensions funding is only guaranteed for one year.

Mr Boddison asked how Sidegate will continue to develop cultural capital if the Arts become squeezed out of the curriculum, and how school will show impact without having data. Mrs James was confident that there will be evidence shown in book work. This will be further enhanced by work with the Paul Hamlyn Trust, which is an Arts based organisation that promotes the use of the Arts in all aspects of school life. SPS have secured a grant for this work (which will be rolled out to other schools) with teachers being trained in areas such as reflective journals, artistic reflection, evaluation of pupils’ vocabulary, and quantative evaluation. Although aimed at all pupils, pupils experiencing disadvantage are specifically considered.

Mr Boddison asked about the percentage of SEN registered pupils that are pupil premium. Mrs James spoke about the MLD and Specialist Support Centre based at SPS. She stated that not all pupils with an identified need are placed on the SEN register, as she felt current guidance was unclear. It was agreed that support will be given in this area to ensure all that should be are registered.

Mrs Cutchey sought clarification on the pupil premium data figures. Mrs James apologised for any confusion and explained the figures given.

***Ms Adams thanked Mrs James for attending and for her report.***

***Mrs Hawkes and Mrs James left the meeting at this point.***

**32.** **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13th DECEMBER 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2018 were accepted as a true record with no technical corrections or matters arising.

**33.** **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

Trustees were asked to note the minutes from the Finance committee and the Audit committee meetings that were held on 13th December 2018.

***Trustees noted the content of the minutes from the committee meetings held on 13th December 2018.***

**34. CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Ms Adams informed Trustees that she had undertaken two chair’s actions on behalf of the Board since the last meeting.

1. The Complaints Policy has been rewritten to take account of an independent member being required for each panel.
2. Roofing works at Gusford have been approved in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.

**35. FINANCE REPORT**

Ms Adams informed Trustees that the finance and audit agendas have been moved to the the main Board meeting (once per year) in response to concerns from the DfE that all directors should be aware of financial and audit matters.

**35a. Financial Position of Schools across the Trust**

Mr Paskell highlighted the following points from his report:

The central finance team are working closely with Pakefield Primary School due to their falling roll and anticipated budget deficit. The main focus for Pakefield will remain achieving a good Ofsted outcome and support will continue to ensure this is not compromised.

There is an increased element of input from the central finance team for schools.

Trustees remain responsible for the budget at Littleport.

Cambridgeshire County Council funding is expected to move resources from the main formula funding to meet high needs increases. This may mean some Cambs schools are disadvantaged. Suffolk funding has not been confirmed yet, but a recent Ofsted inspection of Suffolk LA expressed concern re high needs and SEN funding, so Suffolk are likely to consider changes.

**35b. Gifts & Hospitality Policy**

Mr Paskell asked Trustees to adopt the revised policy for Gifts & Hospitality. Mr Boddison asked how the issue of a maximum gift of £30 is considered if parents band together to purchase gifts. It was agreed that this issue, under 3.5 of the policy, would be reconsidered with details of any rewrite being made available at the next meeting.

**35c. ALT Central Budget**

Mrs Jarvis presented a summary of the ALT Central Budget Monitoring sheet for 2018/19, with major amendments listed. She stressed that the budget is very likely to change again due to required staffing amendments.

***Trustees noted the content of the reports presented by Mr Paskell and Mrs Jarvis on financial matters.***

**36. AUDIT UPDATE**

**36a. Earith Audit Report**

Mr Paskell asked Trustees to note that the financial audit undertaken at Earith Primary School was found to be good. There is a query on the Cashflow report, but this does not require any action.

**36b. Risk Register**

Mrs Jarvis explained that the Risk Register shows whole Trust risks that SLT consider at each meeting and how they are monitored.

**36c. Consideration of Future Audit Arrangements**

Mr Paskell spoke to his report that summarised the current audit practises and the options for future arrangements. He informed Trustees that there are three school audits outstanding on the audit programme and these will be undertaken by the Trust Compliance Manager. He proposed this as a way forward for the future, confirming that it is an EFSA accepted route. The Compliance Manager is a qualified auditor, and is already carrying out payroll audits. Mr Paskell cautioned that different auditors may change the emphasis of audits.

Mr Boddison asked if the internal option would allow transaction analysis. Mr Paskell confirmed that it would. Mr Kerr volunteered to support during the assessment process.

**36d. Health & Safety Update**

Mrs Jarvis presented the latest RAG ratings from Handsam, the health & safety system that all schools use to monitor progress across the Trust. The figures are encouraging, with all schools engaging in monitoring to a high standard.

Health & safety audits have been completed at all schools during the Autumn and Spring terms and results are being analysed to determine any common factors that the Trust can support with.

Areas of concern were discussed, as identified in the report. Trustees were pleased to note that all areas of risk have been addressed.

**36e. Data Protection & Compliance Report**

Mr Paskell referred to the report on Data Protection, including the recent findings of the ICO audit. He stated that the ICO audit was somewhat frustrating, with the ICO refusing to move on areas that the Trust (and solicitors) found to be misleading. He added that there is continual amendment to policy by the ICO. In order to mitigate the audit findings, a statement has been prepared to sit alongside the report on the Trust website.

Ms Lloyd asked about the receiving of warning headings on email from schools. Mr Paskell replied that all email servers are switching over to a new platform soon so this should improve the situation.

Mrs Steel asked that the amendment suggested for the Records Retention Policy (from KCSE Sept 2016 to Sept 2018) be amended to read “refer to latest current version” so that an update is not required each time a new date it given. This was agreed.

***Trustees noted the content of Audit reports.***

***Trustees approved that the Audit services arrangements across the Trust be put out for retender.***

***Trustees approved that Mr Paskell move forward with an evaluation to bring the compilation of the draft accounts and provision of internal audit services in-house.***

***Trustees agreed the amendments listed for the Information Governance Policies, with the proviso that the Records Retention Policy be amended as stated above.***

**37. STANDARDS REPORT**

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Hilton explained how the structure for AIG meetings has been tightened and referred Trustees to the two examples of individual schools data packs, which can be compared with the overall Trust position. On-line materials are being used, which will help with consistency of the process. These include work plans, activity plans and smarter working.

Mr Bush explained the school RAG rating sheet. Amendments were discussed, and Trustees were made aware of the addition of RAGs to show most recent Ofsted levels.

***Trustees noted the content of the Standards Report, and the work being carried out across the Trust to raise standards.***

**38. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT**

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report from the CEO that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Bush highlighted the following:

1. The ALT Development Plan has been updated and now gives an accurate picture of the position across the Trust.
2. The results of the Staff Welfare Survey will be relayed to headteachers, discussed at the Heads Conference and discussed with staff at school level. There was a 30% return rate, but the majority of responses were from teachers. There are no major concerns, however one school scored negatively for staff morale. This will be monitored and the survey repeated to assess improvement. Mr Kerr commented that staff mentioned the value of the survey when he visited Pakefield. A brief discussion took place regarding the response rate and the length of time the survey took to complete. Mrs Steel agreed that this will be reviewed.

6. Mr Bush explained that he had hoped to bring a summary report of MyConcern to the meeting, however the system is not embedded in all schools yet and reporting is not as good as expected. The reporting issue has been referred back to the system providers, and Trustees can expect an update at the next meeting. Mr Bush was able to confirm that all schools have the system installed and are using it.

***Trustees noted the content of the report and the activities across the Trust to support staff and pupils.***

**39. SAFEGUARDING**

No issues were raised at this point. Ms Toft was able to report that the next two schools to receive safeguarding reviews will be Westwood Primary School and Red Oak Primary School.

**40. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised at this time.

**41. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 23rd May 2019.