

BOLTON IMPACT TRUST

FORWARDS CENTRE LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING HELD VIA TEAMS ON MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 4.00 PM

Present: Elizabeth Douglas (ED), Carleen Fernside (CFe), Christopher Fielding, Academy Lead (CF), Suzanne Halliwell, Chair (SH), Jenny Scott (JS) and Lynn Williams (LW).

In attendance: Nicola Berry (NB) Deputy, Paul Hodgkinson Exec Principal (PH), Damien Mills (DM), Mubeen Moosa (MM) Trainee Accountant, David Smith (DS) Finance Director, Alison Woosey, Director of Standards (AW) and Emma Cornthwaite (Minute Clerk)

Mrs Halliwell in the Chair

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Deborah Crier.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

The Clerk invited nominations for the election of the Chair. Mrs S Halliwell was nominated and seconded and elected by governors unanimously.

Agreed: That Suzanne Halliwell serve as the Chair of the LGB for a period of two years.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair invited nominations for the role of Vice-Chair. It was understood that, although Liz Douglas was not present at this point, she was interested in continuing to serve as Vice-Chair.

Agreed: That Liz Douglas be reappointed as Vice-Chair of the LGB for two years.

ED joined the meeting shortly after this decision and confirmed that she was happy to continue to serve. She added that she would enjoy becoming more involved generally in the work of the LGB and the Centre.

Action: CF to note/action LD's wish to become more involved in the work of the LGB.

4. MEMBERSHIP

Governors noted the following information:

4.1 Notification of vacancies:

There were now 2 vacancies for parent governors (see 4.2 below)

It was noted that the two parent governors whose terms of office had expired had

served the Board well. CF was keen that the parent governors elected were parents of children currently attending the centre; however, this had proved difficult due to the low numbers on roll. Further, parent vacancies had previously been recruited through the parent group, but this had been affected by the pandemic.

CF said that a further parent election would be held. As described in the minutes of the previous meeting, an informal approach had been made to Joanne Blackburn about filling one of these vacancies; if the new election was unsuccessful, CF would approach her again.

4.2 Notification of expiry of Term of Office

The following terms of office either had or would soon expire:

- Damien Mills, Staff Governor – term ended 6 November 2021
- Charlene Parkinson, Parent Governor – term ended 14 November 2021

Governors noted that DM was attending the meeting as an observer as his term of office as staff governor had expired. CF reported that a staff election would be held.

- Deborah Crier, Co-opted Governor – 31 January 2022

This was noted.

Action: Parent and staff LGB elections to be held (CF)

4.3 Declaration of Eligibility & Privacy Consent Form

CF reported that his colleague in the office would send these forms out (and all the forms on the agenda which needed to be signed and returned by governors) via Google. This was an efficient way of ensuring that all the necessary paperwork governors needed to complete and sign at the start of the academic year was returned to the Centre.

Action: All standard forms referred to on the agenda to be circulated by school.

4.4 Governance Gateway Agreement

The user agreement for the Bolton Governance Gateway had been revised to ensure the safe and secure use of the site, governors were asked to note and accept the agreement.

Agreed: To note and accept the Governance Gateway User Agreement.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

5.1 Register of Interests Form

In accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook 2020, entries in the Academy Trust's Register of Business Interests were to be reviewed on a 'regular' basis. It was noted that the regularity of returns was for the Trust to decide upon; however, as a minimum the Governance Services Team recommended at least annually.

It was noted that the entry included:

- relevant business and pecuniary interests
- details of any governance roles in other educational institutions;
- any material interests arising from relationships between Local Governors or relationships between Local Governors and school staff (including spouses, partners and close relatives).

This item would be dealt with as per minute 4.3.

5.2 Declaration of Pecuniary or Conflict of Interest

No declarations of pecuniary or conflict of interest were made

6. SAFEGUARDING SELF-DECLARATION

A decision had been taken by the Board that all individuals would complete a self-declaration form to state that they had not received any criminal convictions or cautions within the previous 12 months, which had not already been reported to the Chair of the Board.

Agreed: i) That, as per minute 4.3, school would distribute the self-declaration form for governors to complete and return.

ii) That any local governors who had not completed the form would be highlighted at the spring term Board meeting as per the usual process.

7. LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

A copy of the LGB Code of Conduct had been circulated with the agenda papers. Governor Services would continue to issue the Code of Conduct and Acceptance Form to new members as part of the welcome to governance pack.

Agreed: That Governors note and accept the Code of Conduct.

8. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

A copy of the LGB's terms of reference for 2021/22 had been circulated with the agenda papers.

PH reported that, following discussions with the Governance Services Officer, Emma Stoddard, amendments to the terms of reference, which were necessary following the withdrawal of the UK from Europe and other updates to legislation, would be implemented. This included an amendment to the terms of reference of the Risk and Audit Committee to require breaches of GDPR to be reported to it.

Agreed: To review and approve the terms of reference for 2021/22.

9. NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items of any other business were notified.

10. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Agreed: To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the LGB held on 14 June 2021.

11. MATTERS ARISING

The following matters were raised:

11.1 Governor Skills Audit (minute 10.3.3, page 6)

This minute referred to the minimal issues which had needed addressing following the skills audit. These had been highlighted as:

- lack of experience across the Board in Chairing
- lack of experience across the Board in the area of Finance

PH reported that the skills analysis had in fact showed that at least two members of the LGB had expertise in all areas and that there was a broad range of skills across the Board. There were no skills gaps as such, it was a question of whether, when any future vacancies occurred, the focus should move to recruiting governors with a high-level skills set, as identified in the audit. CF and PH said that they would work together on this.

Governors considered this a sensible approach to future recruitment.

Action: That, as and when appropriate, CF and PH to work together to identify governors who possess the high-level skills set, as identified in the audit.

11.2 Governor Impact Statement (minute 14)

PH reported that it had been agreed, across the Trust, that the Governor Impact Statement would be considered annually, at the summer term meeting of the Board.

12. ACADEMY LEAD'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

A copy of the Academy Lead's report had been circulated with the agenda papers. CF guided governors through the details:

The report was concerned mostly with the summer term and therefore covered the period from Easter through to July 2021. It followed the OFSTED categories of Quality of Education; Behaviour and Attitudes; Personal Development and Leadership and Management.

During the summer term, the centre had been open to all pupils, who had worked in strict class bubbles. It had been a challenging time with staffing numbers changing on an almost daily basis through various Covid related restrictions. The whole team had been magnificent and had worked together to solve each problem as it arose and despite being stretched very thin at times, the centre had stayed open throughout.

CF reported that there had been a recent spike in Covid cases with over 10% of pupils and staff testing positive. Having felt that things were returning to some sort of normal in September, pupils and staff were back to working in bubbles and wearing face coverings in the corridor.

QoE

The two main areas of focus identified in the report were to:

Develop and implement a 2-year rolling programme which delivered a broad primary curriculum designed to be accessible, relevant and meets the needs of Forwards Centre pupils.

To develop and implement a robust programme of quality assurance for the new Forwards Centre curriculum.

NB was leading the work in this area.

Attendance

Governors were updated on attendance figures and noted that there had been 3 persistent non-attenders. A governor asked for further information about this, particularly whether those involved were 'traded place' pupils? The response was that two were children who had been at the centre for a long time, one was a traded place. Did this affect the budget? It didn't, but PH agreed that it was a really important point - trading was essentially 'selling a seat'. The governor commented that it was frustrating when there was such a demand for places that one of them wasn't being used - absences such as this also impacted staffing.

The staff restructure had meant that the centre could be staffed at a level appropriate for the low number of children at the beginning of the academic year. The structured, flexible plan had trigger points where the centre could either increase or reduce its number of agency staff. From a financial perspective, the centre did not need to be full in order to balance its budget. What about transport for non-attenders? Were costs still incurred there? DM explained that in this case the traded places pupils lived locally and so staff could go and collect them and 'walk them in'.

What were the main reasons for the non-attendance - was it the child or the adult in the household? CF reported that in one case it had been the child, the parent had done her very best to get the child in. The other two cases were more complex and involved mental health issues within the family. He added that DM and the other members of the team had and continued to work tirelessly to support pupils and their families. Attendance was currently 5 or 6% lower than usual. A governor shared her experience of trying to persuade a reluctant child to go to school and understood that sometimes the daily battles wore parents down.

Behaviour and Attitudes

CF referred to the flexible staffing model which meant that there was a low number of experienced staff. An influx of pupils had coincided with an influx of agency staff - CF said the centre had 'wobbled' for 2 or 3 weeks and had gone back to basics; the situation had recovered.

Leadership and Management

One of the areas of development in the SDP was to further develop and formalise the commitment to staff health and wellbeing.

PH reported that the Trust had recently received the Wellbeing Charter Gold Award for its commitment to staff wellbeing; this had followed a visit and interviews with management and staff. Everyone had been delighted; staff did a magnificent job in difficult circumstances and the award was a recognition of this.

CF added that as the centre had a hybrid team of permanent and temporary members of staff, it would ensure that those agency staff who had worked with the team for a long time were

supported as well as permanent staff. PH reported that he was working on a webinar for staff which would be available before Christmas.

12.1 Termly update on the centre's self-evaluation and development plan

This was covered in general terms elsewhere.

12.2 Review of the 2020/21 Pupil Premium and 2021/22 Allocation

Detailed information on the review of the 2020/21 PPG and the 2021/22 allocation were included in the Academy Lead's report.

12.3 Personnel Update

CF reported that there were vacancies for two permanent learning mentors. The vacancies would be advertised externally in January, with a view to appointment after Easter.

12.4 Safeguarding Update including report on Children missing in education (CME)

CF reported that the centre had been involved in three ongoing safeguarding cases with children's services involvement during the summer term.

The updated safeguarding policy was considered as part of minute 19 below.

12.5 Update on health and safety and buildings

The report of the H & S compliance review on 24 September 2021 conducted by Mrs Crier had been circulated with the agenda papers. During her visit, Mrs Crier had recognised the diligence and pride that Mr Simpson (caretaker) took in the building. Her next visit would focus on the schedule of statutory maintenance checks carried out by outside contractors

CF continued to meet each month with Mr Simpson to ensure that all statutory checks and maintenance were being completed.

Three quotations had been received for improved CCTV.

An evacuation drill had been conducted on the 15th June and an invacuation drill on the 16th June.

A governor asked if there had been any further vandalism at the centre? CF reported that there hadn't been due to the 'sticky' surface the caretaker was using.

12.6 Termly report on the school's provision for Looked Children After

During the summer term there had been two children looked after.

12.7 Termly report on Attendance and Children Missing Education.

Attendance had been covered elsewhere.

There had been no children missing in education during the summer term.

12.8 Update on admissions arrangements

The pathways into the centre were considered elsewhere.

13. UPDATE FROM EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT LINK PROFESSIONAL

CF reported that Lis Fenwick, SIP, had visited recently and had produced a positive follow-up report. Amongst other things, Lis had recognised the quality of the curriculum development work at the centre and the work on QA. She was due back shortly and, amongst other things, would be meeting the children and speaking to the Maths and English leads.

CF apologised that the document had not been uploaded to the Gateway with the rest of the agenda papers and said that he would send it out to governors.

PH reported that he and CF were due to meet the week beginning 29 November (as part of their normal half termly meetings) to test and review the SEF.

Action: CF to distribute a copy of the SIP report to governors.

14. FINANCE UPDATE

A copy of the Financial Monitoring Report 2021/22 had been distributed with the agenda papers. The Finance Director advised governors that the financial position was in line with what had been anticipated, namely that the Forwards Centre was budgeted to operate at a deficit of £36,000 and at the present time the net position was expected to be in line with this budget.

Pupil numbers placed by the local authority were slightly lower than budgeted (with a projected reduction in LA funding of £100,000) however additional traded pupils from schools in the borough would generate additional income of £100,000 more than the budget compensating for this. Mr Smith said that this shift in balance was likely to continue over time.

Governors thanked him for the report.

15. POLICY APPROVAL

The following policy documents had been circulated for consideration. Governors had no questions or comments on them.

15.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

15.2 Discipline and Behaviour Policy

15.3 Anti-bullying Policy

15.4 SEND Policy and Information Report

CF thanked CFe for her input in drafting this report.

15.5 Supporting pupils with medical needs

Agreed: To approve the policies listed above.

16. NOMINATED GOVERNOR REPORTS

16.1 Chairs' Briefing

The Clerk reported on the Chairs' Briefing meeting which had been held on Monday 27 September 2021. The following issues had been highlighted:

- Introduction to the new Assistant Director for Inclusive Education and Learning: Geraldine Whitehead

- Governance Services Update
- Support for Chairs
- Consultation Findings: Chairs' Briefings 2021-22
- Revised NGA Skills Audit Templates
- Autumn Term Meeting Updates

16.2 Partnership Governor's Report

It was noted that the virtual live events of the Partnership Forum had been held on Monday 11 October 2021, where the following issues had been considered:

- Update on Primary and Secondary Phase with an Ofsted Update - *Strategic School Improvement Team*
- School Place Planning Update - *Ged Kelly, Children's Services Capital Programme Manager*
- Support for families who are new to the UK and speak English as an additional language (EAL) - *Yousif Islam, Head of Service, Achievement, Cohesion and Integration Service (ACIS)*

16.3 Training Development Governor's Report on Training

The 2021/22 Governance Training Programme was now available on the Governance Services website. There were a number of new training opportunities available in the programme to assist governors in their role, taking into account national initiatives and changes in legislation.

PH asked any governors who had not completed the Safeguarding or Prevent training to contact the office to arrange this. He also reported that the Trust had recently bought into Creative Education's SEND training package, which was described as a really good resource. A licence had been bought for all staff and governors; governors would have access to it in the very near future.

Action: Those governors who have not done so to complete both the Safeguarding and Prevent training online.

16.4 Bolton Governance Conference

It was reported that Bolton Governance Services were planning to hold their annual Governance Conference on 19 March 2022 at the Mercure Georgian House, Blackrod. Further information would be provided via the e brief service.

16.5 Website Compliance

LW reported that she had recently completed the website compliance check and updated the LGB as follows:

- The English and Maths curriculum maps needed to be uploaded. CF explained that this work was being undertaken as part of the centre's development plan and would reflect the richness of the curriculum.
- The site was much easier to navigate than previously, was well structured and very 'clean' in appearance. In a sense this was disappointing as the site did not reflect the extraordinary things the centre achieved. CF reported that the site was trying to reflect the academic nature of the centre but took the point. PH agreed.

Governors had a discussion about the website in general and whether it would benefit from adopting a different tone, which was warmer and more celebratory in nature and include lots of photos. The LGB felt that this would more accurately reflect the outstanding provision the centre offered. Governors agreed that if the site reflected the tone of the twitter account it would be on the right lines.

Action: Tone and presentation of website to be reviewed, as per governors' comments (CF/PH)

16.6 Governor Visit Reports

CF thanked governors for their input into governor week, which had been very successful. He asked if a governor would be willing to serve as the wellbeing link? SH agreed to do this.

Agreed: Chair of the Committee to be the link governor for wellbeing.

17. SCHOOL TEACHERS & SUPPORT STAFF PAY AWARD 2021

A report by the Clerk on the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2021 ('STPCD') had been circulated with the agenda papers and is not reproduced here.

DS explained that the Trust always honoured the local authority model. Decisions were made at the Pay Committee and changes implemented in December payroll, backdated as appropriate.

Governors noted the information.

18. ACADEMY TRUST HANDBOOK

An agenda note, produced by the Governance Services Team, had been circulated with the papers. The Academy Trust Handbook, previously known as The Academies Financial Handbook had been updated with effect from September 2021. The Handbook described the financial responsibilities of academy trusts reflecting their status as companies limited by guarantee, exempt charities and public bodies. It balanced the need for effective financial governance with the freedoms that trusts had over their day-to-day business.

The handbook was for members, trustees, local governors of multi-academy trusts (MATs), accounting officers, chief financial officers, clerks to the board and auditors.

Agreed: That the Local Governing Board note the changes.

19. SAFEGUARDING AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION

A report from the Clerk had been circulated; it related to updates from the DfE to the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance, which had come into effect from September 2021.

The Local Authority Safeguarding and Child Protection Unit had updated its model Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy as well as its Section 175 Safeguarding Audit Checklist for schools and academies in Bolton.

It was noted that the Centre's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy had been agreed at minute 15.1 above.

CF reported that the centre's Section 175 checklist had been completed - LW asked that the actions arising from the audit be shared with governors.

Action: CF to share the outcomes of the Section 175 audit with governors.

20. GOVERNOR IMPACT

As reported in 'matters arising' above, it had been agreed that the governor impact statement would be submitted annually to the summer term meeting of the Board.

LW referred to the routes into the Forwards Centre and how the procedures were now more robust than previously. This was thanks to CF and his team who had stood firm in their approach; there was now a distinct pathway into the centre. PH agreed and said that LW's challenge on this over a number of years demonstrated the effective impact local governors had.

21. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Agreed: That the LGB meets on the following dates for the remainder of the 2021/22 year:

Spring Term 2022: Monday 7 March 2022 at 4.00pm

Summer Term 2022: Monday 13 June 2022 at 4.00pm

In response to a question, the Clerk reported that it was for the LGB to determine whether they wished to continue to meet virtually or in person. LW pointed out that schools had recently received updated guidance from the local authority on managing the pandemic; the advice had been to keep contact to a minimum.

22. CONSENT TO ABSENCE

Agreed: To consent to the absence from this meeting of Deborah Crier.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items of any other business were considered.

24. CONFIDENTIALITY

Agreed: That none of the matters discussed at this meeting be designated as confidential in accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The meeting closed at 5.05 pm.

Signed as a correct record:

(Chair/Vice-Chair of Governors)

Date: _____