**BUCKTON VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**MINUTES OF THE SUMMER TERM GOVERNING BOARD TRAINING MEETING**

**HELD VIRTUALLY ON 21 JUNE 2021**

**PRESENT: Mrs Sarah Blake Staff**

**Mrs Jackie Brook Co-opted**

**Mr Matt Hartley Parent**

**Mr Arron Leech Co-opted**

**Ms Jenny Ross Parent**

**Ms Taf Sharif Authority**

**Mrs Deborah Brown Headteacher**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Kelly Quinn Deputy Headteacher**

**Mr Steve Gallagher Intel Tech**

**Ms Louise Astbury Oldham Six Form College**

**Mrs Rachel Lees Clerk to the Governing Board**

**PROCEDURAL**

**1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed governors to the virtual meeting, hosted by the Headteacher using Zoom Pro, and reminded them of the confidential nature of the discussions taking place.

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Wayne Williams, Co-opted governor and Mr Nick Whitbread, Parent governor.

RESOLVED: To consent to the absence of Mr Williams and Mr Whitbread

**2 IT Infrastructure and systems**

The Headteacher explained that Steve Gallagher from Intel Tech was supporting the school in the IT Manager’s absence. He had been in school on a regular basis to support the Headteacher as there had been some significant issues. Louise Astbury was working to support schools in their curriculum planning. She worked for Oldham Sixth Form College and had visited the Headteacher to discuss writing a digital strategy plan on how to improve the current IT situation at Buckton Vale. The current situation was very serious and both Mr Gallagher and Ms Astbury would share their concerns.

Mr Gallagher provided some background which included work for Tameside Council (TMBC). He commented that IT at Buckton Vale was in a dire state. Since TMBC stopped offering IT support, the network had not been upgraded since 2011. The two servers and domain controllers were very old (2008 and 2003 respectively) and security updates had last taken place in March 2007 and August 2018. Machines around school were running a mixture of windows XP (updated in 2008) and Windows 7 (updated in 2011). He was extremely surprised that there had been no security incidents as the server and software was so out of date. He had visited on 21 June and was surprised that teachers could use the equipment either in school or at home. He was appalled at the situation.

Within the infrastructure, network and cabling, wi-fi was not a standard set up. He had done some speed tests which were extremely slow over wi-fi and encryption on laptops had been discontinued because of security issues. He felt that it needed to be completely removed and to start again. The SBM had asked what could be done to improve things and he suggested that to start with improving password security. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) had sent some questions which were all negative responses. There had been some communication from TMBC regarding ransomware attacks on the UK education centre, and he gave some examples of serious vulnerabilities. Regardless of the security implications, the system was unusable. He did not know how teachers were able to use the system.

Mr Gallagher proposed a complete restart which meant that no one part of the process could be done on its own due to the serous issues within school. As no upgrades had been done for the past 10+ years , everything needed to start from scratch.

The Headteacher understood that school had been previously ill advised about the types of laptops to be purchased. She had asked new laptops for staff to be ordered in February and a governor had asked for IT investment using pupil premium (PP) funding. Reconditioned laptops had been purchased as new laptops would not work on the current system, despite the Headteacher’s request which indicated that the issue was known but not communicated. The Headteacher felt that school had no choice but to put it right and was very concerned that school was vulnerable. In view of the serious situation, the Chair had completed Chair’s action to purchase servers for the summer holidays to get school in a safer position and to activate an order of new teacher laptops to meet statutory duties. A governor commented that she had previously sent the DfE’s minimum specification for school computers to Mrs Brook. The Headteacher reiterated that any new laptops could not have been used on the current server, which is why new ones were not purchased. Louise Astbury was supporting the Headteacher with a digital strategy document who saw a 3-5 year plan.

Ms Astbury worked at Oldham Sixth Form College, a small Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and EdTech demonstrator school. She was funded by the DfE to give support to schools on their digital strategy planning. However, she was unable to help the Headteacher as there was no infrastructure in place. School was in a very poor position but the plan needed to be started from the ground up with funds and a long-term vision. The IT infrastructure and laptops for teachers needed to be a priority before moving onto the next step. Ms Astbury reiterated that her support was completely free as she was funded by the DfE.

The Headteacher explained that Ms Astbury had identified an opportunity to tap into the Condiitons Grant Spend guidance to apply for support. Unfortunately, the deadline was missed but a new window would be open in October 2021. School could apply for an urgent fund for two reasons: (i) if the school was at risk of closure; and (ii) there was a danger to the children. She could argue that the IT issues could lead to a school closure as school was very vulnerable in terms of IT. However, the Conditions Grant Spend would be a loan, but there was no money in the budget for repayment. The Chair and a governor commented that school was in a very vulnerable and could not avoid setting a deficit budget. The Headteacher had shared her concerns with the LA regarding Buckton Vale’s budget, who suggested a reduction in staffing, but this did not meet the needs of the children. Morally the Headteacher wanted to think about what was right for the children at Buckton Vale. The adjudicator had recently agreed to a 30 PAN so there could be some ‘natural wastage’ of staff from September 2022.

Mr Gallagher noted that there was no form of back up whatsoever. All SIMS and FMS data stored on the school servers was not being backed up either on site or off site. School was not only at risk of attack but at risk of the servers failing due to age. The back-up was very urgent as his major concern was a failure. Ms Astbury stressed the urgency and confirmed that school closure was a condition which could be argued. If school could not access safeguarding and emergency contacts then school could not be open. It was a dire situation and if any personal information was stolen from Buckton Vale, both the Headteacher and governors were liable. Ms Astbury felt that governors had no choice but to spend the money as school was in a very serious situation.

In relation to a governor’s question regarding costs, Intel had sent a proposal to the Headteacher. Mr Gallagher explained that Intel worked differently to other IT companies as they did not supply any hardware, but used hardware suppliers, having sought three different quotes. Intel charged for the work they completed within the proposal. It would be difficult to find a similar proposal and any quotes would need to be broken down in to server/hardware and wi-fi. The Headteacher had received quotes from JTRS but Mr Gallagher wanted to ensure that school had a fresh start with automated systems which reduced the time someone was needed on site to give support. When Intel visited schools after everything was up to date, it was just about maintaining the system with minor upgrades and keeping it up to date. The proposal could be split to get quotes from different companies as Mr Gallagher did not anticipate a proposal similar to that prepared by Intel.

The Headteacher thanked Mr Gallagher and Ms Astbury for attending the meeting and responding to governor’s questions. She was very appreciative of their time and support. Although school was in a very vulnerable position, she felt that she was in good hands.

**3 Training**

3.1 Insight assessment tool – Nicola Oldham

Mrs Oldham had been Buckton Vale’s assessment leader since the 2014-5. Governors were aware that school had previously used Educator but had switched to Insight which was much better for staff. Mrs Oldham shared a presentation regarding statutory and in school assessment at Buckton Vale.

Firstly, she explained what assessment looked like and showed an example of the pupil progress form which teachers used. Each term teachers input judgemenrs on Insight once children had been tested on content, with a baseline assessment for Reception. Baseline was reported to the LA and was used to predict where children should exit at Y6. Teachers were able to give four different judgements on Insight – below, just below, on track or greater depth for each subject. School would use P (PIVAT) levels for children at below, including SEND, to track smaller steps of progress. A data analysis chart was completed for each year group. The results of tests were stored on Insight, correlated with teacher assessment and used at pupil progress meetings. An example of individual level analysis of test performance was shared with governors. Mrs Oldham explained how progress was measured. The Headteacher commented that there had been some anomalies with children who were given greater depth (GD) in Reception who did not continue with GD in school but the government had now removed GD from the Reception curriculum.

Mrs Oldham then talked about the challenges staff faced during the pandemic, including being unsure of the true effect of the pandemic on children’s attainment. It had been very difficult to assess home learning as there was less evidence of independent work than usual. Autumn teacher assessment had been completed but there was insufficient evidence in the spring term due to lockdowns as children had not been tested in spring. In response to a governor’s question, Mrs Oldham said that children had complete autumn term tests in the spring to see what they had retained and another teacher assessment wold be completed at the end of July. Another governor commented that the government stated that the onus was on schools to make sure teachers saw home learning and Mrs Oldham explained that staff did not know whether the work had been done independently at home thus making it impossible to assess what children could/could not do. Staff could see the process of the learning in school and could make a confident judgement. She confirmed that staff would have all the evidence needed for the year at the end of the summer. Mrs Blake reiterated that teachers had to recap some of the work children had completed during lockdown as the support from home was variable. Phonics was assessed each half term in KS1 and Y1 children would complete the phonics screening check.

Attainment data from each year group would be shared with governors in September 2021. Data would be made available for September, February and May. Governors could have their own log in to view data on Insight and Mrs Oldham would provide further training in the autumn term. Mrs Oldham stated that the past two years had been difficult in terms of data (due to lockdowns and the pandemic) and it was very important that a clear consistent format would be reported in the future. A governor asked if provisional data could be shared in July and Mrs Oldham responded that it was not possible as testing would take place at the end of July, following which whole school data would be updated. Mrs Quinn had tested Y6 children to help the local secondary schools have an understanding of how Y6 children would cope in a SATs situation.

The Headteacher thanked Mrs Oldham for her presentation. Buckton Vale was in a partnership of schools and she commented that most other schools had decided to test just Y2 and Y6 as there was insufficient evidence or too many gaps. Buckton Vale staff had decided to test the whole school in preparation to support the children as best as possible from September 2021. The Headteacher was very pleased that Mrs Oldham with the progress the school had made since adopting Insight: in a short space of time it was proving very valuable and Mrs Oldham’s input leading on assessment was strong.

3.2 SEND – Louise Moczulski & Kelly Quinn

The Headteacher introduced Mrs Moczulski as the SEND Consultant who had been helping her understand SEND better and to support Kelly Quinn with her workload.

Mrs Quinn shared a SEND report which would be shared with governors annually. The current profile of SEND pupils in school was 63 on the SEND Register and one EHCP. Primary need was broken down into four main areas of need with 32 cognition and learning, 19 communication and interaction, 10 social emotional and mental health, 2 sensory and/or physical, although some children would have more than one area of need. Mrs Quinn had then collated data to show the term of birth (1 autumn, 17 spring, 24 summer) and looked at gender (68% boys, 32% girls.)

Mrs Quinn provided an update on EHCP requests, two of which were denied by the LA. Mrs Moczulski had worked independently for lots of different schools and local authorities. She explained that the expectations within the code of practice to submit an EHCP required evidence of need. She commented the evidence school submitted for the Y2 child exceeded what was required but was rejected and Mrs Moczulski had suggested the parents get support from IPSI to appeal the decision. She had worked collaboratively with the child’s parents and was confident that school had gone over and above to support the child. In response to a governor’s question, the Headteacher confirmed that Charlotte Finch was responsible for SEND in Tameside. Mrs Moczulski was of the opinion that there was an issue with EHCPs and Buckton Vale; school had provided a significant amount of information in comparison to EHCPS which were accepted at other schools.

Mrs Quinn showed governors an anonymised EHCP referral form which was completed by the teacher and herself. There were a significant number of supporting documents for any request – 26 different documents were sent for the Y2 child. The cost of provision for one EHCP was over £19,000. Mrs Quinn had provided evidence to suggest that the child needed one to one support. The Headteacher reminded governors that the LA wanted Buckton Vale to re-open the SEND unit. The LA were failing Buckton Vale with the support of SEND children, which was reiterated by Mrs Moczulski. The Headteacher was adamant that school needed to meet the needs of the children, rather than the budget and explained how it would be difficult to open a SEND unit without certainty of support from the Local Authority.

A governor was disgusted that the LA would force parents into judicial reviews with the associated cost. The Headteacher confirmed that EHCPs were a national crisis. Mrs Moczulski said that, with regard to school and provision mapping, if school could evidence 12 ½ hours support or above then it was clear evidence that that school could not maintain that type of support within the current budget. The complexity of needs for the children who had been rejected would mean that school could double the amount of support needed. A governor stated that the school community, including staff and governors, needed to complain to Ofsted. The Headteacher had prepared an email to Charlotte Finch.

Mrs Moczulski was angered that one of the comments from the LA was that school did not use data from the educational psychologist (EP), as the EP could not come into school - as advised by the LA. According to the SEND code of practice, it was not school’s responsibility to get EP in. It was an LA assessment, not a school assessment, which had been paid for by school. She was very disappointed that the LA continued to knock back EHCP applications for Buckton Vale and delay matters, which seemed linked to a funding issue within the LA.

A governor expressed her concern regarding the EHCP applications. She agreed applications needed to be taken forward to get the support the child needed and the financial recompense for school. She concurred that it was a national and local problem. The Headteacher and Mrs Moczulski agreed that the whole area of EHCPs needed to be reformed. SEND children were unfairly disadvantaged across the whole country but, over a period of years, Buckton Vale’s EHCPs had been rejected despite being checked by a professional. Mrs Moczulski felt that Tameside were failing their children and the rejection of EHCPs was a budgetary exercise and was not sustainable. The Headteacher agreed that budgets were taking precedence over childrens’ needs. A governor asked if the budget was ring-fenced and the Headteacher confirmed that it was, but not at £19,000 per child. School had eight children who needed EHCP support, but that support could not be provided long term, as school was already heading for a deficit budget.

The LA was asking Buckton Vale to support children as specialist provision on £11,000 -£14,000 per child. Mrs Moczulski felt that the LA was the biggest barrier. She confirmed that Tameside were failing with regard to SEND provision and support. Their communication with school was very poor. The Headteacher noted that the LA did not close Buckton Vale’s MLD provision legally as it was never formally shut in 2011 through consultation. Mrs Moczulski stated that the LA did not understand the complexity of SEND. Tameside did not have the provision to open a new PRU as it would be removed from the LA and academised. Independent resources were bought in at a high cost to the LA who were trying to save money. Tim Bowman suggested that having an MLD provision would help Buckton Vale’s budget. Governors were concerned at such a suggestion any provision would need to be suitably funded to provide for the children. They found it difficult to understand such a suggestion.

A governor said that, as governors were statutorily responsible for the school, then they would not agree to MLD provision. Mrs Moczulski stated that the LA had not taken into consideration that there had been practically no external support for schools over the past 16 months, which was also a safeguarding issue when children were in very complex family situations. Children and schools had been failed. Governors agreed that the Headteacher should write to Ofsted to express her dissatisfaction over the SEND/EHCP processes in Tameside.

RESOLVED: That the Headteacher and Mrs Moczulski write to Ofsted

**3 Any Other Business**

The Clerk noted that an Extraordinary Governing Board meeting had been convened for Tuesday 13 July 2021 at 4:00 pm.

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| *Meeting details* |  |
| *Time started* | *1656* |
| *Time finished* | *1855* |