

## Minutes of Directors' Meeting 11 February 2022 8am at Richard Crosse School and via Google Meet

Attendees : Mrs C Gethin (CG) (CEO and Director), Mrs H Bowman (HB) (Chair of Directors), Mr K Borg (KB) (Director), Mr C Bradshaw-Smith (CBS) (Director), Mrs A Burns (AB) (Director), Mrs S Cockayne (SC) (Director), Mr P Halifax (PH) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Mrs M Havelock-Crozier (MHC) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Ms S Cole (SCo) (Finance Manager), Mrs J Bowman (JBo) (Data Protection Officer, Business Operations Manager)  
Also present for Item 5: E Bowring (EB) (Head RC), N Jarrett (NJ) (Head AS), J Wynn (JW) (Head SM), R Mills (RM) (Head TH)

Clerk: Mrs A Howard (AH)

RC: Richard Crosse  
SM: St Mary's  
TH: The Howard  
AS: Anson School

SEN: Special Educational Needs  
EY: Early Years  
NPQH: National Professional Qualification for Headship  
PTFA: Association of Parents, Teachers and Friends of the School  
SLT: Senior Leadership Team  
PAN: Planned admission number  
HLTA: Higher Level Teaching Assistant  
HT: Headteacher  
NPQEL: National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership  
PHRP: Principal HR Partner Ltd

1. **Welcome, Prayer** - HB welcomed Mrs Angela Burns who had joined the Board of Directors and introductions were made. CG led the Directors in the prayer.
2. **Apologies** - Apologies were received from CH. AH will update the attendance register.
3. **Pecuniary Interest** - CG declared that she is now a Trustee of Burton MIND charity. There were no other changes to the Pecuniary Interest Register. AB will make her declaration of Pecuniary Interests.
4. **Minutes of last meetings** - The minutes of the Directors' meeting held on 19.11.21 were agreed as a true copy by Directors. The minutes were signed by HB. Confidential items will be deleted from the public minutes. Directors agreed the minutes of the AGM which will be confirmed by Members at the next meeting.
5. **School Reports** -  
**Richard Crosse:** EB joined by Google Meet to give a verbal report on RC, saying that, although it had been a challenging time, she thought the school was now more settled, with fewer children absent. She welcomed the Directors' walk around the school and had also received a Church community visit. The behaviour of the children was excellent and the Bikeability group who had come to teach safe cycling to the older children said that they were the best behaved group of children they had taught in the county. During monitoring walks, the children were always found to be on task and well behaved. There were plans for a well-being playground (including a nurture hub, seating, group reflection area and outside library) and a trim trail/outdoor gym, addressing pupils' exercise, mindfulness and wellbeing. Father Jeremy is involved with the school, giving RE lessons and conducting online worship. The numbers of staff and child absences are now declining; an attendance rate for pupils of 87% in December has risen to 96% in January. The new Class 5 teacher is very vibrant and enthusiastic and the Green Power project is ongoing. Visits away from school included a visit to Lichfield Cathedral and a Christingle service and children have taken part in Dove Valley sports when they were commended for their sportsmanship. EB will be arranging a

number of after-school activities by outside clubs, including Soccer Starts, Multisports and Mini athletics.

The challenges from September 2021 onwards are connected to staff absences due to Covid, these have had a knock-on effect and affected the consistency of daily intervention. Online worship has also impacted on the amount of time available for intervention as the teacher has had to remain with the whole class. EB considers that writing stamina and the quality of writing have been adversely affected during the pandemic and staff are working hard to remedy this and to support early reading skills. There has been good progress in phonics. EB reported that a group of boys in Y6 are showing a lack of internal motivation despite the efforts of the teacher to engage them and she considered the main reason for this to be playing computer games outside the school day, sometimes for as long as six or seven hours; this is affecting their mental wellbeing. It is planned to deliver a presentation to parents across the MAT, to encourage parents to be more aware of this issue and put actions in place to prevent it. *Confidential item*. EB has found it difficult to recruit an additional TA, but interviews will be held next week.

Directors were invited to ask questions. HB asked about assemblies back in the hall and EB confirmed that this would start again after the half-term holiday. MHC asked whether any adjustments due to the pandemic had been suggested for children taking SATS in Y2 and Y6, but EB said that the usual adjustments would be made, offering a 'brain break' and a quiet area to work, but no additional adjustments had been suggested by the government, even though Y2 pupils had not even been in school for the first two years of their schooling. Mock SATs will be held next week. CG agreed that it is necessary to draw up a timetable for the SATS, as some schools e.g. TH have a large number of SEN pupils to accommodate. PH asked how EB was feeling, EB said she was feeling OK but it had been a difficult half-term. CBS asked whether support and resources could be obtained from the county to counteract the gaming problem and EB said she had attended a day conference which was helpful. KB said that internet safety was paramount, particularly with reference to the dangers of adults grooming young children.

EB was thanked for her report and she thanked her team for pulling together to keep the children safe and happy. EB has now started her NPQH qualification.

**Anson School:** NJ attended by Google Meet to present her verbal report, saying that the challenges had been mainly due to Covid and absences of staff and children. The positives were an increase in staff teamwork, supporting each other, and in staff flexibility. Earlier in the epidemic, staff were working in bubbles and felt isolated, but over the recent months they have dealt with a number of staff absences by supporting each other; the children have also become more used to working with different staff members. NJ reported that staff were grateful to Directors who came to visit AS and this, together with visits from JBo and SCo, made them feel more valued and part of TSSMAT. NJ is now extending the links with the governing body at AS, inviting them to come into school; this has not been possible during the epidemic, but NJ would like them to meet staff and pupils and become more informed about the school. NJ congratulated the pupils on their excellent behaviour, which is due to the high expectations of the parents and their support. Following suggestions from KB, NJ is approaching outside companies to help finance the development of the outside area; the PTFA will assist with this and KB will discuss with AS the possibility of approaching other companies e.g. JCB, HS2, Jaguar. AB also suggested asking banks for support, as they sometimes offer match funding. NJ was thanked for her report.

**St Mary's:** JW attended in person and first addressed questions arising from data, saying that in small cohorts the data is child specific. SM have target areas of low attainment; although Y3 is a good year group, there is a group of low attainers to support. Y1 and Y2 are strong cohorts and Y4 are making good progress although a group of reluctant boys find writing a struggle. There are always challenges with small cohorts in SATs; *confidential item*. There is an issue with communication and language in EY, due to the impact of Covid and the lack of social interaction, and a TA is working on a programme to improve this. The provision for EY children has proved very attractive and SM now has the challenge of accommodating 28 children in the space available.

JW welcomed the fact that the PAN of 15 children will be filled in September and thought that this was due to the success of the Nursery with most children continuing into school. Efforts have also been made to publicise the school outside Colton and MHC agreed that parents talk to each other in positive terms about SM. Factors such as being in a rural area, the small size of the school and its links with the church also have an effect.

JW said the wider curriculum was very important, with the outside area and the emphasis on communication, language and social interaction in Forest School and dance and drama. One TA is now qualified in Forest School and one TA has nearly completed a HTLA qualification.

JW went on to thank the staff for their resilience in difficult circumstances, with TAs doing a great job of covering classes and helping with online teaching. JW himself had worked in every year group during the pandemic. He said the positive aspects were that HTs had pulled together and that staff had demonstrated great teamwork.

SC asked how JW was in himself and he said he was fine, there had been lots of support and everyone had pulled together to work in a professional way to drive the MAT forwards. HB expressed her enjoyment of the visit to SM and JW was pleased to have had the opportunity to show off the school. He felt that SM was in an excellent place at present, he was pleased with the efforts and behaviour of the children and the environment of the school. Directors thanked him for his report.

**The Howard:** RM attended by Google Meet and was happy to report that the children had settled well; the school had a good atmosphere with the children behaving well. *Confidential item.* RM stated that children were attending from outside the village and feedback from the parents, who were friendly and supportive, was very positive. Reading and Writing were exceptional and RM could see standards rising in the school. The behaviour of children in Class 3 had much improved under Mr Challinor. A new secretary had been appointed and RM thanked JBo for her help with this. There are plans for redecoration and improving the electrics; the fabric of the school needs work doing on it. RM thanked Directors for visiting TH and said that this had been the most challenging term of her career due to staffing issues. However, a wellbeing survey of staff showed that most were positive despite the turbulence. The parents had been really supportive, despite problems due to the lack of a secretary and cook.

RM went on to report that PTFA will be helping to fund Forest School and that Chromebooks are in use daily. Communication and language were good and RM is encouraging intergenerational links, with pupils visiting a nursing home in the village to give residents gifts and sing to them. There has been a whole school trip to the pantomime at the Garrick theatre in Lichfield, with PTFA support. An after-school cooking club is now in place, with parents asking for recipes, and there is a project involving Phunky Foods and healthy eating. Children went to see Santa at the Snowdome and they took part in a Christingle in church.

RM stated that, although staffing issues had caused problems, this had enabled her to grow as a leader and she was grateful for the strong support network of the MAT, particularly for HR support from PHRP and CH and the help given by CG, JBo and SCo; she thanked SC who had really supported with staff mental health and wellbeing.

RM is continuing with KS1 and KS2 moderation for the county and with the NPQEL course. A Maths hub has been established to develop teaching; TH is addressing Maths and would like others to visit to watch the good practice established in whole class reading in school.

RM was thanked for her report and CG said how grateful she was to RM for stabilising the ship during a turbulent time.

There was discussion on morale at TH and CG informed KB that the plans to speak to the staff were agreed with RM as the best course of action to mitigate any further issues. SC had also been named as wellbeing champion for the school. CG has planned a wellbeing day for MAT SLT staff, to take place in June, when strategies for addressing mental health issues will be discussed. MHC spoke of the importance of HTs talking to each other and JBo confirmed that HTs had had to pick up everything during the pandemic, acting as cook, janitor, teacher and additional roles.

6. **Finance** - SCo reported Period 5 Management Accounts up to the end of January showing a £2.5k deficit, around £3.5k behind budget. Three schools are behind budget, due to unexpected expenditure. With regards to the outturn, the deficit is projected to be around £6k. The HTs receive monthly financial reports and they are now more aware of their own school's finances and are asking SCo questions about this. The income is healthy, with Care Club and catering contributing to income being £21k over budget. Total staff costs are £2k under budget but TA costs are £8k over budget due to extra hours. Non-staff costs are £28k over budget, due to catering costs and education resources. The catering supplier will be changed. £11.6k for purchasing Whiteboards has been transferred to capital expenditure.
- SCo reported that KPI figures are now correct.
- There is a cash balance of around £414k, which will reduce to around £386k by the end of February. PH asked whether the move of an employee to the position of supplier had been checked to ensure it was compliant with HMRC National Insurance stipulations; SCo stated that she was aware of this. SCo was thanked for her report.
7. **CEO Report** - CG's report had been sent out to Directors and she asked for questions. KB asked about the Reserve Policy and CG clarified that SCo was consulting with the Accountants about the amount which can be held in reserve. Different options will be considered and presented at the next FAR meeting.
- With regards to the Safeguarding Report, Item 12, there is now a single central record section, as part of the new Finance and HR system, which can be accessed online. This provides for easy access and scrutiny by MHC, the Safeguarding Link Director.
- There was discussion on KPIs and it was decided to have a small sub-committee to review these, as there were too many to monitor. CG was happy to have 5 areas, but the committee will look at reducing the number of items within each area; she will send out an email to Directors inviting those interested to decide on a date for the meeting.
- With regards to Appraisal, Point 14, CG appreciated the input from PHRP and the support of Directors at the meeting; she considered that her targets were really relevant and robust. Directors' visits to schools and Learning Walks were discussed. CG said that staff had welcomed the Directors' visits and their support and interest, but had expected feedback; however, it was agreed that feedback would be given from learning walks and formal book trawls, rather than informal visits. Directors wished to visit schools on a regular basis and CG suggested that half-termly visits for small groups of Directors could be arranged. KB proposed that schools could also invite Directors in for special occasions.
- PH questioned the quotes given for the purchase of Chromebooks for staff and asked JBo to check what teachers need: faster processing or a larger screen. He also suggested that Dell be approached for a quote as they are able to supply devices more quickly. It was agreed that that it was important not to skimp on quality, memory or processing speeds for staff Chromebooks. PH considered that staff could be asked to comment on the quality of the Chromebooks purchased at TH.
- Directors agreed that the formation of Local Advisory Groups for each school was a good idea and this will be proposed at the next LAG meeting in March. Each HT would run the LAG for their school, with a Director appointed to each one.
8. **Staffing** - CG advised Directors that there had been discussion with HTs about the appointment of a SENDCO, looking at the value with regards to the cost, particularly as EB has been doing the job for 4 schools at no extra salary. CG is now considering instead the appointment of a person responsible for inclusion for 2 or 3 days a week, who, in addition to SENCO duties, will also be responsible for pupil premium children, Looked After Children, the attendance of vulnerable children and may also have additional teaching duties. The role of SENCO will be coordinated by EB as Line Manager. The SENCO at AS may be interested in applying and CG will further consult with HTs and PHRP. The person will need to have a SENCO qualification or be working towards one; CBS agreed that there is a minimum statutory role of SENCO which could be combined with other discretionary roles.

9. **Data Protection and Updating IT Security** - JBo had sent the Cyber Security Review to Directors to read. Updating IT Security was postponed to the next meeting, as PH had to leave the meeting.
10. **Health and Safety** - There were no issues arising.
11. **Policy Updates** - The following policies had been sent to Directors to review:  
Admissions Policies 2023-24; Data Protection; Food; SEN; Gifts.  
CBS had raised a question about Dyslexia as part of the SEN policy, saying that the county now had a new literacy programme. He was advised by JBo to discuss this with EB.  
The Risk Management Policy has been moved to the Financial Handbook and the Performance Management Policy has been moved to the Employee Handbook.
12. **Safeguarding** - MHC confirmed that she would look at the Safeguarding report after the meeting. There is now a single central record which can be accessed online, as part of the new Finance and HR system.
13. **Any Other Business** - There was no other business.

**Dates of meetings 2021-2022:**

**Directors**

- 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (with Members)
- 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022
- 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (with Members)
- 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**FAR Committee**

- 6th May 2022

**Members**

- 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022
- 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**LAG**

- 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (SM)
- 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (TH)

Signed.....

Date .....

Heather Bowman - Chair of Directors

Item	Action to be taken	Action by whom	Action by when
3	Complete Pecuniary Interest declaration	AB	4/3/22
5	Discuss funding strategies with AS	KB/NJ	13/5/22
7	Reserve Policy to be reviewed	FAR committee	6/5/22
7	Arrange sub-committee meeting re KPIs	CG/Interested Directors	4/3/22
7	Arrange half-termly visits to schools	CG	4/3/22
7	Check Chromebook quotes	PH/JBo	4/3/22
7	Discuss new LAG arrangements	LAG	7/3/22
8	Appoint new SENCO	CG	tba
9	Bring in personal IT devices to improve security settings	PH, Directors	4/3/22
11	Discuss Dyslexia re SEN policy	CBS/EB	4/3/22