

Minutes of Directors' Meeting 15 October 2021 8am at Richard Crosse and by Google Meet

Attendees : Mrs C Gethin (CG) (CEO and Director), Mr C Bradshaw-Smith (CBS) (Director), Mrs S Cockayne (SC) (Director), Mr P Halifax (PH) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Mrs M Havelock-Crozier (MHC) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Mrs C Humphries (CH) (Director), Ms S Cole (SCo) (Finance Manager), Mrs J Bowman (JBo) (Data Protection Officer, Business Operations Manager)

Clerk: Mrs A Howard (AH)

Also present for Item 5: E Bowring (EB) (Head RC), J Wynn (JW) (Head SM), N Jarrett (NJ) (Head AS), R Mills (RM) (Head TH)

RC: Richard Crosse

SM: St Mary's

TH: The Howard

AS: Anson School

EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan

ECT: Early Career Teachers

SIAMS: Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools

HLTA: Higher Level Teaching Assistant

1. **Welcome, Prayer** - CG welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the Directors in the prayer.
2. **Apologies** - Mrs H Bowman (HB) (Chair of Directors). AH will update the attendance register. MHC took the Chair for the meeting.
3. **Pecuniary Interest** - Directors had updated their Pecuniary Interest declarations online; CH was advised to switch to Chrome to do this.
4. **Minutes of last meeting** - The minutes of the Members' and Directors' meeting held on 9.7.21 were agreed as a true copy by Directors. The minutes were signed by MHC. With regards to actions, CBS reported that he was still awaiting a reply from his contact at the DfE.
5. **School Updates** - All Headteachers had sent their reports to Directors prior to the meeting.

Richard Crosse Update: EB was asked about the Nursery and Reception intake. *Confidential Item.* The teacher in Class 1 is working on social stories, acting out situations for children to engage in. EB continued saying that the Covid lockdowns have also impacted on older children's behaviour. *Confidential Item.*

EB welcomed the split between Y5 and Y6, with Y6 children settling very well into work and the Y5 children really stepping up. She considered that the school was going in the right direction, but staff were very tired and it had been a long half-term. She welcomed the fact that children were now visiting church and going on trips.

CH asked about the impact of having two ECTs in school and EB said that this had involved some difficult logistics as extra hours were required for the two ECTs' development and also for their mentors and for EB as the induction teacher. CH asked whether it would have been better to employ a experienced teacher but EB said the pool of experienced teachers was limited and the two ECTs had already worked at TH and SM so had knowledge of TSSMAT.

St Mary's Update: JW joined the meeting and started with a brief summary of his report, saying that it was a positive picture with many exciting things going on at SM. The MAT targets include Communication and Language (a particular issue with the younger pupils) which is being addressed by a teacher and a teaching assistant, Spelling which involves the new phonics scheme and Writing *Confidential*. The SIAMS inspection at SM is due shortly. JW is pleased and proud of the wider curriculum, with Worship taking place in the hall, visits to church, Forest School, dance and drama; also after-school clubs including cooking, and school trips. He agreed with CBS that the Forest School has come into its own, being a valuable resource since the Covid lockdowns. JW believed that children who may be nervy and emotional have benefited from the Forest School and drama

performances. Intervention is in place for a number of pupils. JW considers that behaviour is exceptional at SM at present, with children aware of the school values.

One member of staff has tested positive for Covid *Confidential Item*. The attendance numbers are a bit low, but this is due to parents being extra-safe or awaiting test results.

JW said that his staff at SM were phenomenal and the middle leadership is taking on extra responsibilities, giving support to younger staff and undertaking book trawls.

PH commented on the good number of Nursery pupils and JW said that SM had an emphasis on publicity and marketing, including flyers, banners and an improved website page. Word of mouth was encouraging people to visit the school and although a place at school was not guaranteed by attending Nursery, children tended to stay on at the school if a place was available. In general, numbers in school are a bit smaller than JW would like. MHC pointed out that some children were moving to the middle school in Abbots Bromley; however she thought that the Hart School in Rugeley now had a good reputation. JW also expressed concern about the through-school planned by John Taylor on the site of the cooling towers, which will start by admitting Reception and Y7 children; however he is advertising SM to the new houses on the site where there may be children in other years.

Anson Update: NJ joined the meeting by Google Meet, saying that the return to school has not been completely normal with many Covid cases within families of children at AS. CBS asked about attendance figures and NJ confirmed that these will be added to her report. Covid has also caused a difficult situation with regards to staffing resources. CG has carried out a review of AS, getting to know the school and its vision and values and giving a positive report. NJ considers that everyone at school has been working extremely hard. PH asked about the Pupil Premium, which has the highest ratio in the MAT; NJ confirmed that there are a number of children with SEN including ADHD *Confidential Item*. There are targeted interventions and one-to-one support, including nurturing and addressing mental health issues. NJ considered that the money was being spent wisely, including music lessons for one child.

The Howard Update: RM said it had been a very interesting start back to school. On the positive side, she was very proud of the children and staff who are all working hard. The staff are now exhausted; however, on a sweep of the school, RM found the atmosphere calm and purposeful and she had received positive feedback from parents at parents' evening. There are ten new starters at TH from outside the village, whose parents have chosen the school specially. RM considers that the smallness of the school and the strength of the MAT have been factors in the parents' choice; parents have also mentioned the extra-curricular options and the passion of RM as she showed them round the school. The 'Stay and Play' session for Reception children on 23 August during the school holidays worked very well: parents were reassured and the children started school in September very well. *Confidential Item*. RM thinks that the main issue at TH is not having a Nursery, but it is still hoped to be able to provide an extra classroom in the future.

RM went on to talk about the enrichment activities, including a whole-school trip to the Adventure Farm which the children really enjoyed. She thought that it was important to have a number of outside activities, including a visit to Church and the Christmas Fayre.

RM considered that the National Tutoring Programme has been invaluable at TH, offering good intervention at a subsidised cost and enabling positive progress and 'closing the gap' for pupils.

There are two new TAs at TH who are being trained up, but are not at present able to offer intervention. Intervention has been aimed at KS2, *Confidential Item*. RM feels that KS1 are making excellent progress due to excellent teaching and support, the children are working well and volunteers are helping to ensure that children read every day to an adult.

PH asked about the Phunky Food Council and RM explained that there are a number of pupil councils and committees for KS2, including Eco, School, Community and Sports.

RM went on to say that a number of community events were planned, including singing in the Village Hall and inter-generational links.

Confidential Item. RM concluded by saying that, although there have been problems with wifi and the electricity supply in school, everything is now working.

Directors thanked HTs for their reports and CBS expressed his appreciation of the good standard of these reports. It was agreed that this should be a two-way process, with Directors asking how they can support HTs in addressing the schools' budgets and monitoring the impact and value of these. CH understood that HTs are keen for Directors to consider sharing staffing resources across the MAT. CG agreed that this was something to consider, as there was no give in the system, with TH having the least resilience in terms of staffing; in the future, HLTAs could be created and the leadership capacity should be increased.

6. Finance -

P1 Management Accounts: SCo had sent Directors the P1 Management Accounts and explained that at the end of P1 the MAT had a deficit of around £7k and overall was around £2k behind budget, with RC, SM and TH showing a deficit and AS showing a surplus. The management charges are now being split between the schools on the basis of the school size. There is a mis-match with trip costs as payments have been made for these, but deposits and parental contributions have still to come in. CBS questioned the percentages shown for the KPIs for Teacher/Staff/Other costs and SCo agreed that these should be amended. Reserves are in a good position, being around £197k. There are some banking issues at present, as CG is not yet able to approve payments; Lloyds bank have agreed to sort this out as soon as possible.

Audit: SCo reported that the audit had gone well, with some minor items mentioned including the historical signing of contracts and a missing receipt.

SCo was thanked by Directors for her report and for all her hard work during the audit process.

7. **Data Protection** - JBo reported that she has monitored the schools by phone and found them all compliant with Data Protection requirements except for AS where there are still some issues. JBo plans to do a data protection walk around the schools as she feels confident that staff know what they should be doing, but may not always be doing so. She has received a Freedom of Information request from a journalist which had been sent to an old email address for the previous CEO; this old email address has now been closed and the matter has been dealt with. Directors agreed that they would like an update on Data Protection training from JBo at the next meeting.

8. **Policy Updates** - The following policies had been sent out to Directors to review:

Allegations against Staff; Central Recharges; Complaints; Directors Code of Conduct; Disciplinary; Grievance; Lockdown; Pupil Premium; Remote Education; Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions

There have been some minor amendments to Allegations against Staff, as part of the Safeguarding system across the MAT.

CG and JBo are in the process of sorting out over the next 12 months which policies will become guidance documents. The Directors' Code of Conduct is now a statement and all the curriculum policies will be statements of intent. CBS queried why the Health and Safety policy did not have a front sheet showing provenance; JBo explained that this policy had been set up by Elite who carried out the H&S assessments, but she will ask them to provide the information. The Attendance policy has been updated. The Financial Handbook and Staff Handbook are being reviewed.

9. **MAT growth:** CG had forwarded her report to Directors before the meeting *Confidential Item*. Work on the joining pack put the MAT in a good position for further applications from schools. CG wished to have a working party to look at the growth structure and the capacity of the HTs to work with new schools. Some Directors expressed an interest in joining the working party, but it was agreed to issue an open invitation when a date had been arranged.

10. **School Review and Improvement:** CG said that her recent reviews of the schools had shown how phenomenal they were, with excellent behaviour and a calm atmosphere, solid systems and structures and hardworking staff. She had identified some inconsistencies in marking and feedback, with a need to show next steps and challenge. CG considered that there were some very small classes and these could be managed more strategically. The MAT had an excellent curriculum, but work could be done on planning and learning objectives. CG considered the four HTs were excellent and the staff worked together well.
11. **Strategic Plan 2022-2027:** CG had listed the different areas in the Strategic Plan, including MAT growth and School improvements, following the Covid epidemic. She and SCo are reviewing the Asset Management Plan which highlights some repairs and work to be undertaken on the buildings. There was discussion on the Trusts belonging to Richard Crosse and St Mary's which can provide money for structural work. It is hoped that the boiler at TH will continue to function over winter. A separate meeting will be held to discuss the Strategic Plan.
12. **Health and Safety:** Elite provides training on H&S and SCo will send out a short video to Directors. JBo will visit TH to show how to carry out inspections. CBS suggested a 'buddying' system, whereby the H&S officer from a different school could tour the school with the H&S officer to provide a mutual learning experience.
13. **Safeguarding:** CG is taking steps to move the Safeguarding system online. MHC has gained her Level 2 in Safeguarding.
14. **Any Other Business** - CBS asked about the Director Recruitment Folder in the Shared Drive and JBo explained that Directors might wish to add their own comments and amendments. *Confidential Item.* CG wondered whether a HT might be invited to join the Board, but CH considered that the HTs were very busy at present and it might not be an appropriate time. CH asked why a separate contract had been proposed for extra hours for a cook but JBo explained that the extra hours were for a different post of catering management paid at a higher rate. This post will be advertised internally. PH reported to Directors that a productive meeting had been held with Staffs Tech regarding IT infrastructure and he considered that progress was being made.

Dates of meetings 2021-2022:

Directors

19th November 2021
10th December 2021 (AGM)
11th February 2022
4th March 2022 (with Members)
13th May 2022
17th June 2022 (with Members)
8th July 2022

Members

10th December 2021 (AGM)
4th March 2022
17th June 2022

LAG

7th March 2022 (SM)
20th June 2022 (TH)

Signed.....

Date

Heather Bowman - Chair of Directors

Item	Action to be taken	Action by whom	Action by when
3	Update Pecuniary Interest declarations	CH	19/11/21
7	Data Protection training for Directors	JBo	19/11/21
9	Set up MAT growth working party	CG	19/11/21
12	Send H&S video to Directors	SCo	19/11/21
14	Director recruitment: read and add comments to Director recruitment folder in Shared Drive. Contact possible applicants to Board of Directors.	Directors	19/11/21