

## Minutes of Directors' Meeting 26 February 2021 8am via Google Meet

Attendees : Mr P Lovern (PL) (CEO and Director), Mrs H Bowman (HB) (Chair of Directors), Mr C Bradshaw-Smith (CBS) (Director), Mrs S Cockayne (SC) (Director), Mr P Halifax (PH) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Mrs C Humphries (CH) (Director)

Also present for Items 5 and 8: Ms S Cole (SCo) (Finance Manager)

Also present for Items 7 and 9: Mrs J Bowman (JBo) (Data Protection Officer, Business Operations Manager)

Clerk: Mrs A Howard (AH)

RC: Richard Crosse

SM: St Mary's

TH: The Howard

AS: Anson School

KPI: Key Performance Indicator

SLT: Senior Leadership Team

1. **Welcome, Prayer** - HB welcomed everyone to the meeting and PL led the Directors in the prayer.
2. **Apologies** - No apologies had been received. AH will update the attendance register.
3. **Pecuniary Interest** - There were no changes to the Pecuniary Interest Register.
4. **Minutes of last meeting** - The minutes of the Directors' meeting held on 20.11.20 were agreed as a true copy by Directors. The minutes will be signed by HB when the situation allows. Confidential items will be deleted from the public minutes.
- 4a. **Staffing** - HB suggested that this item from Agenda Item 11 be discussed at this point. PL had sent a letter to Directors stating that he planned to take early retirement from 1 September 2021. HB explained that time was of the essence in arranging an interview process, as serving Headteachers would need to put in their notice by the end of April. This will therefore be the only agenda item at the meeting planned for 5/3/21 when Members will also be present. HB will prepare a paper including a draft job description to send out to Directors and Members before the meeting. Issues to be discussed will include whether to replace PL, how many days of work will be expected, the salary, the interview process and advertising strategies. CH agreed that Mrs Sian Carter from PHRP could assist with the advertising and coordinating the interview process. HB has looked at 5 advertisements for CEOs on the internet at present, including the Penk Academy, and can send links to these to any Directors interested. She thought that concise and specific information about the TSSMAT post should be included in the advertisements and put on the school website. CBS asked about the timeline: HB is working this out and will send out dates with the paper. Interviews may take place during the last week of April, with applications in by the week after Easter, but this is to be confirmed. If this is not feasible, an interim CEO could be considered. With the current Covid epidemic, the format of the interview process will need to be considered, with small groups and interviewing one candidate at a time. CBS wondered whether tours of the school could take place during the Easter holidays, but PL thought that applicants can look at the school website for information and that the personality of the applicant is the key issue, ensuring that there are opportunities to assess the individual applicants. It was decided that the job description was very important and CH recommended using PL's job description as a basis for discussion. PL considered that TSSMAT was in a good position, with a good team; he thought it was an opportune time to consider whether and how the Board wished the MAT to grow. If the Directors' decision was that the MAT should grow, it could aim to grow on its own or to merge with another

Trust. PL has found that, in trying to promote joining TSSMAT, the other schools do not want to lose autonomy.

He thought the CEO, staff and Directors in TSSMAT were working together, supporting each other, especially during the Covid epidemic, and shared a vision and values. There are at present vacancies for a Member and a Director. It was important to consider what sort of CEO the Board thought appropriate: someone working day to day with the Headteachers or someone skilled in data and admin, taking on a consultative role.

*Confidential*

CBS asked about the formation of the interview panel and PL confirmed that there would be a member of the Diocese on the panel.

*Confidential*

HB will draft a letter to parents informing them that PL is leaving and send it to PL for his views. PH emphasised the importance of a positive message and suggested that TSSMAT's very effective and successful ways of handling the Covid situation in school should be included in the letter.

5. **Finance** - SCo joined the meeting and presented the Management Accounts for Period 5, up to the end of January. She said that the accounts were looking good, with £28k surplus which is ahead of budget and an increase of £21k from Period 4. All schools were showing a surplus apart from TH which showed a slight deficit. The projected outturn for the end of August is £51k surplus, behind budget due to the Covid situation. SCo explained the factors affecting income and expenditure: income is more or less as expected, although Local Authority income is £19k ahead of budget due to Early Years and SEN payments and Staffing costs are showing £26k behind budget due to increased teaching staff and support staff costs; much of this is due to extra Covid student support and Health and Safety costs. Non-staff costs are ahead of budget by £33k, although there have been some extra costs on school trips (payment of refund for cancelled Kingswood trip), premises, transport and admin. A delayed invoice for £50k was received and is being paid in £10k instalments. SCo went on to say that KPIs are in line with expectations and the Bank Balance is £425k, although this is dropping to around £408k in February. SCo considered that the financial situation was healthy.

With reference to Internal Assurance, PL and SCo had approached Deans Accountants who gave quotes for different areas of review; however, as there have already been internal assurance exercises on Data Protection and Health and Safety, together with an HR audit, Directors considered that there was no requirement to undertake another review until next year.

SCo had sent out to Directors the quotes received for Budget Modelling software. Although the present software used is much cheaper than the other two quotes, SCo considers that it is not fit for purpose. The other two companies are similar to each other, being more efficient, integrating with Xero, cloud-based and easier to use for making comparisons with the budget and preparing reports. CBS asked how much it integrated with Xero and SCo said it could evolve to integrate as much as one wished. PH asked SCo to check that the system was hosted in the UK and to check the support for multi-factor authentication. Both companies were recommended and used by MLG Accountants, but as BPS was much used in schools, Directors agreed with SCo to accept the BPS quote.

PL informed Directors that another quote had been obtained for grounds maintenance on MHC's suggestion, but the original choice of Prime was found to be cheaper and was therefore accepted for a 12-month contract.

SCo was thanked for her report.

8. **Health and Safety** - This item was considered next as SCo was still present. She had sent Health and Safety and Covid reports for the four schools to Directors. She reported that actions had been taken and although there was a small number of minor issues to complete, she had no concerns.
7. **Data Protection** - JBo joined the meeting as DPO. She reported that with regards to Data Protection AS was slightly behind the other schools, but improving this involves visiting the school which is difficult at present. There are no significant issues.

An Action Plan on Cyber Security has been undertaken, with training planned on Multi-Factor Authentication; Directors are involved in making sure that the plan is put into action. RM Education has offered a G suite audit offering training on making it more secure and on how to make the best use of it.

PH gave an update on IT, saying that the upgrade on infrastructure was not quite there yet. There had been some debate on Staffs Tech not responding quickly enough, but it has been pointed out that TSSMAT pay quite a low amount for their services which will only cover a basic fix. It might be necessary to pay more to get strategic information from Staffs Tech, or to use outside experts.

Policies on using mobiles and Chromebooks are being developed.

9. **Policy Updates** - JBo as Business Operations Manager had sent the following policies to Directors to be reviewed:

Asthma; Data Protection; Food; Harassment and Bullying; Managing Probation; Packed Lunch; Placement; Recruitment; Risk Management; Short Term Home working; Social Media.

JBo explained that the internal review process had been changed slightly, but the Subject Leads and Board Leads had seen the policies and some minor comments had been made; the policies were ratified by Directors and the minor comments will be taken into account.

6. **Covid Update** - TSSMAT entered the present lockdown in a similar fashion to the previous lockdown, with children of keyworkers and vulnerable children being taught in school, while other children receive online lessons. Some staff have now received vaccinations and are happy with the present system. The MAT is set to open on 8 March to all children and is prepared for this. CBS asked about testing and PL confirmed that staff in school are being tested twice a week and this will continue when schools re-open fully, but primary age children do not have to be tested.

10. **Safeguarding** - There were no safeguarding issues.

11. **Planning for Academic Year 2021-22** - Staffing and Priorities have been covered above. With regards to PPA time, PL proposed that PPA time taking place on a Friday afternoon should keep going over the summer term, with consultations taking place during the term with parents about continuing beyond this academic year. He stated that Headteachers wished it to continue and PL thought it was educationally the way forward for the Academy. Children can stay at Care Club for a modest charge from 1.30 - 3.30pm and TAs can be brought in if there are large numbers of children. As the children start school at 8.30am they are not short-changed on the amount of teaching time they receive, particularly as Friday afternoons in the past included a half-hour Worship. PL pointed out that the previous use of two teachers on a high pay point to cover teachers' PPA time cost the MAT £90, 591 per year, which could pay for more 1-to-1 teaching or other valuable activities. The advantages of the present system for teachers are the ability to carry out planning and preparation together, have CPD and talk together on training modules e.g. work towards Google Educator Level 1. HB considered that it was important to involve parents in consultation and a report on the advantages of the new PPA time should be presented during the first half of the summer term. PL will work with the SLT to put a report together for parents

12. **Any Other Business** - There was discussion on the composition of the Board and statutory functions were reviewed. The Directors' training needs were discussed and CH reminded Directors that there were five training videos available to watch at any time on the following topics:

Data Protection

Recruitment and Selection

Managing Safeguarding Allegations against Staff

Managing Formal Employment Processes

Terminating Employment

**Dates of next meetings** – Directors were reminded that the next meeting on 5 March will have one agenda item on the recruitment process for a new CEO. Headteachers' Reports which were to be given at that meeting will be put into the Shared Folder for Directors to read.

Directors' meetings: 8am on a Friday

5 March (with Members)

14 May

18 June (with Members)

9 July

FAR meetings: 8am on a Friday

7 May

Members' meetings: 8am on a Friday

5 March (with Directors)

18 June (with Directors)

LAG meetings: 4pm on a Monday

10 March 4pm at TH

23 June 4pm at SM

Signed.....

Date .....

Heather Bowman - Chair of Directors

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>
4a	Note purpose of meeting 5/3/21	Directors/Members	5/3/21
4a	Circulate paper including draft job description to Directors and Members	HB	5/3/21
	Send out agenda for meeting	HB/AH	1/3/21
4a	Approach Mrs S Carter to assist with interview process	CH	5/3/21
4a	<i>Confidential</i>		
4a	Draft letter for parents	HB/PL	3/3/21
5	Check with BPS where system hosted and MFA	SCo	5/3/21
7	Discuss actions on Cyber Security Action Plan	Directors	14/5/21
11	Prepare report and consultation with parents on PPA time	PL/SLT	30/4/21
12	Read HTs reports in Shared File	Directors	31/3/21