

**Local Advisory Group Meeting  
at Richard Crosse School and via Google Meet  
Monday 4 October 2021**

**MINUTES**

CG	Charlene Gethin, CEO	AH	Alison Howard - Clerk
SC	Sue Cockayne – Director for LAG and Chair of LAG		
HB	Heather Bowman – Chair of Directors		
AA	Antony Allen – Parent Member Richard Crosse		
MHE	Marcella Henley – PTA Member Richard Crosse		
PBU	Phil Burrow- Parent member Richard Crosse		Abbreviations
GP	Gillian Pitchford - Community Member Kings Bromley	RC	Richard Crosse
AR	Anna Redpath - Parent Member St Mary's	SM	St Mary's
CC	Claire Clarke – PTA Member St. Mary's	TH	The Howard
MH	Marie Havelock – Community Member Colton	AS	Anson School
PW	Philippa Wood – The Friends Member Howard	EY	Early Years
CB	Chris Billingham – Community Member Elford	TA	Teaching Assistant
		NPQ	National Professional Qualification
EB	Emma Bowring - Headteacher Richard Crosse	PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
JW	Jon Wynn – Headteacher St. Mary's	SIAMS	Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools
RM	Rachel Mills – Headteacher Howard	HT	Headteacher

**Attendance :** CG, SC, HB, AA, AR, CC, MH, PW, CB, EB, JW, RM, AH

1. SC welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting opened with a prayer.
2. **Apologies :** There were apologies from MHE, PBU, GP.
3. **Pecuniary Interest**  
LAG members were in the process of updating their Pecuniary Interest declarations online. Members were advised to return a reply even if no changes had occurred.
4. **Minutes of last meeting**  
These were accepted as a true record and were signed by SC.
5. **Headteacher Reports**  
**Richard Crosse School:** EB presented the report for RC, saying that children had settled in well and were pleased to be together; the situation had become more normal. CG had undertaken a review of the school with a very good outcome, although there are always some minor things to improve. One member of staff is away due to Covid and staff are continuing to take lateral flow tests. One child in EY has Covid, but parents are now better organised in arranging tests for their children. Whole school worship is now taking place regularly. As a result of pupil feedback, a quiet area has been set up for break- and lunch-times with games and activities; the School Council has reported that children are enjoying this. There are a number of clubs and activities at lunch time and after school, including yoga, gardening and sports. It has been decided that RC will now have PE Days, when children come to school in their PE kit; this means that pupils now have a full one-hour PE lesson and staff and children have responded positively to this. Trips are planned for the school,

including an orienteering day, a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum and a Santa Safari; Wonderdome planetarium will be coming to RC. EB was hoping to have parents at the Harvest Festival in church, but due to Covid concerns it has been decided that only the children will attend. In conclusion, EB said she was pleased with the situation at RC and, although Covid is still causing problems, the school is managing it well.

**The Howard School:** RM presented her report, saying that TH is in a good place, although the present lack of Wi-Fi is making things more difficult. The school is returning to normal and children are enjoying singing in whole school worship. There has been a very positive response to the CEO's dog visiting the school. New staff have been appointed and RM considers that the new staff running the before- and after-school clubs are doing a really good job and forming strong relationships with the children. The teacher covering a maternity leave is also working well with the children, dealing with SEN and behaviour problems in the class with mindfulness and a child-centred approach. There are ten children in Reception who were invited into school before term began for a stay-and-play session; this has proved invaluable, as they have joined a class of Y1 and Y2. RM considers that TH now has a good reputation and PW confirmed this, saying some families in the village have decided to move their children from other schools into TH. The Friends of TH paid for a trip to the Adventure Farm, which CB also attended and reported on the excellent behaviour of the children, saying how nice it was to see all the children enjoying themselves. Trips including a pantomime are planned and RM thought it important to focus on children's experiences and mixing together after lockdown rather than on technology. With regards to PE kits, RM reported that it has been decided at TH to trial a school PE kit with the TH logo; it will not be compulsory to buy this. CG wondered whether sponsorship could be obtained towards this. RM concluded by saying that she is now moving on to a NPQ Executive Leadership course and another member of staff is taking a NPQ course in teaching.

**St Mary's School:** JW gave a report on SM, saying that the children had settled into the new term really well, enjoying the Acts of Worship and returning to full-time education. Entry into Reception and Y1 had gone well and JW was pleased with the behaviour and standards in school; children with social and emotional difficulties were being well supported. SM was looking forward to the Harvest Festival in church and a return to normal routines. Outdoor learning, with Forest School and a variety of activities, is important. JW feels that children have missed out on enrichment activities during lockdown. A key focus across the MAT is on Writing and at SM a TA and a teacher are working on pupils' communication and language. The school is expecting a SIAMS inspection any day now, but SM had made preparations for this before lockdown. JW was pleased with the number of after-school clubs including dance and drama and art. There have been trips to the Staffordshire Regimental Museum and Packington Farm and lots of exciting events are planned. SC thanked the HTs for their reports and thanked the Headteachers and the staff for all their hard work.

## 6. Trust Updates:

CG presented her report to LAG members, starting by thanking everyone for their warm welcome to the MAT. She was getting to know people, feeling passionately invested in the Trust, and was pleased at achieving so much already in a short time. CG had reviewed the remit of the LAG and had arranged her report under headings accordingly:

Scrutinising the work of the institution From Day 1, CG has been aware of the ethos of the MAT and has seen that it meets the underlying vision and values. During her formal and informal monitoring of the schools and attending Acts of Worship, she has witnessed the impeccable behaviour of the children and the strong relationships between staff and pupils, finding the atmosphere in the schools to be calm and purposeful. CG has found a consistency in the appearance and marking of books over the MAT and has discussed any challenges in staffing with the HTs. Expectations for the children are high and there is an excellent wider curriculum. A targeted approach will be taken to make improvements and ensure that middle leaders are equipped for their roles; CG considered that the School Leaders managed Covid and staffing

challenges well. Procedures for a Lockdown Policy have been reviewed and updated; SM has already carried out a practice which went well.

Vision and Values With regards to MAT growth, CG stated that it was important to maintain capacity and not to stretch the MAT too far, trying to achieve a balance between growing the MAT while maintaining outstanding standards. *Confidential*. A working group has been set up with the Board. CG stressed the importance of looking closely at schools wishing to join, as it would be difficult at present to take on failing schools; they should share the vision and values of TSSMAT. A joining pack has been put together to give to interested schools.

CG went on to talk about PR and Marketing, mentioning the new Twitter account which HTs are encouraging staff to be involved in; use of Twitter, the school blogs and Instagram will promote the MAT's reputation as an ethical Trust.

Policies are being streamlined, with some becoming guidance rather than policies. The admissions codes have been updated.

Strategic Planning The current Strategic Plan runs from 2017-22 and CG is now working on the 2022-27 Plan. The objectives are unlikely to change and CG considers that the curriculum is suitable for the present number of schools. There will be a focus on IT infrastructure, Writing, Mental Health and Communication and Language, ensuring that the MAT continues to be financially viable with a growth strategy in place. CG will look at developing senior and middle leaders and also at benchmarking scorecards which compare TSSMAT to other Trusts. Reducing the environmental impact of the MAT, together with maintaining an ethical approach, will also be important.

Finance A financial audit started on the day of the meeting, 4 October, lasting a week. The HTs each have £2,000 catch-up premium to spend and grant applications have been made for improvements in the MAT. CG stated that the MAT was stable financially, with a good amount of reserves and a healthy surplus, but it was difficult to be more specific as the financial audit would report on last year's accounts and the MAT is at present in Period 1 of Accounting, so there was little to report.

CG concluded by saying that Health and Safety procedures are being updated, recruitment procedures have been reviewed and there are plans to improve IT cyber security.

CG asked LAG members to feedback on the amount of information provided in the CEO report. AA said it was useful, with the change of CEO, to understand the continuity and changes in school. CG agreed to send out the report to LAG members before the meeting, so that they can prepare questions or ask for further information.

## 7. Community Updates

**Richard Crosse/Kings Bromley:** MHE sent apologies. AA considered that the return to school had gone really well and welcomed the return of the choir and the introduction of the quiet games area at RC. He raised the issue of parking, saying it was a small minority of parents who were parking badly. EB agreed that it was a problem; she had asked the PCSO to be outside school and that had worked well, but in the absence of the PCSO the situation had deteriorated. It was difficult for EB to take punitive action while maintaining a relationship with parents. AA mentioned the introduction of the PE days, asking whether a more coherent uniform policy could be developed. EB agreed that the timing of the introduction had been unfortunate, as parents had already purchased items of clothing, but it was important to have a balance between the costs and the new PE arrangements. AA went on to ask about the proposed Parent Forums and SC said that the idea was for any problems relating to an individual school to be dealt with at these meetings, with the outcome reported to the LAG. EB considered that this should get more parents involved and give them more of a voice.

EB continued by saying that the PTA at RC was in difficulty as a recent meeting had been attended by only two parents. Although these two parents do an amazing job, raising money for school projects, they are finding it difficult to continue. The PTA fund is in a healthy situation with over £8,000 in the accounts, but there is a lack of parental involvement.

**The Howard/Elford:** PW reported that The Friends of TH have responded to the difficulties mentioned by EB by putting the emphasis on events being social rather than fund-raising, for

example calling the AGM 'Planning and Prosecco'. They welcomed new parents by giving them 'goody bags' during the summer holidays and offering to be a support network for them. A number of people have joined and some have taken on Deputy roles, shadowing the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer over 12 months, as these people wish to stand down in a year's time. PW stressed the importance of getting people with a variety of skill-sets, who are well connected in the village. She explained to EB that The Friends was set up to avoid the constraints of the PTA and enable villagers to attend community events which are always well supported.

CB said she would report back to Elford on the school and Trust news, she was very pleased that the school was back and had thoroughly enjoyed her day out at the Adventure Farm. She asked whether parents would be elected or nominated to attend the Parent Forums or whether anyone could attend and CG said that the format was up to individual HTs to arrange.

**St Mary's/Colton:** CC gave a report on the PTA, saying that there had been a pre-loved uniform sale in July which had raised £70, with another one planned for the New Year. The Bike Shelter was being installed. A lot of work had been carried out on the Hortihub during the summer holidays and a celebration of the opening of the Hortihub had taken place at the start of term, with a commemorative plaque put up. Sale of various items had raised £351 on the day and Tesco, who had supported the fundraising, informed them that they were eligible to apply for a second fundraising drive. Although SM was not successful in their entry to the National PTA awards, CC found it a very enjoyable experience and would do it again. Tesco also supported the PTA's car-washing event which raised £400. Plans for the future include Big Breakfast, the purchase of a planter to be placed in the church grounds to remember a person who had given a lot of support to the PTA, the production of Christmas cards and a possible school Christmas Fayre. To encourage more people to join the 59 club, CC has produced cards with details of this and the Easy Fundraising scheme.

MH advised the Colton village Christmas Fayre is going ahead this year. She joined the meeting by Google Meet and said that she and many in her age group were still worried about meeting in groups and mixing with big groups of children. She missed going into school but was pleased that the vicar in Colton was getting the children back into church. MH considered that the Trust was going from strength to strength and stressed how important the school was for the village, although only a small number of village children attended. She thought that Colton village had altered, particularly during Covid, with a number of village societies folding, and recommended that older people should be invited into school to show how children are taught nowadays.

SC thanked the PTA and community members for their reports and asked for further questions, but there were none.

**8. LAG member appointment dates:**

AH advised that for a number of Members (Anthony Allen, Marcella Henley, Claire Clarke, Chris Billingham and Marie Havelock) their term of office (3 years, plus a further 2 years) comes to an end this autumn. CG agreed to look into whether members could further extend their term of office.

**9. Any other business**

SC concluded by saying how nice it was to meet in person after so many Google Meet meetings.

**Date and location of LAG meetings 2021-22**

4pm	7 March 2022	St Mary's/Google Meet
4pm	20 June 2022	The Howard/Google Meet

Signed.....  
Sue Cockayne, Chair of Local Advisory Group

Date.....