

## **Minutes of Members' and Directors' Meeting 17 June 2022 8am at Richard Crosse School and via Google Meet**

Attendees : Mrs C Gethin (CG) (CEO and Director), Mr C Hopkins (CHo) (Chair of Members), 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), Mrs C Humphries (CH) (Director), Mr P Halifax (PH) (Vice-Chair of Directors), Ms S Cole (SCo) (Finance Manager)

Also present for Item 4: E Bowring (EB) (Head RC), N Jarrett (NJ) (Head AS), R Mills (RM) (Head TH), J Wynn (JW) (Head SM)

Clerk: Mrs A Howard (AH)

RC: Richard Crosse

SM: St Mary's

TH: The Howard

AS: Anson School

SENDCO: Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator

PTFA: Association of Parents, Teachers and Friends of the School

SIAMS: Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools

NPQEL: National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership

1. **Welcome, Prayer, Introductions** - CHo welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the Members and Directors in the prayer.
2. **Apologies** - Apologies had been received from Rev S Davis (SD) (Member), Mrs J Bowman (JBo) (Data Protection Officer, Business Operations Manager) and Mrs M Havelock-Crozier (MHC) (Vice-Chair of Directors). AH will update the attendance register.
3. **Pecuniary Interest** - There were no changes to the Pecuniary Interest Register.
4. **Schools Updates** - Headteachers gave updates at various points during the meeting.  
**The Howard:** RM attended by Google Meet and reported that it had been an eventful year, but was finishing on a high. Her project with the NPQH was ongoing and she appreciated the emphasis on ethical leadership. Reading across the MAT was a strength; she is involved in writing moderation across Staffordshire and a focus on Writing is planned for next year. The subsidised scheme from EAS focussing on reading intervention and led by RM, whereby each school receives £250 for books and training of a TA, has been excellent. A strength of the last year has been the children's behaviour, there is a calmness and lovely atmosphere in the school and the parents' attitude to the school has been good; the school's reputation is growing, with visiting parents enjoying seeing children in Forest School and climbing trees. The PTFA have been a fantastic help in establishing Forest School. Nursery and Reception children from RC have visited to carry out pond dipping, so it is an asset to the Trust.  
Ms Jennings is now back in school and Stuart Challinor has done a really good job with Y5/6; they look forward to welcoming Kathryn Powell in September.  
RM thanked CH for all her HR support, it has been reassuring to know she is there at the end of the phone.  
There has been excellent contact with the community, through the Village Hall and the church, making up for lost time during 2 years of Covid. Events such as the Colour Run and Maypole dancing have been enjoyed.  
Catch-up interventions are in place; the outsourced tutoring did not work well, so in-house tutoring is taking place instead.  
The Y6 SATs went well, *Confidential*. With Mr Challinor's support all children, except one, accessed the tests.

There are good links with John Taylor and RM has been asked to facilitate more English moderation. The parent forum once a half-term is working well and parents are appreciating the "You said, we did" approach to acting upon the parental questionnaires. The parents are supportive of the school. A £2.5k reading scheme, funded by the PTFA, will be launched from September with pupils taking age-appropriate books home to encourage a love of reading. Problems have included the gate at the school, which is being resolved, and future challenges include dealing with job shares and supporting new TAs; however, after some difficult staffing issues, the school is now in a good place.

CBS asked whether problems in EY with behaviour and catching up after lockdowns have been helped by Forest School and are now resolved. RM reported that the Reception children are now a real strength and work has been done on Speech and Language; Forest School and the active support of parents have helped towards this and the younger children feel happy and safe in the family atmosphere of the school.

RM was thanked for her report.

**St Mary's:** JW attended by Google Meet and informed Members and Directors that a SIAMS inspection had taken place the previous day which had gone very well. Although the outcome has not yet been announced, JW and CG were very happy, saying it had been a rigorous, long and eventful day and the framework of the inspection was challenging, but they had received some lovely feedback. JW stressed that everything during the day was genuine, showing what they do in a normal day. He thanked the Board, Members and Leadership for having a real Christian vision, which was reflected in all the Trust schools. The staff and pupils were excellent, with RE lessons being taught and the children responding well to high-level questions asked by the inspectors. It was a great team effort with many positive aspects.

JW thanked his brilliant staff for the past year and said he was enjoying his NPQEL training which helped with the curriculum and supporting staff. With regards to staff, two members of staff will be taking maternity leave and one is now trained in Forest School. The Y6 teacher has moderated the Writing, showing good results. There are also pleasing results in Phonics and the data across the school is satisfying, with pupils tracked and showing good progress. He considers that the school is in an excellent place.

JW considers that the staff are feeling empowered to be more creative with the curriculum, using the outdoor space. There will be a changeover of staff from September, with one member of staff returning to Devon after maternity leave, but JW feels that the Trust puts the people in the right places. CBS asked whether the Trust tracks what staff move on to and it was agreed that this could be considered. JW thanked the Members and Directors for their support, with CG and MHC giving a lot of help with the inspection; JW was thanked for his report.

**Anson School:** NJ gave a summary of strengths and weaknesses and the plans for the future. Priorities for the school in the development plan include outdoor learning which is very successful with support from the PTFA and an Action Plan in place for the Reception area; also nurture which involves working with children who lack confidence, particularly when speaking in front of a group, and the National Tutoring Programme. NJ is proud to obtain the NPQH, it has been a challenge but she has received a lot of support. AS have re-invested in Reading for Pleasure with support from the PTFA and Pupil Premium money. Monster Phonics has only been in place since summer 2021 which means that AS's journey is slightly behind the other three schools; resources and CPD have been provided for staff to improve this. With advice from KB, the PTFA have had a very successful drive to raise money by sourcing government grants and sponsorship for outdoor classrooms and books. KB added that AS have linked up with a local gardening group, the In Bloom team, on a community project; the Parish Council have also been involved.

Following on from a parental survey, there was a focus on communication and mental health and wellbeing, so the newsletter has been improved to show parents what AS is doing and why.

NJ considers that the children's behaviour is impeccable, they were congratulated on this during the Greenpower event. NJ mentioned the great parental support and the aim is to get many people involved in collaborative actions. *Confidential* NJ was thanked for her report.

**Richard Crosse:** EB attended the meeting in person and started by saying that she was enjoying working with the staff and the wider community, with improved links with the Parish Council and the church. At a recent SIAMS audit, all areas were given a green rating; Father Jeremy is very involved with the school and all school pupils have visited the church to look around. Every other week, the Open Book team come into school, and church members have been involved with school productions and the Jubilee celebrations. The Jubilee party on the Showfield was a great success and it was the first time for a few years, due to Covid restrictions, that the whole school has met together in mixed groupings of children. EB considers that RC is now much more a part of the community.

Y6 children will have lasting memories of Greenpower; Phunky Foods have come into school to promote a healthy lifestyle and healthier lunchboxes with parents and children. The children are now getting a wider, more rounded curriculum.

Two children have joined higher up the school and three more are starting in September. EB has shown six new sets of parents around the school and many have commented on the school website and also word of mouth which has encouraged them to visit the school. If RC is unable to accept pupils into a year group, EB has suggested contacting TH to look around.

With regards to staff wellbeing, there have been mostly positive comments, *Confidential*. EB stressed to staff that they should be honest and CBS pointed out that dips in positivity are a sign that staff are answering the questionnaires honestly. EB thought staff were encouraged by the fact that if issues were raised, the leadership took note and actions were taken: for example, the marking policy was reviewed and is now working better, with children being more reflective. EB is proud of the children's behaviour. *Confidential*. SEN across the county is in a difficult place, with funding frozen at present. EB considers that EY, Y1 and Y2 children have been hardest hit by the Covid epidemic, with those coming into school this autumn likely to be also affected. However, children are making good progress and a TA is running the National Tutoring Programme, with a focus on Writing development.

EB is pleased that NQTs are staying on to teach in the MAT. An additional TA is working in the mornings. At RC there is a focus on spellings, with two new spelling schemes purchased; there is training for TAs in reciprocal reading and the White Rose Maths scheme is in use for intervention. One member of staff at RC is now in a Middle Leader role, taking on a student teacher this year. EB was very pleased to mention that the Trim Trail will shortly be installed as part of the outside play project and a Traversing Wall will be put in shortly, thanks to support from the PTA. EB was thanked for her report.

After the HT presentations, CHo asked for comments and queried whether staff recruitment was more difficult at present. CH agreed that the situation was a 'nightmare' at the moment, it was particularly difficult to recruit support staff. However CG said that at TSSMAT all appointments have been made, mostly with internal appointments within the MAT. *Confidential*; all staff at TSSMAT worked extremely hard. CH confirmed that exit interviews have taken place in the past for staff leaving the MAT, with reports being made back to the Board. CBS considered that the MAT had solid foundations and the teams of staff were working well. KB questioned the HTs' role in staff development and leading their teams; CH said there had been a lot of work on this across the MAT. CG confirmed that the HTs were at different stages of Headship, with some now looking more strategically at their role. The appointment of the Trust SENDCO, work on Phonics, expansion of the outdoor play, targeted intervention and use of Parent Forums are all examples of development in the ways HTs work more strategically; also CG and CH stressed the importance of the work of Champions (Subject Leaders) to use a planned cycle of meetings across the Trust, looking at the strategic development of their subject, benchmarking to look in a broader way at how best to teach it. In addition, CG is looking at the development of governance.

5. **Minutes of last meetings** - The minutes of the Members' and Directors' meeting held in March were agreed as a true copy by Members (these had already been agreed by Directors) and were signed by CHo. The minutes of the Directors' meeting held on 13.5.22 were agreed as a true copy

by Directors and these were signed by HB. Confidential items will be deleted from the public minutes. Actions relating to the minutes were included in the CEO Report to be discussed at the meeting.

6. **CEO Report** - CG's report had been sent out to Members and Directors and firstly she addressed the Actions from previous meetings.
  - i) With regards to the pay increase, CH is still awaiting the outcome. It is likely to mean that all pay points will be moved up, but she does not think that there will be a re-evaluation of job descriptions.
  - ii) PH confirmed that O2 will continue to support the phone at TH, but this will not be for free. If a booster is put in, teachers will have to be able to link to O2 on their phones. PH was told that as it is a black spot for phones, it is worth making a fuss to move up the list. He will send a report to CG about this.
  - iii) CG has send out a note about the roles of Directors and asked Directors to consider this. There are more roles than Directors, but, for example, there is no link Director to Spirituality and the Christian ethos of the MAT. Some roles need to be amalgamated or developed. A small working party is needed to plan this.
  - iv) Quotes for clerking by an agency are being arranged and interviews are planned at the beginning of July. CH stated that another MAT was suggesting sharing a clerk and CG agreed that this could be considered when the small Academy Trusts meet the following week; it would be beneficial to work strategically together, for example sharing an Estates Manager as well as a clerk. There was discussion on using Entrust, with CG pointing out that updating training for clerks is regularly provided by Entrust.

CG went on to say that she was really pleased with the attendance figures which are now above the national average; she has worked with HTs to improve attendance and HTs are working with families where there are persistent absences. The attendance policy has been reviewed. KB queried whether staff attendance was monitored and CG agreed that this should also be noted.

Government benchmarking figures are now being received more regularly.

Cooper Parry will no longer provide auditing services, so the MAT accountants suggested Dains where the Stoke office has capacity for this from mid-November. There is no time to re-tender so it was agreed that Dains should be appointed as they are highly recommended; however the cost will be £3k more than expected.

Directors had received quotes for the work on the gate at TH and agreed that this should go ahead with the agreed company; the gate will be fully automated, but PH asked that the links be checked to ensure everything works correctly.

The results of the condition (premises) surveys on the schools have been received and will be presented to Directors at the next meeting.

CG and JBo have been working on the Risk Register and certain items have been added.

The new appointment of the SENDCO was welcomed by CG, who said it was a real step forward for the Trust.

CG had been visited by the Director of Delivery from the office of the Regional School Commissioner, and CG was pleased to receive 5 days' support from them on governance; she was grateful to CHo for his help with this.

CG finished by saying that a new name is needed for the LAG and asked Directors to consider this.

7. **Finance** - SCo started by saying the budget 22/23 was much as agreed at the last meeting, but staffing changes have meant some amendments; however a balanced budget will still be presented. She talked through Period 9 Management Accounts up to the end of May, showing a net surplus of just under £16k. AS, TH and RC are showing a deficit and SM a large surplus. The full-year projected surplus is £21k which is ahead of budget. Income overall is £85k more than budgeted, due to e.g. GAG income, funding for heat decarbonisation and the national tutoring programme and IT money for TH. Other income is increased Care Club income, donations and an insurance claim for maternity leave. Staffing costs are under budget as a teacher left, but TA costs are over budget to cover extra one-to-one support. Non-staff costs are over budget by £88k, but income has been

received to compensate for this. There have been some exceptional items of expenditure, e.g. drainage work and work on lighting and decorating at TH. Education resources are £24k over budget, but this is being closely monitored by HTs: there has been spending on sports provision by outside providers, as the previous sports teacher is now teaching at TH, and spending on music provision. It may be the case that the amount set, based on spending during Covid, was less than required for normal full-time schooling. ICT costs are £15k over budget. There is a capital balance of £36k. SCo was pleased to report that the CIF bid for funding for the roof at SM has been successful and £44k will be provided. Current reserves are £281k.

The cash flow balance at the end of May was £399k but this is expected to dip slightly.

SCo was thanked for her report.

With regard to the KPIs, KB asked why TH had a lower average teacher cost; *confidential*. CBS asked whether a date for the heat decarbonisation programme had been arranged, but this was not yet arranged; he recommended that solar panels be considered as part of the roofing project at SM.

8. **Policy Updates** - CBS pointed out that there was still a problem in identifying where edits have been made and CG will discuss this with JBo. KB queried the reference to 'The Key' in the ECT policy and CG explained that this was a website link to the company involved. HB mentioned that the Behaviour Policy still referred to Paul Lovern and CG confirmed that this would be changed. The following policies had been reviewed by Directors and were ratified:  
Charges & Remissions, DAA, E Safety, ECT, Employee Handbook, Lettings (updated)
9. **Cyber Security Review** - CG reported that there had been a positive penetration test and PH confirmed this, saying that two schools were perfect and there were issues of configuration and the firewall at the other two schools; in addition Staffs Tech were advised to update and change their passwords more regularly. The Action Plan will be completed by JBo.  
PH will look at the Cyber Skills Audit and CG expressed her thanks to PH for all his help and support with interviewing people for the Wifi contract. Two companies met the requirements of the need to have Wifi across the Trust, with a link to Google so that one set of credentials would be required. The cost of these improvements has risen from £12k to £18k and may rise further, but funding has been received for IT improvements at TH.  
The back-up of data has been arranged with Staffs Tech and PH stressed the importance of them keeping TSSMAT data separate and secure.
10. **Safeguarding** - There was nothing to report
11. **Health & Safety** - There was nothing to report.
12. **Any Other Business** - There was no other business.

**Dates of meetings 2021-2022:**

Directors

8<sup>th</sup> July 2022

LAG

20<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (RC) at 4.30pm

Signed.....

Colin Hopkins, Chair of Members

Date .....

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>
6	Send a report to CG/JBo on mobile phone coverage at TH	PH	8/7/22
6	Consider Directors' roles	Directors	8/7/22
6	Check links with automatic gates	CG/JBo	8/7/22
6	Consider new name for LAG	Directors	8/7/22
7	Consider solar panels at SM	Sco	8/7/22
8	Identify edits in policy reviews	CG/JBo	8/7/22
9	Complete Cyber Security Action Plan and inform Staffs Tech about updating passwords	JBo/PH	8/7/22