



Local Governing Board to The Learning Alliance

KNUTSFORD ACADEMY LGB
Online Meeting via Microsoft Teams
MINUTES – Part I



Date: 21st September 2021 at 4pm

Present:

Mrs C Millson (Chair)
Mr D McGarvey (Vice Chair)
Mr R Taylor (RT)
Mrs J Padget (JP)
Mrs V Young (VY)

Absent: Mr D Baxendale
Mr P Woodhouse

In attendance:

Mr J Whittaker – Headteacher
Mrs K Key – Deputy Headteacher (KKY)
Mr C Leigh – Assistant Headteacher (CLH)
Mrs H Weigh – Assistant Headteacher (HWH)
Mrs A Thatcher – Assistant Headteacher (ATR)
Mrs N Phillips– TLA Director of Governance (NP)

Clerk: Mrs N Phillips

1. **Welcome, Apologies and confirmation of quoracy** - The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. This was a blended meeting and JP was in attendance remotely. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Baxendale and Mr Woodhouse; the meeting was quorate. Mr Twambley, COO of TLA had also sent apologies.
2. **Declarations of Interest** - There were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interest.
3. **Minutes of the meeting and matters arising:**
The minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2021 were approved subject to the following amendments:
 - Mrs Julia Padget was present at the meeting and needs to be recorded as such.
 - Correction of spelling of Mr Tom de Jong.
 Under matters arising the Chair wished to raise 3 matters:
 - 3.1. The Chair asked Mr Whittaker if any Heads’ Health and Safety training had been put in place. Mr Whittaker reported that he had not yet heard, but it was early in the school term.
 - 3.2. The Chair asked for some feedback from the trust board regarding the KA LGB request to amalgamate Health & Safety contractual arrangements as it was phenomenally expensive. The clerk reported that the Trust Board had undertaken to review Health & Safety costs across the trust board. There was not currently a timeline for this.
 - 3.3. The Chair noted KA LGB’s continued requests (to the trust) for regular finance information and for details of the risk register. The Chair asked the Headteacher to confirm if he had received any reports since the last meeting. It was reported that he had not, but he had had meetings to discuss finance with the COO. The Clerk reported that the Trust Risk Register will be placed on governor hub. (*Since the meeting, this is now placed in the resources section*). It was further reported that the Trust was undertaking a review of the structure of shared services, particularly within the area of finance which should facilitate future regular reporting. Governors were however concerned, as this had been promised last year, but not materialised. The Chair acknowledged that finance was not a delegated responsibility to the LGB, but that it would be difficult to know if governors could support the Head’s school improvement plans, without having any kind of overview of the financial position. The Chair also expressed concern of the Head’s ability to effectively run the school if he was not being provided with monthly or regular financial updates. It was agreed to discuss this matter further under item 6.
4. **LGB Composition & Governance Matters** - The Chair noted that there was currently upto 2 vacancies on the LGB. The review of the skills’ audit had suggested that a governor from the secondary education sector may be beneficial. The Chair asked governors if they wanted to make any recommendations to her know asap.

- 5. Matters for the Trust Board to share with the LGB** – The Clerk reported that the Trust Board had not yet met this term. At the end of last term, Trustees wished to thank all governors for their continued hard work and particularly so during the covid crisis and ever changing and ongoing situations the school's and governors were needing to react to.
- 6. Finance Update** – The Chair noted that the COO had sent apologies as he was attending another school's LGB this evening. NP reported that the process of finalising the 2020-2021 accounts was underway and that currently there is expected to be a surplus of approximately £150K for the year. This is much better than the originally set budget – which was a deficit of £114K. The key reason for the change was that the Studio Headteacher and his pa had moved to The Oaks Academy early in the year, producing salary savings. In addition to this, there were other staff vacancies that had not been filled due to the school being partially closed due to covid. Also, more income had been received through various covid grants.
- 6.1 **A governor asked if the Leisure Centre was still paid at the same rates.** It was reported that for 2020-2021 it had been, but that the joint use deal was due to come to an end in March 2022. KA would then have to pay on a flexible access basis.
- 6.2 **A governor asked if the Head knew he had such a surplus for the year and asked if he had been aware of the surplus at an earlier point, might he had been able to invest in a better provision for better outcomes for the current students.** The Head explained that he had been made aware there was likely to be some surplus this year, but had only found out today (at this meeting) that it would amount to this much.
- 6.3 **A governor asked if the school needed more TA's to meet the requirements of the SEND students.** It was reported that a new SENCO had been appointed (starting this September) and she would review the provision for the SEND students.
- 6.4 **A governor asked if the surplus was ring-fenced for Knutsford Academy and whether it might be clawed back by the Trust.** It was reported that the surplus would be added to KA's reserves, for the use of KA in future – this was the policy of TLA.
- 6.5 **A governor asked if there was confidence that the trust would provide regular finance reports this year** – it was reported that the Trust was now required to do a regular financial return to the ESFA and therefore it was very likely that the reports would come this year. Governors discussed the need to challenge, support and hold the Headteacher to account and agreed that the Head would not be able to discharge his duties, nor would they be able to support any decisions without regular financial information. **Action:** For this reason, it was agreed that the Chair would write to the CEO to express concern and stress the importance of receiving this information from central services.
- 7. School Risk Register** – as discussed under item 3.3 it was reported that the trust risk register would be placed on governor hub. **Action:** It was agreed that the Chair would request clarity from the CEO as to responsibility of the risk register at school level – as although the trust have promised it throughout last year, it had still not materialised.
- 8. Strategic Vision:**
- 8.1 School Performance**
- GCSE: Results were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). 153 students were entered for GCSE. Total progress 8 score was 0.35 with English 92.2% at level 5 or above and 98.7% at level 4 and above. For Maths 77.8% were level 5 or above and 90.2% were level 4 or above.
- A governor asked why there was a lower figure (77.8%) in maths compared to 92.2% in English**
The Headteacher noted that these grades hadn't been moderated and the data is therefore more volatile than normal. As with all schools, this data will not be published and/or used by inspectors. There is a gap nationally between English and Maths, and governors were shown data from 2019 (last published data) showing (positively) how good maths and English are at Knutsford compared to other schools locally.
- A governor asked if the school was confident that the students were getting the teaching they needed to get the best outcomes in maths.** The Headteacher confirmed that there was no reason or data to show anything other than that teaching is strong in maths. A slide showing data in 2019 showed maths and English at KA well ahead of other secondary schools in Cheshire East.

A governor asked about the uptake in Maths vs English at A Level, and whether there was a gender imbalance across the subjects– it was reported that there is generally a higher uptake in Maths than English. There were no specific gender imbalances in these subjects.

A governor asked if there were any subjects that were considered to be weak. The Head said there were no weak subjects, but there is room for growth in some subjects.

A-Level: Grades were higher than prior years – but the jeopardy of taking the exams and having a ‘bad day’ or not having done enough revision, was removed with the TAGs process, so this was to be expected. There were 231 awarded grades, 43.9% were A*-A, 74.5% A*-B, 92.9% A*-C and 100% were A*-E. There were some amazing students in the Year 13 cohort and they got the grades they deserved.

A governor asked if any appeals had been lodged. It was reported there had been two that had been upheld, one was an admin error and one was a selection of evidence error.

Student Numbers: Currently 1316 on roll an increase from 1273 last academic year. Year 7 is now capped at 220 to manage class sizes and school growth effectively. Governors discussed the gender balance noting that in Yr 13 there were 26 males to 57 females. There was no particular reason for this –in the Studio, there were more males – but this was expected as the Football Academy is mostly male.

8.2 Self-Evaluation Form – The SEF received with the agenda was noted

8.3 School Improvement Priorities - Mr Whittaker introduced Assistant Headteachers Hazel Weigh (HWH) and Alex Thatcher (ATR) to the governors explaining that ATR had been appointed earlier in the year from a field of over 100 candidates. The three school improvement priorities for Knutsford Academy for the year are:

1. Developing teaching and learning and refining the academic curriculum
2. Developing effective behaviours and skill for school and the wider community
3. Developing the personal development curriculum

Developing teaching and learning and refining the academic curriculum: KKY is the lead on this and reported the following:

- Focus on delivery has led to the creation of a ‘teaching and learning team’, led by KKY and made up of the following:
 - Head of Languages – leading on the ‘The Knutsford Way’ a more prescriptive way of teaching and will come to the next meeting to discuss this further.
 - Head of English is leading on coaching staff to deliver lessons in a more consistent way.
 - There are x2 learning outside the classroom members of the team (BFS & RWT) –one to focus on homework and out of lesson provision and one to focus on learning through academic enrichment.
 - Research Group (RBK) will be launching an online reading group with staff and conducting training
 - Making Learning Stick (CMS) effectively helping students to organise themselves and learn how to revise.
 - Literacy (VLY) will focus on improving consistency approach to raising literacy standards across all faculties.
- The team are highly motivated, driven and keen to drive improvement across teaching and learning.
- KKY discussed some of the new processes that are in place, explaining how regular low stakes testing helps make learning stick. This helps the teachers identify gaps in learning.

Developing effective behaviours and skills for school and the wider community: HWH is the lead on this explained that there are three areas of focus which are as follows:

- i. Raising Standards – there has been much work done with staff and students to establish and embed the expected level of conduct and behaviour – all students understand the expectations and standard required – which is at a level of excellent.
- ii. A member of staff has been employed to promote ‘recognition and rewards’. Alongside HWH, this member of staff is responsible with recognising and promoting the most hard-working students so

they get the recognition they deserve. Part of this role involves improving the school's profile within the local community – links with local business partners have already been established and many prizes have been donated to the recognition and rewards programme. These prizes should give the students small incentives to achieve merits through hard work.

iii. Focus on the learners who perhaps do not have support outside of the classroom. These 'high priority behaviour needs' will receive earlier support and greater intervention so that the school can support and guide these students to achieve better outcomes.

8.4 **A governor asked if this was a new initiative and how students were responding so far this year.** HWH reported that so far it is going well, uniform looks smart, generally students are following rules and instructions. Students like the idea of rewards and feel proud. Local businesses have donated a range of rewards such as restaurant vouchers, amazon vouchers and even an ipad.

8.5 **A governor noted that forging relationships with local businesses was a positive move and may help with work experience and work opportunities.** HWH noted there had been much enthusiasm for involvement from the local businesses.

8.6 **A governor asked if there was any student input into this initiative** – it was noted that there was, and this was being further developed by ATR as part of priority 3.

8.7 **A governor asked if there had been any time for feedback from parents and students.** HWH reported that so far, the feedback had been extremely positive, with students (and their parents) feeling proud of achievements. Some of the coding has been changed and there is now an ability for a teacher to award a 'legend of the lesson' – students like and are aspiring to gain this.

Developing the personal development curriculum – ATR explained to governors that she had had a good start and a warm welcome to her new role at KA and was very impressed with the behaviour and standards already embedded in the school. For this priority there were three strands:

- i. Personal development in the curriculum - will be delivered mostly through PHSE, SMSC and tutor time. Work is ongoing to identify gaps across all subjects and then will be embedded in lessons. The student voice is being developed through a new structure of the school council – there will be a democratic voting process for this.
- ii. Personal development in terms of career – working with the careers' adviser, to ensure there is a robust framework for development of awareness and aspirations of careers from Yr7 through to Yr 13
- iii. Personal development in enrichment activities – a review of participation and demographics is underway vs an audit of what is available. This will enable analysis and encourage wider depth of offer and greater participation.

8.8 **A governor asked if support would be given to pupil premium students to encourage enrichment activities.** This was confirmed, and, using the student voice to understand what sort of clubs/extra curricular activities would be popular - would be key to this.

9. **Student Welfare & Safeguarding** – The paper, circulated with the agenda was noted, CLH reported the following:

- the start of this term so far had focused ensuring all staff were up-to-date with annual updates in safeguarding guidance.
- It was noted that the safeguarding team in school had been in touch with all parents of students that were 'children in need', 'child protection' and 'looked after' to ensure a smooth return to school.
- The school has been able to secure links with the local authority Mental Health Support Team. This in turn has led to support from x2 mental health Counsellors meaning that we can now access immediate support for those who need. There will be mental health first aid training for Sixth formers to disseminate across their peers. There will be research and support in the school which is a new initiative for the school.
- Outreach work is underway. CLH and the team are attending the Welcome Café to introduce parenting classes to the local community, and for improved parent/teacher communication; with the intention of leading to stronger support for the students that need it.

- Attendance figures were then discussed. It was noted that attendance figures are quite difficult to interpret due to covid and isolations. It was noted that the Sixth form figures weren't currently correct as there was a problem in the school management information system which was being investigated.
- 9.1 **A governor asked if there were any persistent absentees that were a cause of concern.** CLH reported that the data was only two weeks into the term and so conclusions couldn't really be drawn at this stage. However, there are a number of school refusers at this stage of the term which is unusual, and this will be monitored.
- 9.2 **A governor asked if students who were isolating, but working from home, were marked as absent.** It was reported that there are special covid codes. It was further reported that at the end of last week there were 27 students isolating across the school, which was much lower than at the end of last year.
- 9.3 **A governor asked if the student vaccination programme and process was planned for the school yet.** It was reported that there was currently not a date set, but it was thought that the school would be asked to send a letter to parents, which would have link to a consent form. That would provide a list for the nurses to come in and do the vaccinations.

10. Local Matters

- 10.1 **Leisure Centre** - As reported under the finance item, it was confirmed the current (25year joint use) Leisure Centre deal had come to an end; a year's extension had been requested, but only six months were granted. After this (in March 2022) a flexible access agreement (FAA) will be in place. The main reason for this is the proposed development of the Leisure Centre. The school is in close negotiation and consultation with the group that is running and planning the development of the leisure centre facilities.
- 10.2 **Roof Project** – It was reported that the £1m CIF flat roof project was underway.
- 10.3 **Westfield Drive** – It was reported that the top floor had been developed for use of a flexible training space including for the teacher training TT@K and a space for the shared services team. In addition, it was hoped that there would be opportunity to hire the rooms out as a meeting/training space.
A governor asked how TT@K was progressing this year. It was reported that central services were now providing the personnel to run the TT@K programme. Governors noted that this had been nurtured and grown by Knutsford Academy and hoped it would continue to be a success under the TLA. **A governor asked if KA would still be receiving the revenue/profit from this project.** It was reported that currently the profit had not be allocated to KA. **A governor asked how much of a loss was this to the KA bottom line** – it was reported that TT@K usually brings approximately £70-£80K income to KA. Governors were concerned that this was substantial and asked if this could be monitored for this year.
- 10.4 **Website** – A new version of the website was due to be released this week.
11. **Policies – Admissions Policy** – It was reported that the admissions code had been updated as at September 2021. The 2021/22 policy had been updated to reflect the changes. At their October meeting, the trust board need to make a decision on how they wish admissions committees to be managed. Following this decision, the 2022/2023 policy can be finalised and will be brought to the next meeting.
12. **LGB Training** – the clerk reported that TLA had bought into the NGA training module – this will shortly be rolled out to all governors. The trust will recommend which modules to take. In addition to this there will be some bespoke training for governors around exclusions, admissions and admission appeals.
13. **Matters to Share with the Trust Board** – The LGB felt the key matter of importance was that of regular finance information. The LGB hope the promise of regular financial information (including capital monies) comes through to the LGB, but more importantly to the Headteacher, so that he has the confidence to make financial decisions associated with effectively running the school and its future planning.
14. **Any other business** – there was no other business

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 4pm

Meeting Closed 6.15pm