



## MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

**15 September 2020, 1.00 a.m.**

*Hybrid meeting with physical and virtual attendance*

### Part A Public

Item	Subject	Actions
	<p><b>Trustees present</b> (<i>V = virtual attendance</i>):</p> <p>Tom Briant-Evans (TBE) V  Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair  Nick Lake (NL)  Keith Tipler (KT) V  John Whetter (JW) V</p> <p><i>Also present:</i></p> <p>Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Secretary V  Mike England (ME) – Finance Director  Simon Hague (SE) – CEO  Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education</p>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies and Welcome</b>	
1.1	Apologies: none.	
1.2	MH confirmed Brett Elliott had stepped down as a Trustee but was still willing to help the Trust if requested.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Conflicts of Interest:</b> no additional interests were declared.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Previous minutes</b> of the 14 July 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters arising / Action Tracker</b>	
4.1	19.09 Admission arrangements - defer to next year.	
4.2	19.10 Bridge MAT – close.	
4.3	19.12 Strategy meeting – incorporate into October Board meeting.	SH/MH
4.4	19.14 Board skills review - on hold pending recruitment discussion and plans.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Delegated Decisions since last meeting</b>	
5.1	Trustees acknowledged the Notes from Trust Leaders' meetings held since the 16 <sup>th</sup> July and the delegated decision taken on 27 <sup>th</sup> August to approve the plans to re-open all schools.	
<b>6</b>	<b>CEO's report / Covid response</b>	
6.1	<p>One week in and our operational plans 'landed well'. Under constant review as each school has some challenges to make their plan work.</p> <p>Yesterday lots of parents looking for leadership as lots of children with coughs and colds. We refined guidance for Heads who now direct parents to phone 119 which they are finding very helpful.</p> <p>Lack of testing an issue.</p>	

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	SH highlighted that in the risk assessments risk ratings have deliberately been left high as so difficult to say we can mitigate all the scenarios...but confirmed he had no concerns with all the measures put in place.	
6.2	<p><i>Q: Trustees noted how the risk assessment underlines things are not back to normal and asked are schools having to readjust plans for teaching?</i></p> <p>TL reported that children have come back 'desperate to learn' and 'hungry for knowledge' so some contingency arrangements have not been needed.</p> <p><i>Q: Are any staff working from home?</i></p> <p>One teacher who is in the clinically highly vulnerable category is doing remote teaching but has two TAs physically supervising her class.</p>	
6.3	<p>Lanner roof.</p> <p>CIF bid granted in second round. Work well on way for completion and expected to finish by end of this month.</p> <p>SH and Trustees passed on their thanks to the Property Manager for a successful project.</p> <p>Expansion.</p> <p>Governors at a standalone academy have formally invited SH and TL to present to them.</p>	
6.4/5	Confidential items	
<b>7</b>	<b>Director of Education report</b>	
7.1	<p>Attendance.</p> <p>Very high first few days then children started developing colds and coughs and has dipped to 10-15% absence across every school.</p> <p>Managing their education will be really challenging whilst maintaining classroom teaching for every bubble as well. We need to get creative here and a teacher-led working group is about to start work on this.</p> <p><i>Q: Do we have an online alternative offer?</i></p> <p>Not yet as teachers all in the classroom... so closing a class / bubble will be easier as teacher will be at home too.</p> <p>Looking at 3 day packs which can be sent home / posted but they may not be linked to lessons their classmates are having in school.</p>	
7.2	<p>Catchup funding.</p> <p>We are using helpful guidance from EEF to decide how best to use this. It suggests a three-tier approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Whole class teaching is best approach – and cost-effective</li> <li>2. Individual or small group support</li> <li>3. External / IT solutions</li> </ol> <p>Heads will take the lead on deciding what is best for their school.</p>	
7.3	<p>Assessments.</p> <p>All schools have started on this with the aim to having all data on Target Tracker by the end of the month.</p>	

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	<p>Home Education.</p> <p>We now have 12 families across 7 schools who have chosen to take their children out of school. Figure may have been higher but once parents understand their child comes off roll (so cannot automatically return in the future) and there is no further input from the school many decided to keep their child in school.</p> <p>Heads been very clear about following correct procedures and we are doing our best to 'keep the door open'.</p>	
7.4	<p>Ofsted.</p> <p>Trustees noted the summary outline of what Ofsted have announced as their approach for this term. SH added it is a fluid situation with some inspectors not happy with going into schools so it may change.</p> <p><i>Q: How likely is it we will get a visit?</i></p> <p>Entirely possible as it will be based on random sampling.</p>	
8	Confidential item	
9	<b>Financial procedures update</b>	
9.1	<p>SH explained that section 26.6 (Charge cards) had been updated again since the version issued with the agenda.</p> <p>Expenditure limits are also being reviewed and may change and need to account for the cumulative total of multiple small transactions.</p> <p>Agreed Audit Committee to review and recommend approval / amendment to full Board.</p>	KT/SH
10	<b>Finance update</b>	
10.1	<p>Budget outturn 2019.20 update.</p> <p>ME explained this was based on July outturn report. He proposed not to issue a trial balance to the auditors until August outturn completed and numbers finalised at a meeting on 30 September. NL and SH both supported this approach.</p> <p>Current projected surplus may reduce as still receiving invoices from schools who have now been given 16/9 as the cutoff date.</p> <p>TL explained this was a common issue when deliveries were received some time after placing order, and also Covid had clearly had an impact on the many smaller suppliers used by the Trust.</p> <p>Overall it was a good performance in a difficult year but there are areas to improve upon including staffing and supply costs.</p> <p>Projected reserves of £2.3m so important to find the best investment solution and ensure these are used efficiently.</p>	
10.2	<p>Trustees noted the delay in completing August outturn.</p> <p>Agreed to add formal review of benchmarking data to a future meeting – both internal and external.</p> <p>ME suggested this would be a good lead-in to the budget setting process and proposed the spring term as this is when external auditors tend to issue their benchmarking reports.</p>	JA

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10.3	<p>External Audit update.</p> <p>ME confirmed that to date had been a positive experience and less intensive work for finance team.</p> <p>Auditors will complete their work virtually and ME had no concerns over meeting their timetable.</p>	
10.4	<p>Catering contract.</p> <p>Rigorous process used external consultants and included presentations from the three shortlisted suppliers.</p> <p>Schools reported some early issues with contract but provider responding promptly.</p> <p>NL stressed the Trust followed latest Covid guidance from the government in drawing up the criteria for awarding the contract – notably that of minimising risk by not switching supplier unnecessarily.</p> <p>TUPE process imminent for staff in four schools – timeline to be agreed tomorrow.</p>	
10.5	<p>Procurement update.</p> <p>Banking – need to look at alternative to Lloyds.</p> <p>Stationery – time to review current contract.</p> <p>LED lighting – getting quotes from suppliers.</p> <p>ME stressed the need to scrutinise reported savings of 30-50% as this could equate to over £100K for the Trust so will use external consultants to assist with this. Potentially will be supported by grants or interest-free loans. ME hopes to bring final proposal to December board.</p> <p>Trustees noted this was another opportunity to divert savings back into the centre.</p> <p>SH confirmed procurement / suppliers is a standing item at weekly Heads meetings.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Governance</b>	
11.1	Trustees noted the letter ESFA letter of July 2020 and the new requirement for carbon reporting from next year.	
11.2	<p>Recruitment / Parent Trustee option.</p> <p>MH reminded Trustees that the Board has currently reduced to five so recruitment is urgent.</p> <p>Meeting discussed the briefing note on the pros and cons of switching to elected parent trustees. There was a consensus not to pursue this for a variety of reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• moves away from skills-based appointments</li> <li>• risk of an individual wanting to push a particular agenda</li> <li>• can still recruit parents as trustees</li> </ul> <p>Agreed to prioritise a recruitment drive for governance at all levels of the Trust – in particular targeting existing local governors and the wider parental body.</p>	MH
11.3	<p>Delegated Decision subgroup - future arrangements.</p> <p>Agreed to retain upto next Board meeting as a minimum. Frequency of update meetings to be reviewed at their next meeting.</p> <p>On behalf of the Members JW thanked SH and MH for sharing information and keeping them updated.</p>	

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11.4	Meeting dates – spring / summer terms. JA to progress via email.	JA
<b>12</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
12.1	Format for meetings. Trustees agreed the 'hybrid' format for today had worked well and could be repeated. Agreed that for the time being LGB meetings should be virtual only.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Items for next agenda</b>	
13.1	Budget outturn update. Strategy session.	
13.2	Future items agreed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding – December Board</li> <li>• Complaints Policy – via email / delegated decision</li> <li>• Education update – December Board</li> </ul>	SH/KT SH/JA TL/JW
<b>14</b>	<b>Agree Confidential items</b>	
14.1	Draft Trust plan / discussion.	
	<i>Meeting finished at 3.19</i>	

<b>Signed</b>	<b>Date</b>
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