

CBAT BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 11th February at 6:00pm at Marling School

Present: Nigel Riglar (Chair), Graham Ayre, Debbie Bird, John Gilbert, Emma Gray (Finance Director), Stuart Wilson (Chief Executive Officer).

In Attendance: David Dale (Clerk).

1. Apologies received and accepted:

None.

2. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new declarations.

3. Minutes of the meeting of 27th November 2019

It was **proposed** by JG **seconded** by DB, that these be approved and signed, to be published on the Trust's website. This was **agreed** unanimously.

4. Action point checklist

All actions ongoing or completed.

With reference to action CBAT 137 (CWJS report), Trustees asked about how the concerns with KS1 data are being raised. The CEO reported that this matter is mentioned in the Headteacher's report (item 9 below) and will be raised with the local authority. He added that the general issue is one that Ofsted are aware of and will take into account at inspections.

With reference to action CBAT 138 (School Resource Management self-assessment), the FD reported that she had established that there is no mechanism for revising answers once the self-assessment has been submitted, but that the question about the role of the CEO will be reviewed next year when the self-assessment is done again.

5. Matters arising

In addition to the matters raised under item 4 above, the CEO reported that with reference to item 17 of the minutes the question of the eligibility of a person to stand for election as a parent governor at CWJS had been resolved, they had stood as a candidate in the recent election but not been successful.

6. Trustee appointments and resignations

The Chair reported that Nathan Wolstenholme had submitted his resignation on 13th January 2020, Trustees agreed to accept this with effect from today's date. It was noted that the Chair and CEO had already written to NW to thank him for his contribution to the Trust and to BPS.

The Chair reported that Ben Eagle's personal circumstances had not changed and that he too had submitted his resignation on 11th February 2020 to take effect at a date to be agreed with the Chair. **Action: Chair** to write to BE to thank him and to confirm the effective date.

The CEO reported that recruitment of new Trustees is continuing, he had today met one potential candidate with strong skills in teaching and learning, and knowledge of inspection. He is due to meet another potential candidate later in the week, someone with specialist knowledge of audit and risk. He reported that Academy Ambassadors still had a moratorium on Trustee recruitment in the South West, and that he would be raising this with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Trustees were pleased to hear that strong candidates were coming forward, and had a detailed discussion about the best way of ensuring that the Board has a good balance of skills. They noted that parents from the schools has been advised of Trustee vacancies via newsletters in December and by the SDBs. They agreed that it would also be desirable to have some Trustees who were not connected with any of the schools. The CEO and FD noted that they would ask Bishop Fleming and Gloucestershire College for suggestions of other potential candidates.

Action: CEO and FD to follow up opportunities as discussed.

In respect of the Trust's Audit and Risk Committee, the terms of reference for which were agreed by the Board in September 2019, it was agreed that as the recruitment of additional Trustees was taking longer than expected it was important that the Committee should be established as soon as possible. It was **proposed** by JG, and **seconded** by NR, that GA and DB would be the Trustee members of the Audit and Risk Committee. This was **agreed** unanimously. DB indicated that her appointment would be on an interim basis until additional Trustees were in post. The CEO said that he will contact potential candidates to be the non-Trustee member of the Committee, with a view to arranging the first meeting of the Committee within the next six weeks. **Action: CEO** to contact potential candidates.

7. Trust growth opportunities

The CEO updated Trustees on the various growth opportunities for the Trust that were currently being explored. He reported that, in respect of possible opportunities to sponsor Church of England (C of E) schools, further constructive discussions had been held with the Diocesan Director of Education, and the outcomes reflected in the draft letter shared with Trustees. In response to questions from Trustees, the CEO confirmed that the Diocese is happy to accept the Trust's proposed amendment to the model Minority Memorandum and Articles, article 50C, for a maximum of 49% church Trustees (as advised at the Board's last meeting), and that the Trust go through the legal process of adopting the new Articles at the same time as converting or sponsoring its first church school. **Action: CEO** to write to the Diocese, as proposed.

The Chair suggested that when the new Articles are adopted, the Trust should undertake a governance review to ensure that all arrangements are fit for purpose. This would allow the Board to consider, amongst other things, whether the CEO should be the only employee who is also a Trustee.

In respect of secondary school need in Gloucester, the CEO reported that following the Trust's submission of a bid to sponsor a new school in the south of the city under the DfE's wave 14 programme, he and others had done a mock interview with the New Schools Network to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the bid. The Chair noted that even if the prospects for DfE funding in Gloucestershire are not positive, the local authority will still need to provide a school in the south of the city and the Trust should be ready to talk to the local authority in due course.

The CEO added that he would continue to monitor the growth opportunities locally and if any schools were to go into Special Measures, and would continue to talk to the Regional Schools Commissioner about sponsorship and conversions.

8. Schools updates (interim reports)

The CEO presented Headteachers' interim reports for the three schools.

BPS – Trustees asked about the resignation of the Deputy Headteacher. The CEO said that this had followed an extended period of sickness absence, and that an advert is ready to go out for a replacement to be in post by September. He also drew attention to the results of the Parents Survey carried out in the autumn which showed high levels of satisfaction, and noted that the lower figure for SEND support may in part reflect a short period without a permanent SENCO.

CWJS – Trustees noted that staffing is currently a challenge, with the school seeking maternity cover staff for key positions. Trustees noted that afternoon intervention sessions for some children were apparently counterproductive but that this is being addressed by the SLT.

MS – no issues raised.

9. Staff exit questionnaire

The CEO explained that in response to a Trustee's suggestion, he had obtained a model staff exit questionnaire from the HR advisers and made some minor changes to it. He recommended that it be adopted for use in all the schools. Trustees discussed this, and suggested some minor amendments to the covering letter to reflect the fact that staff members leaving the schools already receive a personalised letter acknowledging their resignation and thanking them for their contribution. It was agreed that the exit questionnaire should be implemented as recommended.

10. Health, safety and wellbeing

The FD reported that the schools had implemented DfE advice on precautionary measures in respect of the coronavirus risk, including advice to parents and posters in schools.

A member of staff at BPS had received medical attention following a fall, this has been recorded and reported as required. There had been some minor damage to premises during the recent storm. Planned building work at BPS is due to start on 17th February and is expected to last for three weeks.

11. Finance

(i) Budget monitoring

The FD reported on budget actuals for each of the three academy schools for the period to the end of December (month 4). She noted £40k extra income from the DfE for growth funding at MS 6th Form. She noted that supply staff costs were still high, as discussed at the last meeting, and being monitored closely. In response to questions, she explained the MAT average benchmark column in the Trust Metrics.

The FD also provided Trustees with the school resource management self-assessment dashboard for the three schools. It was noted that some outcomes at BPS and CWJS are inadequate or well below average, the CEO said that these should improve this year.

On the balance sheet, Trustees noted the difference between the figures for total fixed assets and net assets, due to the £2.2m LGPS Pension Creditor entry although it is not expected that this will have to be repaid, as discussed with the independent auditor at the Board's last meeting.

(ii) Berkeley Primary School S106 funds

The FD reported on the c£500k S106 income from local housing developments. BPS may need an extra classroom, any proposal will come back to the Board. In response to questions from Trustees, she explained that although there is no site development plan as such there is space for expansion, and no temporary classrooms are currently being used.

(iii) Cam Woodfield Junior School multi-use games area

CWJS has available capital funds from accrued sports grant (must be spent on sports provision) and S106 income. The Headteacher is keen to increase external play space and is proposing a MUGA with an AstroTurf surface. Trustees asked questions about the cost of the games area and fencing for it, and whether any loan or contribution from the Trust would be needed. The CEO advised that any such request would come back to the Board.

12. Complaints

The CEO reported the complainants of the longstanding complaint at BPS not upheld at Stage 3 have been back in contact. They have said that the local authority have upheld part of their complaint against the LA and have said they are still pursuing some elements of their complaint against BPS. Trustees noted this information.

13. Allocating a Trustee to each school

Following the discussion at the last Board meeting, the CEO reported that he had discussed the proposal with the schools and that SDBs had been supportive. It would be important to ensure that the new role did not create a large additional demand on Headteachers' capacity. In practical terms, the role would be limited to two school visits a year, to discuss the SEF with the Headteacher, to attend one SDB meeting as an observer and to read the minutes of the other meetings, and to review the Headteachers' reports before they are submitted to Trustees.

It was agreed that DB would be the link Trustee for Marling School; one of the new Trustees with primary education experience would link with CWJS; and that a BPS link would be identified once Trustees recruitment had been completed.

14. School Development Boards – minutes of last meetings

The minutes of the following meetings were received and noted:

- Berkeley Primary School 4th December 2019. Trustees noted the appointment of Andrew Rome as parent governor at BPS and welcomed him to his new role.
- Cam Woodfield Junior School 2nd December 2019.
- Marling School 4th November 2019 and 9th December 2019. Trustees noted that (i) Andy Fellows had resigned from the SDB on 18th October, and (ii) Ian Mudge's term of office as parent governor had ended on 4th November and although he had then been reappointed as a co-opted governor he had since resigned. Trustees thanked them for their valuable contributions.

Trustees agreed that in future the Chair should write a welcome letter to all new governors.

Action: Chair to write to the new governor at BPS.

15. SDB recommendations for consideration in line with Scheme of Delegation

None.

16. Trust policies

The Clerk reported that the Teachers' Pay Policy 2019/20 is currently out to consultation with staff and trade unions, closing date 24th February. He reported that comments had been received from two Teaching Assistants at MS who felt that TAs across the Trust's schools should also be paid at the same rate. These written comments were shared with Trustees. Trustees discussed the comments and asked about the roles involved. The FD indicated that TA roles are different in primary schools, involving a greater personal care role. She said that there would at some point be a job evaluation exercise for all non-teaching roles in the Trust, but the HR provider is advising that it is not opportune to do so now.

Trustees agreed to respond in writing to the TAs' comments, thanking them for their response and for their work and dedication. **Action: Chair** to write to the two TAs, reflecting the discussion here.

17. Trustees' decisions under Scheme of Delegation since last meeting

Trustees noted their decision taken via email on 11th December 2019 to accept the recommendation of the Marling School SDB approve the appointment of Muir Mathieson as Chair of the SDB.

18. Any other business

- (i) It was reported that some Trustees are having difficulty accessing or printing documents for Board meetings as shared via MS Teams. It was requested that the Clerk provide some additional advice and support.
- (ii) Confidential item on the Finance Director's pay (separate confidential minute below).

19. Risk register

The FD reported that there were no changes in the status of the key risks as reported and discussed at the last meeting. **Action: FD** to circulate updated risk register.

Trustees had a wide-ranging discussion about the potential risks facing the Trust, including fundamental risks around pupil numbers/income, safeguarding, and insurance claims. There was also discussion about whether having the FD on the Board might be a risk, and Trustees asked if this is common practice. The CEO said that this is considered good practice in the business world, and that some other MATs have the FD on the Board. It was suggested that the Audit and Risk Committee should advise on the way in which risks are reported to Trustees.

20. Dates of future meetings

- Term 4, week 5 – **Monday 23rd March 2020**
- Term 5, week – **Monday 18th May 2020**
- Term 6, week 6 (w/c 6th July 2020 - tbc)

The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

APPROVED BY TRUSTEES AT BOARD MEETING OF 23rd MARCH 2020 (conference call)