

CBAT BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 18th May 2020 at 2:00pm via videoconference

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

In Attendance: David Dale (Clerk).

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair explained that this meeting was being conducted via videoconference call due to the continued restrictions advised under the current Coronavirus emergency.

2. Apologies received and accepted:

None.

3. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new declarations.

4. Minutes of the meeting of 23rd March 2020

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

5. Action point checklist

All actions ongoing or completed.

6. Matters arising

None.

7. Trustee appointments and resignations

The Clerk reported that there had been no appointments or resignations since the last meeting.

The CEO reported that on Friday 22nd May he and the Chair will be interviewing a candidate who has applied to become a Trustee.

8. Trust growth opportunities

With regard to the Trust's bid to sponsor a new secondary school in the south of Gloucester, the CEO reported that there was little to report since the previous meeting but that it was still hoped to have a decision by the end of summer.

The CEO noted that Ofsted inspections had been postponed in the current circumstances. As inspectors' training would need to be refreshed, it is likely that regular inspections will not restart until January 2021.

9. School closures and temporary provision

The CEO updated Trustees on temporary provision at the three schools for priority groups (vulnerable children and children of key workers) since 23rd March. He referred to the three reports circulated, and highlighted some key points.

He reported that following the Prime Minister's statement on 10th May, the DfE had issued guidance on 11th May asking that in the week commencing 1st June primary schools welcome back children in reception, year 1 and year 6; and secondary schools begin some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils, although not on a full-time basis at this stage. The CEO also briefed Trustees on the additional information circulated, including letters from trade unions and advice from the National Governance Association.

The CEO outlined the work done to date with Headteachers to prepare for extending in-school provision during June. He gave a detailed description of the risk assessments that had been undertaken, identifying risks and mitigating actions with regards to staff, pupils, site management, continuity of learning, communication and governance. As a result, plans had been developed to extend provision at the primary schools from the week commencing 1st June, for Y6 at CWJS and for YR, Y1 and Y6 at BPS, and from the week commencing 15th June at MS. These plans will be reviewed immediately following the publication of updated DfE guidance expected on 28th May.

He explained the main protective measures to be put in place included rotas (so that only some pupils in each year group are in school at any time), 'bubbles' of small groups of pupils, maintaining social distancing as far as possible, being alert to the wellbeing of staff and pupils, and sensitive communication with staff and parents. Risks and decisions made will be recorded. The CEO and Chair will meet Headteachers and Chairs of SDBs on 3rd June to review progress.

Trustees raised a number of questions and challenges including:

- Threat of legal action from one trade union if its members have to return to work before serious health and safety concerns have been resolved by the Government – the CEO advised that he has consulted the Trust's legal advisers and they are preparing a list of frequently asked questions.
- The levels of active trade union membership at the three schools. Primary Headteachers had already met their staff and considered it unlikely that staff would follow trade union advice not to go into school. Staffing ratios would be reviewed daily, as in the case of strike action where some staff were absent. It was noted that the ASCL was more positive about DfE advice than some other trade unions.
- How to operate in bubbles at MS – the CEO advised that it is more complex at MS where we might need greater movement of students around the campus reflecting options at GCSE and A level, so it is not easy to operate 'bubbles'. MS is looking at options to reduce student movements and redesign classrooms to allow social distancing. It is likely that Y10 and Y12 students might only be in school for two days a week initially.
- Home to school transport – this will be a challenge especially at MS where many students travel a long way, and the government is currently advising against using public transport. Possible solutions include a shorter school day.
- The impact of shielding on staff availability – the CEO responded that if some staff are not able to return to school it will further limit the provision available. Current information is that there will be sufficient staff to expand provision in June. There are particular challenges for employees who have caring responsibilities for vulnerable

adults or children who are not in school. The Trust will not want to put staff into untenable positions, but will need to seek HR and legal advice on this matter.

- Staff and parental anxiety about safety and wellbeing – schools will be sensitive to this and address it locally as necessary, Headteachers will want to feel that they have the support of Trustees and Governors to take operational decisions.
- The level of detail in communication to parents. The Chair said that there will be a Trust letter sent to parents at all three schools and this will be shared with Trustees, Headteachers will communicate directly with parents at their school on practical issues including start dates. The primary school Headteachers have already been in contact with parents via letter and video.
- Capacity to continue to support remote learning – the CEO said that staff rotas will ensure that everyone has the capacity to teach in school and remotely. Trustees were concerned that a pragmatic approach is taken so that staff do not have unreasonable pressure.
- Longer term planning – given the uncertainty about the public health situation it will be necessary to plan flexibly for the start of the new school year in September. It is possible that tests and exams will not have returned to normal by 2021 and that an element of teacher assessment may continue.

The Chair summarised by saying that Trustees wanted reassurance that robust plans were in place for opening the primary schools at the beginning of June, including robust risk assessments, and that there would be mechanisms in place to review risks and update actions daily. He felt that this had been provided. Trustees recognise that the situation at MS is more complex, and understand that a later opening date is advisable.

The Chair indicated that Trustees would need a little more time to consider all the information provided to them. He will prepare a detailed recommendation to share with Trustees via email, to formally record the decision to proceed with reopening plans as outlined, subject to any further information becoming available – legal advice and updated DfE guidance. An extraordinary meeting of the Board will be set for 29th May if it is considered necessary to review the decision before 1st June. **Action: Chair** to prepare a resolution to put to Trustees later this week.

Trustees recorded their thanks and appreciation to the CEO, Headteachers, and all staff in the schools, for their efforts in continuing to provide in-school support for priority groups and remote learning and support for other pupils, and asked for this to be communicated to everyone concerned. **Action: CEO** to pass on Trustees' thanks to all staff.

10. Health, safety and wellbeing

The FD did not have any additional health and safety matters to report on. In response to Trustees' questions she confirmed that no one in the Trust's schools, staff or pupils, had died or been hospitalised as a result of the virus. Some staff had been symptomatic but not seriously ill.

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 April (month 8). She shared the outturn report with Trustees on the screen. The report showed that all three schools had spent a little over the amount forecast, but some income had not yet been received. Trustees asked about the financial impact of school closures and the FD indicated that it might be possible to claim DfE grant to cover some lost income (e.g. lettings)

and additional costs (e.g. extraordinary cleaning and premises costs). The CEO reported that the Trust had paid all invoices for exam fees but it may be possible to reclaim some of these costs.

12. School Development Boards – minutes of last meetings

The Clerk referred to the signed minutes of the Cam Woodfield Junior SDB meeting of 13th January 2020, as circulated.

The CEO reported that Marling SDB had met last week and that the minutes of the previous meeting on 3rd February 2020 would be available soon.

Action: Clerk to circulate minutes of these meetings once finalised and signed.

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

None since the last Board meeting, this was noted.

14. Trust policies

The CEO reported that revised policies covering data handling and protection, and responsible use of IT, would be circulated for remote approval in due course. **Action: CEO** to circulate updated policies for approval.

15. Trustees’ decisions under Scheme of Delegation since last meeting

The Clerk reminded Trustees of the five decisions they had taken remotely since the last meeting and said that these had been recorded appropriately.

16. Any other business

- (i) The FD reported on the cancellation of MS school trips (including three overseas trips), and ongoing work to refund parents. Refunds will be paid in the summer term once the Trust has been reimbursed by insurance, but with a quicker turnaround in any cases of hardship.
- (ii) The FD reported that the outcome of six CIF bids (two per school) has been delayed by the ESFA.

17. Risk register

The FD reported that risk assessments and business continuity plans were in place in response to the Coronavirus threat. She briefed Trustees on arrangements for internal assurance. The CEO reported that the recruitment of a Deputy Head at BPS had been postponed until September (to start in January 2021).

18. Dates of future meetings

- A possible meeting on **29th June**, if required, to consider the implications of any significant change in DfE guidance.
- An extra meeting on **9th June at 1.30pm** to consider plans for reopening Marling School.
- The next regular meeting in term 6, week 6 – **Monday 6th July at 4.00pm**.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned at the top left of the page.

6th July 2020