

CBAT BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Trustees' extraordinary meeting held on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 6.30pm via videoconference

Present: John Gilbert (Chair), Graham Ayre, Emma Gray (Finance Director), Barbara Green, Ruth Hollier, Nigel Riglar (from 7.00pm), Stuart Wilson (Chief Executive Officer).

In Attendance: David Dale (Clerk).

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone and explained that this is an extraordinary meeting to consider urgent matters in relation to the reopening of schools next week.

2. Apologies received and accepted:

There were no apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new declarations.

4. School reopening

The CEO briefed Trustees on the latest Government advice published on 22nd February, and on the reopening plans and risk assessments prepared by the Trust's schools. The Department for Education (DfE) operational guidance sets out that from 8th March attendance will be mandatory for all pupils (unless clinically vulnerable or self-isolating), although secondary schools can phase the return during the first week to facilitate testing. Essential control measures must be in place to minimize coronavirus transmission. The recommendation to wear face coverings by secondary pupils is extended to include in classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained, although the government have said this isn't mandatory.

The CEO reported that he has been in regular contact with the Headteachers since the further DfE advice had been published. The risk assessments for the three schools had been shared with Trustees prior to the meeting. The assessments set out the potential hazards of getting or spreading coronavirus in different parts of the school environment, and the control measures in place including classroom plans, one-way movements, site restrictions, hand sanitizing, toilet arrangements, increased cleaning, staggered lunch and break times, and personal protective equipment for staff. He reported that the risk assessment for Marling School had been amended to reflect a discussion with a representative of the National Education Union, and that advice from the National Governance Association (NGA) was consistent with the DfE's operational guidance.

NR joined the meeting at 7.00pm.

The CEO advised that these plans and risk assessments had been considered by the relevant School Development Boards (SDBs) earlier this week, and all three SDBs are now recommending that the Trust approve the plans and that the schools reopen fully from 8th March.

Trustees asked a number of questions about how the arrangements would operate in practice and how they would be monitored to give assurance that the risk assessments were robust, and how the wellbeing of staff and students would be monitored. They asked about the impact on staffing of the

recent Government guidance extending the definition of clinically extremely vulnerable people on the shielding list, the FD reported that only a few members of staff are affected, they are working from home. Trustees asked about staff morale in the approach to reopening, and about arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of risk assessments following reopening.

There was a detailed discussion about the wearing of face coverings by secondary pupils. A number of Trustees were of the opinion that this should be mandatory in order to provide the greatest level of protection to staff and other pupils, this could then be enforced through the usual discipline process including the isolation of any non-wearer. The CEO stated that the language used in the DfE guidance was not very helpful. It says schools **MUST** follow recommendations and it says face coverings are recommended in classrooms. However, Nick Gibb stated clearly on national television that face coverings were not mandatory in the classroom. The CEO has sought legal advice and the school is going to be saying that *“In line with the government’s strong advice, we expect all staff and students will wear face coverings indoors in all situations where social distancing of at least 2 metres is difficult or impossible to maintain. Until Easter that includes when in classrooms”*. The school will also say *“Where exceptions are required, we will work with that student to understand their situation and take appropriate steps, including adjusting seating plans, to mitigate the risk to others while acting at all times in accordance with the government guidance”*. This exception includes students that are not medically exempt but still wish not to wear a face covering. Trustees agreed to accept the CEO’s advice that the school must act in accordance with the DfE guidance and its own legal advice. They hoped that in practice the number of non-wearers would be minimal, and agreed that it would not be constructive to raise the issue with parents unnecessarily.

Following a thorough discussion, it was **proposed** by GA and **seconded** by RH that:

Having discussed government guidance for the reopening of schools, the Headteachers’ reopening plans and risk assessments, and any points raised by the trade unions and the NGA, Trustees are in agreement with the recommendation of the School Development Boards that the Trust’s schools should reopen fully from next Monday, 8th March. Trustees have given detailed consideration to the mitigation actions set out in the risk assessments and believe that these will protect the health and wellbeing of staff, students, and visitors to the schools. This resolution was **agreed** unanimously.

The Trustees expressed their huge thanks to Headteachers and staff for their hard work during lockdown, and for the detailed effort that had gone into the risk assessments and reopening proposals. It was suggested that Headteachers and Chairs of SDBs be invited to attend the first part of the next Trust Board meeting to hear these thanks first hand, and to give Trustees an up to date report on progress with reopening the schools.

5. Any other Business

- i. In response to Trustees’ questions about gaps in pupils’ learning over the last two months, the CEO reported on ongoing assessment work in the primary schools and baseline testing to be conducted soon after reopening: overall, he was pleased with the schools’ ability to continue teaching and learning throughout lockdown. With Marling School, he believed that learning gaps would be able to be closed over time for Years 7 to 9, and that the needs of older pupils, whose examinations had been disrupted, would be determined through assessment and then work to close gaps would commence.
- ii. In respect of the successful bid to sponsor the free school in Gloucester (as advised to Trustees via email on 5th February), the CEO reported that he is due to meet the DfE next week: he is already working on a range of issues including site identification and acquisition, project management, IT and marketing, and consultation on admissions policy.
- iii. The trust was unsuccessful in its bid to lead a Teaching School Hub. This means CETA will no longer be funded as teaching school from September 2021. We will however, be strategic

partners in both of the county's Teaching Hubs and will continue to operate CETA as a source of CPD and ITT in our local area.

- iv. The CEO advised that he, NR and RH are to meet a potential additional Trustee next week.
- v. The CEO advised Trustees about the current situation in respect of administration and business support capacity at the primary schools.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 24th March at 4.30pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. J. [unclear]', written in a cursive style.

24th March 2021