

### Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 at 5:00pm via videoconference

**Present:** Nigel Riglar (Chair), Graham Ayre, John Gilbert, Barbara Green, Ruth Hollier, Judith Taylor, Stuart Wilson (Chief Executive Officer – CEO).

**Apologies:** Debbie Bird

**In Attendance:** Emma Gray (Chief Finance and Operations Officer – CFOO), David Dale (Clerk).

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2. Apologies – DB.

#### 3. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new declarations. The Clerk thanked those Trustees who had completed and returned their declaration of interests 2021/22 forms, and reminded those who have not done so to complete them as soon as possible.

#### 4. Minutes of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021

GA noted that his name was missing – he had been unable to connect remotely and had sent his apologies. With this amendment, Trustees considered the draft minutes of the last meeting and noted that they were an accurate record. It was **proposed** by BG, and **seconded** by JT, that the minutes be approved and signed, to be published on the Trust's website. This was **agreed** unanimously.

#### 5. Action point checklist

The Clerk ran through the actions. Trustees noted that:

- Action 183 (People Strategy) would be covered in today's meeting
- Action 198 (CWJS recovery plan) would be picked up under action 203 (schools' contribution to CBAT funds)
- Actions 202 (schools heat map), 204 and 205 (CEO salary range) have been completed.

**Action:** CFOO to circulate CEO salary details to Trustees.

#### 6. Matters arising - Confidential

The CEO reported that he had written to the Chair to request a flexible working arrangement (0.95 FTE). NR said that he is minded to agree to the request but would first discuss this with the CFOO to confirm his understanding of the Trust's policy, and share the request with the organisational development working group.

**Action:** NR to discuss with CFOO and share with OD working group.

## 7. Decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation

It was noted that Trustees had agreed an extension to the SIMS/ESS software contract (14<sup>th</sup> December), and approved the recommendation from the Marling SDB to appoint Tiegan Bingham-Roberts and Rob May as new Governors (17<sup>th</sup> January).

## 8. Trustee resignations and appointments

There had been no appointments or resignations since the last meeting. The CEO reported that he, NR and JG are to interview a candidate on 4<sup>th</sup> February.

## 9. Headteachers' reports

The CEO presented the reports for the period December 2021 – January 2022 and said that he had been through them with the relevant Link Trustees.

Cam Woodfield Junior School – the CEO reported on the progress of Early Career Teachers and noted that this is now a two-year programme that is challenging for the ECTs, their mentors and the school. This may limit the capacity of small schools to support a number of ECTs at any time. He noted that the school now has broadband installed after a lengthy wait for the contractor. Faye Heming has led a deep dive on early reading and found good practice as well as making some recommendations for improvement.

The CEO shared his screen to display additional Insight data on pupil progress in reading, writing and maths, highlighting the proportion achieving at or above expected levels. The gender gap in maths progress has closed but there is still work to be done in reading and writing. Overall, the data show clear progress in recovery from spring to autumn 2021. Trustees asked a number of questions about the way in which progress is recorded and the reasons for it. The CEO also referred to the government's new Levelling Up White Paper which includes very challenging targets for primary school pupils with at least 90% to meet expected standards.

Berkeley Primary School – the CEO reported on the impact of staff absences with the Headteacher having to cover classroom teaching at times. Trustees asked about the school's Covid-19 risk assessment and whether more could be done to mitigate risks, the CEO highlighted a number of actions mentioned in the Headteacher's report to limit mixing, and that further measures would be introduced in the event of an outbreak.

Marling School – the CEO said that the Headteacher had discussed his report with JT (link Trustee). On Covid-19 safety, face coverings are now voluntary rather than required in the classroom, other measures in the risk assessment will be reviewed in light of DfE guidance. He reported on the pilot scheme using Chromebooks for learning and said that JT will be looking at this in more detail. He gave updates on work-shadowing for Year 12, and academic progress for Year 11 and Year 13 students. On premises, he noted that new fences and gates are being installed around the Hall and East Campus, these will eventually have biometric and/or card reader access to further improve site security.

Trustees asked about how the new Headteacher is managing in his new role, JT and the CEO said that he has 'hit the ground running' and is dealing well with some early challenges.

Trustees asked about safeguarding and in particular the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) training being undertaken by safeguarding leads. Trustees asked about the number of students affected, any preventative work being done, and links with wider research on young people's mental health. The CEO said that he would provide a more detailed report for Trustees at a future meeting. **Action: CEO** to report back on ACE training and associated issues.

Schools Heat Map – the CEO presented a revised version of the Schools Heat Map for discussion as a possible format for exception reporting on schools as the Trust grows. Trustees agreed that this was useful snapshot to gauge areas of strength and concerns in our schools and would be particularly useful as the Trust grows. In response to suggestions from Trustees, the CEO said he would look further at a way of showing direction of travel so that any status changes could be easily identified.

#### **10. SDB minutes and matters raised**

Trustees considered the minutes of the following SDB meetings – CWJS 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, BPS 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022, and MS 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. These were noted.

#### **11. Recommendations from SDBs for decision**

Recommendation from Marling SDB to appoint two new Governors – see item 7 above.

#### **12. Governance conference 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

The CEO presented a revised draft programme for the Trust’s governance conference on 4<sup>th</sup> May. He said it was unlikely that we would get a speaker from the RSC’s office. Trustees noted that the programme is ambitious and agreed that there should be just one substantial slot for table discussions, and that there should be an item on Trust-wide achievements (to include an update on the Beacon Secondary Academy). The CEO said that he and BG would work up some questions for table discussions on the People Strategy. GA noted that the date fell in the week of the early-May Bank Holiday, the Clerk said that 4<sup>th</sup> May is in term time and was the favoured date when everyone had been consulted.

#### **13. Scheme of delegation – Finance, Audit & Risk Committee**

Further to the Board’s decision in October 2021 to establish a Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, the CEO proposed a change to the terms of reference. In line with legal advice, he proposed that the CEO as a Trustee should be able to vote on finance and risk matters, but in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook when audit matters are discussed the CEO as an employee will not be able to vote.

It was **proposed** by GA and **seconded** by JG that the terms of reference of the FARC be amended to clarify that the membership of the Committee is the CEO plus two Trustees and an additional member, with the CEO able to vote on matters other than audit. This was **agreed** unanimously

#### **14. Policy management**

The CEO reported that he is working to reduce the amount of time that Governors have to spend reviewing and approving academy policies. To streamline and reduce the number of academy policies, he is looking to see which ones can be approved by SDBs and which can be made Trust policies. Trustees agreed that this would be an important and positive piece of work, and asked the CEO to bring forward firm proposals following further refinement and consultation. **Action: CEO** to develop proposals for streamlining academy policies.

The CEO said that an initial tranche of academy policies that could become Trust-wide have been drafted and are available on Governor Hub for Trustees to consider. **Action: Clerk** to email Trustees with the list of these policies, **Trustees** to review them and submit any comments by 18<sup>th</sup> February.

The CEO said that he is drafting a code of conduct for Members, Trustees and Governors, this will be available for consultation soon. Trustees agreed that it would be timely to undertake consultation and finalise the code of conduct ready to launch it at the conference on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

## **15. Letter from Director of Education**

The CEO drew Trustees' attention to the letter from the Director of Education (05/01/22) responding to concerns about Year 2 data from Cam Woodfield Infants School. The Director had declined to respond to the concerns and advised that they should be discussed directly with the school. Trustees asked about any further developments, and noted the potential challenges of two schools sharing a site. **Action: CEO** to discuss next steps with the Chair and Headteacher of CWJS before following up the Director's offer to meet her.

## **16. Safeguarding**

Nothing further to note beyond the points already mentioned in the Headteachers' reports above.

## **17. People**

Health & safety – the CFOO said that there had been no RIDDOR reportable incidents. She briefed Trustees on a recent incident at MS when a pupil had suffered delayed concussion, the parents had queried the process followed by the school but this had been reviewed and found to have been followed correctly. The CFOO is awaiting a response from the parents.

Staffing – the CFOO reported that staff absence and recruitment are challenging at present. The primary schools in particular are seeing high levels of absence and often find that supply cover is not available. Absences put pressure on other staff, SLTs are doing all they can to support them. Support staff recruitment is proving difficult, particularly at MS, adverts are not always attracting strong fields of candidates and some vacancies are continuing. This is not a unique issue, other Trusts and schools are finding the same.

Trustees asked about the effects of absence and recruitment on pupils and staff, and said that they are keen to support SLTs in any way possible. The CEO and CFOO emphasised that SLTs are sympathetic to the pressures faced by staff and doing all they can to support them including maintaining personal contact. Trustees asked the CFOO to raise any specific concerns with them, including her own welfare. Trustees agreed that they want to keep staffing issues under review and to be able to see trends, and asked that the matter be brought back to their next meeting.

## **18. Property**

As there were no urgent matters to consider, Trustees agreed to postpone this item to their next meeting.

## **19. IT strategy and operations**

The CEO shared his screen to show Trustees a draft consultation document on proposals to reshape the IT team. The existing structure covers MS alone, although the staff have been willing to work beyond their job descriptions and give some support to the primary schools. The proposed structure is for a central CBAT team that will work across all the schools (travelling as required), and with an additional post. The proposed changes at this stage are not very significant and there will be no redundancies. Salaries are being benchmarked by HR and will incorporate current temporary allowances, staff and trade unions will be consulted soon. The proposals are flexible to allow for further change as the Trust grows and greater capacity is needed.

Trustees asked about the staff affected, and the likely allocation and selection process. They asked about the timing of the changes, and recruitment risks when posts have to be filled externally. They commented that proposed salaries should be competitive in terms of recruiting

and retaining good staff. It was **proposed** by JT and **seconded** by RH that the CEO be authorised to consult IT staff and trade unions from 1<sup>st</sup> March on the proposed new IT team structure, with a view to implementing the new structure and contracts with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. This was **approved** unanimously.

## **20. Data protection and privacy**

No significant data protection breaches to report. The CFOO noted that one minor breach (not reportable) had been contained.

## **21. Beacon Secondary Academy**

The CEO reported that the likely timetable for the construction of the Beacon Secondary Academy has slipped due to progress with the development of the Stroud Local Plan. However, the DfE and local authority are still committed to the project. The opening date could now be September 2026 or 2027. The external project managers for the scheme have been 'hibernated' until required, in accordance with their terms of engagement.

NR noted that the delay might have some positive impact in terms of being able to take advantage of higher energy and emissions standards in the design and construction.

## **22. Other growth opportunities**

The CEO reported that he is continuing to actively pursue a number of potential opportunities with primary and secondary schools in the county. Some are keen to take discussions further and to undertake collaborative work. Others are clearly looking to join a MAT and are considering their options. A government White Paper on education is due to be published soon and is expected to give further momentum to the growth of MATs. The CEO drew Trustees' attention to the GSHA briefing paper on grammar schools and MATs which suggests that MAT membership will be strongly encouraged, rather than required.

On behalf of Trustees, NR noted that the potential growth opportunities sound very positive and thanked the CEO for investing significant time and effort in building the constructive relationships with other schools.

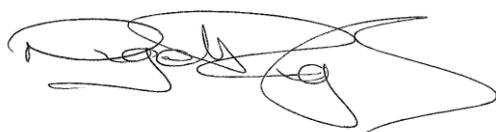
## **23. Any other business**

None.

## **24. Dates of next meeting**

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 6.00pm at Berkeley Primary School.

The meeting ended at 7.05pm.



30<sup>th</sup> March 2022