

Coppice Primary Partnership
Meeting of the Trustee Board
Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 5.30 pm
at Coxheath Primary School

Present: Darren Webb, Carole Hardy (chair of Trustee Board), Peggy Murphy, Andrew Maitland, Carina Cuddington, John Edgar, Isabelle Linney-Drouet

In attendance: Andrew Lacey (Trust Business Manager), Phil Reynolds (Kreston Reeves, items 1 – 3 and discussion of report and audit only)

Clerk: Clare Nursey

Meeting preceded by a learning walk of the school

Agenda item and discussion	Action/ decision
<p>1 Welcome and any introductions</p> <p>1.1 CH welcomed all to this meeting, particularly ILD who was attending her first meeting after appointment as a trustee.</p> <p>1.2 CH explained that discussion of the annual report and audit findings would be brought forward on the agenda so that PR could leave the meeting early.</p>	
<p>2 Apologies for absence</p> <p>2.1 All trustees present.</p> <p>2.2 John West (CoG LPS) had sent apologies that he was unable to attend as a regular meeting attender.</p>	
<p>3 Declaration of business interests</p> <p>3.1 No new interests declared. ILD completed a declaration form.</p> <p>3.2 Trustees signed to confirm they had received and accepted the CPP Code of Practice for governance, the trust Acceptable Use and Wi-Fi policies, and the GDPR governance privacy notice.</p>	
<p>Annual report to Members and audit findings (discussion brought forward on agenda)</p> <p>a) Trustees had received the report and audit findings, updated after detailed discussion at the Finance and Audit Committee meeting.</p> <p>b) PR confirmed all minor alterations had been implemented by KR and trust responses inserted where required. Information on the land/property valuation split had still not been received from the LA. What if this information is not available before the AGM? PR advised the trust could only report on information it held, and next year's report could include adjusted figures if necessary, as this was a "paper figure" only.</p> <p>c) PR complimented the trust's handling of the audit and the outcome, which had been very positive particularly as this was the first year of going through the audit process.</p> <p>d) How should the trust deal with the requirement to include information on energy etc next year? This would not be required until the 3rd year of reporting when the trust would meet 2 of the 3 requirements to make provision of this information necessary (income over £10m, over 250 employees, gross asset value over £3.5m). DfE benchmarking information would be useful when the time came (eg trust energy consumption may prove higher than average but be explained by having 2 swimming pools to heat, having only single glazed windows in places etc).</p> <p>e) PR clarified some technicalities in the accounts (eg land and buildings count as income, inherited LGPS deficit counts as loss, so technically a loss of £295k overall but depreciation and LGPS amount added back in by actuary; money from "investments" represents bank interest; unrestricted funds represent money raised by the schools) and confirmed that the SALIX loan was included as the only creditor and this amount would decrease over time as</p>	

<p>the loan was paid off.</p> <p>f) Net current assets shown on the balance sheet at the end of August (p 28) represented the trust’s working capital and showed there was “enough to pay the bills”.</p> <p>g) PR drew attention to the audit findings (Appx 4) and said it was very rare for there to be no items RAG rated amber or red; the 4 items identified were all low risk and he again complimented AL and his team on their handling of trust finances.</p> <p>h) Trustees expressed their thanks to AL and finance staff for their hard work leading to an excellent outcome in this first external audit.</p> <p>Trustees unanimously APPROVED the report and audit findings for submission to Members at the AGM on 11th December.</p> <p><i>[PR left the meeting]</i></p>	
<p>4 Minutes of the last meeting (9th October 2019) and any matters arising</p> <p>4.1 Minutes were signed as an accurate record of discussions.</p> <p>4.2 DW confirmed he had notified the NEU of the trust board’s decision not to proceed with a collective bargaining agreement at this stage, and had received no response.</p>	
<p>5 Executive HT report and recommendations</p> <p>5.1 EHT’s written report had been circulated and he updated trustees (some discussion in annex for trustees):</p> <p><i>Leadership and staffing</i></p> <p>5.2 EHT advised he was exploring how to develop the trust’s recruitment strategy and would provide an update at the next meeting. Very recent staff changes (1 leaver at LPS, 1 mat leave at SKPS, 2 leavers at CPS) showed the difficulty of recruiting strong replacements for a January start, and adopting a courageous approach to overstaffing across the trust would have benefits. EHT advised that he or HTs normally carried out informal exit interviews with staff but he would remind HTs of the need to do this.</p> <p>How would overstaffing across the trust work?</p> <p>EHT suggested overstaffing by the equivalent of 2 NQTs would allow flexible working across the trust if “surplus” staff were not needed in the classroom. Working in class would be the priority for those staff if needed, but they could cover absences (reducing supply staff needs) and add provision and generally fill spaces as required leading to savings for the trust, particularly as it grew. HTs could also book their time as needed, eg for projects. He advised that delivering induction training was difficult midyear so he envisaged NQTs being in class, with already trained staff being those available to fill slots – trustees agreed this was the sensible approach.</p> <p>Did the EHT think the proposed posts would be attractive to staff, either new recruits or those already employed?</p> <p>EHT advised that some existing staff were open to the idea of working more flexibly. In terms of recruitment, it would be necessary to sell the benefits of the posts – similar to supply work, not necessarily full time, some flexibility on hours but a requirement to work full time when needed in class. CH reminded the meeting that a commitment had been given to existing staff that they would not be required to move school, and this must be honoured, however new contracts could provide that staff may be required to work at any school in the trust. EHT reminded trustees that there was an understanding that wherever possible staff would not be moved midyear in order not to disrupt the education of the children.</p> <p>Would 2 surplus staff be enough to meet needs?</p> <p>PM suggested recruiting 1 NQT per school would be better, allowing the surplus trained member of staff to cover PPA, carry out projects etc as well as fill in as necessary. EHT advised that budgets could not afford 3 additional staff, but PM suggested there might be creative solutions available eg employing more ITT students who would cover 10-20% of a class teaching role. EHT advised that</p>	<p>EHT</p>

increasing ITT placements was part of the proposed recruitment strategy (5-6 different pathways into teaching were available) but would not solve the immediate need. PM also suggested having one teacher identified to work with all NQTs and ITT students across the trust (this worked well at FAW). DW advised trust leaders already took on this role but he would reflect further and arrange to discuss with PM.

EHT/PM

How would the trust advertise the posts when there was no specific role available?

EHT suggested adverts would have to be speculative and stress the flexibility offered to teach across the trust, and the potential to take on a more structured role in time. He acknowledged this might be a difficult sell, although he knew of a MAT which employed its own supply teachers. Trustees noted the posts would link to Wellbeing, which was already in evidence in schools but not necessarily trust wide.

5.3 Trustees agreed the proposal had much to recommend it: it would allow pooling of risks across the trust, offered a flexibility which was rare in teaching, and further opportunities for career development. They **AGREED THE PROPOSAL IN PRINCIPLE** but it would depend on affordability being demonstrated (EHT advised the CPP leadership team would be recasting budgets next week).

5.4 The KR audit report had highlighted that the pupil-teacher ratio (KPI 7) was high at LPS compared with other schools nationally. This suggested some understaffing, which needed to be considered further including in light of budgets. The HT at LPS wanted to appoint a Music teacher, to develop Music further at the centre of the curriculum, and this could be considered, and it would also be useful to review the LPS leadership aspect, particularly while the LPS DHT (envisaged as a trust wide role) was employed full time at CPS.

EHT/AL

Admissions

5.5 EHT advised that the proposed change to the Admissions policy linked to the revised recruitment strategy, which also linked to equality of benefits (free childcare) across the trust which was to be discussed later.

5.6 The suggested change to the policy was to add, ahead of distance in the oversubscription criteria, "Children of staff where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage". This would apply to applications for both entry to YR and in year admission. EHT acknowledged it would be more difficult for TAs than teachers to satisfy the criteria, as it would be harder to evidence a demonstrable skill shortage at TA level.

What would happen if no school place was available?

This would have to be considered as circumstances arose as there could be no guarantee that a place would be available. Entry to YR should not be problematic as there were usually plenty of spaces available, after siblings and before distance in the criteria. In year admissions might be trickier and staff would have to join the waiting list, ranked according to their priority based on the oversubscription criteria.

5.7 EHT thought there would be only a small impact from the change, but it would offer benefits in terms of recruitment and retention. Trustees **AGREED** with the EHT and **APPROVED** the proposed change to the oversubscription criteria. EHT advised that a 6-week consultation was needed and this would begin next week.

5.8 EHT advised trustees that the number of families visiting school open days with a view to admission to YR in September 2020 were LPS 124, CPS 63, SKPS 45. He remained concerned about admissions at SKPS, particularly in view of demographics (the "bulge" has moved through to secondary schools now) and competition (new schools in the area), as this impacted on budget.

What was being done to promote the school with current and prospective parents?

EHT reported:

- HT had held an open day in T1 – well attended and good feedback (and more requests for visits since) but more needed to be done to increase parental engagement, including via the

curriculum, ie offering more opportunities for parents to become involved at school

- School Twitter account introduced last week – ipads bought to enable frequent tweeting through the day, sharing positive stories and the new look of the school
- Coffee afternoon to be held tomorrow – EHT speaking, press invited, opportunity to emphasise that SKPS has joined the trust, opportunity to see visible improvement at school (refurbishment demonstrating ethic of excellence)
- Leaflet drop carried out
- Leadership team makes visits to other nursery provision to promote the school
- Trust (including EHT) will be more visible at the school as time moves on, highlighting that CPP has made a visible difference in the community – all designed to encourage word of mouth recommendations of the school.

Should the trust consider reducing the PAN to make SKPS a 2-form entry school?

EHT advised this may need to be considered in future but it was necessary to provide flexibility to accommodate growth. The current YR was 58, which the school had decided to spread over 3 classes although the cohort could be accommodated in 2 classes. This was manageable now as the EY leader had gone back into class, but it was not a sustainable position and options would need to be carefully considered once EY numbers for September 2020 were known. The current 3-year budget had been set on an EY roll of 65 for 2020, and an intake of 80 for 2021.

Extension of free childcare to staff at SKPS

5.9 The FAC had agreed the TB should discuss offering free childcare to staff at SKPS (currently pay 50%) in order to bring all three schools in line. EHT stressed it was important to offer equality across the trust, and free childcare for staff was a further incentive to offer in recruitment. He acknowledged that not all staff could benefit from this offering, and the position may have to be revisited if the impact on budget was severe, however he reminded trustees that extended services generated a significant amount of money for the trust and in this case could be used to help staff work productively.

5.10 Trustees **AGREED** that free childcare should be extended to staff at SKPS from January 2020.

KPI 12 Ethic of Excellence

5.11 Discussion in annex for trustees.

Current threats and areas for development

5.12 Numbers on roll at SKPS posed threats to budget.

5.13 Mobility at CPS had impacted on outcomes last year and vulnerability continued this year, although should reduce over time as the school filled and the roll became more stable. Some discussion in annex for trustees.

5.14 KS2 forecasts for the trust were challenging considering Yr 6 baseline data, especially for Maths at SKPS (KPI 3).

Nurture proposal – Alternative Provision Pilot

5.15 EHT expanded on the pilot beginning in January 2020 at LPS, which had evolved from a proposal from Laura James. A SENCO from another school had been seconded to LPS to lead the project, which would involve 8-10 children who were struggling in class and needed both nurture and specialised provision. The project would upskill staff generally, including in ELSA provision, and if it proved successful the hope was that provision would transfer to CPS later and develop into trust wide provision. Trustees agreed the project would make a valuable contribution to mental health and asked to be kept informed of progress.

6 Feedback from LGBs (T3 meetings)

Coxheath Primary School

6.1. PM reported that governors had discussed whether they should receive marked up copies of

<p>amended statutory polices. This related to unease over their roles as academy governors, a feeling that they were not doing enough or perhaps did not have enough to do?</p> <p>6.2 CH advised a broadly similar discussion had been held at LPS LGB. Governors there had questions over the trust board’s decisions on allocation of budgets for school to school support, and she had spent time explaining how the trust worked (ie decisions were taken at TB level to benefit the trust as a whole) and the LGB’s important role in that. She had stressed that the LGB was quite right to ask such questions as their role was to challenge the school and the trust, to monitor the impact of decisions at school level, including the impact on budget, and to champion the school in the local community.</p> <p>6.3 Trustees agreed it would be useful if CH held similar discussions with both CPS and SKPS LGBs to ensure governors were clear on their role, and the mechanism for them to feed any concerns up to the TB.</p> <p>6.4 PM reported that governors had also asked about the exit interview procedure for staff. EHT advised that he or HTs normally carried out informal exit interviews with staff but he would remind HTs of the need to do this.</p> <p>6.5 CH reported that the discussion at LPS had raised a number of other points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential for conflict of interest between the CoG role (champion of the school) and trustee role (trust wide perspective needed) was clear, and this reinforced the belief that CoGs should not sit on the TB. It was however vital that LGBs had a voice at trust level and the mechanism for ensuring this, both now and allowing for growth, needed further thought and action. • LGB training needs – DW reported that HTs did not always feel they received enough challenge from LGBs. Some joint training sessions would be planned. • A means of assessing/measuring both Trust Board and LGB effectiveness needed to be found or devised. <p><i>St Katherine’s Primary School</i></p> <p>6.6 JE confirmed there was nothing to report back after the first meeting of the SKPS LGB.</p> <p><i>Loose Primary School</i></p> <p>6.7 CH had nothing further to report from LPS LGB.</p>	<p>CH</p> <p>EHT</p>
<p>7 Future direction of the trust One item in confidential annex for trustees.</p>	
<p>8 Policies and key documents</p> <p>8.1 Trustees received and APPROVED the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum statement • School Food Guidelines <p>8.2 Risk Register – AL would amend small typos and continue to add to mitigations and risks as they arose (eg LGPS liability was a risk).</p> <p>8.3 Trustees confirmed that the risk register was a “live” document, which informed the audit programme, and AGREED that it should be included on every TB agenda, with AL providing a brief update of changes.</p> <p>8.4 When were the last Conditions Surveys of the schools undertaken? Trustees noted that the trust board had not reviewed the condition of its buildings since CPP was established. AL advised that ESFA/CIF bid surveys of all three schools had been carried out in the past 18 months, indicating some work needed, but these were not the same as full surveys (last LA Conditions surveys of LPS and CPS were several years old). Trustees AGREED they would feel more comfortable having up to date full survey reports available to inform planning. AL to investigate and report back at the next meeting.</p> <p>8.3 Annual Report to Members – dealt with earlier in meeting.</p>	<p>AL</p> <p>Clerk/AL</p> <p>AL</p>

9 Business Matters

Finance and Audit Committee chair's report

- 9.1 The report had been circulated before the meeting, and CC confirmed the FAC had discussed:
- The annual report and audit findings in detail – dealt with above
 - Management accounts, including the cashflow position at CPS next May and the way to mitigate this (deferring charge backs)
 - 3-year budget plans – further information on the NFF was now available and CC would work with DW and AL to revise the plans in light of assumptions
 - Broadband contract – trustees received details of 3 quotes and the FAC recommended accepting RM's bid for providing the service at all 3 schools which would ensure a common platform for the trust. **AGREED TO PROCEED WITH RM's BID**
 - LPS Sports Funding- trustees received details of 3 quotes and FAC recommended acceptance of Fawns' quote for providing a new KS1 trim trail and resurfacing the KS2 trail. Although this was the most expensive quote (different equipment offered by each provider), the supplier was known and offered more for the money than others, the proposal was the school's preferred option, and the cost was within budget. **AGREED TO PROCEED WITH FAWNS' BID**
 - The majority of discussion at the FAC meeting had been on the new business structure – further discussion in confidential annex for trustees.

Business structure proposal

9.2 Discussion in confidential annex for trustees

Trust Business Manager's report

9.3 Following a recommendation from the auditors, the FAC had agreed an amendment to the Finance policy to increase the limit for capitalisation from £1000 to £5000. Trustees **APPROVED** this amendment.

9.4 Decisions on the new business structure required investment in a new finance system (AL and DW viewing 4 options). If the decision was taken to dispense with Capita (FMIS), the required 3 months' notice had to be given by 31 December in order not to incur a full year's fees for 20/21 (£8 -9k regardless of how long the system was in use in the year). FMIS would be available until the end of March if notice was given, but this left only a short time for a new system to be installed, staff trained etc. for a 1st April start date.

9.5 By a 4 to 3 majority, trustees **AGREED** that while it would be unfortunate to pay double for a finance system if a new one could be ready for 1 April, the budget could manage this cost and it was therefore more sensible to buy time and **NOT** give notice to Capita this month.

10 Governance

Appointment of co-opted governor

10.1 Trustees **APPROVED** the appointment of Richard Dalton as a co-opted governor at SKPS.

Appointment of associate governor

10.2 Trustees **APPROVED** the appointment of Sarah Aikenhead (DHT) as an associate governor at SKPS.

10.3 Trustees **AGREED** that other LGBs might appoint DHTs as associate governors if they wished as this would be good experience for the DHTs.

Members' AGM

10.4 This had been arranged for 11th December and all those involved in governance had been invited, including for an informal social gathering after the meeting.

11 Safeguarding matters including Health & Safety and Disability matters

Nothing urgent to report.

12 Chair's Actions/ Correspondence and any other business Chair had no further actions to report and there was no other business to discuss.	
13 Confidentiality & Publication of minutes Several items included in confidential annex for trustees. Main minutes to be circulated to LGBs and be publicly available once approved at the next meeting.	
14 Meeting dates for 19/20 Wednesday 12 th February 2020 – 5:30pm (St Katherine's) – learning walk 4.00 Wednesday 25 th March 2020 – 5:30pm (Loose Primary School) Wednesday 20 th May 2020 – 5:30pm (Coxheath Primary School) Wednesday 15 th July 2020 – 5:30pm (St Katherine's Primary School)	

Signed.....

Date.....

Para	Action	By whom
5.2	EHT to provide update on recruitment strategy at next meeting	DW
5.2	EHT and PM to discuss supervision arrangements for trainee teachers	DW/PM
5.4	Consider position on staffing levels, including leadership	DW/AL
6.3	CH to meet CPS and SKPS LGBs to clarify LGB role	CH
6.4	EHT to remind HTs to carry out exit interviews with staff	DW
8.2/8.3	Risk register – AL to update continuously, clerk to ensure it is on every TB agenda	AL/clerk
8.4	Investigate arrangements for full Conditions surveys of 3 schools	AL