

Coppice Primary Partnership
Meeting of the Trustee Board
Wednesday 12th February 2020 at 5.30pm
at St Katherine's Primary School

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

In attendance: Andrew Lacey (Trust Business Manager), Liz McLaren (Schools clerk)

Clerk: Clare Nursey

Meeting preceded by a learning walk of the school

Agenda item and discussion	Action/decision
<p>1 Welcome and any introductions CH welcomed all to this meeting, and introduced Liz McLaren, who was attending as part of her induction into the Schools clerk role.</p>	
<p>2 Apologies for absence Received and accepted from Andrew Maitland (work commitment). The meeting was quorate.</p>	
<p>3 Declaration of business interests No new interests declared. Trustees were reminded to declare interests as discussion developed.</p>	
<p>4 Minutes of the last meeting (4th December 2019) and any matters arising 4.1 Minutes were signed as an accurate record of discussions. 4.2 AL clarified that the pupil/teacher ratio at LPS (KPI referred to at para 5.4 of last minutes) was also affected by the school being over PAN at present. 4.3 There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>5 Executive HT report and recommendations EHT's written report had been circulated and he updated trustees (some discussion in annex for trustees): <i>Update on KPIs</i> 5.1 EHT confirmed that, in normal circumstances, his report would only include updates on KPIs in terms 2 and 4 when data was available. Financial KPIs would be covered each month in the Management Accounts. <i>School Improvement</i> 5.2 Curriculum development continued, reflecting very positive work by the School Improvement lead, especially in terms of developing curriculum and subject leaders and improving subject knowledge. Curriculum leaders from the 3 schools had recently spent a day planning progression, especially vocabulary and subject knowledge, across all areas. The School Improvement lead's impact showed in staff development, though not yet in outcomes, and thought needed to be given how to continue this work once the role ended at Easter (see para 5.12 below). 5.3 Professional development (OTP and other training) continued to be given a high priority. EHT had delivered Ethic of Excellence training at SKPS and the improved environment reflected impact, with great credit due to the HT and team at the school. Mark Burns continued to deliver Leading for Excellence training for leaders, and EHT was delivering Aspiring Leaders training, which covered a range of skills and was based on the programme developed by Andy Buck. https://www.leadershipmatters.org.uk/ambassadors/andy-buck/ 5.4 Sponsored academy feedback – the document had been circulated to trustees ("School Improvement Summary for SKPS") and EHT explained this had been prepared as part of the required evaluation to justify receipt of the £45k sponsorship funding. The school had clearly moved forwards</p>	

since joining the trust, and EHT and JE gave credit to the HT for work started before the trust stepped in to provide further support. Progress was recognised in the external review report from Alastair McMeckan, with provision judged consistently good with pockets of outstanding. The challenge at the school remained KS2 outcomes: if they were closer to national this year, then a positive inspection outcome would be likely and the school could look to build further on this; it might be worth requesting an early inspection in order to capitalise on momentum. Trustees discussed this possibility, querying whether an early inspection could be arranged (not guaranteed), and agreed that a positive inspection outcome would have clear benefits in terms of the school's reputation and intake.

DW

Recruitment, retention and wellbeing – “People Matter”

5.5 EHT explained he had pulled together all offers/commitments/benefits to staff into the “People Matter” document, and the new HR Manager would take work forwards. Trustees agreed this was a very positive document and asked the EHT to add an introduction.

5.6 Regarding Recruitment, the document made clear that there was a pathway available for every member of staff and highlighted the options and support available at each stage of the process.

5.6 Regarding Wellbeing, the question had been raised whether the trust should offer some form of additional healthcare for staff (the market was increasingly competitive and this was a benefit often offered by other trusts). Informal feedback from school leaders was positive, and initial enquires suggested that trust membership of Benenden would cost around £36k pa.

Q. Would the benefit cover individuals or families?

Just individuals but family membership could probably be bought privately.

Q. Would the cost go up if the benefit was used?

This would be investigated if trustees thought the idea might be worth pursuing as would the cost of add on services eg dental, but personal experience was that premiums did not rise if the service was used.

AL

5.7 Trustees agreed that offering healthcare would be evidence of concern for staff, and a useful tool in recruitment and retention, and asked the TBM to explore options further and present findings to the next meeting.

School Reviews

5.8 SKPS – the external review report had been circulated to trustees and they agreed this showed a very positive outcome.

5.9 EHT reported that recent internal reviews at CPS and LPS had been very positive:

- CPS strengths: strongest review result seen yet, school has moved on, credit given to new HT; behaviour for learning exemplary; very strong staffing with Quality of Teaching 50% outstanding; broad curriculum; environment excellent; high expectations across the school; one item in annex for trustees
- CPS areas for development: build on increasing consistency in Reading so that KS2 outcomes improve further; improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged groups where low attendance impacts on outcomes; further develop EYFS (good but some missed opportunities to be judged outstanding); develop leadership, especially confidence in demonstrating the impact of their role; one item an annex for trustees
- LPS strengths (review undertaken in line with the new Ofsted framework, so included deep dives in Phonics, Reading and PE): high quality Phonics provision in KS1 showing clear impact; improving picture in Reading, there is now a consistency of approach with current forecasts for KS2 outcomes being 90% expected and 48% greater depth; broad and relevant curriculum; PE curriculum strong with evidence of coaches having impact
- LPS areas for development: leadership, especially sharing of practice; Phonics (share practice to ensure consistent application); curriculum (ensure coherent planning and sequencing to show progression).

5.10 EHT summarised that he was confident all 3 schools were at least “good”, with elements of outstanding, and that KS2 data was the only thing holding judgements back. Trustees noted that Ofsted had not been interested in in-year data during recent inspections but EHT stressed that externally published data was still important evidence to demonstrate 3-year trends.

DW

Q. Was an update on the nurture provision trial at LPS available?

It was too early to report now but Anita Makey (HoS) planned a review in March and EHT would report back after that. What was clear was that good things were happening on nurture in all 3 schools, with support staff being trained and developed etc., and it was possible that HTs would decide if they preferred to organise their own nurture provision rather than have a trust wide offering.

Q. Had the focus of the trial at LPS moved away from SEND?

While the project had been envisaged as SEND focused, it was now clear this provision was not affordable at each school though it may prove useful as a way of delivering upskilling on a trust wide basis. The emphasis of the project had shifted in order to deliver what HT wanted/needed for the school, although it may swing back towards SEND in time.

DfE Review

5.11 EHT and Chair of Trustees had attended the review meeting with Neville Bolton and Matt Morley and had received a one page letter with feedback, highlighting four areas with which the department was pleased (improvement and maintenance of standards at LPS; the trust’s global curriculum; good mix of skills in governance; the level of challenge the trust provided to SKPS) and three areas for development (raising attainment at CPS and SKPS; Reading at LPS; continuing T&L improvement at SKPS). Trustees **AGREED** this was a good outcome and asked CH to write to all 3 HTs on behalf of trustees, to acknowledge their efforts which had resulted in this positive review.

CH

5.12 EHT advised that the meeting had drawn attention to work which had only been achieved through having additional capacity, notably that enabling him to work with HTs, and this in turn had drawn attention to a need for a lower level trust resource which they could deploy as necessary. Such support was already in place at CPS and LPS and he proposed extending it to SKPS by creating a permanent role for the T&L Lead across the trust (full time post but initially with 2 days in class/3 days out of class - one day in each school to carry on some of the School Improvement Lead’s work).

Q. Why not introduce the post as full time?

The trust was quite strong in T&L so there was not a need for a full time post at present, but this would be reviewed if the trust expanded or if a specific need was identified. Additionally, there were budget constraints to consider.

Q. Would the proposed pattern of work impact adversely on the staff member’s work/life balance?

It would be the EHT’s responsibility to provide support necessary to carry out the role (the member of staff would report direct to the EHT).

Q. Could the post holder mentor NQTs at all 3 schools as well, to provide consistency across the trust?

Part of the trust’s vision was to preserve the uniqueness of each school within it, and this included allowing HTs to develop their own structures which provided for recognising “home grown” talent.

Q. The schools increasingly looked alike – were they still genuinely unique?

Excellence looked the same everywhere but each school had a different “feel” due to the different people working there.

5.13 Trustees **AGREED** that, while ideally the T&L role would be full time across the trust, the post should be made permanent on the basis proposed by the EHT (2 days in class/3 days out of class).

Staffing/Leadership Structure

5.14 Trustees discussed options to extend leadership capacity at the schools – in annex for trustees.

Business Structure

5.15 EHT confirmed that appointments had been made to the 3 new posts in the business structure – HR manager, Finance Manager and Trust Administrator/PA. All 3 posts would be part time/3 days per week and based at the newly created Trust Hub in Brook building at Loose.

Surveys – Parent, staff and pupil

5.16 Trustees had received the survey response results and EHT drew attention to:

- a) Pupil surveys – behaviour had been mentioned as an issue at all schools (this had not arisen in staff or parent surveys) as had school meals (same provider at 2 of the schools, possibly different responses due to the quality of the cook)
- b) Parent surveys – very positive especially at CPS; homework raised as an issue as SKPS; amount of information on progress received by parents at LPS will be clarified with Parent Council and discussed at next executive leadership meeting
- c) Staff surveys – resources and IT raised as issues and IT certainly needs addressing (will be a big focus next year); HT investigating responses on morale at LPS to unpick situation (particular groups of staff/any specific issues)

Q. Was the same question on morale included in last year's staff survey?

There had been no explicit question on morale before but it would be useful to look at last year's responses for comparison.

Threats

5.17 EHT summarised threats as:

- a) Staffing at LPS (morale)
- b) KS2 outcomes, especially progress at CPS and SKPS and possibly Maths at LPS
- c) Year 3 budget for CPS and SKPS

Opportunities/successes

5.18 EHT summarised opportunities and successes as:

- a) Rapid school improvement at SKPS
- b) Strong T&L across the trust
- c) Healthy budget position (LPS oversubscribed, CPS almost full)

Admissions

5.19 EHT advised that applications for entry to EY in September were very positive:

- LPS (PAN 90) – 109 first choice, 207 in total
- CPS (PAN 60) – 45 first choice, 42 second choice so almost certainly full
- SKPS (PAN 90) – 63 first choice, 97 in total

5.20 Figures for SKPS were particularly pleasing (last year there had been around 45 first choice applications) and reflected the improving reputation of the school. Next year's budget was planned to be based on 65 admissions at SKPS but EHT thought numbers might increase to 70 for September.

6 Feedback from LGBs (T3 meetings)

Coxheath Primary School

6.1. PM asked whether the TB would consider extending free childcare to governors as well as staff. Trustees confirmed that free childcare was already offered to enable governors to carry out their governor role, eg when attending meetings or training, but could not be offered more widely as this would count as remuneration and governors could not be remunerated for their voluntary role. CoGs would be asked to remind all governors that provision existed for governors to claim travel costs etc (in the Finance policy).

St Katherine's Primary School

6.2 JE asked for clarification of plans for the new Chairs' committee – see 10.6 below.

DW/CoGs

<p><i>Loose Primary School (CoG not at this meeting)</i></p> <p>6.3 CH had received action points from that meeting and reported that governors had enquired about governor training programmes and costs. She advised that the trust was looking at developing an ongoing package of training for governors.</p>	
<p>7 Future direction of the trust</p> <p>One item in confidential annex for trustees.</p>	
<p>8 Policies and key documents</p> <p>8.1 Trustees received the updated policy review timetable (Feb 20 version).</p> <p>8.2 Trustees received and APPROVED the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions – EHT confirmed there had been no responses to the consultation and therefore the new criteria (worded in line with the School Admissions Code) had been added to the policy which would now be published on websites • On Line safety – name of safeguarding governor at LPS needs changing following JW’s resignation • SEND – one item in annex for trustees <p>Q. Would it be advisable for the SEND governor on each LGB to make a specific visit to monitor SEND, since this was now a very high Ofsted focus?</p> <p>SEND was now monitored by governors as part of Quality of Education but EHT agreed this was a good idea and would advise HTs/CoGs accordingly.</p> <p>8.3 Risk Register – trustees had agreed this would be reviewed at every meeting. AL confirmed that the document would be constantly updated and small changes in this version related to finance, IT and estates management.</p>	<p>DW</p>
<p>9 Business Matters</p> <p><u>Trust Business Manager’s report</u></p> <p><u>Conditions surveys</u></p> <p>9.1 AL advised that the trust needed to complete a self-assessment as part of the ESFA requirement for trusts to have an estates management policy. He planned to present this to the TB in T5, by which time he would have studied the ESFA and DfE surveys and the surveys carried out in connection with recent CIF bids. He therefore suggested the trust hold off paying for new full conditions surveys until all current information had been assimilated.</p> <p>Q. Did the trust’s current estates and facilities strategy take into account all developing thinking, eg on climate matters?</p> <p>EHT – there was almost certainly more room to develop the strategies in this respect and this would happen with greater capacity on the trust team.</p> <p>AL – advised that Andrew Maitland (trustee) was already helping develop documentation needed for utilities bids next year, which included consideration of these issues.</p> <p>9.2 Trustees expressed concern that deferring full conditions surveys may lead to late discovery of problems which might be expensive to rectify, and they questioned whether surveys should be brought forward in plans. AL advised that work on other contracts had taken priority due to timescales (catering paperwork with schools now, cleaning paperwork must be ready in T4 if contract is to go to tender then and be in place for September) and a decision was needed as to whether work on conditions surveys should take priority over work on the cleaning contract next term. EHT advised he would prefer work to continue on the catering and cleaning contracts now, with work on the conditions survey to take place after April, as feedback from HTs showed dissatisfaction with current providers.</p> <p>Q. Would it be useful to employ temporary help to assemble headlines on conditions matters so that the TB might be informed of any issues needing urgent attention?</p> <p>EHT – this was not necessary. The CIF surveys had identified the most urgent matters, and regular H&S walks picked up smaller matters.</p>	<p>AL/T5 agenda</p>

AL – the trust was now responsible for carrying out statutory inspections in the schools, and he assured trustees that all inspections were being carried out as necessary and any action necessary would be taken if problems were identified.

9.3 Trustees were satisfied that the CIF surveys, DfE condition surveys and H&S walks provided them with sufficient assurance about the condition of the schools.

Catering contract

9.4 AL advised that the cost of school meals differed across the schools. EHT advised that the leadership team had already agreed that the price should be standard across the trust so the TB did not need to discuss this matter of detail but should wait to receive final paperwork in order to agree a new contract.

IT support contract

9.5 Trustees received details of 3 bids for this contract, from EIS (most expensive/previous unsatisfactory service), BODE (small company of 4-5 people, current provider at LPS and CPS, offered dedicated technician and access to named director) and ATS (larger company with 20-25 staff, temporary provider at SKPS and HT impressed so far, no dedicated technician, limited access to director). AL recommended BODE on the basis of both the dedicated service offered and cost (£40,000 all inclusive), and trustees **AGREED** the contract should be awarded to BODE.

Modification Order and aligning TCP

9.6 Trustees **AGREED** that the trust should comply with the Modification Order on continuity of employment in order to provide consistency and equity across the trust.

9.7 Trustees noted that, as a result of an error in advice provided to staff, aligning support staff pay at LPS would add c£3,000 to the 20/21 pay bill. AL advised it was not practical to consult staff again with the correct information and there was no scope to recover this cost from SPS, who had provided the original wrong information.

Budget monitoring

9.8 Trustees received budget monitoring data for 4 months (Sept – Dec 2019). KPIs were shown on page 1 of the report and AL asked trustees to note:

- a) CPS showed very tight balances
- b) LPS figures included costs for establishing the Trust Hub in Brook building
- c) The LA had announced a 3.6% award for those “achieving” under TCP and the trust had to match this % under TUPE
- d) Pay awards and implementation of the National Living Wage had raised staff costs.

9.8 AL advised that figures had changed again since December, eg rollover at CPS now likely to be only £17k, and the latest figures showed a need to prioritise spending plans (“wish list” attached to budget report – one item in annex for trustees).

9.9 AL drew attention to current reserves, which were above target at LPS and SKPS and across the trust as a whole, and asked trustees to consider whether the target should formally be increased. Trustees discussed whether, as an alternative, the contribution to the contingency fund (currently £3,000 per form of entry) should be made an annual requirement as this would enable funds to build up over time and this money could then be spent on “wish list” items across the trust without impacting on other spending plans.

Q. Would this requirement disadvantage CPS and SKPS where spending was already necessarily high to achieve school improvement?

EHT – probably not as they would almost certainly be beneficiaries from the central fund as there was more to be done at those schools.

Q. Should contributions be based on pupil numbers rather than number of forms of entry?

EHT – this was worth exploring – AL was asked to produce relevant figures for the next meeting.

<p>9.10 Trustees AGREED that schools should make an annual contribution to the trust contingency fund (£3,000 per form of entry pending sight of figures based on pupil numbers).</p> <p>9.11 In light of EHT’s very positive news on applications for entry to YR in September 2020, trustees AGREED that the first draft budget for 20/21 (to be prepared in May) should be based on the following numbers: SKPS 70 (up from 65), CPS 60 and LPS 90.</p> <p>9.12 Trustees received the “wish list” compiled for the 3 schools and AGREED that decisions on spending were an operational matter and the trust leadership team should take this forward.</p>	AL
<p>10 Governance</p> <p><i>Members’ AGM and confirmation of audit returns/submissions</i></p> <p>10.1 Trustees had received minutes of the AGM and AL confirmed that all necessary returns had been submitted on time.</p> <p>10.2 CH advised that the meeting had gone well but the format/agenda would be reviewed for this year as part of the trust’s ongoing learning curve.</p> <p><i>Annual audit programme</i></p> <p>10.3 CC advised she was waiting for a response from Kreston Reeves to enable discussion of the trust’s internal audit schedule. She would follow up and report at the next meeting.</p> <p><i>Appointment of CoG at Loose LGB [ILD declared a business interest for this discussion]</i></p> <p>10.4 In light of John West’s resignation as Co-CoG at LPS (resignation letter circulated to all trustees), trustees AGREED that Sam McMahon (also Co-CoG) would be sole CoG with immediate effect.</p> <p>10.5 CH advised she had spoken to SM who had confirmed that due to work commitments she could not attend TB meetings as an observer, as had been the plan for the LPS CoG who did not sit on the TB. CH had therefore arranged to meet SM outside TB meetings to ensure communication between the TB and LPS LGB remained open while arrangements for September were being decided. At this stage, CH advised that it was envisaged that all CoGs would come off the TB next year and instead meet the EHT and TB chair at a separate Chairs committee.</p> <p>10.6 PM and JE advised fellow trustees of their provisional plans regarding continuing membership of the LGB or TB – in confidential annex.</p>	CC
<p>11 Safeguarding matters including Health & Safety and Disability matters</p> <p>Nothing urgent to report.</p>	
<p>12 Chair’s Actions/ Correspondence and any other business</p> <p>Chair had no further actions to report and there was no other business to discuss.</p>	
<p>13 Confidentiality & Publication of minutes</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>14 Meeting dates for 19/20</p> <p>Wednesday 25th March 2020 at 5:30pm (Loose Primary School)</p> <p>Wednesday 20th May 2020 – 5:30pm (Coxheath Primary School)</p> <p>Wednesday 15th July 2020 – 5:30pm (St Katherine’s Primary School)</p>	

Signed.....

Date.....