



COPPICE PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

PUBLIC MINUTES FOR THE 2022/2023 MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24TH MAY 2023

Trust Board present at the meeting held on 12th July 2023 approved these minutes as a true and accurate record, and signed on Governor Hub electronically

PRESENT

John Edgar (Vice Chair)	Isabelle Linney-Drouet (Trustee)
Neil McDonald (Trustee)	Carina Cuddington (Trustee)
Andrew Maitland (Trustee)	Mark Chatley (CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and Trustee)

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Lacey (Trust Business Manager / Chief Operating Officer)	Annamaria Potgieter (Chief Finance Officer)
Stacey Marsh (Governance Secretary)	

PART A – PUBLIC MINUTES

Yellow highlighted text demonstrates challenge / questions to the Trust representatives

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 In the absence of the Chair, Carole Hardy, John Edgar welcomed all parties to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received, and accepted, from Carole Hardy and Peggy Murphy.

The meeting was declared as quorate for the purpose of decision making.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 All parties were given the opportunity to declare any additional declarations of interest against the agenda to which none were declared.

3. TRUST BOARD MEMBERSHIP

3.1 *No comments made*

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Both the public and confidential minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place on the 29th of March 2023 by all present.

Clerk action; JE to mark term 4 minutes as signed on Governor Hub

5. ACTIONS TABLE

5.1 Trustees noted the completed actions following the previous meeting, and discussed the following outstanding actions:

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER	UPDATE
<i>Actions outstanding from 7th February 2023</i>			

1	CH to arrange meeting with new Member and report to Trust Board in term 5.	CH	24 th May 2023 update; CH has emailed the prospective new Member and is awaiting a response. <i>Action; carry forward</i>
Matters arising from term 29th March 2023 meeting			
3.	MC to make changes to the structure chart so that the job roles are in a larger font.	MC	24 th May 2023 update; This has been completed.
4.	MC to investigate requirements around qualification certificates, particularly those who are working in the professional roles already.	MC	24 th May 2023 update; <i>Action; carry forward</i>
7.	Trustees to consider how to link LGB members to the Trust board for upskilling and succession planning.	ALL	24 th May 2023 update; Work is continuing around how to link the LGB members to the Trust Board and different options are being explored to ensure there is a good level of succession planning between the Trustees and Governors, and this will be revisited in September 2023.
8.	All Trustees to complete Cyber Security e-learning before next Board meeting.	ALL	24 th May 2023 update; CH and CC are yet to complete the training modules sent by AL. This needs to be completed by the 31 st May 2023 as the transition date is the 1 st June 2023. <i>Action; CC and CH to complete Cyber security training before 31st May 2023</i>
10.	AL to liaise with the ESFA around amendments to the Articles of Association and to report back at the term 5 Trust Board.	AL	24 th May 2023 update; AL has been in contact with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and a query has been raised through the online portal with the relevant documentation included. Trustees confirmed that they are happy for AL to continue with the process as previously discussed.

6. TRUST MATTERS

6.1 Recorded in confidential minutes

6.2 Benenden Healthcare; This was discussed briefly during the term 4 Trust Board meeting and AP has provided a detailed summary of the take up across the schools. Trustees were pleased with the level of take up by staff in the brief period of time since it has been introduced.

AP explained that there is currently an overlap between Benenden and the previous provider of support, and this may continue for a brief period whilst staff have sought support from the previous provider and wish to continue with that.

Trustees questioned if access to Benenden Healthcare has been used as a marketing tool during recruitment;

This offer is detailed within the recruitment pack as part of the overall staff benefits package, and applicants have commented that they felt the recruitment pack sold the trust well and was professionally presented.

6.3 Central Team Update; A member of the central HR team has resigned, and the central team are currently exploring the efficiencies within the team before recruiting.

7. SCHOOL REPORTS

7.1 St Katherine's School; Since MC has been based at St Katherine's School, behaviour in year 6 has been the priority. Initially MC was due to be based at the school between 2-3 days per week to support the leadership team, however behaviour in year 6 is particularly disruptive and the leadership team required additional support to manage this. The behaviour challenges have led to a number of pupil suspensions this term and a potential permanent exclusion that the Local Authority (LA) are now supporting with. Both MC and the senior leadership team have sought advice from the Local Authority (LA) and external professionals, and this has taken a priority over phase 2 of the rapid improvement plan.

Trustees questioned if year 6 have had behaviour challenges in previous years; Over the years, there have been a few suspensions across the cohort however the senior leadership team within the school have commented that the behaviour challenges have not been seen previously. The approach to behaviour has been consistent and robust throughout this term and will continue in order to support the development of the school.

MC has spoken with senior members of staff across Loose Primary School and Coxheath Primary School who advised that they have seen escalating behaviour within year 6 also, however not to the same level at St Katherine's School.

7.1.1 Branwen Taylor has been working with senior leaders across all three schools with the aim of further improving leadership capacity within St Katherine's School as the leadership capacity needs to increase to support phase 2 of the rapid improvement plan. Going forward, the school will require additional monitoring from Governors to ensure that there is sufficient oversight across the school.

7.1.2 Recruitment of a new Headteacher has taken place and they are due to start in September 2023.

Trustees questioned if it would be appropriate to seek support from an Interim Headteacher for the remainder of this academic year;

MC has been in contact with an external agency for support, however there were no suitable candidates available and after further consideration, it was suggested that MC and Branwen Taylor would be best placed to support the school during this interim period.

7.2 Loose Primary School; The new Headteacher, Trevor North, joined the school at the start of term 5 and has made a good start in his new role. He has reorganised some responsibilities of the Assistant Headteachers and held a vision and values session with senior team to consider how this will look in the future. Staff have welcomed Trevor North into the school and have responded well to him.

7.2.1 At the recent Local Governing Body meeting, Governors discussed changing the way that monitoring is reported and in term 6 they will be trialling a new format for the Board meetings whereby the meeting is focussed entirely on the monitoring that Governors have undertaken to explore in detail and ensure that sufficient challenge is being undertaken.

7.2.2 Recorded in confidential minutes

7.2.3 At the recent Local Governing Body meeting, Trevor North raised his concerns around the "My Concern" software that is used for the management of safeguarding. In his previous school they used "CPOMS" which allocated cases efficiently. Trevor North has since spoken with MC about this in further detail and whilst My Concern is the recommended system across the Trust, Headteachers are able to explore alternatives if they wish.

7.3 Staffing; Recorded in confidential minutes

8. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

8.1 SATS; JE visited Loose Primary School during SATS week and did not see any evidence of the emotion and heightened behaviour that was reported by the press. Pupils were on task and relaxed at Loose Primary School. For Coxheath Primary School, Giacomo Mazza (Headteacher) advised that the process ran smoothly, and pupils responded well to what was asked of them. Branwen Taylor was also in attendance to conduct a monitoring visit. For St Katherine's School, some children were not as focussed as they could have been and there were some behaviour and attitude challenges throughout the tests. CC visited St Katherine's School during SATS week as part of her monitoring responsibilities and the report is to follow

8.2 Curriculum; A new Art curriculum was introduced in September 2023 and the impact of this change has been positive and was recognised during the recent Ofsted inspection at Coxheath Primary School. Outcomes are stronger across Coxheath Primary School where the Art curriculum lead is based and they have since offered support to both Loose and St Katherine's School (which included a visit) which is expected to make a positive impact.

8.2.1 The History and Geography curriculum have moved forward and were also recognised at the recent Ofsted inspection at Coxheath Primary School. Further work has been done to map out what units will be included within the programme of study so that the teachers can plan how this is delivered to the pupils across the other schools.

Trevor North (Headteacher at Loose Primary School) has referred to this as teachers being given the opportunity to “make the how wow”.

8.2.2 The trust is moving on to look at the Design and Technology curriculum and are currently exploring writing the curriculum structure in the same way that the art curriculum was created. The art leader has offered support with this task and further consideration is being given to the starting point for the curriculum and the key points that will be covered within it.

8.3 Progression Pathways; The aim is for the progression pathways to be mapped out for staff by September 2023 so that staff have clear progression within their roles. Work on this has started with the Headteachers who have considered how that will work with their existing structures and for opportunities to be made available within that.

8.4 Future Growth; MC has continued to contact local Headteachers to discuss where they stand with academisation and what Coppice Primary Partnership could offer them; the biggest draw is the potential for the schools to have additional support from a trust to develop their school, particularly for maintained schools who feel that support from the Local Authority (LA) is diminishing.

8.4.1 Ray Lang has been appointed as the new Headteacher for St Katherine’s School and will start in September. Since they have been appointed, they have made contact with the senior leadership team, however their release time from their current school will be minimal before September.

9.FINANCE REPORT

9.1 At the recent Finance and Audit Committee meeting, the recent management accounts were reviewed alongside future budgets and estates management. The management accounts highlight a slight improvement in the outturn, and this is due to lower utility costs than anticipated. All support staff pay increases have been included from April 2023.

9.2 Since the committee meeting, CIF bids awards have been announced and the trust were only successful at St Katherine’s School. The award has been given at St Katherine’s School for the project around updating the boilers, safeguarding, fire safety and security across the site. Following the announcement of the award, AL has received an email from the ESFA who have requested further evidence around the fire safety aspect of the proposal particularly around the fire risk assessments and the inspections that have taken place. AL has responded to the request for further information and will provide an update when a response has been received.

9.3 Within the committee meeting, the cleaning contract was discussed at length. Committee members reviewed the tender process that was completed, and a discussion took place around how to secure best value and service going forward. The committee explored the possibility of rescinding the notice that was given to the current cleaning provider as there have been some changes within the management of the service and they continue to be the best value option.

Throughout the tender process, Headteachers have asked to explore the possibility of bringing the cleaning in-house and by extending the current contract for another year, this will allow the central team to have time to look into this option further.

Trustees present approved the proposal to extend the current cleaning contract provider for 12 months and to explore the option of bringing the cleaning service in-house.

9.4 Central Budget forecast and assumption update; Funding has been included as before for 2023/24 which does not support the proposed teacher pay increases that have not yet been confirmed. These are currently proposed as 5% for 2023/24 and 2.75% for 2024/25.

9.4.1 Income generation is anticipated to increase across the trust as wrap-around care costs are increasing from September 2023. This was initially suggested as an increase from July 2023; however, it was decided to move back to September 2023 to give parents more time to prepare for the increase.

9.4.2 Support staff pay increases have been built in at 5% for following years and this is due to the expected national minimum wage increases.

For support staff, the central trust team have discussed moving the support staff pay review back to April. This will align the trust with other local schools and the Kent Range.

9.4.3 Energy costs are expected to reduce over the next few months, although they will still remain high.

9.4.4 IT plans have been built into the budget although Coxheath Primary School are still reflecting on what they will need.

9.4.5 Within the Capital budget the central team have included as much as possible following the recent Headteacher walk arounds where they explored what is needed across their sites.

9.4.6 Head Office recharge will be decreasing from £3,000 to £2,000 to further support the increased costs that schools are seeing.

9.5 Coxheath Primary School; Giacomo Mazza (Headteacher) has moved Teaching Assistants (TAs) around so that they will be split across year groups rather than attached to a specific class from September 2023.

9.5.1 Pupil numbers are slightly lower going into 2023/24 and this is due to the current year 2 cohort where there are some gaps.

9.6 Loose Primary School; Trevor North (Headteacher) has carefully reviewed the staffing structure across the school and Teachers have been agreed. Further consideration is being given to Teaching Assistants (TAs), extended services staff and midday meals supervisors.

9.6.1 Pupil numbers are stable at 656 for September 2023.

9.7 St Katherine's School; There are some changes expected within the support staff as this has not yet been reviewed.

9.7.1 For September 2023, the school are looking at 62 pupils in Reception which will pose some financial challenges. MC has spoken with local schools who have commented that they are undersubscribed for September 2023 so this figure may change. MC has contacted Nick Abrahams at the Local Authority to challenge the current number of 62 and is awaiting a response.

A review of the Early Years set up at the school took place this week and they were advised that they do not need to appoint a qualified early years teacher in Reception, and they could utilise the Nursery manager.

Trustees challenged how the budget has been prepared and who has been consulted; The central finance team discussed the budget in the presence of senior leaders within the school who have had a good oversight of the curriculum needs and areas of need. When the new Headteacher joins the School in September and completes a full review of staffing, this may need further exploration and adjustment. The priority within the budget has been the development of the curriculum.

9.8 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); KPIs highlighted that staff costs have increased and are not covered by the income that the trust receives, and the trust will need to utilise their reserves going forward to address this shortfall.

Trustees commented on the £1.3m reserves that are showing within the budget forecasts and challenged if they are comfortable with that figure when schools are facing significant financial deficits; In order to demonstrate that the income that the schools are receiving do not cover the increased costs that schools are facing, deficit budgets will be submitted to the ESFA, however going forward, there could be an opportunity to invest some reserves back into schools, however this would need careful consideration as there are no guarantees that the schools will receive additional funding.

9.8.1 When the new Headteacher at St Katherine's School is in place, they will need to review the leadership capacity there and this may need additional financial support.

Trustees questioned if there would be an opportunity to recruit an individual to the central trust team that is responsible for supporting all schools with school improvement; This would be an opportunity for all schools to have access to further support, however, will need careful consideration.

9.8.2 Trustees challenged if it would be a worthwhile opportunity to use a portion of the reserves to invest in the Maths curriculum; The Trust have already made plans to undertake training for Teaching Assistants under the White Rose curriculum as the schools have already invested highly in this and there is a clear impact.

9.8.3 The Phonics lead at St Katherine's School has put a proposal forward to the central trust team for the school to become a "Sounds Write Specialist School". This is being explored further as it would be an opportunity for the trust and may attract new schools.

9.8.4 Trustees questioned who will be writing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for St Katherine's School; This will be written by the incoming Headteacher.

10. SAFEGUARDING

10.1 A recent external review of safeguarding for all three schools has been completed and highlighted a number of positive processes and procedures that are in place and being used effectively.

10.1.1 The review showed some gaps in the safeguarding processes at Loose Primary School surrounding the use of the swimming pool and these have been addressed between the school and the swimming pool hirer.

10.1.2 The trust has been made aware of some trust-wide actions that have been suggested to further enhance the safeguarding aspect of the trust and these include:

- A termly forum for Designated Safeguarding Leads to come together.
- Strategic safeguarding training for Governors and Trustees.
- Implementation of a system / process during recruitment checks to cover online searches of candidates.
- Peer to peer review of My Concern records to ensure consistency
- Specific safeguarding site walk outside of the Health and Safety site walk.

Action point 1; MC to share Trust safeguarding report with Trustees, and school-based reports with ILD.

Action point 2; MC to liaise with the auditor for details of strategic safeguarding training for Trustees.

11. CHAIRS ACTION

11.1 Carole Hardy has received communication from the National College offering a webinar on the sustainability of leadership and climate actions that need to be implemented by 2025 under the Department of Education (DfE) guidance.

12. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

12.1 Katherine Atkinson, co-opted Governor at Loose Primary School has resigned due to family reasons, and a replacement Governor has come forward; Stuart Thomson is related to the office manager at Loose Primary School and has attended the term 5 Local Governing Body Board meeting as an observer and would like to be considered for the appointment.

Trustees approved the appointment of Stuart Thomson as co-opted Governor for Loose Primary School with effect from the 24th of May 2023.

Action point 3; JE to send resignation acceptance letter to Katherine Atkinson.

Action point 4; AL to make contact with Stuart Thompson to complete Governor appointment checks.

Clerk action; Update Governor records to reflect appointment of Stuart Thompson.

13. TRUST BOARD TRAINING

13.1 Trustees were reminded of the cyber training that was emailed to them this week.

14. POLICIES AND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

14.1 Policies presented by the Finance and Audit Committee

14.1.1 Trustees present approved the Trust Pay Policy recommended.

14.1.2 Trustees present approved the Trust Finance policy recommended.

14.1.3 Trustees present approved the Trust Covid Absence Policy recommended.

14.2 Trust Risk Register; Trustees noted the risk register and made no comments.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 2023-2024 meeting dates; Draft dates for 2023/24 have been collated and these are under review by AP and AL.

Action point 5; AL & AP to review 2023/2024 meeting dates to be presented to Trustees at the term 6 Trust Board meeting.

16. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

16.1 Trustees confirmed that items from this meeting are to be recorded within a separate set of confidential minutes.

17. MEETING CLOSE

16.1 All parties were thanked for their attendance and contribution at the meeting;

The meeting concluded.

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER	UPDATE
Actions outstanding from 7th February 2023 (term 3)			
	CH to arrange meeting with new Member and report to Trust Board in term 5.	CH	

	<p>24th May 2023 update; CH has emailed the prospective new Member and is awaiting a response.</p> <p><i>Action; carry forward</i></p>		
Matters arising from term 29th March 2023 meeting (term 4)			
	<p>MC to investigate requirements around qualification certificates, particularly those who are working in the professional roles already.</p> <p>24th May 2023 update;</p> <p><i>Action; carry forward</i></p>	MC	
	<p>All Trustees to complete Cyber Security e-learning before next Board meeting.</p> <p>24th May 2023 update; CH and CC are yet to complete the training modules sent by AL. This needs to be completed by the 31st of May 2023 as the transition date is the 1st of June 2023.</p> <p><i>Action; CC and CH to complete Cyber security training before 31st May 2023</i></p>	ALL	
Matters arising from this meeting			
1.	Action point; MC to share Trust safeguarding report with Trustees, and school-based reports with ILD.	MC	
2.	MC to liaise with the auditor for details of strategic safeguarding training for Trustees.	MC	
3.	JE to send resignation acceptance letter to Katherine Atkinson.	JE	
4.	AL to make contact with Stuart Thompson to complete Governor appointment checks.	AL	
5.	AL & AP to review 2023/2024 meeting dates to be presented to Trustees at the term 6 Trust Board meeting.	AL / AP	
Clerk Actions			
	JE to mark term 4 minutes as signed on Governor Hub		
	Update Governor records to reflect appointment of Stuart Thompson.		Complete