



COPPICE PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

PUBLIC MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7th February 2024

Trust Board present at the meeting held on 20th March 2024 approved these minutes as a true and accurate record, and signed on Governor Hub electronically

PRESENT

Carole Hardy (CH), Chair	John Edgar (JE), Vice Chair
Isabelle Linney-Drouet (ILD), Trustee	Carina Cuddington (CC), Trustee
Neil McDonald (NM), Trustee	Mark Chatley (MC), Trust Leader
Annamaria Potgieter (AP), CFO (Chief Financial Officer)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Lacey, Governance Professional	
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Yellow highlighted text demonstrates challenge / questions to the Trust representatives

PART A – PUBLIC DISCUSSION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE *(led by Chair)*

1.1 Welcome: CH (Carole Hardy) welcomed all parties to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from PM and AM.

1.3 Quorum: The meeting was declared as quorate.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST *(led by Chair)*

2.1 CH gave all parties the opportunity to declare any additional declarations of interest against the agenda to which none were declared.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND ACTIONS OUTSTANDING

3.1 Approval of Minutes; Both the public and confidential minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place on the 6th December 2023.

Clerk action: AL to mark the minutes as signed on Governor Hub and publish on website

3.2 Actions Outstanding; Trustees noted the completed actions from previous meetings (recorded in the actions table). Other actions were discussed under specific agenda items, or below:

- LPS pilot of governor monitoring – JE had received an update that he had shared with MC, who in turn had recently discussed with HT's. CC asked if she could receive an update for use with the new St Katherine's LGB in T3.

4. TRUST MATTERS

4.1 Autumn Data pack: MC provided Trustees with a summary of the data and key issues and challenges with specific reference to the vulnerable groups as they tend to fall in multiple groups. JE asked if the data relating to vulnerable groups could be presented in a VENN diagram by school as this would show the distribution of vulnerable pupils across the three groups? MC agreed to provide such.

ILD why some pupils were unable to access assessments? MC advised that this related to those pupils who were studying the curriculum at a lower level, and therefore were not expected to complete the assessments for their Year group.

JE expressed a concern raised at the Loose LGB in that TN believes not all SEND pupils have been identified and if this is the case, then how does the Trust ensure these children receive the right learning content and assessments? MC advised that pupils are screened in relation to speech and language on entry to EYS, and then as staff become aware of any behaviours or issues pupils are assessed depending on the circumstances e.g. What might be needed to refer to LIFT.

CC added that RL is also aware not all SEND needs have been identified. CH asked how do trustees assure themselves that all SEND pupils are being picked up? NMc asked if the SEND policy was fit for purpose and if so, is it being followed?

MC confirmed that the SEND policy was right for pupils on the SEND register and the issues was one of capacity and having sufficient resources to identify pupils.

ILD asked what could be done to increase SEND resources? MC confirmed that this was being looked into but that the resources should be located within the schools as pupil knowledge tends to produce better assessment of need not least as the child feels more comfortable with someone that they know.

CC asked whether parents could be involved in the process – MC advised that parent involvement varied due to a range of factors and that this sometimes meant that the order of assessments for children reflected this.

MC added that events and networking opportunities were being offered to parents of SEND pupils. CC followed up by asking what were schools offering to support parent well-being and signposting to such events and other resources? MC agreed to look into what was being done to support parent well-being and to action.

JE commented that good teachers / TA's identify needs and make adaptations within class to enable pupils to access the curriculum. Data would indicate that this is not happening across all classes and therefore, what is being done to support these teachers? MC advised that this is being provided via PDM and pedagogy, SEND support and interventions. ILD added that if some teachers are not getting it right then a suggestion would be for BT to look at practice and pedagogy rather than ongoing work on the curriculum sequencing.

ACTION: Trustees asked MC to discuss the matter with HT's to clarify and confirm the issues and identify solutions, which can be costed and reported to Trustees to consider how funding can be made available to address the issue of SEND pupil's progress.

4.2 Survey outcomes: MC provided a summary of the outcomes informing trustees that responses from both staff and parents was low. Plans are being developed to increase participation and particular parental engagement for the summer term survey such as when parents attend school / class assemblies.

4.3 Review of the KPI's: Trustees noted that the Trust was on track to achieve the KPI's with the possible exception of 'growth' which MC had highlighted as 'red'. This item was discussed in detail later on the agenda – item 6.2 refers.

4.4 Report from EEC Chair: CH provided feedback to Trustees on other matters arising from the T3 EEC meeting not already discussed – the draft minutes were provided with the agenda. Key issues discussed focused on the autumn data pack and SEND including SEND resources and support, survey outcomes and trust wide training for governors.

ACTION: MC to source Kent Test Data for the schools and provide to Trustees

5. FEEDBACK FROM LGB'S AND SCHOOL SPECIFIC MATTERS

5.1 Feedback from LGB's:

- Coxheath – the key matters arising related to: Trustee / Governor communications and the Expansion project.
- Loose - the main issues arising from the LPS LGB meeting concerned site management issues and resources having to be diverted to cover the role.
- St Katherine's – the LGB meeting is being re-arranged due to the Ofsted inspection resulting in that planned for T3 being cancelled.

5.2 Coxheath Expansion project

- MC informed Trustees that the LA had cancelled the January project review meeting due to the Project Manager being on extended sick leave. A date of 22nd February had been set for the initial project meeting.
- GM was hoping that the temporary building would be on site by May 2024 as this would provide time to effect the classroom moves in time for the start of T1, September 2024. Trustees noted that it was not a simple case of providing the interim building for the bulge intake in EYS planned for September 2024. The building would be located adjacent to the modular building and therefore require several class movements to accommodate the additional EYFS class in the KS1 building.
- CH asked when would the school know of the numbers for the September 2024 intake? MC advised that this would be published on 14th February 2024 and agreed to confirm once known.

ACTION: MC to confirm September intake for Coxheath.

5.3 Loose SEND development

- It was noted that the LA had not provided the design and costings as requested by F&A. The project was progressing and expected to be completed for September 2024. Item to be carried forward to T4.

ACTION: AP to provide Trustees with the project details.

6. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

6.1 Annual Strategic Actions: MC provided Trustees with a summary of the report attached to the agenda. Key points:

- **Quality of Education:** The outcomes of the external reviews had been positive supporting the view that the curriculum is ambitious and meets the national curriculum. Subject leaders for writing are continuing to design a new curriculum, which would be ready for September 2024. MC is grateful to the HT's for releasing their subject leads to work on this, which has proven to be challenging and time consuming. As a result, DT has taken a 'back seat' and the new curriculum is unlikely to be ready until September 2025 – MC reminded Trustees that it was agreed a change in the curriculum would only be implemented at the start of an academic year.
- **Personal Development of pupils:** Building on the success of the panto in 2022/23, the aim to offer an annual event, which provides wider learning opportunities. The proposal for 2023/24 is to host an athletics event for Years 4 and 5 at the Julie Rose stadium, which will become an annual event. As Year 6 would miss out on the event, RL is planning to organise a similar experience for that year group and was looking for a suitable venue the Loose side of town. ILD offered the use of the sports facilities at Cornwallis Academy.
- **Progression Pathways:** MC provided an update advising trustees that the progression pathways had been mapped out and were now being expanded. The aim is to develop progression pathways for all roles.
- **EYFS:** The aim is to build on the external reviews and develop trust-wide principles particularly those relating to continuous provision.

6.2 Growth of the Trust: MC informed Trustees that future growth of the Trust had been discussed with HT's. It was considered that there are three key parts to the growth strategy:

- What does the Trust offer look like? MC agreed to provide a draft proposal to Trustees in T4.
- CH said that the Trust should complete a self-evaluation against the 5 pillars and the matrix provided in Annex B. This would provide a gap analysis and help define our strategy for growth.
- How well we sell the Trust, and our approach to marketing especially concerning timing and to whom? It is felt that the Trust might need to look further afield for schools who might want to join the Trust.

MC suggested having a discussion with the RSG to explore how the Trust could be promoted to schools who need support, or have a bad experience, seek RSG referrals. Trustees expressed a view that the Trust should seek mergers or new schools to join by mutual agreement and for the benefit of both rather than simply

schools that require improvement. Trustees also noted that the need to be aware of possible threats from others who might be interested in either individual schools or the whole Trust.

ACTION: MC to provide a draft proposal for growth in T4.

7. POLICIES AND KEY DOCUMENTS

7.1 Policies:

- Trustees approved the following: SEND Policy, Children in Care guidance and Investment Policy.
- Trustees asked that the Grievance and Staff Discipline and Conduct policies be deferred to T4 so that anomalies could be addressed.

7.2 Risk Register: JE informed Trustees that following feedback, he and MC were reviewing the format Risk Register to include pre-mitigation and post mitigation scores, including a note of the action taken. In addition, there would be a summary to highlight key risks. An issue would be how to ensure Trustees are made aware when relatively low-level risks become more serious and worthier of escalating. Once finalised, there was also a need to roll out to LGB's to establish a register for school specific risks.

ACTIONS: NM to review risk register and inform JE / MC of any H&S omissions. JE / MC to provide Trustees with new Risk Register for T4.

7.3 Pupil Premium Reports: MC confirmed that the PPM reports were published by the 31st December 2023 deadline.

8. FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

8.1 December 2023 Management Accounts & Budgets: AP provided Trustees with an overview of the management accounts provided with the agenda. In summary, the key points were: Year-end Trust forecast reserves at £1.4m were slightly down compared to last month at £1.5m but remained above budget. Main reasons for the above budget forecast were: year-end balances brought forward, inflationary increase in staffing costs not being met by an increase in funding, additional HNF with concerns regarding future funding. Impact on the budget can be seen in Year 4 where reserves are significantly lower.

CC asked if there was an explanation for the in-year deficits as staffing as a percentage of total costs is in line with the benchmark. AP said that there was an initial £130k additional spend closely followed by a further £95k due to the revised budget. MC asked if the staffing costs KPI had been projected for future years and did the figure remain online with the benchmark? AP advised that Kreston Reeves had recently provided benchmarking data, which showed an increase in MATs with budget deficits.

CC commented that the picture should be clearer in March as the funding rates will have been published, and also there should be better idea of the support staff pay increase.

JE asked about the risk to HNF. CC advised that the LA had funding challenges and, there is a need to re-apply annually to retain existing funding, and there is the issue for the schools where 1-2-1 TA's funded by HNF had more than 2 years' service and therefore, would incur redundancy costs albeit relatively small.

8.2 Estate Management

- **H&S Compliance:** MC informed Trustees of the discussion at F&A relating to the vacant Site Manager role at LPS, and the impact it was having on other staff. Although there was an interim Agency resource, the person worked only morning resulting in SLT having to lock up the school, and urgent tasks being picked up by Office staff. The post had been advertised but despite reviewing the job description and increasing the pay range there had been no applications. ILD asked if there were any H&S concerns for LPS? MC advised that there were not as there were now better processes in place.
- **RAAC:** MC informed Trustees that following the recent intrusive surveys at CPS and LPS the schools had been declared 'RAAC free'.

8.3 Proposals for the Use of Balances: Trustees noted that the Trust-wide priority was to fund a short-term increase in SEND resources to address the concerns and issues raised following discussions with HT's.

St Katherine's SENCO is diverted by leadership tasks, whereas Coxheath and Loose SENCO's are both part-time. All three schools feel that they are also playing catch up. Action discussed under Item 4.1.

8.4 Trust Auditors: See Confidential minutes

9. GOVERNANCE

9.1 Cyber Security and GDPR training: AL provided with Trustees an update on those Trustees and Governors still to complete the training. Trustees confirmed that all new appointments including staff were required to complete such as part of their induction and existing would undertake refresher training every two years.

ACTION: AL to remind Trustees and Governors of the need to complete the training and remind HT's and HR on the requirement for staff.

9.2 Governor induction and training: It was noted that CH and AL were established training requirements for trustees and governors both in regards to induction and ongoing including that suggested for specific roles.

ACTION: CH / AL to review training needs and suitable material, develop a schedule for governor training.

9.3 Loose LGB: Trustees confirmed re-appointment of Sean Johnson (SJ) as an Associate Governor.

ACTION: AL to confirm appointments to TN and SJ, and update the membership list.

10. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

10.1 There were no urgent matters raised.

- **10.2** LADO referrals: See Confidential minutes

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Ofsted inspection at St Katherine's: See Confidential minutes

11.2 Internal audit – Fraud: AP informed Trustees that in preparation for the forthcoming audit on fraud, one of the questions asked is whether Trustees are aware of and have reviewed Government guidance on fraud and prevention. AP also advised that there was an anti-fraud checklist for Academy Trusts that she would complete. It was agreed that AP would email Trustees with the link to government guidance who would review the document to be discussed at the T4 Board meeting.

ACTIONS: AP to send document link to Trustees to review. AL to include as agenda item for T4 meeting.

11.3 Admission arrangements: MC informed Trustees that an email had been received regarding the determination of admission arrangements. Whilst there was nothing of significance, all Admissions policies have been amended to include revised guidance from the LA regarding distance from school to home.

Trustees agreed to the amendment.

11.4 Teacher Pensions: See Confidential minutes

12. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND ACTION POINTS

12.1 Trustees confirmed that the following items were also considered confidential: 8.4, 10.2, 11.1 and 11.4

12.2 CH asked staff to leave the meeting whilst Trustees discussed confidential matters. AP and AL left the meeting.

13. Meeting close and future dates:

13.1 Next meeting on Wednesday 20th March 2024 to be held at Loose Primary School will start at 1730.

13.2 Future meetings all commencing at 1730 will be held at Loose Primary School (staffroom) on:

- Wednesday 22nd May 2024
- Wednesday 10th July 2024

13.3 CH thanked all attendees for their contribution to the meeting. The meeting closed at 1930.

14. Meeting Outcomes: Against the agenda items, what have we achieved against the three core functions:

14.1 Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction?

14.2 Holding the executive leaders to account for educational performance of the schools

14.3 Overseeing the financial performance of the schools ensuring money is well spent?