



**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD (LGB) MEETING
HELD VIA VIDEO LINK
ON THURSDAY 28 JANUARY 2021 AT 6.30PM**

Present: Mrs Natalie Garrett (Chair)
Mrs Louise Weaver
Mr Alan Eaton
Mr Tim Hughes
Mr Simon Blackbond
Mrs Rachel Gallyot

Apologies: Ms Steph Lovett (Warriner MAT School Improvement Director)

In Attendance: Dr Annabel Kay (CEO Warriner MAT)
Mr Matt Green (Headteacher)
Mrs Catherine Musgrove (Clerk to the Warriner MAT)
Mrs Wendy Willie (Clerk)

ACTIONS

1.	Mr Blackbond to complete PREVENT training. Certificate to be sent to Mr Green	Mr Blackbond
2.	AGM to be scheduled	Mrs Willie
3.	Health & Safety Policy to be finalised and circulated by email for approval	Mrs Musgrove
4.	Pupil Premium Strategy document to be updated and presented at the next meeting	Mr Green/ Mrs Willie
5.	SEND and Complaint's policies to be cross-referenced	Mr Green
6.	Nursery data to be circulated	Mr Green
7.	Governors to contact Mr Green to schedule in monitoring visits	ALL
8.	Dates to be amended in the Governor Visits Policy	Mr Green
9.	Trust governing bodies to be approached to allow governors to observe their meetings	Mrs Musgrove
10.	Staff Governor role to be advertised	Mr Green
11.	Schedule of LGB Business to be drawn up	Mrs Musgrove
12.	Remote Learning Provision self-evaluation form to be shared with Mr Green	Dr Kay/ Mrs Gallyot
13.	Milestones to be added to the Rapid Improvement Plan	Mr Green

This meeting was held via video link through Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19.

1. Welcome & Consent to Absence

Mrs Garrett welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apology as noted above which was accepted. All documents were made available on GovernorHub prior to the meeting. The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of interest in respect of any items on the agenda & notice of any amendments to the Register of Interests

None.

3. Presentation of Draft Report & Financial Statements 01.09.2019 – 31.08.2020

Dr Kay introduced Mr Andy Jones and Mr Andrew Jeffrey of Cooper Parry Accountants, who are also accountants for the Warriner Trust. Mr Jones apologised for the delay in presenting the accounts to the Governing Body.

Audit Findings Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2020

Document 'Audit Findings Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2020' was shared on screen. Mr Jones briefed on the content of the document with the following noted and questions raised:

- There have been tighter controls of the finances this year, although there were a lot of inconsistencies in the postings.
- It has taken time to unravel the payroll and third party payments which has caused the delay.
- Work is now complete and the accountants propose to issue an unmodified audit report and are satisfied that the accounts present a true and fair view of the school and its financial position.
- One caveat is that at the end of the year the Trust has an overall deficit of approximately £110,000.
- There is fundamental uncertainty with the future viability of the Trust.
- A modified regularity report is being issued because there has been no internal scrutiny work undertaken throughout the year. The Education Skills & Funding Agency (ESFA) have done their own investigations, however, these do not count as internal scrutiny.

Key Audit Risk Findings

It was understood that historic payroll balances owed to Northants County Council (NCC) had been resolved. This correlated with NCC's view that nothing was owed to them by the school. However, on working through the third party payments, it transpired that there are still some historic balances not yet paid to NCC. It has been established that from September 2018 to March 2019 no payments were made to NCC and as a result £223,000 is owed to NCC. It was explained that NCC has made payments to the pension authorities, etc, but has not claimed the money back from the school. It was noted that there is no evidence from NCC to support this. Although the accountants tried to obtain confirmation from NCC that this money is owed to them, NCC state that nothing is owed to them. The accountants have found no evidence that this money has been paid to NCC. It was stated that this issue needs to be resolved with NCC.

Mr Jones referred to the audit adjustments and it was noted there was one small unadjusted difference which was the Covid costs, which were not received until after the year-end, so are not accounted for in the results. If these are taken into account it would reduce the deficit by £14,000. Dr Kay recommended this be left in this financial year, with no objections made to this recommendation.

Mr Jones briefed on the issues rated as high, medium or low risk as shared on the screen. It was noted that there was a significant number of control issues from 2019, with complete failure of financial controls and oversight. Mr Jones briefed on the issues which have been addressed, such as monthly Management Accounts now being produced and shared with the LGB. With the Warriner Finance Team supporting these processes through the year, a lot of these issues should be resolved going forward. Dr Kay added that the Warriner team are hugely experienced and is confident that issues will be resolved for the next year end.

Mrs Gallyot asked if a Finance Risk & Audit Committee should be formed. Dr Kay agreed that this committee should be set up as it is still not known when the rebrokering will be finalised. It was clarified that there should be an Audit Committee, however, this can be part of another committee or within the LGB. Dr Kay recommended that due to the size of the LGB that all governors be part of this committee and that a schedule of business be drawn up to ensure that all finance and audit requirements are covered by the LGB. Mrs Musgrove to draw up a schedule of business. **Action: Mrs Musgrove**

Annual Report & Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 August 2020

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were shared on screen. It was clarified that the accounts have to be with the ESFA by 31 January 2021. Mr Jones briefed on the report with the following noted and questions raised:

The accounts have been produced on the basis that the school is not a going concern. The only viable options are for the Department for Education (DfE) to write off the deficit, for more funding to be provided or for the school to join The Warriner MAT or a combination of these.

Mrs Garrett asked if the issue with NCC is mentioned in the report. Mr Jones confirmed it is in Note 15. **Mrs Garrett asked if this is required to be paid back to NCC could a payment plan be put in place.** Mr Jones said a payment plan could be agreed. Dr Kay stated that she would like this issue resolved and would take this forward. **Mr Eaton asked what the MAT's view is of this issue, as it is a huge burden.** Dr Kay advised that they need to establish NCC's position. **Mr Blackbond asked what the impact would be if NCC asked for the money back in one payment.** Mr Jones advised that if NCC did take a one off payment the liability would not affect the deficit. **Mr Blackbond asked if there is a time limit by which NCC could clawback this money.** Mrs Garrett suggested that it could be 7 years.

With no further questions raised it was proposed that the accounts be approved for submission to the ESFA. All governors voted in agreement with the proposal, motion carried. It was clarified that an AGM would be called in order for the accounts to be laid before the Members of the Academy Trust.

Mr Jones and Mr Jeffrey were thanked for presenting the accounts. Mr Jones confirmed that amendments highlighted would be made prior to the accounts being signed and submitted to the ESFA. Mr Jones and Mr Jeffrey left the meeting at 7.45pm.

4. Minutes of the meeting held 10 December 2020 & Review of Actions

The minutes having been circulated were agreed as a true copy. Minutes deferred for signing.

Review of Action Points

Please refer to table above for new/outstanding actions.

5. Headteacher's Update

Mr Green gave the following verbal update with questions invited:

Remote Provision

Now using Google Classrooms with staff becoming more confident in using the system. Parents have been surveyed, with a summary of parental feedback provided on GovernorHub. Generally parents feel the right of amount of work is being set, however, some parents have asked that more challenging work be provided for the more able pupils which has been fed back to staff. Mr Green has compared work completed by those pupils at home and those in school and reported that there were no differences in the work, which is positive.

The number of pupils in school has increased with 36 pupils in school today compared to 3 pupils in the first lockdown. No groups are currently larger than 11 with 15 pupils to be the maximum in a group.

Safeguarding

Mrs Cosgrove, Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo), and Mr Green continue to contact vulnerable families who are not engaging. Mr Green has also visited pupils at home to check they are well.

Rebranding

A consultation was put out to parents with 75% of parents agreeing the rebranding was a good idea but that they did not like the proposed new logo. Mr Green and Dr Kay have discussed the way forward and agreed that this be passed over to governors for governors to discuss and produce ideas. Governors discussed how much to involve parents in the process. It was stated that parents have indicated that the brand is improving in the town, but the view of the wider community is not known. Mr Green advised he is creating a social media strategy which governors can assist with.

Dr Kay commented that as the admissions deadline had passed plans could be put in place for when the rebroking takes place. Mr Green expressed that there needs to be robust pupil numbers moving forward. Dr Kay recommended a marketing group be formed to move this forward. **Mr Blackbond asked if much feedback had been received following the rebranding of the nursery.** Mr Green said that the launch had been impacted by the pandemic and that for some the nursery was the same, just now called something different. During this current lockdown, there are 3 children attending nursery per day.

Mr Eaton asked if the number of pupils coming into school included those permitted to attend because they do not have access to IT at home. Mr Green said no, adding that laptops have been provided to pupils to enable them to access lessons at home. Numbers attending school have increased because the definition of a critical worker has expanded and more parents are working than in the first lockdown. **Mrs Garrett asked if staff are coping.** Mr Green said yes.

School Development Plan (SDP)/Rapid Improvement Plan

The Rapid Improvement Plan was reviewed in December by Dr Kay, Mr Green and Ms Lovett. This review and the monitoring undertaken in the peer review highlighted some pressing issues which needed to be addressed quickly.

Mr Green briefed on some of the issues identified and advised that a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme has been produced covering issues identified. Targeted monitoring and evaluation is taking place between Mr Green and Ms Lovett with improvements already seen with progress being made. **Mrs Garrett asked how staff are coping with being micro-managed.** Mr Green explained that some staff are uncomfortable with it as they have not had experience of being managed or having their work scrutinised. However, staff are working towards the strategy because it is working. **Mr Hughes asked if staff are being managed in relation to planning and monitoring.** Mr Green confirmed this is correct and explained how a planning format was developed to engage staff and move their planning forward. **Mr Hughes asked about English being a focus.** Mr Green explained why English needs to be a focus with monitoring of planning taking place on a weekly basis. Mr Green added that the curriculum is strong and he is confident that the non-core subjects are being embedded. **Mr Hughes asked if mapping of the new curriculum is in place.** Mr Green confirmed it is in place.

Mrs Gallyot asked about the remote learning provision and if the self-evaluation provided by the DfE had been completed to identify any gaps in the provision. Mr Green said he was not aware of the self-evaluation. Dr Kay and Mrs Gallyot to share the self-evaluation with Mr Green.

Action: Dr Kay/Mrs Gallyot

Mrs Gallyot asked if parents had been provided with any guidance on writing to help them support their children at home. Mr Green confirmed that documents are provided on the website for parents to access. There is also a home learning guide on the website as well as useful links.

Mrs Gallyot asked how phonics is being delivered in school and at home. Mr Green explained the work being provided through Google Classrooms for each year group. **Mrs Gallyot asked if pupils are doing group work.** Mr Green confirmed that work is differentiated. Parent Governors briefed on the phonics lessons delivered to their children.

Mr Hughes asked if teachers are able to map the progress and needs of the pupils in order to track their progress. Mr Green explained this is difficult to do remotely. Work submitted is being tracked so pupil engagement can be monitored. Once pupils return to school they will be assessed to identify gaps, with support and interventions to be put in place as required. Dr Kay added that the Trust had reviewed all data collection points and have plans in place for when pupils return to school.

Mrs Gallyot asked if the School Development Plan is as tight as it can be in terms of measurable outcomes and asked how effectively governors could hold the school to account. Mr Green agreed that milestones could be added to the plan. In terms of governors' responsibilities these can be clarified when governors go through the monitoring plan which sits alongside the improvement plan. Mrs Musgrove briefed on governor monitoring, which is closely linked with the improvement plan with progress of specific priorities to be monitored. **Mr Hughes asked how governors will know which areas have made solid progress and which are making slower progress.** Mr Green explained that at each governor meeting the improvement plan can be presented with progress tracked against each of the targets. **Action: Mr Green**

6. Data

End of Autumn Term 2020-21 Data Report had been circulated. The following was noted and questions raised:

- Pupil Premium attendance has been identified as an issue and this will be worked on when all pupils return to school. Attendance as a whole is in line with national and in line with the MAT schools. It was noted that one or two pupils can affect the data.
- Mr Green briefed on the pupil groups as detailed in the document advising that bespoke interventions can be provided as cohorts are small.
- There are a number of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Mrs Cosgrove is developing a whole school EAL strategy to support these students.
- The impact of the lockdown on pupils in term 2 appears to be smaller.
- No identifiable gender gaps were identified which is positive.
- Attainment between summer and autumn born pupils is noticeably different with summer born pupils achieving less well and these pupils will be supported.
- SEND pupils are attaining below and scaffolding learning is being used more effectively than previously, but staff need to improve this element of their planning.

Mrs Garrett asked where the data sits with other schools in relation to Covid. Mr Green said it appears the impact of Covid is smaller than anticipated. Writing across the Trust schools is an issue in terms of stamina and construction of writing. Dr Kay added that pupils are making significant progress across the Trust between testing points. **Mrs Weaver asked if there is any specific reason why writing is not as strong.** Mr Green said no, but suggested that the first lockdown had an impact because pupils were not writing as much. Mr Green added that handwriting guidelines have been provided to pupils which they have been using through Google Classrooms.

Mrs Garrett asked about nursery data. Mr Green advised he would send this out to governors.

Action: Mr Green

7. Management Accounts

A summary of the accounts had been made available on GovernorHub. It was stated that significant savings need to be made, with the loss of income from lettings due to the lockdown impacting on the budget. Covid costs have also impacted on the budget and it is not known if these will be able to be claimed back in the future.

Dr Kay explained that they have re-profiled the five-year budget. A budget will be presented that will show the year-on-year savings it is hoped will be made with restructuring. Currently it looks like the budget will break even in year 3.

8. Safeguarding

Reported under item 5.

9. Policies for Approval

The following policies had been made available prior to the meeting.

a) Admissions Policy 2022/23

Mrs Gallyot asked if the policy had been consulted on in the last 7 years. Mr Green said no, adding that the 2023-24 policy will go out for consultation and come to governors in September 2021.

Mrs Gallyot asked why the school does not use the policy provided by NCC. Mr Green said he is not aware of an NCC policy and that this policy is based on one used by Farthinghoe Primary School.

Mrs Gallyot asked if the school is confident the policy is acceptable as it seems to be very short. Dr Kay clarified that the Trust schools use the model DfE policy which is slimmed down.

With no further questions raised it was agreed the policy be adopted as presented.

b) Health & Safety Policy

A Health & Safety Policy had been circulated for review. However, it was noted that the policy needs to be amended. Policy to be finalised and circulated by email for approval. **Action: Mrs Musgrove**

c) Exclusion Policy

It was clarified that the policy is based on the MAT policy which has been reviewed by legal advisers. It was noted that if Mr Green were not available to make a decision regarding an exclusion then he would refer to the Warriner MAT. Mrs Musgrove added that MAT governors could be approached should a panel need to be formed.

Mrs Weaver asked if a pupil had been excluded last academic year. Mr Green confirmed there had been one permanent exclusion last academic year. **Mrs Weaver asked if the exclusion had been reviewed in line with the policy.** Mr Green confirmed that the exclusion had been reviewed by a panel with the meeting minuted. **Mrs Weaver asked if the review is documented as having taken place.** Dr Kay clarified that a permanent exclusion cannot go ahead without a review panel. **Mr Eaton asked about the template letters being provided by Oxfordshire County Council.** Mr Green advised that this is because NCC do not provide template letters. **Mrs Garrett asked if policies would be duplicated for nursery.** Mr Green clarified that all adopted policies are relevant to the nursery, the nursery is part of the whole school and is not considered separate to the school.

With no further questions raised, it was proposed that the policy be adopted as presented. All governors voted in agreement with the proposal, motion carried.

d) Governor Visits Policy

Mrs Musgrove explained that the policy had been developed by the Trust over the last 12 months and links with monitoring of the SDP. It is hoped that the policy will be used to support governors in their role. It was noted that questions are also available in the policy to enable governors to challenge senior leaders.

Mr Green referred governors to Appendix 3 which details which governors are assigned to an area for monitoring. It was stated these links are up for discussion. Dr Kay added that each row represents a termly visit which can be held remotely. It was recommended that virtual meetings be held as soon as possible. Governors to contact Mr Green to schedule in monitoring visits. **Action: ALL**

Mr Hughes asked if concerns identified during a visit should be raised with the Chair of Governors, particularly if for example there are concerns about the Headteacher. Mrs Musgrove clarified that following each visit a feedback form should be completed which can be an item on the next LGB agenda for visits to be discussed by the Governing Body. Mrs Musgrove added that if there is a concern about something operational this should be taken to the Headteacher. Dr Kay clarified that any formal complaints should follow the Complaint's Policy.

With no further questions raised, it was proposed that the policy be adopted. All governors voted in agreement with the proposal, motion carried. Dates to be amended in the policy. **Action: Mr Green**

10. Governance

a) Governor Meetings

Mrs Gallyot asked if there would be any opportunities for governors to observe other governing body meetings across the Trust as part of their training. Mrs Musgrove to ask if governors can observe meetings. Mrs Garrett raised the issue of confidentiality and it was agreed that this would not be an issue. **Action: Mrs Musgrove**

11. Any Other Business

a) Staff Governors

Mrs Weaver asked if there are any plans to appoint Staff Governors. Mr Green agreed that the Staff Governor role can be advertised. **Action: Mr Green**

b) HMI

Mrs Garrett referred to the issue highlighted at the last meeting at which it was stated that when HMI visit a school in Special Measures that is receiving support from a Trust, that if they were not part of the Trust HMI would consider it as external support and asked if there is a conflict of interest. Dr Kay reiterated that the support would be seen as external support but not necessarily in a negative way.

c) Deficit

Mr Eaton asked with regard to the auditor's report, is it felt that the report will impact any decision made by the DfE or the MAT Board in Southfield joining the MAT. Dr Kay stated that the closing deficit is less than expected and she is working on a recovery plan for the DfE now that the final figures are confirmed. Dr Kay added she had not heard from the DfE since October 2020, however, the deficit is being managed which is positive.

d) Administrative Post

Mrs Garrett asked if someone would be appointed to the Administrative position. Dr Kay said there were no plans to appoint to this position at present and in the new structure this position would reduce to 15 hours.

e) Website Audit

Mrs Garrett asked if the website had been audited again. Mr Green said no, as the website has not yet been fully updated.

12. Date of next meeting – Thursday 25 March 2021 6.30pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed _____ Dated _____