



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BD) AND LOCAL GOVERNORS OF THE RURAL CHURCH SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST (RCSAT) HELD REMOTELY ON 15th MARCH 2021
(Commenced 3.30pm)

Directors in Attendance:

P Bostock	(PB)	Chair of Board of Directors
A James	(AJ) (Joined at 4pm)	
S Loughlin	(SL)	
A Denton	(AD)	
N Badger	(NB)	Executive Headteacher

Local Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

T Boote	(TB)
B Brockbank	(BB)
I Burnley	(IB)
A Tomlinson	(AT) (Joined at 3.50pm)
S Waddington	(SW)

Also in Attendance:

M Gate	(MG)	Observer
A Goodwin	(AG)	St Oswald's Worleston School Principal
K Appleby	(KA)	Warmingham School Principal
H Cummings	(Clerk)	Clerk

PART ONE

Welcome and Prayer

1. APOLOGIES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) ITEMS

No apologies for absence were received.

There were no items of other business to consider.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No potential pecuniary interests or conflicts of interest were declared in connection with the business to be discussed during the meeting.

General declarations of interest were recorded on GovernorHub.

Chair.....Date.....

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Tim Boote and Malcolm Gate as new Local Governors, whose appointments would be officially confirmed at the next Directors' meeting. It was hoped that they would be able to visit the schools before too long.

Governors noted the departure of the following governors:

- Heidi Spencer had sadly died in January, leaving a vacancy for Estates Director. PB would Chair Estates meetings.
- Alex Platt had stepped down as Finance Director and local governor when her term of office expired at the end of February. AD had agreed to Chair the Finance and HR meetings.
- Isobel Burnley would be stepping down as a Local Governor when her term of office expired at the end of March, leaving a vacancy on the Pastoral committee.

Governors again expressed their sadness at losing Heidi, and their thanks for all she had done for the Trust. They also noted the intention of the Trust to arrange a memorial to Heidi.

The Chair offered his sincere thanks to AP for the work she had done in managing the Trust's finances since it was first set up in 2017. AP was stepping down due to domestic pressures and it was hoped that she would feel able to re-join the Trust at some point in the future. AP wished the Trust and its schools all the very best for their future development.

IB had decided to retire after many years' service to St Oswald's, and also the other schools after the formation of the Trust. The Chair thanked her for her support and noted that she would be sadly missed, but hoped that she would stay in touch with the school, where she would always be warmly welcomed.

Governors noted that the terms of office of the following governors were due to expire on 31st March 2021. All had indicated their willingness to continue and would be re-appointed at the next Directors' meeting.

- Brenda Brockbank
- Tim Hayward
- Alison Tomlinson

4. RECRUITMENT AND ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNORS

Governors requested an explanation of the process of appointing local governors, as there was some confusion as to whether vacancies were advertised; whether there was a quota for each school; whether applicants needed to be church-goers, and who approved the appointment of local governors.

The Chair explained that all appointments to date had been referred to the Diocese, and a faith reference had always been requested. However, it was unclear whether this was strictly necessary, and the Chair was working with the Diocese to clarify the position.

ACTION: PB to report back on discussions with the Diocese.

It was recognised that there was currently a lack of governors affiliated to Warmingham, and the Chair noted that MG would be a Warmingham governor.

Chair.....Date.....

With regard to the role of local governors, it was acknowledged that the inability of governors to visit the schools had reduced their involvement, and the need to respond quickly to developments had meant decisions taken at Director level had not always been communicated to local governors. It was agreed that it was important for local governors to be kept informed, so that they could respond appropriately to any matters raised by parents or staff.

Governors discussed access to papers on GH, and attendance at committee meetings, and it was agreed that all committee folders should be available to all governors. The access had originally been restricted so that governors were not overwhelmed with paperwork, but it was agreed they should be able to see it if they wished.

ACTION: Clerk to remove access restrictions on Committee folders on GH.

Similarly, all governors were welcome to attend any committee meeting, or Directors' meeting, with appropriate voting restrictions. The clerk noted that while meetings were being held virtually, the meeting links were available in the GH calendar.

5. PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2020 were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes. That were not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

6. COVID UPDATE (included in the EHTs report)

A detailed update was included in the EHTs report on GH, but governors particularly noted the following points made by the EHT:

- Parental support for the schools had been strong.
- The three Principals had worked extremely well as a team.
- The welfare of the pupils had been at the forefront of every decision, and all actions had been in the best interests of staff, children and families.
- Remote learning had gone very well, but staff were glad to be back in school.

NB expressed how proud she felt of everyone at all three schools. They had risen to the challenge and come through as a team.

Governors had reviewed the updated risk assessments and re-opening plans on GH prior to 8th March, and were happy to formally approve.

Full details of remote learning had been published on the school's websites in September 2020, and it had been monitored through the Achievement committee. With the children now back in school, and the experience following the first lockdown, the emphasis was on friendship; helping children adjust socially to being back.

Attendance for the first week back had been as follows:

- Bunbury - 99.5%
- St Oswald's - 97% (1 child, absent all week, had now moved to another school)
- Warmingham - 95.21% (3 children on part-time timetables, and 1 absent with a broken leg)

Chair.....Date.....

The Achievement and Pastoral committees had specifically looked at how the schools had minimised the impact on disadvantaged children, but all governors noted the individual approach taken by the schools. Each school had gone beyond the DfE definition of disadvantaged to provide support based on the individual needs of children and families.

All staff were being asked to conduct lateral flow tests twice a week, and all were doing so apart from 2 staff at warmingham.

7. PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

a) Part one minutes of committee meetings not previously received;

The minutes from the spring term committee meetings had been uploaded to GovernorHub for review prior to the meeting, with the exception of Finance & HR which had taken place immediately before this meeting. The following updates were received:

Finance

Budget forecasts had been adjusted in light of the latest information and to reflect likely income and expenditure under Covid restrictions. As a result, the schools' budgets were looking healthier, and there were no concerns around the financial position for the next 2 years.

Estates

Governors heard that roofing work at Bunbury had been completed, and the builders had left the site. Internal and cosmetic work would be completed over the Easter break.

Work was continuing to formulate a CIF bid for a new classroom at St Oswald's, replacing the mobile classroom and conservatory. The arguments supporting the bid would focus on overcrowding of 125%, and the removal of the mobile classroom allowing restoration of the sports field. It had also been agreed to seek planning permission for the proposal in advance of the bid submission.

There were no significant health & safety concerns, and the two Site Managers were agreed to be doing an excellent job in covering general maintenance issues.

Pastoral

AJ wished to congratulate the Principals on the level of care for the children during lockdown. It was agreed that it went above and beyond what was required and was a great credit to the Trust.

Achievement

The committee had reviewed the available data, and noted that the Year 5 cohort at St Oswald's was particularly weak. Whilst the reasons were clearly understood, it was of concern because this year group would provide the first official results since 2019.

The committee had been pleased to note that the staff team at Warmingham was working well, and 'Greater Depth' outcomes had been predicted.

b) There were no other reports from committees.

c) There were no recommendations requiring the approval of the board of governors.

Chair.....Date.....

d) Reports from governors with special responsibilities:

Health & Safety

While school visits were not possible, PB continued to monitor Health and Safety through reports submitted to the Estates committee. St Oswald's had been subject a H&S inspection on 1st February, and the report had been uploaded to GH.

8. PART ONE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S (EHT) REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

The EHT had circulated a comprehensive report, for review prior to the meeting, focusing mainly on the response to the lockdown and the pandemic, as covered under item 6.

Governors wished to thank the EHT for the exceptional detail provided in the report, and noted that there were no questions because everything had been addressed in the report.

9. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A detailed update on the plan was contained within the EHT's report, but governors noted the following:

Priority 1 – Reading. The Pathways to Reading scheme had been introduced during the summer term, ready to launch in September. Evidence of impact was observed towards the end of the autumn term, and teaching had continued remotely during the lockdown period.

Priority 2 – Curriculum Review. This was paused to allow staff to focus on remote learning, but would re-start in the summer term, ready for September 2021.

Priority 3 – Review of SEND provision. Actions agreed following an internal review conducted in the autumn term, were not felt to have had the desired impact on SEND provision. An external review of SEND/Pastoral provision had therefore been arranged for 27th April. It was hoped that this would provide an action plan with which to move forward.

The Chair noted that work was continuing on a Trust level Self Evaluation and Development Plan, as recommended by the School Improvement Partner. The Chair planned to circulate the SEF in the next week, for comments.

10. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNER

There had not been any visits from the SIP due to the lockdown and school closures.

11. GOVERNOR MONITORING, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

a) Report from the Training Liaison Governor:

SL had previously sent out the training schedules for both Cheshire East and the Diocese, and reminded governors of the online modules offered by the NGA. All governors were asked to ensure that their training logs on GH were up to date.

New governors were asked to contact SL if they were unsure how to access any of the training.

ACTION: SL to circulate skills audit for completion.

Chair.....Date.....

b) Governor Monitoring Visit Reports

SL noted that she was working with NB to update the EHT job description. A draft would be circulated to those involved with the EHT appointment in February, for comments.

12. SPRING TERM GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter had been circulated earlier in the term and items addressed in committee. The clerk drew governors attention to the changes in what schools are required to publish on their websites.

13. MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting of the Full Board of Directors and Local Governors was confirmed as **Tuesday 6th July 2021 at 3.30pm**. The meeting would be held in person if possible.

ACTION: PB to book Aqueduct marina if possible.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other part one business.

The meeting moved to Part two.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm