



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BoD) OF THE RURAL CHURCH  
SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST (RCSAT) HELD AT BUNBURY SCHOOL  
ON 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2023  
(Commenced 4pm)**

**Directors in Attendance:**

P Bostock	(PB)	Chair of Board of Directors
N Badger	(NB)	Executive Headteacher
S Loughlin	(SL)	
A Denton	(AD)	
B Holdcroft	(BH)	
P North	(PN)	

**Also in Attendance:**

M Gate	(MG)	Chair Warmingham LGC
V Greenbury	(VG)	Chair Bunbury LGC
J Jones	(JJ)	Trust Business Manager
H Cummings	(Clerk)	

**PART ONE**

The meeting opened with a prayer.

**1. APOLOGIES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) ITEMS**

Apologies were received and accepted from B Brockbank.

There was one additional item of part 1 business to consider:

- School transport

**2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the business to be discussed at the meeting.

General declarations of interest were recorded in full on GovernorHub.

**3. MEMBERSHIP**

- a) There were no changes to the membership of the Board of Directors to note.
- b) There were no appointments of new Local Governors to approve. However, VG noted a contact with a background in IT project management, who might be interested in becoming a Director or Local Governor. It was agreed that they should be asked to complete a skills audit, to see where their skills could best be used.

**ACTION: Clerk to send a skills audit to VG to forward.**

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- c) There were no current vacancies on the trust board.
- d) There were no terms of office due to expire before the next meeting.
- e) JJ confirmed that all DBS and Section 128 checks had been completed.
- f) JJ confirmed that GIAS had been updated.

*NB. The following items match those on the agenda, but numbering does not align as numbers 4 & 5 were missed from the agenda.*

#### **4. PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The part one minutes of the previous meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were **agreed** as a true record, signed by the Chair and retained by the trust.

##### Matters arising

All actions had been completed, with the exception of the following:

- The Admissions Policy had been reviewed to confirm compliance with the Admissions Code regarding military personnel. However, another issue had come to light relating to the wording around the catchment area and the parish. The policy would therefore be updated in September and sent out for consultation.
- Re-format two procedure documents. **Action c/f.**

#### **5. CHAIR'S POWER TO ACT**

No actions had been taken on behalf of the Board of Directors since the previous meeting.

#### **6. PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a) Directors had reviewed the minutes from each of the LGC meetings, and the committee Chairs added the following comments:

##### **Bunbury**

VG reported that the committee had received curriculum presentations on Science and IT, and had discussed the following areas:

- Governor training day on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- Finance
- The SIAMS inspection expected next year
- Development and impact of the Pastoral Management role
- Areas identified by a governor Health & Safety walk.
- Governor monitoring schedule to be drawn up.

Since the meeting, VG had attended training on governor visits and would be looking at the best way to develop governor links, perhaps linked to SDP priorities.

It was noted that the 2 appeals for places in Reception in September had been withdrawn.

##### **St Oswald's**

The meeting had discussed the recent Ofsted inspection, noting that while the outcome of Good was the same as previously, the tone of the report had been much more positive.

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The CIF (Condition Improvement Fund) bid for a new classroom had been rejected, and governors had agreed to meet on 11<sup>th</sup> July to discuss alternatives.

### Warmingham

MG highlighted the following areas of discussion:

- Presentation by Year 5 pupils on their research project.
- The Principal's report and the need to streamline this to reduce the Principal's workload. It was also noted that a more concise report on the SDP, focused on the key actions, would be easier for governors to understand.
- Proposed SDP priorities for 2023/24
- The proposal for an after-school club. It had been agreed that this was not currently financially viable but would be kept under review.

A Director noted that a pilot scheme for wrap-around care was likely in the next few years, given the government's stated aim for all schools to offer this by 2027. The pilot scheme was likely to include capital funding, and may be of interest to Warmingham.

#### b) Outdoor classroom at Warmingham

Directors discussed the proposal to instal an outdoor classroom at Warmingham, to provide additional space for activities such as intervention, PPA time, music lessons and meetings. The project would cost approximately £23K in total, with electrical work being completed by RH.

**Question:** Where will the money come from, given that the budget shows a predicted deficit from 2024/25 onwards?

Response: We expect a budget surplus for this year of approx. £32K. The budget forecast includes the cost of this project but does not include sparsity funding, which has been received in each of the last 2 years. The school is also looking at other sources of funding, such as sponsorship or donations from local developers.

**Question:** Could the decision be delayed until we know about sparsity funding?

Response: We are unlikely to know about the funding until November, and the need is urgent. We would want to complete the work over the summer break if possible.

**Question:** Would the building allow for savings elsewhere, or generate any income?

Response: The school currently has to hire the village hall for certain activities, so this money would be saved. There is also the possibility of letting out the space for after-school activities.

Directors discussed the current problems caused by the lack of space at Warmingham, and acknowledged the likely positive impact of the project on the quality of provision.

**Directors voted to approve the project**, with the proviso that the school should do all it can to secure additional funding to offset the cost. It was also suggested that the LGC write to the local MP to highlight the lack of facilities at Warmingham.

NB noted that RH would need to prioritise outstanding work at Bunbury before he would be able to work on the outdoor classroom.

- c) There were no Director link monitoring reports to receive, but reports from the SENCo had been shared with each of the LGCs.

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## 7. FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

Directors confirmed the following:

- a) The 2021/22 audited financial statements had been submitted to Companies House by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023.
- b) Arrangements were in place to ensure the combined budget forecast would be submitted by the deadline of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023.
- c) The Section 175 Safeguarding return was being completed by the trust Pastoral manager for each school.

### Approvals:

- a) Directors reviewed the draft budgets agreed by each of the LGCs and noted that the budget for Bunbury included £5.5K to refurbish an area of the school for use as an intervention space, storage facility and PPA area. Directors discussed the need for the space and approved the expenditure of £5.5K

**The budgets for each school were approved.**

- b) Directors **approved** the **proposed staffing structure for 2023/24**
- c) Directors reviewed and **approved** the **annual contracts as listed on GovernorHub**.
- d) Directors discussed the governor training packages offered by Cheshire East and the NGA. A list of training undertaken over the previous 2 years was available on GovernorHub for information. In light of the relatively low level of usage, it was agreed that neither package would be purchased for 2023/24, but governors could still sign up for Cheshire East training on a pay-as-you-go basis.

### To review

- a) **Monthly Management Accounts** up to and including June 2023 had been circulated on GovernorHub for Directors to review.

Directors wished to record their thanks to JJ following the positive review by the DfE on 18<sup>th</sup> May. The official report was still awaited, but the feedback had been very complimentary.

## 8. PART ONE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

The EHT's report had been circulated on GH in advance of the meeting and NB highlighted the following areas:

### Writing

While the end-of-year data was not available, it was clear that improvements in writing, following the pandemic, did not match the improvements seen in other areas, despite the best efforts of staff. It had therefore been decided to adopt the Pathways to Write scheme across all trust schools. NB noted that the scheme was based on quality texts and would therefore fit in with the connected curriculum. The structure was such that it would not be possible to have whole school themes but the connections with various curriculum areas would still be made, based on the assigned text for any given group.

NB noted that the planning and structure of the scheme would better support staff for whom English was not a specialism. It provided clear progression and included planning for greater depth and mixed age groups, which was essential for St Oswald's and Warmingham.

**Question:** Will you need to buy a lot more books?

**Response:** We will need some, but just teacher copies, and we already have some of the texts.

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**Question:** How do staff feel about it?

Response: Staff have been very positive about the lesson plans and the structure of the scheme. They already use Pathways to Read and Pathways to Spell, so are familiar with the structure.

Recruitment

NB reported that recruitment of Teaching Assistants remained extremely challenging. Agencies had been approached to fill some vacancies.

Parental concerns

The school Principals continued to deal with an increased number of issues raised by parents, and anecdotal evidence suggested this was also the case in other local schools.

**Question:** What do you think is causing it?

Response: It started after Covid. People seem less tolerant and more polarised; unwilling to take a more nuanced approach to situations. It has also been exacerbated by social media and general societal pressures. It seems like sometimes there is nowhere else for parents to go for support.

Directors discussed possible alternative support for parents, and how boundaries could be re-affirmed. It was agreed as a first step that parents should be reminded of the Home-School agreement every September.

**ACTION: Principals to issue Home-School agreement to all parents in September.**

**9. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANS 2022/23**

Updated School Development Plans had been reviewed at the LGC meetings and were available to Directors on GovernorHub.

The development priorities for 2023/24 would be discussed at the Inset day on 4<sup>th</sup> September, and all Governors and Directors were invited to attend.

**10. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNER/EXTERNAL ADVISER**

Brian Padgett had visited Warmingham on 14<sup>th</sup> June, and the full report had been reviewed on GovernorHub.

**11. CHANGE IN TIMING OF THE SCHOOL DAY**

Directors ratified the decision, agreed initially by email, to alter the timing of the school day for each of the schools. The change followed parental consultation, and was to ensure compliance with the recommendation for all schools to be open for at least 32.5 hours per week.

**12. CONFIRM TERM DATES AND HOLIDAYS FOR 2024/25**

NB reported that once again there were differences between the dates for Cheshire East and Cheshire West. It was hoped that this would be addressed and the dates for the Trust could then be reviewed in the autumn term.

**13. DIRECTOR'S REPORT SUMMER 2023**

The Director's Report had been circulated on GovernorHub earlier in the term and items raised at LGC meetings as appropriate.

Directors were reminded of the Digital Monitoring training taking place on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

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**14. GOVERNOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

A full list of training recorded on GovernorHub had been reviewed, but it was noted that some governors had not recorded the mandatory Safeguarding and Prevent training.

**ACTION:** Clerk to remind governors to record ALL training.

Governors were reminded that Safeguarding training would be held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, and the clerk noted that governors should also look for training specific to their role in safeguarding.

VG had completed the Safeguarding for Governors training, and agreed to circulate the notes and slide for information.

**ACTION: VG to send out slides from Governors’ Safeguarding training.**

**15. SCHOOL POLICIES**

Directors had reviewed the following policies uploaded to GovernorHub for Spring 2023:

- RCSAT-P-002-01 Accounting Policy
- RCSAT-P-002-02 Investment Policy
- RCSAT-P-002 Charging & Remissions Policy

All policies were **approved** with no amendments.

**16. PLANNED RESIDENTIAL VISITS**

No further residential visits were planned for the current academic year.

**17. MEETINGS**

The date of the next Board of Directors’ meeting was agreed as Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at 4pm, at **Warmingham School**.

**18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

School Transport

A Director noted that a number of children attending Trust schools could be eligible for school transport. Given the traffic congestion, particularly at St Oswald’s, it was agreed that parents should be encouraged to apply for free transport where possible.

**ACTION: BH to draft information for each school’s newsletter to raise awareness and guide parents as to the process for applying.**

*MG and VG left and the meeting moved to Part 2.*

Meeting closed at 6.30pm.

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