



never give up.

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 18th December 2019
at 18.00

ACE Schools MAT
Unit 3 Ensign House, Parkway Court,
Longbridge Road, Marsh Mills,
Plymouth PL6 8LR

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Tim Searle – Chair of Trustees.
Mr Andrew Dunkley – Trustee.
Mr Denis Parsons – Trustee.
Mr Gavin Gracie – Trustee and CEO.
Mr Peter McDonnell – Trustee.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Andrea Chick – PA to the CEO/Clerk to the Trustees/Administrator ACE MAT.
Mrs Anna Rumsby – Finance Manager.
Ms Beccy Woods – Estate and Compliance Manager.
Mr Dan Ayling – Deputy Head Teacher Tiverton.
Mrs Hannah Smart – Head of ACE Tiverton.
Mrs Jo Warn – HR Manager.
Mrs Joan Watkins – Member.
Mrs Karen Felix – IT Manager.
Mr Lee Earnshaw – Head of Courtlands.
Mr Matt Bindon – Head of ACE Schools Plymouth.
Mrs Michelle Thomas – Member.
Mr Paul Winterton – Director of School Improvement.
Mrs Ruth Westwood – Deputy Head Teacher ASP.

APOLOGIES:

Mrs Annette Benny – Trustee.

| Minute No. | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 1 | <p>SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST REGISTER.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Most of the meeting will be presentations from GG and the senior managers with any questions from Members and Trustees through the Chair only.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>ELECTION OF A CHAIR.</p> <p>i. Election of a Chair for the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>TS has resigned as Chair of the Board of Trustees from the end of this meeting. AB has accepted a nomination to be the new Chair from AD, seconded by GG.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that AB be Chair of the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>ii. Election of a Vice-chair for the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>PM has resigned as Vice-chair for the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to carry forward to the next Board meeting on the 12th February.</p> <p>GG has spoken with Peter Cubbon with regard to joining the Board. He is a long serving CEO of large NHS Trusts especially with organisations that are going through significant change with his NHS background in mental health. It is the members' role to approve new Trustees so GG will circulate a resume to members after the meeting and PC can be approved as a new Trustee by email.</p> | GG |
| 3. | <p>APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS.</p> <p>i. Board of Trustees Meeting 16th October 2019. PM Chaired the meeting. Page 2, line 8 should read 'place' instead of 'base'. Page 3, line 5 they wanted a particular type of 'provision' rather than 'revision'.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on the 16th October 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>Michelle Thomas, Member joined the meeting.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>MATTERS ARISING.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p> | |
| 5. | <p>OPERATING PRESENTATIONS.</p> <p>i. <u>CEO.</u></p> <p>GG explained the first slide showed the MAT structure we are now operating which he has sent to the RSA and ESFA setting out how this needs to work within the framework and changing some of the routines. Governance has been disjointed with frustration from Members and Trustees with what is going on within the schools, communication lines backwards and forwards has been lacking.</p> <p>Clusters: Bretonside is like a mini-MAT with 13 different sites including 3 in Cornwall, and 1 in Exeter, two sites waiting for opening in Exeter and Exmouth just waiting for RSC to give the go ahead. This has all worked very successfully but sites are spread around and we have been only looking at ASP as one school. GG has financially separated each</p> | |

site out but how we manage and govern still needs to be considered. Wave 2 submissions didn't fairly represent what the MAT is capable of as we don't just have expertise in just special needs but in the special needs that nobody else can deal with, our whole approach is with trauma informed practice. The MAT are at the leading edge which is not yet acknowledged in the wider community but we have now been approached by another MAT for us to assist, therefore we need to get across ACE are the market leaders in expertise. In 5 years this MAT will be a series of schools specialising in SEN around the country with the ability to share the expertise in provision. At corporate level, a new school or another school, sitting geographically away from us, having to have a model of governance that works. Also to redesign processes and systems so the Board can deliver strategic duties in a different way. **SLG** is in the process of doing this at the moment for finance, HR and IT.

Cluster responsibilities are boots on the ground, looking at lessons etc, not the overall strategy but rather an internal audit and to have dialogue with the Trustees. Finance is not a remit at Cluster level. The safeguarding of staff, not just pupils, has been addressed because of the previous poor culture. Everyone needs to think about the day to day stresses and strains of staff, people do buckle under the strain and this is normal and right so safety nets need to be in place.

Trustees have been in a bit of a cocoon and being given information that is either incorrect or insufficient. They have not had the opportunity to test things on the shop floor because of time constraints but this doesn't absolve Trustees of statutory duties and responsibilities. The Trustees need to be clearer on the strategy and disseminate early on in the process.

Members have not had sufficient dialogue this year, neither have the Trustees because of the restraints of what has been able to be said in the past. **GG** will make sure this doesn't happen again. Changing the Chair of the Board to be the lynch pin between the Members and Trustees, a 6 monthly appraisal of the Chair with the Trustees with feedback on a personal level. The Chair needs to discuss issues with the members at least 6 monthly, feedback to be given and where the MAT stands at that point in time put into the scheme of delegation. In order to be able to this, information will be cascaded down the line, the Senior Leadership Group is the engine room of the company but mustn't bog people down in too much detail. The Board haven't had the clarity against the strategy in the past.

Questions:

1. The role of members: The structure has been covered by **GG**. Two Board reports went to them but the year was dreadful and Trustee capacity was very poor. **JW** did understand this has been a very difficult time but is really pleased this is going to be addressed in the future and welcomes Members will learn how the schools are progressing. She is pleased **PW** is going to become a Member and can support current and new Members. **TS** asked **JW** is content the way the MAT is going forward. **JW** confirmed she was and will wait and see how things progress. **MT** has struggled to understand the role in the past and felt she was just giving lip service but can now see where her role lies. Each Member has something to bring, she has a background in health with a lot of broad experience.

PM would like to enable more efficiency by looking at the amount of paperwork generated for each meeting, this needs to be considered in the future. **TS** agreed, and the Board agenda has moved to a slightly different format for this meeting.

ii. School Presentations.

a) ACE Schools Plymouth – see slides attached. Two sites in Cornwall site leases have now been extended for another year which is really good news, also looking to expand as DCC are talking re strategic place planning. **DP** asked **MB** how he would describe

industrial relations problem. **MB** reported relations were significantly better and working well with the unions now.

b) Courtlands – see slides attached. **LE** explained his presentation was written on Monday morning, the children arrived, had a major incident which de-escalated, he received the notification of the Ofsted inspection. The gap has been eliminated on where the child is and where they should be by national standards which is what **LE** is proud of. The inspectors over the last two days said it was an absolute golden thread as everything starts with the child to build whatever that child needs via the curriculum, building, staff, families etc. Courtlands are the first school to design their own curriculum from the ground up, researched into what educational programmes meet children who have suffered trauma and have disabilities and disorders. Both inspectors say the curriculum stands proud as a leading practice in the country. **LE** is really proud of this, it was teachers, senior leaders and staff who have got on with it.. The second golden thread, that intent at strategic member level, **LE** set the strategy on the way forward, let them get on with it, held them to account, got the support in so he is proud of the development within his leadership team which has undergone significant change, are now amazing and would like them to be recognised. Another golden thread was the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the children, a core part of what is being done, a focus on what is achieving the results in the first place. Courtlands are the first school in the south west to win the Wellbeing Award for Schools which was when ASP were going on strike so couldn't celebrate at the time but it is a huge success. Also being recognised as a beacon in the area for Trauma Informed process is very positive. **LE** is still facing some challenges as the building is completely unfit for purpose which is a massive problem. The LA know about this and agree so discussions are taking place on how to build a new building. The school has expanded by 30% this year so there is the need to improve and not just maintain it, succession planning and developing future leaders, and managing ever more complex pupils with ever receding funding are challenges in the coming years. The Members and Board gave their congratulations to **LE** and all his staff for the Ofsted inspection result.

c) ACE Tiverton – see slides attached. **HS** explained 26 out of 35 pupils have been out of school for more than 6 months so 90% attendance is really good. **DA** is now deputy Head teacher and staff are taking the lead on what is right for the young people. **HS** has a fantastic team of people, the curriculum was expanded at October half term so went from a very nurture led curriculum in the first half term so now other subjects like art and science on included. More recruitment taking place at the moment. Consultations have started for next round of year 6, **HS** is sticking with 12 at the moment however the LA want 15 but she wants stability and sustainable budget opportunities over the next couple of years. Timetables change every half term so changes are slow and steady. Student support is at the heart of what they do, and the young people are the power house of what we do. Staff are being retained and maintaining their passion and doing everything very well.

iii. Service Reports:

a) HR – see slides attached. **JW** reported the department has come a long way in the past year. The move to Ensign House was a negative one to start with as the team were away from the people HR look after so the team works hard to be a visible presence at each base. 78 supply staff moved to permanent contracts around April 2018 through to February 2019. The department grew from 2 members of staff to 5 in the last year which has been a challenge as they are an inexperienced team but getting there slowly but surely; a new payroll manager is starting in January which will take some of the pressure off **JW**. The biggest problem is the number of staff leaving ACE, 289 staff on role and the first term 29 staff left, the pie charts show why they have left eg relocating, new jobs so the MAT needs to get to the bottom why members of staff are not being retained. Exit interviews will be conducted by **JW** rather than staff line managers, surveys sent to staff after they have left, and is staff are moving on to further education, can we get them back afterwards. This issue is high on **JW's**

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| | <p>agenda. Absences for Courtlands are down on last year, up for ASP but this is due to long term illness and is still less than the national average.</p> <p>MT informed staff retention is not unique to ACE, this is a large piece of work that's she is doing and a real learning experience. JW and MT will be in contact.</p> <p>b) IT - See slides attached. KF reported changes and decisions on which way to go are an ongoing piece of work. Assets stand at 5 years with probably 2 years remaining.</p> <p>c) Facilities and Compliance - BW will write a report and questions sent to BW by email.</p> <p>d) Finance – anyone not on the F&S committee send questions to AR by email.</p> <p>iv. <u>Executives:</u></p> <p>a) PW explained the operational cycle is in everything we do therefore it is so important TS and GG's work is recognised along with the rest of the Trust who had to support them during a time when we actually stood up and said what our whole compass is. There is strength there to build on and PW totally understands for anyone involved with governance, Members and Trustees are volunteers but it's what keeps us going and without this working properly the MAT would not be here. PW feels he can say this as he is on a Trust Board which wasn't doing things properly and is now closed down which is something that can happen. He felt the second brilliant thing is the MAT are now in a position to see where things are going and it is a huge privilege to see a new school open; PW suggested Members and Trustees go and visit Tiverton, Courtlands, Camborne etc, as this is when you see the operation that goes on and the MAT is going forward and improving all the time.</p> <p>b) Chief Executive: GG thanked TS firstly, who has done an almost impossible task where he's a balanced a full time job, a young family plus holding down the most difficult set of circumstances for a Board that GG has seen for years, with a smile on his face and a gentleman at all time. TS has had telephone conversations with traumatised people, he had them raw, pick them up and deal with the outcomes. On behalf of the Board, GG thanked TS on behalf of everyone to keep the Trust going as without him the MAT would have been re-brokered.</p> <p>GG cannot conceptualise the organisation without PW as he is retiring in 2 days' time and GG has seldom worked with anyone who will leave such a huge hole in the whole of the MAT. PW has put in place the practices and procedures, worked tirelessly behind the scenes and the MAT owes a huge debt of gratitude so thank you from GG personally and from the whole MAT.</p> <p>c) TS thanked everyone as they have taught him so much, and it's been a difficult few months. He also thanked PW as Ofsted can be a bit of a scary word, PW comes through and takes you through the system and it has been really fantastic to get that input and TS really valued working with him.</p> | |
| 11. | Part II. | |
| 12. | <p>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.</p> <p>PM thanked all non-trustees for their attendance and looked forward to seeing them at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 20.00.</p> | |

Signed:

Date:

Chair

Dates of Future Meetings:

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| Wednesday 12 th February 2020 | 18.00 – 20.00 |
| Wednesday 25 th March 2020 | 18.00 – 20.00 |
| Wednesday 20 th May 2020 | 18.00 – 20.00 |
| Wednesday 15 th July 2020 | 18.00 – 20.00 |

Board of Trustees:

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|-----------------|--|--------------------|
| Annette Benny | annette.benny@acemat.uk | Chair of Trustees. |
| Andy Dunkley | andy.dunkley@acemat.uk | Trustee. |
| Denis Parsons | denis.parsons@acemat.uk | Trustee. |
| Gavin Gracie | gavin.gracie@acemat.uk | Trustee/CEO. |
| Peter McDonnell | peter.mcdonnell@acemat.uk | Trustee. |
| Tim Searle | tim.searle@acemat.uk | Trustee. |