



never give up.

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 25th March 2020
at 18.00

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

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Annette Benny – Chair of Trustees.
Mr Peter Cubbon – Trustee.
Mr Peter McDonnell – Trustee.
Dr Tim Searle – Trustee.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Gavin Gracie – CEO.
Mrs Hannah Smart – Head of ACE Tiverton.
Mr Lee Earnshaw – Head of Courtlands.
Mr Matt Bindon – Head of ACE Schools Plymouth.
Mrs Andrea Chick – PA to the CEO/Clerk to the Trustees/Administrator ACE MAT.

APOLOGIES:

Mr Denis Parsons – Trustee.

Minute No.	Agenda Item	Action
1.	<p>WELCOME, SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST REGISTER.</p> <p>i. AB welcome everyone to the meeting. The video call was evidence of meeting attendance, no declarations of interest.</p> <p>ii. An EGM with Members was held on the 14th March where it was resolved to appoint AB, PM and TS as Trustees for a term of one year. This will enable good governance in succession planning.</p> <p>ACTION: AC to send out letters to the Trustees accordingly.</p>	AC
2.	<p>TO NOTE APOLOGIES.</p> <p>Mr Denis Parsons.</p> <p>Mr Andy Dunkley has resigned as a Trustee due to personal reasons effective as of the 11th March 2020 following his final chairing of the Finance and Audit Committee.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to accept the resignation of Mr Andy Dunkley and to recognise his contribution over the last couple of years.</p>	
3.	<p>APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2020.</p> <p>Item 6e – Delete as not discussed.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees held on the 12th February 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record. 2. That an electronic signature of the Chair be used. 	
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING.</p> <p>i. 5 ii Education and Safeguarding Chair’s Report: Action: GG and AB to write to the CEO of PCC regarding the parking issue for staff at North Hill. Not yet completed – to follow up when the current situation is over.</p> <p>ACTION: AB and GG to follow up in August 2020.</p> <p>ii. 6. Operating Presentations:</p> <p>i. CEO RSC Meeting 4th February 2020, Bristol: GG and MB continue their discussions with the RSC and report back to the Board with progress made.</p> <p>GG has circulated a basic report to enable further discussions with Trustees. From the meeting the ESFA arranged a financial and overall governance audit review of the Trust over two days. The audit report has been generated and is with the ESFA for quality assurance and will be circulated as soon as possible. AB spoke to the auditor who was very positive and keen to help and support. GG to circulate once received.</p>	AB/GG GG GG
5.	<p>FLASH TRAINING.</p> <p>i. The difference between Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Alternative Provision (AP). MB had circulated a table comparing the different provisions across the Trust. LE and HS have a fairly stable cohort at the start and end of year,</p>	

	<p>ASP is very fluid with pupils joining and leaving regularly due to the short-term nature of the placements. The admission and reception route are different and pupils are received from various avenues.</p> <p>The only difference between Courtlands and Tiverton is that Courtlands is a primary school. Additionally, Courtlands children have moderate learning difficulties and are delayed by 2-4 years in maturity and cognitively. All staff are specialised within their own areas.</p> <p>GG explained that ASP covers a broad spectrum from WRAP, hospital provision through to a secure unit all under one URN (or school): all could be standalone schools. LE advised that they all used to be individual units.</p> <p>Trustees found the table and narrative extremely useful to understand the MAT provisions and the different complexities that staff have to deal with. This will help Trustees when they visit schools and will help with strategic planning in future years. The Trustees thanked the Head teachers for their work on this and for how well the schools are working collectively.</p> <p>ii. Next two training topics: 1. Educational Outcomes – Measuring. 2. Risk Management.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to note.</p> <p>ACTION: All Trustees to look at the information provided by Sally Timmins at the Governance Day.</p>	Trustees
6.	<p>HEAD TEACHERS' UPDATE.</p> <p>i. Courtlands: LE reported on the current situation. 17 children identified as having significant vulnerabilities and offered full time reduced placement at the school. 12 staff are off sick or self-isolating due to illness within the family or pregnancy. Although 17 places have been offered on a daily basis, between 9 and 13 children have been attending, enabling LE to offer a couple of extra places to families who are suffering significant issues at home.</p> <p>Children are out of routine and LE is continually reviewing their risk of catching the virus vis a vis staying at home. All members of staff are on a rota (2 days a week) and the other days are working from home. Teachers are in contact with their children every day, mainly on line. If children are vulnerable it's a telephone call or FaceTime. In addition, vulnerable children have free school meals in place of vouchers. LE has arranged, through the school kitchen, to provide food parcels and boxes for 31 families (from 26th March) with the pastoral managers providing a shopping list. The cook is using what would have been spent on school meals (approximately £12 pounds a week) to buy in bulk to provide food for the child. The Trustees were pleased to learn that vulnerable young people had been identified.</p> <p>ii. Tiverton: HS currently has no students attending, parents making the decision to keep them at home. Tiverton has a cohort of 35 young people with 3 students on EHCP. There are no looked after young people although some have special guardianship with grandparents. Currently the school is closed until after Easter. HS is meeting staff online on Friday to discuss provision of food; perhaps a fun bus, driving to where the children live who are receiving free school meals. The staff enjoyed putting the food parcels together which included dried goods and 10 healthy meals recipes (ingredients in the box) to enable the children to practice their skills. HS is looking into the risk factors involved in travelling around the county e.g. Exmouth to Barnstaple. Every day each member of staff have a core group of children to speak to recording their conversations on CPOMS. All children have a package of physical work, 6 packs for home learning supplemented with online work. Issues with</p>	

<p>laptops off site is being addressed. HS is also looking at an online working hub: over the Easter holidays staff will contact families every other day. PC asked if anything is in place if a child wants to talk to staff without parents knowing. HS confirmed there was as the cohort of children are older, a learning email address has been set up where they can chat with staff; the school also has an agreement with parents to hold children's phone numbers (a contact etiquette contract is in place) and a mental health kit is provided. Realistically from Easter there may be pressure for the school to work differently for the next academic year. HS will be seeking Trustees to back decisions and there will be the need for further Board discussions around how to place her staff at the centre of decision making. In summing up AB stated that everyone needs to get through the next couple of weeks, continuing the momentum after Easter. PC asked the Trustees to think about and agree the type of support they can give to help staff resilience. To discuss with GG.</p>	
<p>ACTION: HEADS to work with GG to start the process of short, medium to long term (September) planning/reporting back to future Board meetings.</p>	<p>Heads / GG</p>
<p>ACTION: Trustees to discuss with GG how they can support and help staff's resilience.</p>	<p>Trustees / GG</p>
<p>iii. MB currently has 116 out of 188 pupils attending on Tuesday with the vast majority of Cornwall bases closed. 27 supply staff have been released and MB's working with LE on this. The Exeter base is also working remotely, there are no key worker children; a rota is being run for vulnerable children over Easter. EHCP risk assessments completed, children are safer at home than school. Welfare calls are being made every day, logged on CPOMS. Due to the nature of the provision, food vouchers rather than food boxes are being issued. In response to a question from AB, MB explained that staff have worked out what supermarkets are in the area for the children and written on the food card with the voucher providing shopping for £25 per week until the end of term. MB reported that the last week had been the most difficult week in his 14 year career, he is extremely tired with staff needing emotional support from the Heads. MB asked Trustees not to underestimate the challenges. AB acknowledged the issues stressing the importance of staff taking time off over Easter to re-charge batteries. Looking at the situation worsening in the next couple of weeks and continuing for a possible minimum of three months, re-iterating the need to look after ourselves and each other. She reminded the Heads that lines are always open to the Trustees and GG.</p>	
<p>iv. TS asked about staff morale. MB reported that he had sent out a survey (last Thursday) asking which staff would be available over the Easter; 88 out of 118 members of staff stated their availability. HS reported that her staff are very positive and want to help in any way; with slight concerns around staff balancing the risk of working with their own children. She will continue to work around this. HS may need to consider a MAT approach as she only has 16 staff and if key workers want to send their children back to school, she will need to balance the needs of her staff with pupils.</p>	
<p>TS asked that the Board's thanks be given to all staff who are inspirational. AB also thanked the Heads for their hard work and inspiration. She noted that it was a quiet spell at the moment; however, people will lose relatives, and will need to support each other and will become tired. HS requested that the MAT has a contingency plan, e.g. retaining counselling or support services as the Trust are high tariff school settings. LE's team are doing well with an overwhelming majority very keen and working hard with some future leadership strengths coming out. A few are struggling so he's taking this into account when looking at rotas and only using staff who have family members self-isolating as a last resort.</p>	
<p>ACTION: GG to discuss with Trustees and Members what will the wash up plan be.</p>	<p>GG / Trustees</p>
<p>The Head teachers left the meeting.</p>	

	<p>v. PM asked if there were any safeguarding issues as he was unable to attend parts of the meeting. AB confirmed there are no issues. GG advised that safeguarding in Plymouth and Devon is excellent as staff are routinely contacting vulnerable children and others either daily or two or three times a week. The instruction from PCC is to stop the contact and leave it to social workers. However, staff are continuing under the education guise, recognising that they are the stability in the child's life. They are only visiting where necessary with a clear instruction to staff to keep themselves safe too. Daily conversations are taking place with the LAs. PM will discuss further with GG tomorrow.</p>	GG/PM
7.	<p>SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE.</p> <p>See item 6 v.</p>	
8.	<p>CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.</p> <p>i. GG updated the Board on the Delt project. He is still waiting on a legal opinion on which tender process applies. The delay is due to the solicitor being ill. As soon as he has the information he will bring a proposal back to the Board for agreement in principle. In response to a question from AB to relieve pressure on GG to hit a deadline, he responded that the momentum needs to continue as the MAT cannot continue to operate in the same way. Students are moving to remote learning; however, the system is not yet up and working properly so either new staff will have to employed or different platforms will need to be utilised. AB suggested an Extraordinary Board meeting in April could be used as a deadline with the paper ready then, or circulate next week to give a better understanding when GG will be ready with a series of timescales.</p> <p>GG reported that the key driver is getting the plan in place by 1st September 2020 the current situation may impact on that deadline and have a negative longer-term impact. As soon as GG has the information from the solicitors he will update the Board on timeframes. An Extraordinary Board meeting will be a single agenda item to review/approve the tender process of central services and the timescales associated with the process. TS agreed that the process needs to keep moving, acknowledging that this is out of GG's control. AB agreed that as this was a pressing issue she would still like this brought forward to April rather than May.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to set an Extraordinary meeting for April when GG has the information required.</p> <p>GG reported that the HR manager has requested and is being fast tracked for early medical retirement. The IMAS assessment was completed before lockdown. IMAS are waiting for a letter of confirmation from the specialist. The timeframe is likely to be the end of April at the very latest. GG advised that this is an operational issue and he is looking to employ someone on a temporary basis. He will also use the time to move HR on induction, policies and procedures. He will start doing this irrespective of whether a move to Delt happens. AB acknowledged that the HR manager has been very supportive to the Trustees. GG advised that the manager may not be on site for her last day so a card or letter would be really appreciated.</p> <p>ACTION: AB and GG to discuss further.</p> <p>ii. The IT infrastructure has worked incredibly well over the last 10 days. The IT manager has been ill and her team have rallied around and are winning. After the Easter break there will need to be greater emphasis/capability for face to face interaction with students.</p> <p>PM stated that there has to be a due process which does not impact negatively upon the Trust. These are conversations that the Trustees have been having for over a year with no progress mainly due to the Trust being bound by a process which is stopping progress. GG is working on this at the moment. For IT systems to work on</p>	<p>AB/GG</p> <p>AB/GG</p>

	<p>a day to day basis the Trust will have to “bite the bullet”. GG is progressing with a tender process and is conferring with the RSC and ESFA on the process. PC would like to “press on” with the tender documents whilst GG is waiting for the solicitors to approve.</p>	
9.	<p>RECRUITMENT FOR TRUSTEES AND LOCAL CLUSTER REPRESENTATIVES.</p> <p>i. Trustees: 1-2 x Finance, 1 x Educational Data, 1 x Careers knowledge and understanding, 1 x SEN and Pupil Premium (PP) Total 4-5. TS queried how will this be managed and asked whether advertising would be done in-house. GG is working with people who have recruited Trustees in education and the NHS and is approaching this in two ways, redesigning the advert to make it more appealing and placing the ad into a couple of new platforms.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to recruit 4-5 Trustees.</p> <p>ii. Local Cluster Representatives: 1 x Safeguarding, 1 x Provision of education/pupil assessment Total 2 to make 6+ representatives.</p> <p>GG reported that half of the current representatives are staff members and the remainder parents and that a way into local communities needs to be found for 6 representatives in Cornwall, 4 in Plymouth and 4 in Devon He is also contacting other local academies to try and swap a couple of members of staff.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to recruit 6+ representatives.</p>	<p>AB/GG</p> <p>GG</p>
10.	<p>SCHEME OF DELEGATION.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation had previously been circulated. GG had planned to amend the name of the Clusters but the terms of reference say members are known as ‘representatives’ which seems to be the cleanest definition so the current terminology will remain. TS suggested academy principals should read Head teacher, also the signing off amounts of monies should be covered as the amounts of money the previous CEO could sign off was too high. GG reported that the financial Scheme of Delegation is currently under development and that he had spent time with the SMRA auditor and is implementing some of the suggestions and examples which she gave.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to accept the Scheme of Delegation amending the term Academy Principal to Head teacher.</p>	
11.	<p>AGENDA ITEMS AND MEETINGS PLANNER</p> <p>i. GG utilised the suggestions on information flow from the Governance Day. GG and AC worked together on the plan starting from the 3 data drops from an educational aspect which informs the Heads’ reports. Currently, this report goes to the Clusters and then to the Education and Safeguarding committee and then through to the Board in truncated form; the data discussion is duplicated across three meetings and is not a good use of time.</p> <p>GG and AC aim to plan the Cluster meetings as close to the data drop as possible, to allow time for Heads to produce their reports, and to flow through for a brief discussion by the E&S who will look at the overall trends and strategic impacts and report to the Board. It is suggested that the Cluster representatives could structure their visits to coincide with producing their reports for the E&S committee. Other MAT Boards meet once a term (3 a year). Flexibility in Finance and Audit is different as they have separate points of reference. It would be judicious to remove the financial aspect from the Clusters; currently time is spent on this with very little expertise and representatives need to focus on education and safeguarding.</p>	

	<p>AB expressed concerned re the gaps between the data drops and timing of the Board meetings and what type of business happens at committee level. GG advised the Trustees of the need to be mindful of empowering the Clusters to deliver, to feel useful and to have a purpose. The Cluster Terms of Reference need to develop a clear decision-making timeline; it is important to continue with the E&S committee as well as the Clusters, the E&S are able to delegate routine decision making to the Cluster; strategic decisions that would warrant Board time. AB would like more information around the role of the Cluster; assurance of the Heads' decisions and whether they are sharing and taking up through the E&S committee on an exception basis. AB asked if it was the E&S committee or the Head teachers who were the decision makers. GG confirmed it was the Head teachers and other operational people but the decisions need to be assured. The only decision where the Board is involved is where the decision is a strategic decision or sufficient importance, whether strategic or financial, will have an impact on the MAT. PC stated the issue arises where the Board and SLT are preparing the metrics in terms of improvement, the Clusters monitor this and report back to the Board, so Clusters should have the targets that the Board expect through the year. Fewer set Board meetings would be held but there will be other Board meetings held to consider items going forward as a MAT. The planner will develop over time as there will be plenty of strategic things the Board will have to discuss. PM thought the planner a good starting point and he would expect to have specific topics for each meeting along with the legal obligations.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Trustees would consider the above and report back acknowledging that the planner will grow and shape the design of the flow for the year.</p> <p>ACTION: TRUSTEES to look at the meeting planner and report back to GG with any further comments.</p>	Trustees / GG
12.	<p>STRATEGIC PLAN.</p> <p>The key recommendations of the above plan are embedded in the document and have been discussed on several occasions. GG is seeking Board approval to support him and the Head teachers moving forward. PM agreed all the recommendations listed had been discussed for some time and fully supported GG, PC gave his support and TS thanked GG for the great work he had put into the plan.</p> <p>It was UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to accept GG's recommendations.</p>	
13.	<p>MEMBERS' EGM 14TH MARCH 2020.</p> <p>See item 1.</p>	
14.	<p>PART 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <u>Appointment of CEO.</u> Documents for the appointment process of the CEO had previously been circulated. ii. <u>Objectives of CEO.</u> GG had circulated a paper prior to the meeting. 	
15.	<p>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.</p> <p>PM gave his thanks to GG and to all staff, and Trustees pledged their support in the planning process over the next 9-12 months.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 20.15.</p>	

Signed:

Date:

Chair

Dates of Future Meetings:

Wednesday 20 th May 2020	18.00 – 20.00
Wednesday 15 th July 2020	18.00 – 20.00

ACTIONS ACE SCHOOLS MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING 25TH MARCH 2020

Minute Number	Action	Who	Date to be completed by
1.	<p>i. Re-appointment of Trustees.</p> <p>ACTION: AC to send out letters to the Trustees accordingly.</p>	AC	As soon as possible.
4.	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>i. Education and Safeguarding Chair's Report: Parking at North Hill.</p> <p>ACTION: AB and GG to follow up in August 2020.</p>	AB/GG	August 2020
5.	<p>Flash Training:</p> <p>ACTION: ALL TRUSTEES to look at the information provided by Sally Timmins at the Governance Day.</p>	ALL	As soon as possible.
6.	<p>Head teachers' Update:</p> <p>ACTION: HEADS to work with GG to start the short, medium and long term (September) planning and report back to Board meetings.</p> <p>ACTION: Trustees to discuss with GG support and help for the staff.</p> <p>ACTION: GG to discuss with Trustees and Members what will the wash up plan be.</p>	<p>Heads/GG</p> <p>Trustees/GG</p> <p>GG/Trustees/ Members</p>	As soon as possible.
8.	<p>Chief Executive's Report:</p> <p>ii. Medical retirement of the HR Manager.</p> <p>ACTION: AB and GG to discuss further.</p>	AB/GG	As soon as possible.
11.	<p><u>Meeting Planner:</u></p> <p>ACTION: TRUSTEES to look at the meeting planner and report back to GG with any further comments.</p>	Trustees/GG	As soon as possible.