

STAR MAT Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 21st January 2020 at 5pm at Rose Cottage, TGS

Present: Clare Thornton-Eckford (Chair), Nick Sheppard, Alison Smith, Peter Wilson, Frances Dodd, Simon Peacock, Richard Coy, Deborah Hastie

In attendance:

Martyn Sibley (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operating Officer, STAR MAT)
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)
Andrew Parkinson (Headteacher, Tadcaster Grammar School) (for item 2)

1.0 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1.1 Apologies were received and accepted from Tom Fielden.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest. Nick Sheppard and Alison Smith acknowledged that they needed to complete a fresh register of interest declaration. The Clerk to send the form.

1.3 The Clerk confirmed that Registers of Interests had been completed and published for all of the LGBs. Some registers were missing information due to the lack of some business interest declarations. Relevant persons had been informed and the matter was in hand.

2.0 Ratification of Settlement Agreements

Confidential minute.

Following the conclusion of this item Mr Parkinson left the meeting.

3.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 16th December 2019

3.1 **Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meeting, held on 16th December 2019, were a true and accurate record of that meeting. The Chair was duly authorised to sign the minutes.

4.0 Action Points and Matters Arising

4.1

Action Points from the Meeting	Status
Complete online safeguarding training	Carried over.
Possible further revisions to Equalities policy	Matter in hand.
Arrange one-to-one with Julie Charge (governor applicant)	Carried over. Clerk to resend recent governor applications to the Chair.
Panel to debate utilising internal candidate for CEO role on an interim basis (1 year)	Completed.
Make policies known to school leaders and aspects of personalisation required	Completed.

ACTION

Clerk

NS/CT-E

**CT-E
Clerk**

5.0 Governance Matters

5.1 Mr Sheppard had completed a one-to-one with Tom Merrill, who had applied to become a governor at Appleton Roebuck. Mr Sheppard reported that Mr Merrill understood the role of a governor and had the right skills and level of time to commit to the role. Importantly, he understood the separation required in being both a parent of a child at the school and the governor role.

Resolved:

Trustees appointed Tom Merrill to the Appleton Roebuck LGB.

5.2 The Chair noted that she had visited the recent Brayton LGB meeting. It was important to welcome new schools to the Trust. It was clear that the school was happy to be part of the Trust, although the Headteacher had pointed out some of the challenges they had faced getting used to new systems and requirements in a very short space of time.

5.3 The Chair wanted each Trustee to establish a formal link role with one of the schools/LGBs. In response to a Trustee challenge as to why this was viewed as necessary now, when it had been rejected last year, the Chair replied that everyone had to be conscious of the requirements of Trustees (and their understanding of each of their settings) within the new OFSTED framework. With the inspection window coming up for most MAT schools now was the time to implement this. In-depth understanding of performance and governance was vital in order to show that the MAT was providing the right level of leadership and support for its schools.

Resolved:

Links were agreed as follows:

Clare Thornton-Eckford – Kellington

Nick Sheppard – Sherburn High

Frances Dodd – Brayton

Tom Fielden – Tadcaster Grammar School

Simon Peacock – South Milford

Richard Coy – Kirk Fenton and Sherburn Hungate

Alison Smith – Riverside

Deborah Hastie – Appleton Roebuck

Peter Wilson – Monk Fryston / Saxton

5.4 Prior to the schools/LGBs being notified, the CEO suggested that he work up a protocol around how link visits and any monitoring should be approached. Trustees agreed. Trustees would certainly need to review minutes of meetings and meeting business and carry out a twice yearly oversight meeting involving the school's head and chair and the CEO. The Trustee would also need access to key documents (SIP, SEF, SIC reports). Trustees would not need to do a deep dive into their school's data (the LGBs should be doing that) but would need to know the headlines and have a broad, summary knowledge of the school. Going school events was suggested as a good way of fostering a positive link. Once the protocol had been written and the schools informed, the GA to ensure that Trustees were added to the relevant schools on Decision Time. AS had experience of being a Trustee being interviewed as part of inspection process in school. The CEO said that he would look to launch this via the next chairs' forum.

MS

Clerk

6.0 STAR MAT Curriculum Development Initiative

An action plan outlining progress to date, next steps and timelines for completion had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting.

6.1 The framework progression and planning timeline were highlighted. The initiative had been a positive for staff, the schools and the Trust. Intentions were being mapped out for the subjects but implementation was being left to the schools, as part of the autonomy of local leadership. A peer review exercise was currently under way to check for consistency in things like the language being used and the levels of challenge. As part of this process, the CEO wanted to gauge the views of the teachers in the subject areas – the 'horizontal view'. After all they would be delivering the curricula

and everyone had to be sure that the aims were deliverable. The Trust also wanted to gauge any resource implications etc. The CEO would be talking to the steering group later in the week about where the secondaries could offer support around schemes of work for non-specialists teaching certain subjects at primary level (e.g. computing)

6.2 Once the intent and implementation planning was finalised, the Trust and the schools would need to examine CPD requirements, particularly so as to have more specialism in certain areas of the curriculum (e.g. Art). Once everything was lined up, leaders would need to address how assessment would be undertaken and to try and establish common assessment frameworks – again to uphold consistency.

6.3 A Trustee asked about governor monitoring of this work. The CEO believed that, come September, the LGBs should be able to ‘test’ that the curricula were being applied in their schools. The Trust would support this by drawing up a crib sheet on questions to ask and things to look for etc. The Trustee asked whether it would generate the much needed subject/middle leadership. The CEO hoped so, adding that there would be a decision for the Trust down the line about how to employ improvement leads across the Trust. Would there be expectations for each year group? Yes, the intents will outline what a pupil should be able to do and know at the end of each year. One of the most important aspects of the work was to address the perennial problem of dealing with the ‘dips’ that occurred as children moved between phases. Did the schools have any control over aspects of intent? The CEO replied that school leaders would still be responsible for the rationale that underpinned delivery (implementation). They would also have ownership of the contexts used for introducing new skills and knowledge. There was a general discussion on autonomy versus central leading on curriculum implementation.

MS

7.0 CEO’s Report

Prior to the meeting various documents had been circulated to Trustees. These included:

- Updated education risk register
- Tracking and assessment information with an executive summary
- SIC reports for Brayton, Kirk Fenton and Kellington

7.1 Anticipating Trustee’s challenge on the concerns about Writing, the CEO acknowledged that this had not been an historic issue for schools within the Trust but clearly an issue was emerging. The first set of teacher assessments for the year had been conducted but no ‘no more marking’ assessments had yet been completed (February). Teachers had been critical and were clearly conscious of the need to see sufficient evidence in books before making a judgement. The CEO felt that everyone would have some better indicators of the true picture after the next round of both teacher and ‘no more marking’ assessments.

7.2 The numbers of pupils acquiring Greater Depth was another area of concern. Again, staff were reticent at this stage about making judgement/predictions on this. For example to achieve Greater Depth in Writing, pupils had to evidence Writing ‘with flair’. There were sometimes limited opportunities for children to do this with all the areas that had to be covered and schools leaders were aware that this was something they needed to address within the new curriculum.

7.3 Standards at Kellington were improving and, having spoken to the interim head, there was a more positive feeling about the direction of travel. Staff were getting on message. Leadership capacity was an issue. There were HR matters still to be dealt with. A Trustee pointed out that the CEO’s appraisal was at odds with the SIC report from December, which was not at all positive. The CEO acknowledged the challenge. The SIC was certainly challenging the school. Mr Yapp continued to support the interim head. Alison Woodward, also from Riverside, had been deployed to support EYFS provision. Trustees were asked to bear in mind the small cohorts when analysing the data. For example, two of the 12 pupils in Y6 were children that had arrived at the school having been permanently excluded from their previous setting and had very little education. There was a narrative beyond the headlines. Writing interventions were definitely needed in Y6 and the Trust was looking at ways to fund this given the school’s difficult budget position.

7.4 A Trustee asked about the strength of the Kellington LGB. The CEO and Chair pointed out the need to look at some succession planning and generating further capacity generally. Governance had been an improving picture and some capacity had been recently added but there was more to do.

7.5 Trustees would want to know about the new school in the Trust. The CEO said that Brayton had a strong head who was driving improvement. The school's reputation was growing again. Data remained an issue but was typical for a category school. Teachers were having to plug gaps from the legacy issues. The CEO had no concerns. Good tracking data showed that the school was focussing well on individual needs. Overall, governance was in a good position and hopefully capacity and skills would be boosted by the arrival of new parent governors.

7.6 Saxton continued to move forward, although it needed to remain an amber on the risk register given its formal status.

7.7 The data at Kirk Fenton was not a concern. The deputy from Appleton Roebuck had been seconded to the school for two terms to add leadership capacity and act as SENDCo. This had been possible due to Appleton Roebuck having been overstaffed previously, a situation that was not required now. A Trustee wondered whether a similar arrangement was needed for Kellington. The CEO agreed that it was, however, the Trust needed to identify an appropriate person.

8.0 Staffing Update

8.1 With reference to the Estates Director vacancy, the COO told Trustees that three people were being called for interview, based on applications received. They were probably looking at Easter as a start time for the appointment. It would be at the salary level previously indicated.

8.2 The CEO had circulated the job description for the temporary safeguarding/vulnerable learners lead for information. Ms Mulhern from TGS would be taking up this role, for one day a week, formally after Easter.

9.0 Update on Micklefield

Confidential minute.

10.0 Policy Review:

10.1 Resolved:

Trustees approved the following policies (carried over from last meeting)

- Fixed Asset, Capitalisation and Depreciation
- Procurement
- Eyecare

10.2 The COO noted that the leeway in the statements around contract procurement had been included at the suggestion of the auditors and were still in line with the requirements of the AFH.

11.0 Any Other Business

11.1 Expenses request

The COO explained that employees were required to submit claims within one month. However, the Trust had received a request from a member of staff dating back to March 2019. The COO had refused it due to the fact that this would flag up on audit. The staff member in question had complained to their Headteacher who, in turn, had made a request on their behalf. This had also been refused. There was an indication that this could be escalated to their union. The COO was not concerned by this as the employee had not followed a policy that they were aware of. The COO was aware of the exact circumstances of the claim and that exceptional circumstances might apply.

The member of staff had recently returned from an extended period of absence. In light of the position, the COO recommended paying the expense claim but required Board approval to do this as the Trustees had oversight of the policy. A frank discussion followed. A Trustee was uncomfortable about seemingly going over the head of the COO and approving the claim. Particularly when the COO had already said no. Why was it that the request had been denied twice and now there was a recommendation to pay – this was a bit confusing? The COO outlined some of the complexities with the claim and why it was now the view that the claim should be paid. Trustees debated the situation.

Resolved:

Governors approved the claim based on the COOs recommendation, citing application of exceptional circumstances. It was pointed out that the policy did not actually currently contain a clause to allow for exceptional circumstances to be applied. Trustees agreed that a clause should be inserted into the policy with immediate effect and that the CEO should be delegated authority to make a final decision on those cases where exceptional circumstances might apply. Such matters need not come before the Board again.

MB

11.2 SCA project approval

A project recommendation report, with costings had been circulated. The COO pointed out that heating systems and fire alarm systems, amongst other health and safety critical items, needed addressing swiftly. The flooding problems at Kirk Fenton also needed urgent attention. Beyond that which was laid out in the report, the Estates Director would be responsible for coming up with and delivering upon a five year plan. The COO stressed the importance of making progress on this. A Trustee said that they would like to see the school's scheme bids, just for information. The COO indicated that she would circulate these after the meeting.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the SCA project recommendations as outlined.

MB

- 11.3 The COO informed Trustees that the MAT was establishing its own Union JCC. Previously, the MAT had been trading under the old NYCC agreement. A recognition agreement with unions and collaboration would allow for hopefully positive consultations on policies etc.

12.0 **CEO Appraisal**

Mr Sibley was invited to leave the meeting.

- 12.1 A CEO pay progression proposal had been circulated prior to the meeting. Trustees were satisfied that the CEO had delivered successful performance.

Resolved:

Trustees approved progression for Mr Sibley from L40-L42. This to be back dated to September.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 3rd March 2020 at 5.30pm at Rose Cottage

The meeting closed at 8pm

	Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
1.	Complete online safeguarding training	4.1	CT-E, NS	ASAP
2.	Arrange one-to-one with Julie Charge (governor applicant). GA to send recent governor applications to the Chair	4.1	CT-E Clerk	ASAP
3.	Protocol outlining how Trustee links to schools should be managed. GA to add Trustees to LGBs on Decision Time thereafter	5.4	MS Clerk	Next Chairs' Forum
4.	Crib sheet to support LGBs monitoring curriculum roll-out in schools	6.3	MS	For September
5.	Exceptional circumstances clause to be added to the Expenses policy	11.1	MB	ASAP
6.	SCA scheme bids to Trustees for information	11.2	MB	Due course