

STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 15th July 2021 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

Present: Clare Thornton-Eckford (Chair), Nick Sheppard, Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Alison Smith, Simon Peacock, Deborah Hastie (from minute 4.1), Tom Fielden (from minute 6.2)

In attendance:

Ian Yapp (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operating Officer, STAR MAT)
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)

1.0 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Due to technology issues, the Chair asked the Vice Chair, Nick Sheppard to oversee the agenda/meeting.

- 1.1 Apologies were received and accepted from Frances Dodd. Tom Fielden and Deborah Hastie would be late arriving. There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 Minutes of the Last Meetings – 18th May 2021 and 29th June 2021

2.1 Resolved:

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meetings, held 18th May and 29th June 2021, were true and accurate records of those meeting and the Chair was duly authorised to sign them.

- 2.2 The notes from the church schools' group meeting had been circulated for information.

3.0 Action Points and Matters Arising

3.1	Circulate the governor application form and induction pack to Trustees for their ready reference	Completed
	Flag training at chairs' forum	Completed
	Attend Diocesan Education Team termly briefing	Ongoing
	Support SoD review	Completed. Item on agenda.
	Consult with heads and governors on potential new complaints procedure	Completed. Item on agenda.
	Explore need for additional statements in complaints procedure with legal advisors	Completed. Suggestions included in final draft.
	Ascertain whether Trust exposed to IR35 issues with new SIP consultancy contract	The COO said that there would be no IR35 issues. A contract was being drawn up.
	Consequences of approved ISR proposals to be built into budgets	Completed.
	Report ISR decision to affected schools and their LGBs	Completed.
	Check with HR when Brayton HT recruitment panel would need to be confirmed and approved	Completed at meeting on 29 th June

4.0 Governance Matters

4.1 Vacancies and Recruitment

Trustees noted the current vacancies as advised. The vacancy at Kellington would likely be filled early in the autumn term. The CEO talked about a recruitment push. The Vice Chair was aware of potentially interested parties for other vacancies. The Clerk noted that options for Boards to support recruitment had been shared in the weekly CYC bulletin.

ACTION

Resolved:

John Prentice was appointed as a Trust Appointed governor at South Milford primary school. Claire Callaghan was re-appointed as a Trust Appointed governor at Brayton CE primary school.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the revised guidance to schools on conducting parent governor elections, advocating elections via electronic means, as circulated.

4.2 Appleton Roebuck CAT

Mr Coy, the CAT chair, had worked with the CEO to RAG the progress of the CAT. There had been progress on training and recruitment but there was still work to be done. Thus, the recommendation was for the CAT to remain in place until January 2022. The school understood the need for the CAT to continue in light of the need to further strengthen governance and address matters connected to school improvement.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the recommendation to retain the CAT for the autumn term in 2021.

Responding to a Trustee query about his capacity, Mr Coy said that he could commit his support to the CAT until January. The main issue was sourcing a long-term chair for the LGB. The Vice Chair thanked Mr Coy for his support to date. The CEO noted that moving forward his involvement in the CAT might need to increase, in order to support both school and governance leadership. There were areas of concern as noted in the risk register.

The CEO spoke about the use of external governance reviews. The new Academies Handbook spoke about routine external governance reviews where governance was in question or where there had been significant changes. If a CAT had been in place, this surely constituted a significant change and as such the Trustees might want to consider the use of external reviews as part of the exit process for a CAT or shortly thereafter. The Trust needed to know if a post CAT structure was sustainable and that the criteria for establishing a CAT had been addressed. Trustees agreed that their approach to external reviews needed to be fleshed out in 2021/22.

The Vice Chair said that it was important to evidence the impact of measures taken and evidence where gaps still remained. The Vice Chair suggested a form of peer-to-peer/training support whereby Trust Appointed governors were directed to attend LGBs other than their own to share and take on board good practice. This motion was discussed and received support – it was all about raising expectations. The Governance Advisor noted the potential issue of overburdening governors, some of whom had already pointed to the expectations around meetings and training, indicating that they struggled to fulfil all of their local commitments. The GA also clarified that the Board could not make this a formal requirement per se (i.e. the Board could not remove a governor simply for refusing to undertake this task); Trust Appointed governors were appointed to serve a particular LGB committee and that, alongside being regarded as having the requisite skills and knowledge to perform their duties, was the formal expectation placed on an individual. The Vice Chair still felt that this should be outlined in the induction process, as it would support individuals to improve their skills and knowledge. Trustees could see both sides of the debate; there was a balance to be struck in terms of expectations. A Trustee suggested starting with the chairs and/or vice chairs – these were the key people who needed to see stronger governance in evidence. Trustees liked that idea. The CEO could see merit in the proposal, however, the Board and the executive leadership needed to be sure that ‘red’ or ‘amber’ LGBs were being paired up with ‘green’ LGBs. The red/amber LGBs were the ones for whom certain governors needed to be paired with stronger LGBs to see good practice. Also, in the year ahead, as noted on the LGB agenda planner, there was going to be far more emphasis on active governance between meetings. A good meeting was only one part of good governance. General discussion continued. It was noted that the Trustees themselves should also look to attend other LGB meetings, as they had the ultimate accountability for what was going on at local level and needed to know what governance looked like and the position the schools were in.

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ALL

4.3 Update on LGB and Trustee Training
The CEO said that some LGBs were well aware of gaps on their matrix and the need to remedy this pretty swiftly. Some had appointed particular governors to have oversight of training. Generally, Trustees were pleased with progress on training but some governors definitely needed to improve on their levels of training to date.

4.4 Scheme of Delegation
Alison Smith said that the updates reflected the re-introduction of the CAS committee and delegated authorities to that sub-committee. The CEO also wanted to look at the Equalities policy and the MATs equalities agenda next year and where that would fit in terms of CAS oversight.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the revised Scheme of Delegation as circulated.

4.5 Agenda Planning and Board Meeting Dates

Resolved:

Trustees approved the meeting schedule for next year and the agenda planners, as circulated.

Resolved:

Memberships of the FAR and CAS committees were confirmed as followed:

CAS – Alison Smith, Clare Thornton-Eckford, Nick Sheppard, Deborah Hastie

FAR – Tom Fielden, Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Simon Peacock, Deborah Hastie.

It was noted that the new Trustee would join the CAS committee.

Trustees approved the CAS committee Terms of Reference. Terms of Reference for the optional LGB CAS working group were also agreed.

4.6 Member Appointed Trustee Process

Papers had been circulated outlining the process.

Resolved:

The appointment process was approved and would be shared with Members for comment.

Trustees were asked to complete an updated skills audit by September meeting. This would help inform recruitment requirements.

There was a brief discussion on the CSTs Assurance framework for Trust governance. Trustees agreed it would be useful to go through a process of consideration and evaluation. A working party would be arranged ahead of the September meeting.

4.7 Recommendation on Autumn Term meeting formats

The Vice Chair welcomed the use of virtual formats. There were real benefits to holding meetings remotely in terms of efficiency and engagement. However, he acknowledged that the Board had to weigh up whether they were putting a barrier to engagement by not permitting some face-to-face meetings when LGBs clearly felt they would be beneficial. In all likelihood, face-to-face meetings would be permitted again from the autumn term. Trustees largely agreed with the Vice Chair but some noted general fatigue caused by the number of online meetings. The CEO favoured giving LGBs license to decide locally whether to adopt a face-to-face or hybrid model for their future meetings. Trustees agreed that this was the best way forward. As to their own meetings, the Trust Board would proceed with full board meetings face-to-face and sub-committee meetings virtually.

5.0 **Trust Sub-Committee Reports**

The June LGB minutes and the FAR Committee minutes had been circulated for information prior to the meeting.

5.1 Trustees noted the circulated minutes. There were no comments or questions.

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6.0 Strategic Planning

6.1 Review of 2020/21 Plan

The circulated document had been RAGged. There were two remaining 'red' items. The COO noted that the roll out of a Business Continuity Plan needed to be picked up, along with the methodology for the Central Service Offer with KPIs. The Trust needed to engage with schools about the services that they wanted, as opposed to just assuming that all schools wanted all central services. Some items on the plan had been delayed in terms of delivery due to other priorities taking precedence. Trustees reiterated that, given the nature of the year, having so many green items was a real positive. Progress on the plan had been discussed at the away day.

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- 6.1.1 A Trustee highlighted item 5.5, 6th form provision and the ongoing concerns in this area (now marked as having gone from Red to Amber). They noted discussion of 6th form at TGS LGB, however, there was no mention of collaboration (with SHS) and no indication of any benefits therein. This issue seemed to be drifting. The CEO was challenged as to whether the RAG rating was accurate? The CEO said that a conversation had started and there was analytic data to refer to in terms of guiding forward planning, however, the planned strategy meeting had not happened due to the TGS school closure. This meeting had been rescheduled. The CEO acknowledged the inherent risks with the current situation. The item would now remain Amber until the school and the Trust had delivered against a strategy. The Vice Chair noted the complexities around the 6th form. Mr Peacock would join the Chair at the planned 6th form strategy meeting. Further general discussion followed.

Tom Fielden joined the meeting

6.2 2021/22 Draft Strategic Plan

The suggested priorities were on pg5/6 of the circulated report. The CEO summarised these and the rationale behind them. High level implementation of plans were noted. The CEO highlighted the need to incorporate the staff wellbeing and people strategy. These would impact positively on school improvement and the vision for being one organisation. With regards collaboration and growth strategy – the Trust needed to be ready to deliver on it and having established principles for engagement re: expansion. Recovery plans at school level were detailed in the papers. The CEO asked Trustee approval to roll out the draft plan for consultation with headteachers and chairs. The CEO also wanted to share the plan with Members. Approval of the finalised strategic plan to take place at MAT Board on 30th September. The Vice Chair said that the plan accurately reflected priorities and required action plan. The Vice Chair felt that elements of safeguarding needed to be an objective. Overall, it was a very positive document. Trustees welcomed the quality of the plan and how comprehensive it was. Trustees also welcomed the forward planning for the two years beyond 2021/22. The Vice Chair said that the plan showed good reflection on the previous periods. Trustees agreed that the draft should be taken forward to consultation.

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Collaboration, Partnership and Growth Strategy

The CEO talked in broad terms about the mobilisation of the CPG - the CEO sought expressions of interest post meeting from Trustees to join a working group looking at delivery of the project.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the CPG strategy as outlined and discussed at the away day.

Comms Strategy and associated Press policy

A Trustee noted that the Trust was potentially exposed in the face of a crisis incident. There were already examples of some 'bad press' and fall out. The strategy needed to be understood more widely across Trust leadership in case key people, including the CEO, was not available. The CEO accepted the challenge and the approach in this area would be sharpened up now that there was a coherent strategy and policy.

Resolved:

The Comms Strategy and Press Policy were approved as circulated.

- 6.3 Application of Central Budget for School Improvement Function
No decision was necessary at this stage. Trustees would need to consider impact on budgeting. This item would be returned to in the autumn.

IY / MB

7.0 School Improvement

- 7.1 Continuing Conversations
Trustees noted the individual reports circulated.

- 7.2 Education Risk Register Update
The original risk register was constructed based on the 2019 formal data. It was very important for Trustees to digest the content of the update paper. It was somewhat subjective as it was based on QA with heads and chairs, with limited data to underpin it. However, the assessments were underpinned by the SIC's reports and known factors affecting the overall governance of schools by LGBs. The CEO commented on the current 'reds' and the progress being made to address deficiencies. The CEO talked about those settings that had demonstrated improvements and where support was still necessary. The CEO outlined where risks remained in certain settings. One school was flagged as being of significant concern. The informal S5 showed elements of 'requires improvement'. A structured support plan would come into place, with input from another school leader. The CEO outlined what that might involve. The secondary settings were in a strong position. One school's governance had the potential to undermine the good work being done elsewhere in the school. This view was endorsed by the link Trustee.

- 7.3 Data Report and Summary
Those that were now available had been circulated. They would all be uploaded to Google folder in due course.

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- 7.3.1 Would assessment data go to CAS Committee to look at the information in more depth and identify whether governance was looking sufficiently at school-level priorities? Yes it would. There would be a focus on the success stories and the areas of concern. There would be a summary document when all data reports were in place.

- 7.4 Draft School Improvement Strategy (Trust level) 2021/22
The strategic headteacher meeting to look at this had been postponed. The proposed changes were in blue. The most significant change involved an additional QA of the school improvement function, which involved an agreed audit visit to look at a specific focus area. The Vice Chair felt that this level of assurance was critical. A Trustee agreed; deep dive exercises would help to uncover and highlight some issues that had perhaps gone unseen during the recent period.

- 7.5 School Improvement Consultant Reports
Reports circulated. The CEO flagged those reports where particular concerns had been raised. A confidential discussion followed.

- 7.6 Safeguarding Update
There had been a no notice section 11a inspection at Brayton. The CEO, the Vice Chair and Alison Smith had supported that process. The CEO remarked that the school's Headteacher had been outstanding in the situation and demonstrated her credentials. Crucially, safeguarding was adjudged effective at the school. The official letter to be shared in due course. OFSTED highlighted the need for all employees to understand their responsibility on a day-to-day basis re: safeguarding duties.

There was a deep dive exercise going on with NYCC, with certain MAT schools involved. Judgements were provided. Saxton was viewed as delivering good safeguarding practices. Trust processes and paperwork were in place. Collaborative working was a strength. There were some helpful recommendations arising from the exercise and they had also been reassuring. The Vice Chair said that it was very important to have constructive feedback. The Trust needed to be mindful of big issues that were to the fore such as sexual harassment and peer-on-peer abuse. The CEO said that the schools needed to be strong on safeguarding and that governors needed

to know what to say to inspectors about safeguarding in their setting. Trustees highlighted the importance of the safeguarding governor forum and other opportunities to receive training and guidance on safeguarding. There was more organisational control with regards the latter now that Cayte Mulhern was in post.

8.0 Operations Update

8.1 The COO said that the working party meeting to look at the digital technology strategy was in the diary.

8.2 The COO had met with NYCC and representatives from the schools to discuss catering. All parties had explored a three-year contract with proper KPIs. There had been a change of management staff for the MAT and new daily menu choices were being offered. Mrs Northrop-Clay would be the single point of contact for the schools. NYCC had a lot to prove. Responding to a Trustee query, the COO clarified the nature of the opt-out clause. The fixed meal price of £2.34 matched costs. The MAT and the schools were satisfied with what had been a good contract negotiation.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the catering contract with NYCC in principle.

8.3 In March 2020, the MAT had agreed the 2.75% salary uplift for support staff. However, no decision had made on annual leave entitlement. To remain competitive, the COO believed that it was in everyone's interest to adopt the basic 24 day leave entitlement.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the 24 day leave entitlement for support staff.

8.5 A Trustee asked how the cleaning contract was going. First term audits had been completed. Some improvement was still necessary in certain settings. Issues revolved around staffing in those settings. The management of the service and the cleaning products being used were far better. There were KPI metrics now in place for this and indeed all contracts.

9.0 Policy Review

The following policies had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- SEND policy
- NQT policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Support Staff Appraisal Policy
- Complaints Policy – New Procedure based on DfE template
- Designated Teacher for Looked After Children Policy
- Remote Learning Policy

Notes covering the amendments to policies had also been circulated.

- Privacy notices recommended by Veritau (for information)

9.1 Trustees had been given a summary document outlining any substantive changes to these policies and the rationale for those changes.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the approved the policies as circulated. Trustees noted the new privacy notices, which had been recommended and provided by the DPO, Veritau.

10.0 Items to be Delegated or Communicated to LGBs (before end of term)

10.1 The Clerk and the CEO to liaise on what needed to happen and when in terms of governance communications before the end of term and at the start of next term.

11.0 Any Other Agreed Business

11.1 There had been multiple bubble and class closures and impact on staffing from positive cases of Covid. As with other schools nationally, operating to the end of term was mission critical. There

IY / Clerk

was significant risk of whole-school closures before end of term, certainly there would be further class closures. The Vice Chair noted the resilience and commitment of staff. The CEO clarified the changes that would officially come into effect from 19th July. However, the MAT would largely stick to the protocols that had been adopted to date until at least the end of term.

- 11.2 The parent survey development had been shared with Trustees. There was a working group looking at this matter. Pete Cook, governor at SMPS, had supported the process. Mr Cook had extensive experience in stakeholder engagement. The question set was still in development.
- 11.3 Trustees thanked the MAT central team for their work across an extraordinary year. Their efforts had been remarkable.

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting to take place on Thursday 30th September at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
Discussion and decision on MAT approach to external reviews of governance	4.2	ALL	2021/22
Discuss with local chairs attendance at other LGB meetings to observe strong governance in action	4.2	IY	Autumn term
Trustees to arrange to attend LGB meetings to observe local governance and build knowledge	4.2	ALL	2021/22
Review Equalities policy and MAT equalities agenda	4.4	IY	Autumn term
Pass on Trustee appointment process to Members for comment	4.6	IY / CTE	Before end of term
Complete skills audit	4.6	ALL	By September meeting
Look at the CST Assurance Framework	4.6	Working party	By September meeting
Look at BCP and central services methodology	6.1	MB	By next FAR Comm
Consult on and finalise strategic plan	6.2	IY	September meeting
Advise on future use of central budget for school improvement function	6.3	MB / IY	Autumn term comm meetings
Remaining data reports uploaded to Google folder	7.3	IY	ASAP
Governance comms – what, when and by whom	10.1	IY / Clerk	Discussion before end of term