

STAR MAT Board of Trustees' Curriculum and Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 11th November 2021 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

The meeting was inquorate after item 10 and therefore only notes were in effect for items 11-14.

Present: Alison Smith (Chair), Clare Thornton-Eckford, Nick Sheppard

In attendance:

Ian Yapp (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operations 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.

There were no apologies. There were no declarations of interest.

There was a discussion about expanding the membership of the Committee and how this might be achieved. The CEO outlined the route that he was in favour of, in line with Article 101. The GA advised that the proposal to employ the primary SIC to the committee needed to be looked into by the CEO/COO. Trustees weighed up the benefits and drawbacks. The matter to be explored by the CEO and COO ahead of next meeting.

2.0 Continuing Conversations Update

Full reports pertaining to each setting circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO gave a summary of the position in each of the schools, both from a school improvement and a governance perspective.

One of the schools was subject to a support plan and the LGB/Trust would need to look at long term staff planning at leadership level and overall capacity to deliver improved teaching and learning. A Rapid Improvement Group was now in place with regard governance and, to that end, formal terms for the use and remit of RIGs generally would be put forward for approval at the next Trust Board meeting.

One of the schools had a high prevalence of Covid cases, which was providing additional challenge at a tricky time for the school. The Trust had now made a strong appointment for a new headteacher for that school. The incoming headteacher had experience of delivering against primary assessment processes in a MAT.

Two of the schools were informally buddying, which was viewed as a good way to support one of the settings on its journey to better securing good. The MAT viewed these buddying arrangements favourably and there was scope to look at using them elsewhere in certain circumstances.

Two of the schools were in strong positions but one needed to improve on its ability to articulate its strengths and development to external scrutiny and the other needed to ensure all governors, leaders and staff could articulate their curriculum strategy, given that they had a multi-strand approach to various aspects of teaching and learning. There was a budget risk for the latter, which also needed addressing.

ACTION

IY / MB

One of the schools was flagged as governance journeying from amber to red – issues around capacity and resilience, challenge, support and active governance were to the fore. The interim headteacher knew the school well but there were concerns about the local ability to deliver on recruitment and panel processes. The Chair and the GA outlined issues. The school had been unable to recruit to a DHT post. There were mission critical decisions to be made re: leadership. Further discussions on boosting governance capacity followed.

The CEO outlined the various strengths of remaining settings and where growth and expansion were likely to take place in coming years.

3.0 Attendance Report

Early autumn absence data had been shared with Trustees prior to the meeting.

- 3.1 The CEO noted an erratic picture due to the ongoing Covid situation. The Trust would wait and see what statutory reporting would be required come year end. Trustees were not sure whether anyone could read too much into the data at this point given the turbulent picture in schools.

4.0 Data Reports

Evaluations for each setting and a primary and secondary evaluation had been circulated prior to the meeting. These replicated reports submitted to Trustees in the summer. The Committee had also received a copy of the primary assessment calendar.

- 4.1 The primary schools would be using FFT tracking going forward and making use of their analytics tools. The CEO saw this as a positive step forward for the Trust.
- 4.2 Secondary FFT data had just been released. The Trust was looking for a commonality of reporting at LGB and committee level. 2021 data was just a point in time and it was more important to look at destination data and NEET. From that perspective, the picture was really impressive in both secondaries.

5.0 Education Risk Register

An updated risk register had been circulated prior to the meeting. Trustees had also been given an update on the support plan in place for one of the settings and the SIC/SIP deployment days for the year ahead.

The school with the support plan was being re-categorised internally as a 4. There was now firm evidence to suggest that school was RI. The support plan was updated and reviewed every week – beyond that it was a live and interactive document. The CEO gave further details on the logistics of delivery of the support plan. This had been an intense process and had resulted in a small proportion of staff resigning. Teaching and learning rigour and expectations had been heightened to a level they perhaps had not seen before, but expectations were now clear.

How had the headteacher responded? Very well. They were now full understanding of the school's position. Was this process revealing of leadership capacity? Yes to some extent. The MAT had identified the risk and was working through a process to improve the school. The MAT was putting intervention in place so as to show external scrutiny that they had the capacity to support a school in challenging circumstances. Where there any safeguarding concerns? None identified. What about pupil standards? Outcomes at previous external data (2019) were good but it was clear that teaching and learning needed to be improved. The RIG was now in place, meeting fortnightly, to check on the impact of the support plan. Would Trustees still see headlines? Yes. What about the SDP? Whilst there is an SDP, this has now been superseded by the support plan which is actively monitored by the RIG.

How was the new SIC getting on? Shan had made a fantastic start and was already adding real value. The SIC would be delivering some inspection training ahead of the Kate Rowley visit on the 8th of December. The SIC was supporting peer reviews and deliver of EYFS strategy.

6.0 Church Schools

The Church Distinctiveness Group meeting minutes had been shared with Trustees. Committee had also received the Church Schools' risk register, the CDG advisory report and an amended School Improvement Strategy with regards the Church School.

Church Schools on a page would be delivered at next full Board meeting.

The CEO noted the Chair's requested amendment to school improvement strategy.

7.0 Impact on Provision from Strategic Initiatives

7.1 The CEO noted that it was too early in the year to report on this or make comment.

8.0 Impact from the Use of Premiums

8.1 This item was carried forward to next meeting as reports from headteachers were just going to the November round of LGB meetings. The CEO would provide reports on this ahead of next meeting.

9.0 Curriculum Update

The CEO would update Trustees at the Spring term meeting.

Curriculum groups had now reformed having started work in 2019 and then seen that become more dormant due to the pandemic. The operational complications of Covid in schools had prevented a swift return but matters had been discussed at heads' group and the Trust would look at priority areas.

Could these meetings be done virtually? A Trustee was concerned that the Trust was not really progressing this curriculum development work at the necessary pace. Covid was of course a factor but it would remain so and therefore could no longer be viewed as a limiting issue. Progress had to be made. The CEO acknowledged the Trustee's points. He reflected further and more specifically on the operational difficulties but assured Trustees that post-Christmas the groups would start to deliver against strategic plans. The digital technology group, for example, was already meeting and others were at a planning stage ahead of formally recommencing.

10.0 Safeguarding Update

Cayte Mulhern had provided an update on developments since matters were discussed at last Full Trust Board meeting.

From the SCR audit there was a strong recommendation to move to an online platform. The proposal had been to move to SCR Tracker and this had been given the green light by the working group looking at this. Cayte Mulhern would have overview of the traffic light system it offered. The system was good because it allowed the Trust to interrogate data and it was also a one-stop shop for DBS checks etc.

The Chair was interested to hear about the ongoing response to the review from an RSE perspective at future meetings.

Nick Sheppard left the meeting. The meeting was now inquorate but continued on an inquorate basis. The Clerk continued to take brief notes.

11.0 Website Compliance Overview

Audit reports shared prior to the meeting.

The Trust was seeking to procure a new provider to support a new MAT website and content provision. The executive would seek Trustee approval of the plans for the website. The CEO reflected on a clunky website where information was present but not always easy to see and/or access. There was a discussion on website compliance generally and how to improve the content and quality of school websites.

12.0 Policy Review

None.

13.0 Matters for Escalation to the Full Board

13.1 Committee membership needed to be addressed.

14.0 Any Other Business

Trustees had been given the link to the outcomes of the Trust's parental survey.

The CEO noted that the working group had worked through the question set and the survey would launch for a 4-week period either side of Christmas. A Trustee suggested that the survey be launched sooner rather than later, so that Trustees could review outcomes in the Spring.

Date of Next Meeting:

8th February 2022 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm

	Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
1.	Investigate possibility of SIC joining the committee and whether this could be part of their chargeable hours to the Trust	1	IY / MB	Ahead of next meeting

These minutes were approved at the CAS committee on 8th February 2022.