

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

<b>FULL GOVERNING BOARD - VIRTUAL</b>		<b>DATE:</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> February 2023</b>
<b>CHAired BY: John Clements (JC)</b>		<b>CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)</b>	
<b>GOVERNORS PRESENT:</b>		<b>Also Present:</b>	
John Clements (JC) Russ Green (RG) – in part * <i>RG's internet connection varied greatly during the meeting and attendance was therefore intermittent throughout.</i> Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH)		Christina Mabin (CM), Diocesan Governance Advisor – in part Debbie Clapshaw (DC), Governance Team Lead, Devon Education Services – in part	
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>			
<b>Absent without apology:</b>			

**Governor questions are highlighted in grey**

<b>Agenda Items</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Opening Prayer &amp; Welcome</u></b></p> <p>1. Opening Prayer taken by JC.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></b></p> <p>1. No apologies received.                  JC informed the GB that Anna Wade has resigned from the GB due to not having the time required for the role.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b><u>Declarations of Interest &amp; Correspondence</u></b></p> <p>1. No declarations of interest.</p> <p>2. Correspondence regarding the teacher strikes was received and shared with JC as required.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b><u>Next Steps</u></b></p> <p><b><u>1. Options for St. Martin's</u></b>                  Following SH's decision to resign from her role as Headteacher and take retirement, JC advised that SH's last official day in post would be 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023, although AH will continue to be Acting HT during this time. The GB now needs to seek a long-term plan for leadership of the school which will be for the best for the children. This was acknowledged to be a difficult but very important decision.</p>

JC outlined the options as follows:

- Continue as an independent maintained school
- Join a local Federation
- Join a multi-academy trust (MAT)
- Enter a Management Partnership for a defined period of time

CM and DC were attending to help the GB explore these options. In 2020, the GB researched these options following the retirement of TB and the decision at that time was to stay independent. JC advised the GB that there is now a very clear indication from the Government that the expectation is that all schools will join MATs by 2030. The Diocese has also been clear in its steer towards multi-school groups on the grounds of this providing added resilience, sustainability, and greater opportunities for collaboration.

CM advised that the education landscape has changed significantly from 2020. The Diocesan viewpoint pre-dates the White Paper and the direction towards more multi-school groups is underpinned by a belief that this creates stronger partnerships. CM affirmed that the Diocese has a strong message that partnership working should not result in schools being subsumed into MATs and losing their individuality. CM is aware of many schools who are now considering their options because they are seeing the advantages of partnership working. Previously, CM would work with one school at a time in looking at the options but currently she is working with eleven. This has all stemmed from direct requests from Governing Boards for support. The GB was advised that many schools are currently struggling to recruit Headteachers at the moment, and also all schools who have entered Management Partnerships have now gone onto join Federations or MATs once this had ended. CM advised that MATs have changed a great deal from 2020 and recommended that the GB fully explore the options available to them.

DC explained that there is a period of interim leadership at DCC. The Interim Director of Children's Services addressed personnel and was asked about the direction of travel for schools. He had stated there will be a mixed economy of schools and not all schools can be converted quickly. DC advised that in the light of how things can change the need is to look at which structure will deliver the best experience for the children. DC recommended that governors consider what the strengths of St. Martin's are and where support could be needed. The GB needs to be clear what St. Martin's is seeking from any potential partnership and what it would contribute itself. Within this piece of work, governors should also ensure that they have checked what level of authority the Board and the school would have within each option.

GTH commented that partnering with other schools could be beneficial in addressing the issue of recruiting and retaining governors. For a federation, there would be one GB for all the schools, and in MATs there are Local Governing Boards and Hub Boards. JC agreed that he is concerned by the current small number of governors on the Board, although he also raised that that three applications/expressions of interest from potential governors are currently being processed.

JC raised the potential issue of joining a MAT that is then in turn absorbed by a larger MAT which has a different approach. DC agreed that this could be a risk and that a smaller MAT is very likely to join a larger MAT.

CM noted that MATs consisting of 4-5 schools are ones which are considered smaller MATs and are the ones that are likely to end up joining a larger MAT. However, some schools want to join a MAT earlier so that they can be part of the emerging picture in the early days.

CM and DC shared information on those Trusts which meet the criteria for VA schools in MATs regarding majority articles. This was noted by the GB.

*(CM and DC left the meeting)*

JC raised that the school is currently in quite an exposed position, in terms of leadership. AH suddenly stepped up to be Acting Headteacher after only having held the post of Deputy Headteacher in September 2022. Other EDCSP schools who were previously able to support SH when she became Acting Headteacher are not so much in a position to do so with AH, as they also now have Headteachers who have only been in post for a shorter time.

JC explained that his personal view was that it would be beneficial to explore a management partnership to gain a feel for more formalized partnership working, and to receive more leadership support/cover.

JE asked how the structure of the leadership team at St. Martin's compared to other schools and if its SLT was considered large or not. AH advised that it depended on the size of the school. The biggest difference was that NP and MT were Assistant Headteachers, whereas in other schools they would be more likely to be Key Stage Heads and not be paid on the Leadership scale. Having a Headteacher, a Deputy Headteacher and one Assistant Head would be more likely to be seen. AH advised that it also depended very much on whether the Deputy Headteacher was teaching or not and how Safeguarding work was undertaken. At St. Martin's, there is a Family Advocate who is responsible for safeguarding. AH did not feel that the leadership team at St. Martin's was too large.

The GB discussed that there will be a need to actively consult with staff and to acknowledge that regardless of which route forward is taken, there will be significant change ahead given that even if the school remains as it is, this time the substantive headteacher who is appointed is most likely to be an external candidate.

RG advised that his personal view was that he thought it would be better for the school to remain independent – he would be concerned that the school's autonomy and identity could be lost if it did not.

JC agreed that St. Martin's has a unique place in the community, and he would not want that watered down. The GB will be seeking assurances with all routes being explored as to potential impacts on the school.

AH felt that when researching the MAT option, it would be key to question whether the MAT's vision and values aligned with St. Martin's and rule out any that did not. There would be likely to be less change within an established MAT than in one that was evolving. RG queried where St. Martin's and its individuality would fit in if the vision was already set. JC commented that governors did not want the school to change, and any partnership working would have to fit with St. Martin's existing values.

**Actions: The GB agreed that the next steps would be:**

- **Explore all options available to the GB**
- **Undertake consultation with staff**
- **Contact schools in each option to identify advantages, challenges, staff views etc**
- **Invite people to speak with the GB e.g., to describe what their MAT offers**

The GB agreed that the decision must be fully researched and informed.

## 2. Recruitment of a new Headteacher

AH raised that in order to recruit a substantive Headteacher with a September 2023 start date, the recruitment process would need to be begin as soon as possible. AH asked whether undertaking the exploratory work discussed in item 4.1 would mean that recruitment would need to be delayed by a year. JC confirmed that it would not be achievable to fully research options, make a decision and recruit a new Headteacher by the end of May (as would be needed for a September 2023 start).

GTH asked AH how she felt about continuing as Acting Headteacher for significantly longer. AH advised that she does not wish to be the substantive Headteacher but is prepared to hold the role of Acting Headteacher for as long as it requires to recruit the right person for the role. AH advised that

at a previous setting, recruiting a Headteacher was difficult – she is concerned about St. Martin’s being forced to settle.

3. Confirmation of interim leadership arrangements

**Decisions: The GB agreed the following:**

- **Recruitment of a substantive Headteacher will be delayed – new recruitment timelines will work to a new Headteacher starting in role in September 2024**
- **AH will formally continue as Acting Headteacher until the recruitment of a substantive Headteacher has been completed.**

**5. Approval of minutes from last meetings (12.12.22 and 16.1.23) and update on actions**

1. Parts 1 and 2 agreed as accurate by the Full GB – to be signed by the Chair when next in school.

2. Actions update from minutes of 12.2.22:

- Action 1 – feedback on progress ref reviewing the Behaviour Principles will be provided at the 27.2.23 Full GB meeting by AH
- Action 2 – completed
- Action 3 – in process. JB advised that the minutes which need to be submitted to the bank to close the account were only being approved at this meeting, so it has not been possible to complete this action yet.

Actions update from minutes of 16.1.23:

- Action 1 – this amendment to the Finance policy has now been superseded by the full annual review of the policy required as per the policy review schedule. The amendment agreed on 16.1.23 will be reflected in the fully reviewed policy when it comes to be approved at the Full GB meeting on 27.2.23.

3. Update on Equality Audit

The planning and undertaking of the Equality Audit (previously discussed at Full GB in Autumn 2022) was put on hold when SH went on sick leave and later resigned. AH and JW have now completed the audit, using the suggested framework in the DCC model Equality Policy. Governors had received the audit outcomes and action plan as part of the supporting paperwork for this meeting and noted the actions the school will be taking as a result. Governors will monitor progress made against the action plan as part of their cycle of work.

The GB discussed how inclusivity and equality could be made more explicit in the documentation that goes out to prospective governors to ensure that all are encouraged to be governors.

**Actions:**

- **JB to discuss with AH and IO what the school can offer to ensure governance is accessible to all.**
- **JB to revise new governor paperwork to be explicitly inclusive and to share with GB for feedback**
- **JB to add Equality Audit Action Plan monitoring to the GB Cycle of Work.**

**6. Headteacher Report and Data**

1. The report and supporting paperwork had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting.

JC noted that the numbers of disadvantaged pupils has increased over the last year and asked if any particular reasons for this had been identified. AH advised that more military families (who are eligible for pupil premium and therefore are included in the disadvantaged numbers) have moved into Cranbrook. The overall numbers of pupils have also increased and therefore there would also be likely to be a rise in the number of disadvantaged pupils as part of that.

JC noted the ongoing increased focus on improving attendance and asked if the school is nearing an average of 95-96% yet, following December's dip in attendance due to significant illness in school. AH advised average attendance is not quite there yet. Those children who are persistent absentees (less than 90%) are also impacting upon data. The school is continuing to develop its strategies for improving attendance and supporting families to achieve this. Less EWO letters are now being sent out – the school is choosing to engage with families in a more direct way (e.g., making phone calls initially, along with follow up calls and meetings in school if the situation progresses). Feedback from parents has shown that they appreciate receiving the calls. Attendance has improved for those children who had letters sent home. Children who have severe absence are known to the school and staff are working closely with the families. The circumstances of these children are considered on an individual basis – they are not 'a number'.

The EWO has provided feedback to the school on their strategies to improve attendance. This has stated that St. Martin's is 'ahead of the game' in having more family engagement and less of a punitive approach. This strategy has been developed and led by AH to date, but AH raised concerns regarding her capacity to maintain this level of focus on attendance now she is Acting Headteacher and there is no Acting Deputy Headteacher able to take on her previous workload.

The GB discussed the data analysis and recognized that elements of this are concerning. Year 3 data and strategies to improve progress and attainment were discussed at the meeting on 16.1.23. AH advised that although this year group does have very high numbers of pupils with SEN and EHCPs, the school needs to take some of the responsibility for this year group needing to catch up after Covid. This year group experienced disruption in both Years 1 and 2 with changes of teacher in-year in year 2, and Covid impacted upon the Early Career Teachers (ECTs) the class had in Year 1 in reducing their experience and confidence in being able to fill gaps and catch children up with lost learning. AH stated that even with the high SEN and EHCPs, there is still a need to accelerate progress and attainment within this year group.

JC noted that data results in KS2 were mixed e.g., Maths progress was good but writing achievement has dipped more. AH advised that teacher knowledge in KS2 is being explored. The teaching team has changed significantly over the last few years. She will be exploring whether other schools been able to close the Covid gap quicker than at St. Martin's. The GB noted that the changes made to the approach to reading is working well to address gaps, and attainment/progress there is now predicted to improve.

*(RG left the meeting due to no internet connection)*

Year 2 predictions have been updated. Aspirational targets have been set as follows: Reading – 71% ARE, Writing 61% and Maths 70%. 57% received GLD in 2021 so if these aspiration targets are achieved, this will be very positive and demonstrate that educational standards at the school are good.

JC compared the Summer 22 and December 2022 data and noted the Year 2 data had dipped from Year 1. He asked if that is a common point in the school year for this to happen. AH explained that usually there is more of a dip at that point, as children move to more formalized learning in Year 2 from the continuous provision in Year 1. Further to this, in December, teachers will only have taught their classes for three months and therefore assessments are not as fully informed as they are in the Summer when teachers have been with their classes for the whole year.

**7. Finance**

**1. Budget Monitor**

The Business Manager has now been able to predict end of year figures more accurately. Some spends have not been as high as originally anticipated. The current carryforward prediction is £76,985, up from the last prediction of £49,000. The school has received additional government

funding of £61,000 to offset in part the pay increases. BT is in the process of drafting the 2023-24 budget with SLT.

2. Strategic financial planning needs

It has been identified that when the school was built, substandard piping was installed within the boiler and heating system which means it is not fully fit for purpose. Works to rectify this are being quoted at around £8,000. The school has raised with the Diocese that it should not be the school that has to cover these costs as they have arisen from faults from the actual design and building of the school.

JC advised the GB that work is also being undertaken to explore the best value way forward with regards to the Promethean screens as the lease for these ends in July 2023. It will be important to balance cost, value and ensuring the screens are still functioning as well as teachers need.

JC will feedback to the GB on these areas when further information is available.

**8. Staffing**

1. Report from Headteacher Appraisal Committee Chair re monitoring of Headteacher work/life balance.

It was acknowledged that this has been a very difficult area – for both SH before she resigned and for AH in taking up the Acting Headteacher role. JC proposed that when things have settled a little, a meeting can be held with AH to consider the objectives that had been set for SH and to discuss whether they are (i) still valid for AH and (ii) what support AH may need.

JH raised that in light of the decision to delay the recruitment of a substantive headteacher, there will also be a need to question what support will be needed over that extended period for both AH and other members of the SLT. JC advised that if the school does decide to enter a management partnership, then AH and SLT would receive the level of support needed.

AH informed the GB that Ali Hurst (AliH) has increased her SEND hours and is now working four days a week – this has been hugely helpful in terms of ensuring SEN work is covered. The key issue around workload is that NP and MT, although Assistant Heads, are both in class full time and are fully responsible for their classes. They therefore have very limited additional capacity, especially as their classes are Reception and year 6. AH advised that plans are ongoing to explore whether there could be options to use staff returning from maternity leave differently to release NP at times.

The GB acknowledged that in AH, SH had a full-time non-teaching Deputy, which AH now does not. Further to this, AH also raised that she has had less Headteacher experience although she is exploring contacts who may be able to provide feedback/guidance if needed. The School Improvement advisor is going to undertake a trial OfSTED telephone call with AH, NP and MT to support their preparation for a potential inspection.

**9. Governance**

1. Planning of GB Annual Impact Statement

It was agreed that JC would lead on this.

2. Reaffirm timings for SIP Review meeting in July.

It was agreed that this will be postponed to the last meeting of this term when the prospective governors will all hopefully be in post and able to confirm if they are able to attend if the review is held 1-3pm.

3. GB Self-Evaluation.

In view of governor numbers being in the process of increasing, it was agreed that this would be postponed until the last meeting of the Spring term.

**Action: JC to circulate the evaluation template to the GB by 1.3.23.**

4. Governor Impacts from the previous half term.

Identified as follows:

- JE – has undertaken EY visit and met with MT. JE noted that four children with high, specific needs have recently joined and the staff team has established excellent provision to support them e.g., visual cues and visual time strategies which are especially helping those with limited speech. These were strategies suggested by AliH. MT has reported that the input from AliH has been invaluable.
- GTH – has been in school exploring KS1 Maths and seeing evidence of how the teachers are engaging with pupils through resources such as puppets and number blocks. GTH also saw evidence that the Mastering Number project is progressing positively. GTH attended a Celebration Assembly and felt that this event was a very positive experience for both pupils and families to be part of.
- JC – has been supporting AH and the rest of SLT following SH's resignation and working with the rest of the staff around this as well. JC met with Jo Stranks to discuss Talk for Reading and saw how in depth and comprehensive this is. It was possible to see the impact this (and the other resources Jo is providing to teachers) is having from Year 2 upwards.

5. Balance of Jackie Box Memorial Fund.

This remains at £10.47.

6. Reports from governors who have attended training and impacts for the GB

GTH has booked onto an OfSTED preparation course and will feedback to the Board after completing this.

JE attended an external course on using defibrillators. JE asked whether the school is meant to have one. JB advised that there had been one in school, but it had been moved to the Younghayes Centre opposite as it had been felt to be more accessible to the wider community, and not just the school, in that location.

7. Covering GB roles

JB advised that two governors are needed to join the Leadership and Teachers' Pay Committee to ensure it is quorate and can make any decisions needed. The next meeting is on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2023. The position of Vice-Chair is also currently vacant.

**Action: Governors to notify JB if they have capacity to take on one of these roles, even if only on a temporary basis until the new governors take up their posts.**

**10. Safeguarding**

1. AH advised that following has been implemented to support on-going safeguarding training in school:

- Safeguarding scenarios being delivered and discussed regularly at staff meetings
- JW is sending out One Minute Safeguarding guides on less common or very particular topics/issues on a fortnightly basis.
- AH and JW will be doing spot checks with staff to ensure that they are reading the One Minute guides and are aware of how to respond to different scenarios
- Children at Risk meetings are continuing to be held in school. These are especially effective for sharing key information with NP and MT.

It was discussed that governors could ask how staff are responding to these spot checks at future meetings.

JE asked whether all staff use CPOMS for recording any safeguarding incidents or information. AH advised all staff other than MTAs use CPOMS. MTAs pass the information to another member of the staff team, and they will log it on CPOMS on their behalf.

	<p>JE asked how any whistleblowing would be recorded and whether all staff were aware of how to raise concerns. AH advised that whistleblowing concerns are not recorded on CPOMS but are dealt with in line with the school's whistleblowing policy. All staff have access to this policy on the shared google drive and AH recently re-shared processed for raising whistleblowing concerns directly with staff.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>JB to forward the One Minute Guides to the GB</b></li> <li>• <b>AH to plan safeguarding scenarios for governors to discuss and respond to each term.</b></li> </ul>
11.	<p><b><u>Policies</u></b></p> <p><b><u>1. Admissions Arrangements 2024-2025</u></b>          This was included in the DCC arranged public consultation from November to January. The GB confirmed that since its initial review of the draft policy in the Autumn term, no changes were deemed necessary.</p> <p><b>Decision: The GB agreed to determine the 2024-25 Admissions policy.</b>  <b>Action: JB to confirm determination of the policy with the Diocese and DCC and to publish the approved policy on the school website by 15.3.23.</b></p> <p><b><u>2. Nursery Admissions policy.</u></b>          JE raised that a new model policy for Nursery Admissions had been issued. JB confirmed that she was aware and that this was being shared with AH and BM this week. It will then come to the Admissions Committee to consider if AH wishes to adopt the new format.</p>
12.	<p><b><u>Discussion: 'How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school?'</u></b></p> <p>1. These were identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GTH – discussions around next steps demonstrate that governors wish to maintain the existing Christian ethos and values, and ensure that decisions are made for the best for the children</li> <li>• JC – also agreed that discussions held were focused on what would benefit the children, and that retaining the Christian ethos was key. Learning of SEND innovations within EY has developed the GB's understanding of current needs in school and how provision is being developed to support them</li> <li>• JH – from this meeting, he feels that the Christian values have been upheld, and hopes that decisions taken will help staff grow and benefit the children.</li> <li>• JE – Development of safeguarding training within the GB will increase knowledge and awareness and benefit the children by having a better informed Board.</li> </ul>

<b><u>ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING</u></b>		
<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Person responsible</u></b>	<b><u>Date to be completed by</u></b>
<p><b>1. Complete the next steps regarding the future direction of the school:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explore all options available to the GB</b></li> <li>• <b>Undertake consultation with staff</b></li> <li>• <b>Contact schools in each option to identify advantages, challenges, staff views etc</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>JC to lead, all governors to be involved. JB to support as required.</b></p>	<p><b>Summer 23</b></p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite people to speak with the GB e.g., to describe what their MAT offers</li> </ul>		
2. Feedback on progress ref reviewing the Behaviour Principles to GB	AH	27.2.23
3. Complete closure of Jackie Box Memorial Fund	JB	6.3.23
4. Discuss with AH and IO what the school can offer to ensure governance is accessible to all.	JB	31.3.23
5. Revise new governor paperwork to be explicitly inclusive and share with GB for feedback	JB	31.3.23
6. Add Equality Audit Action Plan monitoring to the GB Cycle of Work.	JB	31.3.23
7. Circulate GB Self-Evaluation template to GB	JC	1.3.23
8. Notify JB if they have capacity to take on one of the roles described in item 9.7.	Governors	27.2.23
9. Forward the One Minute Guides to the GB.	JB	Fortnightly/as received
10. Plan safeguarding scenarios for governors to discuss and respond to each term	AH	GB meetings 2 and 4 each term
11. Confirm determination of the 2024-25 Admissions policy with the Diocese and DCC and to publish the approved policy on the school website.	JB	15.3.23

**ITEMS FOR 27.2.23 FULL GB AGENDA**

- GB Self-Evaluation
- Affirm timings for SIP Review Meeting in July

**SUMMARY OF DECISIONS**

The GB agreed the following:

- Recruitment of a substantive Headteacher will be delayed – new recruitment timelines will work to a new Headteacher starting in role in September 2024
- AH will formally continue as Acting Headteacher until the recruitment of a substantive Headteacher has been completed.
- To approve the 2024-25 Admissions Policy

**Next meeting: Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 6.00-8.00pm – to be held in school**

Signed as accurate by the Chair: .....

Name of Chair: .....

**Date:** .....