

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

FULL GOVERNING BOARD		DATE:	10th July 2023
CHAired BY: John Clements (JC)		CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)	
GOVERNORS PRESENT:		Also Present:	
John Clements (JC) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Brian Gravenor (BG) Ruth Marsh (RM) Phil Wales (PW)		Brigid Thompson (BT) – part Nat Padley (NP) – part Mel Turl (MT) - part	
APOLOGIES: None			
Absent without apology: None			

Governor questions are highlighted in grey

Agenda Items	
1.	<p><u>Opening Prayer & Welcome</u></p> <p>1. Opening Prayer taken by JC.</p>
2.	<p><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></p> <p>1. None</p>
3.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest & Correspondence</u></p> <p>1. No declarations of interest.</p> <p>2. No correspondence.</p>
4.	<p><u>Management Partnership & Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Decisions</u></p> <p>1. <u>Discuss and make decisions on:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school entering a Management Partnership or MAT • Which MAT the school would join if decision were to do so. <p>Members of the GB and SLT have completed their research into the partnership options available to the school. This has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust CEOs invited to visit St. Martin's and meet with SLT and JC

- Q&A sessions held with Trust CEOs and key staff – attended by governors and SLT
- Governor independent research using Trust websites etc.
- Visits to schools in each Trust undertaken by SLT and governors
- Informal conversations with staff/ex-staff

The GB identified and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of joining a management partnership. These were as follows:

Advantages

- More up to date research available and more people with capacity to share findings of research.
- HT recruitment less difficult within Trusts. If the school experienced another loss of HT, then it would not have the same issues as it has done to date. This has been a tough experience for staff at St. Martin's, despite their resilience. Being in a MAT would create greater stability.
- Alternative governance styles may result in greater insights.
- Greater potential for being part of a larger group and more support being available.
- Greater CPD opportunities for both leaders and staff
- Increased efficiency/reduction of admin
- Less time needed for HT to spend on logistics and more available to spend on teaching and learning.
- There are other schools where staff could be deployed to if required.
- Opportunities to receive supportive challenge.
- MAT forums and networking events will offer important benefits.
- Increased opportunities for the children
- As a Church school, St. Martin's will be joining a MAT where the majority of schools are also Church schools.

Disadvantages

- Financial arrangements
- Loss of control
- Loss of ability to respond promptly and make own decisions.
- Loss of identity
- Changes would need to be managed.
- Curriculum changes could be implemented.
- Potential questions around what the long-term commitment there would be from the MAT around making changes e.g., they may initially state changes won't happen, but this could then occur later.
- MAT ethos etc. could change if the CEO changes.
- Impacts on individual members of staff from Trust centralization of services.
- Imposed policies and procedures.
- It has been reported from some MATs that responses from centralized services can sometimes not be very prompt.
- It will take time to build relationships within the MAT.

BG – learning and sharing of practice is two-way and it will be possible for St. Martin's to share expertise as well.

JH – the Government line of direction also must be considered. Currently the school has a choice of whether to join/who to join – this may not be the case in the future.

NP – as a standalone school, things could still change e.g., if a new HT was recruited.

JC – School improvement support from DCC is shrinking for maintained schools and what is available does not always reflect current/up to date practice.

MT – it could be beneficial for the school HT to not have to deal with policies, it is not necessarily a disadvantage for this to be dealt with by a Trust.

JE – concerned at the possibility of losing admin/non-teaching staff, especially as here those people often help in other areas of the school. This could mean St. Martin's could lose its capacity to be as nurturing as it currently is if staffing decisions are taken solely for financial reasons.

AH – staying a standalone school would not necessarily protect the school from needing to make any staff changes e.g., if the financial position became difficult, then decisions on redundancies could have to happen.

RM – the school has been fortunate that AH was willing to step up to be Acting HT and has shown such resilience, but this has created a huge amount of pressure on her.

BT- the loss of the HT has shown the school's vulnerability as a standalone school.

BT noted that many of the advantages and disadvantages raised would only apply once the school joined a MAT, not a management partnership. BT asked if the advantages would come in during the management partnership as well.

AH advised that the advantages would be available within a management partnership, as part of the written agreement. This would involve costs.

Proposal: That St. Martin's should enter a Management Partnership

Decision: The GB unanimously agreed to enter a Management Partnership

The GB discussed which MAT they would enter a Management Partnership with.

At an earlier stage in the process, the GB had decided it would not continue its research with ACE.

The three MATs which the GB fully researched were:

- Ventrus
- First Federation
- St. Christopher's

The GB discussed their findings regarding each of the three Trusts.

Ventrus

- Four schools were visited, each felt very different with different SLT structures and with a strong sense of their own identity – not just the MAT 'brand'.
- Headteachers expressed feeling very supported, and absences were covered promptly.
- Budgets are not gag pooled. HTs have autonomy over their own budgets.
- Evidence found of good CPD and networking opportunities.
- Strong sense of partnership amongst the schools
- Opportunity to be part of something new being built in Exeter.
- Approach of the MAT seemed to be 'natural alignment' and keen to work collaboratively.
- Evidence of good career progression possibilities – staff developing in the MAT, and not moving out to progress
- Feedback obtained informally on Ventrus was all positive
- CEO presents as being open to debate and discussion with other school leaders. CEO also presents as being clearly passionate about offering something different for Exeter.
- SLT had a sense that if there were difficult experiences, the CEO would be prepared to step in and manage the situation.
- Governance structure is local governance boards.
- Ventrus are keen to learn and develop from St. Martin's about Church schools, especially as St. Martin's has an excellent SIAMS grading.
- Schools in Ventrus are already used for benchmarking with St. Martin's due to the similar demographics.

PW noted that CEOs can leave and move on, and asked if the ethos was embedded sufficiently to remain if this happened.

AH advised that the CEO had spoken confidently that he believed that if he stepped back from day-to-day involvement, the Trust could run itself without him due to the strength of the shared ethos and values.

BG asked if MAT staff thought that the Trust could change without the current CEO being in role and they had said not.

St. Christopher's

- Schools visited felt different to each other – the MAT did not seem like 'a brand'. HTs felt that they had retained their individual identities.
- Trust was very forthcoming about CPD opportunities and has already offered training to St. Martin's staff.
- The budget is gag pooled.
- Headteachers spoke about feeling very supported.
- Evidence of investment into improvement of premises
- Opportunities for networking clear
- Christian values seemed strongest at this Trust.
- Governance structure is local governance boards.
- Good networks appeared to exist throughout schools visited, with a prompt and supportive dynamic.

First Federation

- Two schools were visited. Schools were older with lots of smaller buildings.
- HT stated that there were good opportunities for networking and career progression.
- Staff presented as highly valued.
- Schools share values but have autonomy have their individual curriculums.
- School budgets are gag pooled.
- All Headteachers are asked to have a teaching commitment.
- The changing ethos of the Trust and the improvements being made by the new CEO appeared positive.
- The Trust presented as the most professional 'brand'.
- CEO presented as sincere and authentic, and a safe pair of hands.
- Staff were very open during the visits.
- No local governance boards – Governance Hubs in place instead. JC felt that this could be potentially a disadvantage as there would be fewer local people connected with their local schools. Governance could therefore become more remote.
- Schools are quite spread out, but with groups in each locality.

The GB then agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss some of their findings in more detail.

The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

PW asked which MAT had appeared the most curious about St. Martin's as a school.

JC advised that this had been Ventrus, and that the CEO had visited St. Martin's twice.

JC – felt that the research and visits undertaken have assuaged earlier concerns around the potential loss of identity or place in the community that joining a MAT could result in.

MT – the process of analysis has been clear and structured.

JH asked if the SLT were in agreement with which MAT they would prefer to be in partnership with. SLT confirmed that they were – this was Ventrus.

JH felt that it was evident that for governors and SLT there was a clear front runner in Ventrus.

BG stated the importance of the GB taking the lead from SLT regarding which MAT to be in a partnership with.

Decision: JC led the GB to vote on which Trust they wished to enter a management partnership with, starting with Ventrus. The GB voted unanimously to enter a management partnership with Ventrus. Therefore, no further votes on the remaining two Trusts were taken.

2. Next steps

Action: it was agreed that JC and AH would contact the Ventrus CEO tomorrow to confirm the GB's decision.

JC thanked everyone involved for all the work that they have put into this process.
AH thanked JC for coordinating this piece of work.

(NP, MT, and BT left the meeting)

5. Approval of minutes from last meeting (12.6.23 and 3.7.23) and update on actions

1. Agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair. The GB noted that JC had provided feedback to AH on the outcomes of the GB SIP Review session, and these will inform the writing of next year's SIP.

2. Actions update from 12.6.23 minutes:

- Action 1 – completed. AH has met with Parent Voice. AH will be working with those attending to ensure that these meetings are not used for raising individual concerns and that parents know the appropriate channels for raising any concerns.

6. Headteacher Report

1. Questions to the Headteacher

The GB noted that Education Welfare Officers will now be known as Attendance Improvement Officers.

JE asked if the relational plans around behaviour differ to the previous school terminology used around language of choice.

AH advised that plans are only for a few specific children and have been created to help staff know how best to support these children and what works on an individual basis. This should ensure that there is greater consistency in how staff are working with children.

BG felt that it was positive that there has been interest from parents in re-starting the PTFA. This is currently being explored further.

JC asked what developments there had been with regards to staff recruitment for the Holly room. AH advised that they have not been able to recruit to the HLTA role. Most of the children will be moving to their mainstream class for the autumn. There is one child who may be moving to specialist provision – if this has not happened, then 1:1 support will be put in place.

JE asked if there was the potential for there to be an impact on children in the mainstream class if a child dysregulates when they move back in. AH advised that there tends to be less impact as the children in the class are able to remain more regulated. There can be more of an impact if this happens around other children who can dysregulate quickly. The Holly room will still be available for use for interventions as needed.

7. School Improvement and Lead Governors

1. Discuss identified School Improvement Priorities for 2023-24

Draft SIP priorities for next year were included in AH's HT report for this meeting. These have been based on in-school data and feedback from OfSTED, SIAMS and the GB SIP Review session. AH is planning to ask Ventrus for time to discuss these to obtain their thoughts and feedback. The SIP will be approved by the GB in September.

AH advised that incremental coaching will also be added to next year's SIP, along with some actions around the development of children's meals and play provision.

JE referenced the draft Personal Development actions and asked if spiritual development was the same as Christian distinctiveness, and if it should be more specifically Christian in its wording. AH advised that the wording has been taken directly from the school's SIAMS development plan.

JE asked if more Christian distinctiveness could be introduced to the school day e.g., saying grace before lunch. JE suggested this could be undertaken in a fun way that children could engage with. AH advised that she would discuss this with NT as RE Lead. She and NT have already discussed the previous suggestion from JE around introducing prayer groups. Children will be encouraged to write prayers for assemblies together. Prayer spaces are already available in school e.g., on the bus.

AH has discussed the development of the ETHOS Group with the Diocese and how governors can contribute to this and also record evidence of seeing ethos in action. It will also be beneficial to discuss this further once in the Management Partnership and it will be possible to see examples of how ethos groups work in different schools.

The GB noted the contents of the Risk Register, which had been updated for this meeting.

2. Agree Governor SIP Monitoring Teams/Cycle of Work Lead Governors

Decision: Lead Governors will remain as follows:

Staffing – RM

Parent & Christian Community Links – PW

SEND & Inclusion – BG

Data & Curriculum – GTH

Early Years – JE

Action: Finance and Health & Safety and Premises will need to be allocated in the Autumn term as JC (current Lead for these areas) is resigning at the end of this term.

Action: SIP Monitoring Governors/Teams will be agreed at the September Full GB Meeting.

3. Review progress the school has made during the year and reflect on the impact governors have had – recognize and celebrate!

Identified as follows:

- There has been a change in the teaching culture. The implementation of the Model of Great Teaching has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and in sharing/modelling good teaching practice.
- Year 3 progress has been amazing.
- Little Wandle and Mastering Number has been progressive.
- The introduction of the expectation of 'no opting out' has been very positive.
- JW has continued to provide excellent support to families.
- The work undertaken by Maths and English subject leads has been very inspiring.
- Residential have been successfully re-introduced and all classes have had day trips. Parents have been assured that trips are safe and exciting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance supported continuity after SH left. • The work leading up to the Management Partnership decision has been a significant piece of work by the GB and SLT • Monitoring work from Lead Governors has been excellent, with high quality reports being produced. This work adds value and holds key staff to account. Reports have been detailed and well-researched. • Governor vacancies are being filled. • JC's inputs and work as Chair have been very valuable.
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Governance</u></p> <p><u>1. Annual GB Impact Statement</u></p> <p>In progress. Action: JC to complete and send to JB by 21.7.23.</p> <p><u>2. Approve 2023-24 GB Meetings Schedule</u></p> <p>Decision: The GB approved the 2023-24 Meetings Schedule. It was agreed that there would be one mid-year review of the HT appraisal targets, rather than termly reviews. This mirrors the approach to monitoring teacher and leadership performance.</p> <p><u>3. Ensure date set and governors trained for Headteacher Appraisal</u> This has been completed.</p> <p><u>4. Receive reports from governors who have attended training this term and review impacts of training for GB</u> BG recently attended the SEND governor training, along with PW. The notes from this course have been added to GovernorHub. BG highlighted that all governors should read Chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice (also on GovernorHub in the documents file for this meeting). BG also advised governors that the SIAMS framework and grading system is changing, although schools have been advised it could be up to eight years before they are likely to be inspected again due to a shortage of SIAMS inspectors.</p> <p>RM attended training on exclusions and suspensions and highlighted that the guidance is changing for September 2023 so any governor involved in a formal process will need to adhere to that. The training also suggested that as good practice, governors should regularly discuss the Behaviour policy.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p><u>1. Termly data update</u> This was included in the HT Report.</p> <p><u>2. Training scenario</u> The GB agreed to postpone this to the Autumn term due to the time needed earlier in the meeting to make the decision on entering a management partnership.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>Term Dates 2024-25 and 2025-26</u></p> <p><u>1. Proposed dates had been circulated prior to the meeting.</u> Decision: The GB approved the term dates for 2024-25 and 2025-26.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>Election of Chair for September 2023</u></p> <p>1. Review arrangements for election of Chair and Vice-Chair</p>

	<p>The GB agreed to remove the previous formal process of electing Chairs and Vice-Chairs and agreed to follow an informal vote by raised hands process instead.</p> <p><u>2. Election of new Chair</u> Decision: The GB elected Brian Gravenor as Chair from 22nd July 2023 for the period of one year.</p> <p>As BG has previously been Vice-Chair, it was noted that another governor will need to be elected to this position. Action: GB to elect new Vice-Chair at the September GB meeting. Action: JB to notify DES and Diocese of BG appointment as Chair.</p>
12.	<p><u>Thanks for governors leaving the GB: John Clements</u></p> <p>1. JC is leaving the GB at the end of term after six years on the GB, and most of that as Chair. The GB gave their thanks for all his work and the significant improvements he has made through his leadership to the strength and visibility of governance in school.</p>
13.	<p><u>Discussion: 'How has this meeting benefited our children and contributed to the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school?'</u></p> <p>1. The focus throughout this meeting has been on what will create the best school for the children, and what will maintain the school's Christian ethos. It was noted that through the sharing of practice within next year's management partnership, the Christian distinctiveness at St. Martin's will potentially benefit/impact other children in the local area.</p>

<u>ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING</u>		
<u>Action</u>	<u>Person responsible</u>	<u>Date to be completed by</u>
1. Contact the Ventrus CEO to confirm the GB's decision.	JC and AH	11.7.23
2. Appoint Lead Governor(s) for Finance and for Health & Safety and Premises	GB	18.9.23
3. Allocate Governor SIP Monitoring Leads/Teams	GB	18.9.23
4. Complete GB Annual Impact Statement and send to JB.	JC	21.7.23
5. Elect Vice-Chair	GB	18.8.23
6. Notify DES and Diocese of change in Chair of Governors	JB	20.7.23

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB unanimously agreed to enter a Management Partnership
- The GB voted unanimously to enter a management partnership with Ventrus MAT.
- The GB agreed that for 2023-24, Lead Governors will remain as follows:
 - Staffing – RM
 - Parent & Christian Community Links – PW
 - SEND & Inclusion – BG
 - Data & Curriculum – GTH
 - Early Years – JE

- The GB approved the 2023-24 GB Meetings Schedule
- The GB approved the term dates for 2024-25 and 2025-26
- The GB elected BG as Chair of Governors from 22.7.23 for the period of one year

Next meeting: Monday, 18th September 2023 at 6.00-8.00pm

Signed as accurate by the Chair:

Name of Chair:

Date: