

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

FULL GOVERNING BOARD		DATE:	16th October 2023
CHAired BY: Brian Gravenor (BG)		CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)	
GOVERNORS PRESENT:		Also Present:	
Brian Gravenor (BG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Ruth Marsh (RM) Phil Wales (PW)		Mel Turl – Acting Deputy Headteacher (MT)	
APOLOGIES: Lynette Bickers (LB), Jennifer Elliott (JE)			
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 PW.</p>
2.	<p><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></p> <p>1. Apologies had been received from LB, which were sanctioned by the GB Apologies were received from JE following the meeting.</p>
3.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest & Correspondence</u></p> <p>1. No declarations of interest.</p> <p>2. The DAG Governance Conference is on 4.11.23 at Exeter Racecourse. Details have been forwarded to the GB. PW confirmed he will be attending.</p>
4.	<p><u>Approval of minutes from last meeting (18.9.23) and update on actions</u></p> <p>1. Accuracy of minutes to be approved at the 4.12.23 Full GB meeting due to a clerking error in publishing them on GovernorHub. Minutes have been reviewed for accuracy by BG and AH already.</p> <p>2. Update on actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 1 – to be covered by item 7 on tonight's agenda. • Action 2 – half of governors have now completed the confirmations on GovernorHub, JB will send reminder to those who have not yet done so. • Actions 3 – 6 – all completed.

5. **Headteacher Report**

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

BG noted the difficulties with TA recruitment referenced in the report and asked if this was a problem nationally or specific to St. Martin's. There are currently five TA vacancies in school, and one TA is on long-term sickness absence.

AH advised that the recruitment and retention of TAs is being experienced in other schools, but there are additional challenges that are specific to St. Martin's. AH feels that the location of Cranbrook limits applications as people are less likely to travel in from other areas for a B grade position. Raising the pay grade for some TA roles to a C or D grade has been discussed but there are concerns that those in current B grade roles would apply for these, and this would then still leave the B grade roles unfilled. The job vacancies are now being advertised on a wider range of jobsites and it is hoped that this will increase future applications. Using supply TAs has been explored, and one supply TA is currently working in school though they will be leaving shortly. Supply TAs are very expensive and there is a lack of supply TAs who have the experience and resilience needed to work at St. Martin's.

The GB discussed that there is a great deal asked of TAs – it is a hard job to do and there are possibilities for earning more money in other jobs outside of education which are less demanding. Other challenges adding to pressures on TAs include:

- Children who were previously in the Holly Room are now back in mainstream classes and can need additional support especially if they dysregulate.
- Pupil numbers are being pushed past PAN to 64 per year group. Some of these children are from international families and may feel unsettled or speak little English, therefore needing additional support. AH is also querying some children arriving under Fair Access, whose eligibility has been solely based on moving from a part of Exeter. The school does not get any choice over admissions made under Fair Access (up to 64 in a year group).
- When there is any sickness in the TA team, this creates real difficulties, and members of SLT have had to step into TA and MTA roles recently to ensure work is covered. This then impacts upon their capacity to do their own work.
- Interventions such as Little Wandle rely on being followed daily for maximum impact. Improvements are still being achieved but less quickly than if the TA team was fully staffed.
- The most vulnerable children are the ones who will feel the impact most.

AH and MT both feel that this situation could quickly reach a crisis point.

BG asked if Ventrus had been able to offer any support/advice.

AG advised that they have discussed this with Ventrus but that the school had already implemented suggestions they made.

SLT are trying to help improve morale within the TA team through acknowledging these pressures and difficulties and being open in how they are trying to improve the situation.

RM suggested that children could do positive shout outs to the TAs to highlight good practice.

BG asked if many of the international children spoke a similar language and could perhaps be grouped to support each other. AH advised that there are children of many nationalities, so this is not applicable. AH advised that the children from international families are not causing difficulties and do not present with any behavioural issues. They are keen to learn and are coming along well. It is a pressure rather than problematic. Staff are working hard to ensure all children feel included and can participate in events such as the upcoming after school disco. The staff feel it is important that they enable all children to attend (which is very reflective of the school's ethos) but does add to workloads and pressures staff are feeling. Governors observed how positive it was that despite the increased pressures, staff are still working to ensure all children are involved and supported in school life and events.

JH asked whether he or Jude Carter could support any of these pressures during the times they are in school. AH advised that she felt that a greater time commitment was needed than he or JC would be likely to be able to offer.

Action: BG to write to TAs to acknowledge pressures and to thank them for their ongoing work.

Risk Register

It was noted that the Risk Register has not been updated within this report.

Action: AH to update Risk Register and circulate with the next Headteacher's Report.

Attendance, suspensions and exclusions

JH asked how suspensions/exclusions compare to this time last year.

AH advised that this time last year, one permanent exclusion was made. None have been made this term to date. SLT are working to keep suspensions low and to use alternative processes as much as possible. There has been one more suspension today (for half a day) further to what is recorded in the HT report. AH was unable to advise further on suspensions this time last year as she was not in this role then and did not have the information to hand.

The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss some issues related to suspensions and exclusions in further detail.

The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

GTH raised that the attendance data looks worse than it is as given the time in the school year, being a persistent absentee only requires a child to have had three days off school which at this time of year is more likely with colds etc.

The GB noted the following attendance strategies currently in place:

- MT has taken on the role of Attendance Champion, keeping the focus on this high and responding promptly to any attendance issues.
- MT and AH are ensuring that one of them is at the gate and/or at the office receiving anyone late – this is having an effective impact as the children/families take it more seriously when addressed by SLT.
- Attendance and reasons for absence continues to be tracked closely.
- An 'Alert List' of key children whose attendance is causing concern has been created and are being contacted by SLT rather than members of the Admin Team if absent.
- Part-time timetables are gradually supporting improvements in attendance.

2. Self-Evaluation Statement

Circulated prior to the meeting. This ties in closely with the actions and priorities within the SIP. The GB discussed that the SES was particularly useful when preparing OfSTED but is less of an active document outside of these times. AH will publish the SES on the website.

3. Admissions

The GB noted that as the school approaches being full, the following process needs to apply to in-year admissions:

- Straightforward applications where there is a place which can be offered can be approved directly by school staff and do not require governor involvement.
- Applications which may be contentious or need to be refused due to having no space will need to be discussed by three members of Governing Board within five days of the application being received. This needs to be at a formal meeting (online or in person) and all decisions recorded.

Decision: The GB agreed to amend the membership of the Admissions Committee. The Committee will now be a pool consisting of all governors (other than the non-Headteacher Staff Governor), who will be notified when a meeting is required.

The GB discussed that there could be potential difficulties in forming a panel of three governors with this short notice, given that being a governor is a voluntary role and governors have work/home commitments. This will be monitored and if there are difficulties with governor availability, this will be discussed with DCC and the Diocese.

AH advised that since the start of this term, there have been nineteen in-year admissions, and another child is due to start shortly under Fair Access. The school has been required to exceed its PAN of 60 and take up to 64 in each year group. As discussed in item 5.1, this is causing additional pressures.

MT asked if the school was able to apply for any additional funding if the children arrive in between census dates. AH advised this is only possible if schools receive a significant number of additional children and St. Martin's has not reached this.

6. School Improvement Plan (SIP)

1. Questions to Headteacher

The final SIP had been circulated to the GB prior to the meeting. AH advised that it has been reviewed with the Director of School Improvement from Ventrus and they had felt no changes were required. It was noted that incremental coaching may need to be delayed until the Spring term to be implemented.

GTH observed that the SIP priorities and actions made sense and were appropriate for the school.

There were no questions from governors.

Decision: The GB approved the 23-24 SIP.

2. Appointment of Lead Governors for SIP Monitoring

The GB agreed that the SIP objectives would be monitored by the following governors:

- GHT - Objectives 1-2 (with JE taking on EYFS specific items)
- RM - Objective 3
- LB - Objective 4 (**to be discussed with LB**)
- JH – Objective 5
- BG – Objective 6
- PW – Objective 7

3. Agree recording processes for Governor SIP Monitoring

The GB agreed that a termly written report would be produced by each governor for their SIP objective using a separate form from the Cycle of Work Lead Governor Report.

Action: JB to create Governor SIP Monitoring Form with input from BG and publish on GovernorHub for governors to use.

7. Management Partnership and School Development

1. Updates in progress/staff feedback

Feedback from AH:

- Staff feel increasingly positive around the work being undertaken with Ventrus.
- A HT from another Ventrus school has spent time here supporting spelling schemes.
- MT has had meetings with staff from Ventrus schools in N. Devon around Early Years
- AH attended the HT Network meeting – she felt very welcomed and found the meeting positive and well-led.
- AH has arranged to receive informal supervision from Ashley (Director of School Improvement)
- NP and JS have attended the Year 6 Network meeting.

- Two St. Martin's teachers will attend part of an inset day at Woodwater for Maths
- AH will be participating in a peer review of Woodwater.
- SEND/Safeguarding Leads from Ventrus are due to meet with AH and EK around strategic SEND planning.
- Teachers have been involved with networks for Maths, English and EY Reading
- Visits from other Ventrus schools have been arranged for staff to see Forest provision at St. Martin's
- Ashley met with subject leads – this was part CPD/part subject leader development. Her findings matched what SLT had advised her she would find. This demonstrated that SLT have a good understanding of strengths, challenges, work needed. Ashley thought that the subject leader handbook very positive.
- AH feels that St. Martin's can offer a positive perspective as a large school. A number of other Ventrus schools are smaller. Other schools feel that they can learn from St. Martin's.
- Ventrus have offered information on the Aspiring Leaders programme – this can be targeted at specific staff.
- St. Martin's are taking up all opportunities offered by Ventrus – it has been noted that Ventrus offers the same opportunities to the schools within its Trust as well as those it is only in Management Partnerships with.

MT feels that there is now a better balance between sharing practice and received challenge/rigorous discussion.

2. Agree membership of Management Partnership Joint Committee

In line with the Management Partnership Agreement with Ventrus, governors are required to form a Joint Committee to meet half termly. This will begin with the December Full GB meeting.

The GB agreed that there will be a meeting of the Management Partnership Joint Committee at 5.45-6.15pm at each Full GB meeting, with the standard GB business meeting moving to 6.15pm – 8.15pm. The Joint Committee will be formed by a pool of all governors, who will rotate attending so that all governors can contribute and provide feedback to the process. Three governors and AH will be required to attend.

Actions:

- **JB to amend Meetings Schedule and online calendars to reflect changed meeting times.**
- **JB to notify GC at Ventrus and CM at the Diocese of meeting dates and times.**
- **JB to create online rota and send out to GB for governors to allocate themselves to a Joint Committee meeting**

8. Finance

1. Budget Monitor

Circulated prior to the meeting. The GB noted that the budget is on track for this financial year and that there is still a healthy carryforward.

The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss an aspect of the budget in more detail.

The GB agreed to return to Part 1.

2. Funding Consultation – discussion of school response

Online events were attended by BT, AH and BG who contributed their views on the specific funding questions put to attendees. BG provided examples of the questions they had considered, and the GB noted that questions also looked at delegated and central services provision. The response from St. Martin's, along with those from other schools, will now be shared with the Devon Cabinet.

3. Nursery fees write off

Governors had received information on a necessary write off of nursery fees costs which had occurred as a result of the school not being provided with all the necessary information by DCC

around claiming for additional hours. The amount being written off was under the amount that would have required authorization from the GB, so this information was only for governors to be aware of.

4. Disposal of IT devices

The GB had been provided with a list of all items to be disposed of. Governors noted that these have been disposed of in accordance with all data protection requirements and that where the condition had been recorded as "fair" or "good", devices are not usable due to age and the inability to update with the latest operating system, hence the disposal. No further action was needed from governors on this. Governors discussed whether there was any way in which devices still in good condition could be donated to charity to avoid them going to landfill. AH advised that this can be looked into, and that staff are also being given the option to purchase devices. JH advised that he will also speak with Cranbrook Church to see if it could make use of these/pass them on to the church community.

9. Leadership & Teachers' Salary Review 2023

1. BG reported to the GB on behalf of the Leadership & Teachers' Pay Committee that performance management and salaries for all teaching and leadership staff had been reviewed by the Committee and confirmed that decisions on pay progression had been made for all. These are to be implemented in line with the school's Pay Policy. The Headteacher Appraisal Panel had also met with AH to undertake her annual appraisal – this was supported by Helen Eversett as the External Advisor. Objectives were set for AH, and a decision taken on pay progression. The appraisal had noted the excellent work undertaken by AH since taking on the role.

10. Governance

1. Instrument of Government – discuss and approve amendments

The Instrument of Government needs to be amended to state the following:

- Cornerstone Management Group (now known as Cranbrook Management Group) will be replaced by the Cranbrook Conventional District with effect from 1st January 2024.
- Governing Body replaced by Governing Board
- An addition to note that one of the Foundation Governors is ex-officio.

The amended Instrument of Government also needs to be approved by the three appointing bodies named: the Diocese of Exeter, Churches Together in Devon and Cranbrook Management Group.

Decision: The GB approved the amendments above to the Instrument of Government.

Actions:

- **JB to send the draft amended Instrument of Government to the three appointing bodies, and a copy of the minutes of this meeting to the Diocese.**
- **JB to confirm with Devon Education Services when all appointing bodies have approved the amendments and to supply them with a copy of these minutes.**

2. Confirm focus of training session for Full GB 15.1.24

The GB agreed that the training session will be split between the L2 Safeguarding Refresher (to be facilitated by JW) and an update on the Model of Great Teaching (the latter to also include a brief introduction to the model for newer governors).

3. Agree governor involvement/attendance at Parents Evenings

Parents Evenings for this term have already taken place, but the GB agreed that governors will attend at the next ones in the summer term.

Actions:

- **AH to provide JB with dates of Summer Parents Evenings and Parent Workshops when set.**
- **Once dates set, JB to circulate rota to governors for them to sign up to attend.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JB to add all upcoming school events to GovernorHub calendar to enable governors to attend. • JB to move this agenda item to September GB meeting on Cycle of Work to enable governors to attend Autumn Parents Evenings. <p><u>4. Confirm all governors have reviewed and signed their Declaration of Business Interests Forms</u> All governors have now completed this.</p> <p><u>5. Collate governor impacts from the previous term.</u> Noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All housekeeping administrative items have been completed by the GB. • JH has spent time in school with both staff and children and intends to be in school every Monday morning.
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>Safeguarding training scenario</u></p> <p>1. AH presented governors with a scenario in which an IHCP (Individual Health Care Plan) is being reviewed but a parent has not provided medical paperwork to inform the process. Governors were asked to consider if they would identify this as a concern and if so, how they would expect staff to respond.</p> <p>Governors agreed that they would class this as concerning, as without proof, there would be the question of whether the medical condition is genuine or if there is a possibility of fabricated/induced illness which would be a risk of harm to the child. Governors suggested that this should be flagged to the Safeguarding Lead and queried if it should be submitted as a MASH referral.</p> <p>AH confirmed that it would be an issue of concern and that notifying the Safeguarding Lead was correct. AH advised that it would not meet MASH’s criteria for requiring investigation. As a safeguarding matter, the school would however, be able to contact the child’s GP and ask whether there was medical information available to alleviate concerns or not. This would definitely be a matter that the school should address.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>Policies</u></p> <p><u>1. Pay</u> A draft Pay Policy had been published by DCC which had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p><i>(AH and MT left the meeting)</i></p> <p>The Business Manager had raised that the Headteacher Pay Range was still set at the same level as when the school had significantly less children and needed to be reviewed. BT had advised that she had used policy tools to determine that St. Martin’s is still a Group 3 school. BG advised he had discussed this with HR and been advised that for a school the size St. Martin’s is now, it would be appropriate to raise the pay range to L18-24.</p> <p><i>(AH rejoined the meeting)</i></p> <p>The GB considered whether the Deputy HT pay range also needed to be reviewed. AH advised that the pay range is comparable to that used in similar sized schools and would not recommend therefore that it needs increasing.</p> <p>The GB also considered whether the SENDCo allowance needed reviewing. AH proposed that it would be appropriate for this to be reviewed when the SENDCo job share (currently a one-year trial) is reviewed (due to be undertaken Summer 24).</p>

	<p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GB agreed to adopt the 2023 model Pay Policy • The GB agreed to raise the HT pay range to L18-L24. • The GB agreed to keep the Deputy HT pay range as it currently is. • The GB agreed to review the SENDCo allowance in Summer 24 after the job share has been reviewed. <p>Actions: JB to inform the Business Manager of these decisions.</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. Identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors supporting the implementation of the Big Buddy system and teachers working to enable all children to attend school events is reflective of the school's Christian ethos. • Receiving and discussing feedback around the Management Partnership in an open way benefits the children as it will help governors make an informed decision on the way forward in the future. • JH being available to staff and children in school supports the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

<u>ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING</u>		
<u>Action</u>	<u>Person responsible</u>	<u>Date to be completed by</u>
1. Write to TAs to acknowledge pressures and to thank them for their ongoing work.	BG	20.10.23
2. Update Risk Register and circulate with the next Headteacher's Report	AH	20.11.23
3. Create Governor SIP Monitoring Form with input from BG and publish on GovernorHub for governors to use.	JB	3.11.23
<p>4. Management Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend Meetings Schedule and online calendars to reflect changed meeting times. • Notify GC at Ventrus and CM at the Diocese of meeting dates and times. • Create online rota and send out to GB for governors to allocate themselves to a Joint Committee meeting 	JB	10.11.23
<p>5. Instrument of Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the draft amended Instrument of Government to the three appointing bodies, and a copy of the minutes of this meeting to the Diocese. • Confirm with Devon Education Services when all appointing bodies have approved the amendments and to supply them with a copy of these minutes. 	JB	10.11.23
<p>6. Parents' Evenings and governor attendance at school events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide JB with dates of Summer Parents Evenings and Parent Workshops when set. • Once dates set, circulate rota to governors for them to sign up to attend. 	AH JB JB	May 23 As required. 3.11.23

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add all upcoming school events to GovernorHub calendar to enable governors to attend. • Move this agenda item to September GB meeting on Cycle of Work to enable governors to attend Autumn Parents Evenings. 	JB	4.12.23
7. Inform Business Manager of Pay Policy decisions detailed in item 12.1.	JB	17.10.23

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB agreed to amend the membership of the Admissions Committee. The Committee will now be a pool consisting of all governors (other than the non-Headteacher Staff Governor), who will be notified when a meeting is required.
- The GB approved the 23-24 School Improvement Plan.
- The GB approved the amendments detailed to in item 10.1 to the Instrument of Government.
- The GB agreed to adopt the 2023 model Pay Policy.
- The GB agreed to raise the HT pay range to L18-L24.
- The GB agreed to keep the Deputy HT pay range as it currently is.
- The GB agreed to review the SENDCo allowance in Summer 24 after the job share has been reviewed.

Next meeting: Monday, 4th December at 6.15-8.15pm
(to be preceded by Management Partnership Joint Committee Meeting 5.45pm-6.15pm)

Signed as accurate by the Chair:

Name of Chair:

Date: