

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

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| <b>FULL GOVERNING BOARD</b>   |  | <b>DATE:</b>                              | 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 |
| <b>CHAired BY: Brian Gravenor (BG)</b>  |  | <b>CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)</b> |                               |
| <b>GOVERNORS PRESENT:</b>   |  | <b>Also Present:</b>                      |                               |
| Brian Gravenor (BG)<br>Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH)<br>Jennifer Elliott (JE)<br>Amy Hardinge (AH)<br>Lynette Bickers (LB)<br>Rev. Jon Holder (JH) |  |   |                               |
| <b>APOLOGIES:</b> Ruth Marsh (RM), Phil Wales (PW),<br>Vicky Harris (VH) – apologies received after the meeting                             |  |   |                               |
| <b>Absent without apology:</b>  |  |   |                               |

**Governor questions are highlighted in grey**

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| <b>Agenda Items</b> |   |
| <b>1.</b>           | <u><b>Opening Prayer &amp; Welcome</b></u><br>1. Opening Prayer taken by JH.  |
| <b>2.</b>           | <u><b>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</b></u><br>1. RM, PW and VH had sent apologies, which were sanctioned by the GB.  |
| <b>3.</b>           | <u><b>Declarations of Interest &amp; Correspondence</b></u><br>1. No declarations of interest.<br>2. No correspondence.   |
| <b>4.</b>           | <u><b>Approval of minutes from previous meetings (4.12.23 and 15.1.24) and update on actions</b></u><br>1. All agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair.<br>2. Actions from 4.12.23 update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action 1 – in process. <b>Action: AH to update GB on HE's completed safeguarding observations when received.</b></li> <li>• Action 2 – completed. SLT have reviewed the website and ensured content is up to date and compliant. SLT will continue to review what content is added to the website going forward as there are different ways that parents/carers are likely to access information and less probably needs to be on the website.</li> </ul> |

JE asked if the website will be as easily/immediate for staff to update if the school joins a Trust. AH advised that this would not be known until further exploration of how joining a MAT has been undertaken.

3. There were no actions in the Part 2 minutes from the 4.12.23 meeting. The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to hear an update from AH on an aspect of the minutes. The GB then agreed to return to Part 1.

4. Actions from 15.1.24 meeting:

- Action 1 – in process. New red 'Emergency' cards have been produced and are in the process of being distributed. **Action: Governors to request a new red card from the office when next in school.**
- Action 2 – completed.
- Action 3 – completed.
- Action 4 – completed.

## 5. Headteacher Report & School Improvement Plan (SIP) Review

1. LB noted how positive that so many items on the SIP have been progressed so well and asked what the next steps will be to progress the items marked red. AH advised that a number of items are red as a conscious decision had been taken to stagger when work on each priority would be undertaken. SLT have taken time off-site to research and plan implementing the incremental coaching. This is now ready to be launched.

LB asked if there are sufficient staff able to deliver the coaching.

AH advised that all teachers work to a good standard and pairing routes have been undertaken between teachers. All stronger/more experienced in coaching teachers will start as the initial coach within the pair and then swap. Seven teachers already have experience of incremental coaching.

LB asked whether further progress had been made with plans for visits to other schools.

AH advised SLT have not yet found a Ventrus school who use incremental teaching. Conversations with RM and SLT have informed much of the plan that has been put in place to deliver it at St. Martin's, as she has experience of this in her work capacity.

MT advised that SLT are clear on what the aims are for the coaching and what the barriers might be, and how these would be addressed. Staff meeting times have been reduced on a fortnightly basis to create time for staff to undertake coaching work. Progress of coaching will be monitored closely.

JE queried if the coaching plan will be affected by staffing changes.

AH advised that the teaching team is generally stable. Those teachers returning from maternity leave are being supported to gradually join in with the coaching work.

LB asked if there were plans to expand the coaching to Teaching Assistants (TAs).

AH confirmed that future steps will include HLTAs.

BG asked what the impact has been for admissions when international pupils are required to stay on roll for four weeks after leaving if their new school is unknown.

AH advised that they are reported as Children Missing in Education (CME). These children being on roll are not delaying any new admissions being able to be accepted as the school has been over PAN by several children each time already.

BG asked if the TA recruitment issues relate to 1:1 TAs or class-based TAs.

AH advised that there is only 1:1 TA in school, all others are class-based. All TAs are now paid at a Grade C to reflect that they all have the same levels of responsibility now. It is hoped that the higher pay grade may also lead to increased applications for any future vacancies. The GB noted that four new TAs have recently been recruited, three of whom are already known to the school.

JE asked if sickness absence is an issue amongst the TAs.

AH advised that there is no long-term sickness amongst TAs at present. The only recent member on long term sick leave has now resigned. Where there are issues with absence amongst new members of staff, the school is applying its probationary policy to manage them. Having a bank TA system in place is working well to cover any time TAs have off that is unpaid. JH noted that he has observed the difficulties with TA recruitment is having on staff when he has been in school.

BG noted the excellent response rate and positive feedback from the Parent Questionnaire and asked if there were any individual comments that would need to be followed up. AH advised she will be sending a Headteacher response to parents that will address specific comments made and will share this with governors. A number of parents raised that they preferred the old dojo communication system as it provided a more immediate way of contacting teachers. Governors noted that the communication system had changed as dojo has created huge pressures on teachers, with unreasonable expectations on when they should be responding to parent queries which was creating an unhealthy work/life balance. Other parents felt that contacting teachers was not an issue, and there has been a positive impact from MT and AH being visible and present on the school gate daily. MT raised that she feels that AH's consistent 'firm but fair' and transparent approach is reassuring and appreciated by parents. The GB also noted that AH is prepared to have challenging/robust conversations and to hold parents to account if needed.

A separate SEND parent questionnaire will be sent out and responses will be shared with the GB.

## 6. Admissions

### 1. Approval of minutes from Admissions Committee Meeting 15.1.24

These were approved and signed by the Chair.

### 2. Half-termly report on in-year admissions from Headteacher

The GB noted that:

- The majority of in-year admissions are children from international families at the hotel.
- There is a high level of inward and outward mobility from these families.
- The school is full in all year groups.
- The Admissions Committee meets to consider all applications where the school is unable to directly offer a place.

LB observed that DCC seems to be insisting more frequently that the school must take children even if this pushes the school over PAN. A number of these have been just because a child is moving from out of county.

LB asked whether the school gets its funding in a timely way to reflect increased pupil numbers and if there has been any financial impact for the school. AH advised that the school has been able to receive top up funding due to reaching the criteria for high inward mobility. BT is tracking this aspect of the budget carefully.

The GB noted that increased pupil numbers have been especially challenging in the Reception classes.

### 3. Determination of 2025-26 Admissions Arrangements.

**Decision: The GB agreed to formally determine the proposed 2025-26 admissions arrangements, including the reduction of the catchment area.**

**Actions:**

- **JB to confirm that the arrangements have been determined with DCC and the Diocese**
- **JB to publish the 2025-26 arrangements on the school website by 1<sup>st</sup> March and remove previous wording related to the consultation which has now closed.**

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| <p>7.</p>  | <p><b><u>Finance</u></b></p> <p>1. <u>Budget Monitor</u><br/>           BG noted that the carryforward is less than expected and asked if is sustainable if the deficit is growing. MT advised that BT is confident that the carry forward is sufficient and does not have any concerns. AH advised that the carryforward has increased since this Monitor was circulated as it was found one teacher had been included twice in the budget in error.</p> <p><b>Action: JB to liaise with BT to ensure that the Budget Monitor on GovernorHub is the most recent one.</b></p>   |
| <p>8.</p>  | <p><b><u>Staffing</u></b></p> <p>1. <u>Report from Headteacher Appraisal Committee Chair re monitoring of Headteacher work/life balance</u><br/>           MT and AH working together so well really supports AH's work/life balance. Having MT as a non-teaching Deputy enables AH to have protected time off site. It is very difficult for AH to get the opportunity for focused time when in school. New systems are being developed around managing staff absence communications to protect MT and AH's weekend time.</p> <p>The GB noted that AH and MT have also been supporting staff to address their work/life balances and have met with staff on an individual basis where there have been issues raised.</p> <p>Work priorities are being reviewed to ensure that all work is purposeful, and time is allocated to key strategic areas.</p> <p>AH and MT are both studying National Professional Qualifications – these are worthwhile but are additional work on top of daily work.</p> |
| <p>9.</p>  | <p><b><u>Equality</u></b></p> <p>1. <u>Monitor progress made against Equality Audit Action Plan</u><br/>           The GB reviewed the school's Equality Objectives as detailed in the Equality Audit action plan undertaken last year. All objectives are still in progress and should be continued. SLT are reviewing how protected characteristics are best monitored, as tracking is not always meaningful if there are very few numbers of protected characteristics.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AH to upload Equality Objectives with a progress update for each to the school website to ensure the Equality pages are compliant, and to annotate these to reflect that they have been reviewed by the GB.</b></li> </ul>  |
| <p>10.</p> | <p><b><u>Governance</u></b></p> <p>1. <u>Consider responding to DfE Consultation on supporting Gender Questioning Children</u><br/>           The GB discussed that the school's inclusive and supportive approach to date has created a positive environment for children questioning their identity, whereas there are aspects to the proposed guidance which would be less supportive. The GB agreed that it was important to contribute examples of how the approach at St. Martin's has had a supportive and positive impact.<br/> <b>Action: AH and MT to respond to the consultation.</b></p> <p>2. <u>GB Annual Impact Statement</u><br/>           The GB agreed to discontinue the production of an annual impact statement as all the information is already available on the website and within the published minutes of GB meetings.<br/> <b>Action: JB to remove the impact statement work from the GB Annual Cycle of Work.</b></p>  |

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|            | <p><u>3. GB Self-Evaluation Planning</u><br/>The GB agreed that this would not be meaningful to undertake whilst the school considers whether to join a MAT, given that if it joins, the governance structure and membership of the GB will change.<br/><b>Action: GB to plan a self-evaluation exercise once the decision on joining a MAT has been taken. A question is to be included to evaluate the experience/availability of governors to mentor new governors.</b></p> <p><u>4. Review of New Governors Induction Process</u><br/>The GB agreed that the process itself did not require amending but that going forward mentoring should be shared amongst members of the GB rather than being the sole responsibility of the Chair. Planning for this will be agreed following the self-evaluation exercise (see item 10.3).</p> <p><u>5. Collate governor impacts from previous half-term.</u><br/>BG, JH and GTH have all undertaken visits to the school as part of their SIP monitoring/Lead Governor roles.</p> <p><u>6. Receive reports from governors who have attended training this term and review impacts of training for GB.</u><br/>Governors attended the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LB – Finance for Governors</li> <li>• BG – Safer Recruitment</li> <li>• LB &amp; JH – Prevent (online)</li> <li>• JE – Data Protection</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: JB to add these to the GB Training Record.</b></p> |
| <p>11.</p> | <p><b><u>Safeguarding</u></b></p> <p><u>1. Training scenario</u><br/>AH shared a recent example of safeguarding work to inform the GB of good practice from staff, where staff have worked above and beyond what could have been expected outside of usual working hours to best support and advocate for a child, and the difficulties of working with external services who have at times not been compliant with good practice/statutory requirements. Where actions from external services were noted to not be legal, AH has raised this and is hopeful it will lead to changes in practice.</p>   |
| <p>12.</p> | <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>Prior to the discussion, the GB noted that JB has resigned from the post of Clerk although she will still cover some clerking hours to ensure statutory work is undertaken. The GB thanked JB for her work as Clerk.</p> <p>Governors felt that the matters discussed at item 11 demonstrated how AH and MT embody the values and ethos of the school.</p>  |

| <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> |
| <b>1. Update GB on HE's completed safeguarding observations when received.</b> | <b>AH</b>                        | <b>18.3.24</b>                        |

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| 2. Request replacement red 'Emergency' card from school office when next in school.  | All governors | 28.3.24          |
| 3. Confirm that the 2025-26 admissions arrangements have been determined with DCC and the Diocese  | JB            | 1.3.24           |
| 4. Publish the 2025-26 arrangements on the school website by 1st March and remove previous wording related to the consultation which has now closed  | JB            | 1.3.24           |
| 5. Liaise with BT to ensure that the Budget Monitor on GovernorHub is the most recent one.   | JB            | 1.3.24           |
| 6. Upload Equality Objectives with a progress update for each to the school website to ensure the Equality pages are compliant, and to annotate these to reflect that they have been reviewed by the GB. | AH            | 10.3.24          |
| 7. Remove the impact statement work from the GB Annual Cycle of Work.  | JB            | 28.3.24          |
| 8. Plan a self-evaluation exercise once the decision on joining a MAT has been taken. A question is to be included to evaluate the experience/availability of governors to mentor new governors.         | GB            | 6.3.24 GB Agenda |
| 9. Add courses attended by governors this half-term to the GB Training Record  | JB            | 28.3.24          |
|  |               |                  |

**SUMMARY OF DECISIONS**

- The GB agreed to formally determine the proposed 2025-26 admissions arrangements, including the reduction of the catchment area.

**Next meeting: Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 6.00-8.00pm (extraordinary meeting to discuss MAT decision to be arranged separately)**

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

Name of Chair: .....

Date: .....