

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL
GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

FULL GOVERNING BOARD		DATE:	18th March 2024
CHAired BY: Brian Gravenor (BG)		CLERKED BY: Kay Bishop (KB)	
GOVERNORS PRESENT:		Also Present:	
Brian Gravenor (BG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Phil Wales (PW) Lynette Bickers (LB) Vicky Harris (VH)		Brigid Thompson (BT) – School Business Manager	
APOLOGIES: Ruth Marsh (RM), Mel Turl (MT)			
Absent without apology: None			

Governor questions are highlighted in grey

Agenda Items	
1.	Opening Prayer & Welcome 1. Opening Prayer taken by JH.
2.	Apologies and sanctions of absence. 1. Apologies were received from RM & MT – these were sanctioned by the GB.
3.	Declarations of Interest & Correspondence 1. No declarations of interest. 2. Correspondence - none
4.	Finance 1. Lead Governor Termly Report & Budget Monitor The report and monitor had been shared with the GB prior to the meeting. BT advised the monitor had a predicted c/f of £150k into next budget (April 2024). Money gets released near year end so may increase more. BT reported there were projects in the pipeline, from either the revenue

or capital monies. Plans had been made to spend money on acoustics and improve lighting in the hall for performances.

JH asked whether the lighting would be energy efficient? BT explained that the whole school project was to replace the LEDs and this capital project (through the Diocese) was part way through, awaiting different contractors to send quotes. DfE gave money to all schools (via Diocese for St Martin's) for sustainability projects, and it was noted that the documents had mentioned climate change and how the school would adapt to it.

JH inquired if the project would be tied into the curriculum as governors would want the children to know what the school were doing in respect of climate change? AH confirmed that the children study sustainability in Year 6. Governors agreed it would be good for the children to see the project unfolding and the work actually taking place. BT went on to say that although research is minimal, it does show that the quality of lighting in classrooms improves behaviour and learning although this had not been proved. BG suggested that it would not be an instant response but could help over the year especially those children that suffer with light levels and sight issues.

AH felt that a key part of the budget was the sustainability of staffing which could be looked at. If the school moved into Ventrus, changes in staffing would be likely. C/f of budget allows for staffing but there may have to be some changes in Year 2. BT agreed that it would become more obvious in the budget for next year which is currently in draft form due to utility companies only just putting their rates in for next year.

2. Discussion and approval of SFVS findings and action plan

Finance training needed for DHT to be addressed at regular SLT meetings and improvements needed to achieve an integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning through monthly meetings with SLT including Business Manager.

AH confirmed that reviews had commenced reviewing pupil premium and school improvement plans. BT confirmed the SFVS was an annual process to give governors assurance of the financial health and resource management of the school. The school had received a successful audit, and no further questions were raised. LB stated that going through the process with BT had been incredibly useful and clarified what needs to be done as well as identifying any gaps. She found it clear, and governors were reassured that the school was in an incredibly good place. BG to sign documents.

3. Review LA Service Contracts/Service Level Agreements and agree services buy back.

£28k paid yearly. AH had checked the school were getting the right level and amount of time that the school is buying back. The services remain the same as the school had last year. BT explained that the position with Ed-Psychs was not confirmed yet, previously the school could buy Ed-Psych hours however this was not possible but the school were using an alternative rather than the local authority, BT had allowed £5k in the budget for this.

JH inquired whether the non-DCC Ed-Psychs were more expensive? BT confirmed that the independent Ed-Psych was no more expensive than the county cost, and worked well and was happy to continue doing on an ad-hoc basis.

4. Approval of School Absence Insurance purchase

AH noted that it was the wellbeing side of the insurance that is effective as she had spoken to a staff member on accessing the counselling on a number of occasions in the last week. It is the item that is most often accessed and staff value it, even if they do not take it up, they value that it is there and helps them to feel looked after. AH explained that it gives her and MT somewhere to refer staff rather than them having to do the counselling. BT said it was a useful tool when carrying out managing sickness absence meetings – reminder that you have those services available. AH felt that it could be used more. Three quotes had been obtained – one was more expensive and the one which looked cheaper did not have the counselling facility and governors recommended remaining with the current one. BT confirmed the company had proved to be good, no qualms about paying out and as it was a Mutual, run by ex-teachers and ex-headteachers they understand the business and leadership.

PW asked whether the staff were satisfied with the wellbeing support that is offered? BT confirmed that feedback from staff is good.

	<p>Decision: The GB approved the purchase of the School Absence Insurance.</p> <p>5. Review agreement that the school will keep nursery fees in line with (and raise in line with) Early Years funding amounts. BG felt this was a fair agreement. BT explained that as soon as new rates were known, the school gives the parents one terms notice. Decision: The GB approved the agreement that the school will keep nursery fees in line with (and raise in line with) Early Years funding amounts.</p> <p>6. Discuss and note Audit action plan BT confirmed that the latest audit gave substantial assurance on everything (SCR, inventory, asset register, offsite activities) and the minor actions related to a few policies which the auditor advised an annual review should take place however the school had been advised by county that a suggested two-yearly review took place. Reply been put forward to the Auditor and JB is working through it.</p> <p>7. Policy to be approved: Finance Action: The GB approved the Finance policy.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Health & Safety and Premises</p> <p>1. Lead Governor Termly Report - questions to Lead Governor and School Business Manager The report had been shared with governors prior to meeting. JH raised a query about the school toilets being available to all. BT advised that the school do not have gender specific toilets. AH suggested that the school could only have gender neutral toilets if they were self-contained i.e., having a floor to ceiling door similar to the accessible toilet.</p> <p>Action: AH to review guidance on gender neutral toilets and whether it may affect the school in the future</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Staffing</p> <p>1. Ratification of recommendations from Headteacher Recruitment Panel The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss the Headteacher recruitment in more detail. The GB agreed to return to Part 1. Decision: The GB approved ratification of the Headteacher.</p> <p>Governors discussed the Deputy Headteacher vacancy and BG confirmed that he had sent out an expression of interest form with closing date of 27th March 2024. One response received so far. Interview board to be GTH, JE and BG.</p> <p>2. Lead Governor Termly Report - questions to Lead Governor and School Business Manager The report had been shared with governors prior to meeting. Governors discussed the large amount of staff absence, particularly within TAs. 3 out of 4 members of staff on a 2nd absence meeting were TAs. BT confirmed that Absence policy was being followed. <u>JE inquired whether staff were aware of support that is offered?</u> BT advised that the vast majority of absence had no pattern, but it was enough to trigger the absence process. AH noted that staff might get one illness and it triggers something else. BT explained that Occ Health could help when there is a specific condition that is causing the absence rather than ad-hoc absences. Staff are reminded that they can access wellbeing services if needed. <u>JE asked whether the absences were impacting the other staff?</u> AH agreed it was impacting staff and the school were using TA bank staff which was helpful but were trying not to use them for sickness absence due to paying the member of staff off sick. Bank staff were being used when a member of staff's child was off sick as they were not being paid which meant that the</p>

	<p>school was not losing money. The bank staff were flexible and fit in when they are at the school, particularly in EYs.</p> <p>JE asked whether the bank staff were trained? AH confirmed they were experienced.</p> <p>JH asked where the school was in terms of recruitment of TA's following the previous difficulties. AH noted that recruitment remains an ongoing challenge and advised that the latest TA recruited was still at St Martin's. There was an advert for a vacancy for someone that is relocating which closes on Friday 22nd March. She felt that it would be a tricky position to fill as it was a 1-2-1 position for a child with complex needs.</p> <p>JE asked which members of staff deal with HR? BT deals with HR and takes advice from HR One advisors when needed or when something sits outside the policy.</p> <p>JE went on to ask what this would mean if St Martin's joined Ventrus? AH explained that HR was managed centrally outside of the Headteacher however there may be meetings that she would attend.</p> <p>JH queried whether there was any themes or trends to note to ensure that the school remained a healthy workplace? BT felt the school was no different from any other school in terms of the usual rounds of flu/colds from November but if any pattern of D&V is seen for example in a class, a deep clean would be undertaken. Information is also sent out to staff to remind them on hygiene.</p> <p>GTH asked whether the item in point 6 of the report where staff were feeling tearful linked in to the added pressure of other staff being off sick? AH explained that it was not linked, and that teacher workload had cited.</p> <p>3. Policies to be approved: Disciplinary, Redundancy</p> <p>BG noted that some expenses would be picked up by Devon provided the school conferred with HR One first. BT confirmed the school use the most up to date Devon policies.</p> <p>Decision: Governors approved the Disciplinary policy.</p> <p>Decision: Governors approved the Redundancy policy.</p> <p>BT left the meeting at 18:58hrs</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Approval of minutes from last meetings and update on actions</p> <p>1. Approval of minutes from 5.2.24 Agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>2. Update on actions Action 1: HE been off sick, need to move action onto next meeting. Action 2: Completed however, JE pointed out that the Board outside the school office was out of date as it stated that AH was a Deputy Safeguarding Lead and not the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Action: AH to update the Board to ensure that she is the named DSL. Action 3: Completed Action 4: Completed Action 5: Completed Action 6: In progress, AH liaised with Ventrus to bring some of the objectives in line with Ventrus. Objectives need to match the school audit so review underway. Action 7: Completed Action 8: Move action to next meeting – BG to become responsible person Action 9: Completed – any other training certificates to be sent to JB</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Admissions</p> <p>1. Report on in-year admissions for this term AH confirmed that, not including Nursery, 14 new children admitted since January 2024, 8 from Hilton Hotel, 3 of whom had already moved on. Nothing further had been heard about closure of the hotel however numbers reducing. Declined 1 which came back under Fair Access – school</p>

	<p>said yes but family now moved to Liverpool. AH praised the hard work of the staff for supporting the children from the hotel. AH reported that the school had stopped giving the children new uniform as it is not returned when they leave after a few days, they may be provided with second hand uniform if available. AH advised that when the Admission Committee refuses the place, the child comes back under Fair Access and it is the right thing for the school to keep saying no keep to ensure that the county remains aware that the school is full. The GB agreed to enter Part 2 to discuss consultation on a child. The GB agreed to return to Part 1.</p> <p>AH noted that falling rolls in Exeter means schools having to look at reducing or mixed age classes and it was a positive for St Martin's to go to 64 in Reception as the school was still the school of choice. Discussion took place on Cranbrook schools being at capacity, but ongoing property/building works continuing would need additional schools built.</p> <p>2. Approval Admissions Committee Minutes 31.1.24 and 7.2.24 Agreed as accurate and signed by the Chair and AH.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Lead Governor Termly Reports (Cycle of Work) for Teaching & Learning and Safeguarding</p> <p>1. Discussion of findings and questions to governors Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. GTH mentioned that it was lovely to see so many trips taking place, with a cohesive plan of building-up from the Year 3 sleep over to the Year 4 activities. AH explained that this had worked particularly well with the Year 4's this year with pre-visits undertaken too. Action: AH to ensure all trips and residentials uploaded to the school website</p> <p>JH explained that he had recently redone his Church of England safeguarding training and they had spoken of 'spiritual abuse' as a form of abuse, but this was not included in the forms of abuse in the safeguarding training for the school. He felt that the GB might want to be aware of this form of abuse and AH suggested that it should be included in the annual safeguarding training in September. Action: JH to attend the Annual safeguarding training in September to present on spiritual abuse.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>School Improvement Plan</p> <p>1. Governor SIP Monitoring Termly Reports – questions to governors Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. No further questions from governors.</p> <p>2. SIP progress update from Headteacher AH reported that all elements of the school improvement plan continue to progress and are all on-track and she went on to note the following:</p> <p>Objective 1: To improve the quality of children's writing across the curriculum, including the application of basic skills. Key update: Through our partnership with Ventrus we are reaching out and supporting/having conversations with other schools and leaders. This will also aid to prompt our own thinking. Decided the 'no more marking' approach is not one we wish to pursue at the moment.</p> <p>Objective 2: To improve teachers' subject knowledge in writing, particularly grammar. Key update: This continues to be supported through staff CPD - including some bespoke sessions for teaching assistants from our subject leader. Book looks and lesson drop ins also pick this up as a priority.</p> <p>Objective 3: To improve teaching and learning through the introduction of incremental coaching</p>

Key update: This is the most significant area of improvement this term. 4 coaching pairs have now started their coaching sessions, having received training from me and spent time coaching each other first. Main concerns lies around identifying the next step and making sure this is correct and high-value. This can be monitored by senior leaders through steplab. Next set of coaches will be trained on the INSET day in April. Half an hour a fortnight for teachers, TA covers in class when partner teacher leaves for drop in. Not extra time but staff meetings reduced a half hour.

Objective 4: To improve the confidence, skills and impact of subject leaders

Key update: Subject leaders have created action plans and are due to revisit them at the end of term. Time has been provided through CPD sessions. Nat has been supporting the RE/PSHE/DT leads as per the cycle in our handbook.

Objective 5: To provide high quality experiences across the curriculum to develop children’s spirituality

Key update: Ethos network helped Nathan Talbot and I to see that we are further ahead in our thinking in this area than other schools. Work has taken place on identifying areas within the curriculum where links are purposeful. Next step is to work more closely with Jon about opportunities for him and Jude to support in classes/lessons or with some planning.

Objective 6: To improve the quality and effectiveness of intervention for children who have fallen-behind their peers or who have identified SEND needs

Key actions: interventions have been streamlined. Data meetings have been split into SEND and ‘All’ children but we need to review timings of these as it was overwhelming for some teachers.

SEND review in the summer term and this may throw up further actions for us in this area.

Objective 7: To improve the attitudes and outcomes for disadvantaged children through a mentoring approach

Key action: Move towards Y4-6 having more ownership of their small step targets. Next celebration is planned for Wed 27th. During our peer review, the other Ventrus heads were positive about this innovative approach. Next step is to look at metacognition and also how children view mistakes and corrections - this is true of all children but especially disadvantaged. Governors invited to attend.

BG and governors found this way of feedback from AH more useful than a full Headteacher written report. AH explained that the SIP is the key piece of work that governors should be asking questions about. Governors agreed they need to time their visits for the beginning of term to ensure progress had taken place and to enable evidence in books following the HT report to be seen. PW noted that it raised an important point in respect of efficiencies and effectiveness of the GB in terms of rhythm in to the school as well as contributions to the school on reporting when and how. BG did not want duplication of questions from governors and GTH agreed that it should be consolidating and evidencing about the discussions rather than just asking questions. AH wanted governors to visit the school, see and spend time in the classrooms with the children, for members of staff to take and show governors around and not to be tied into having meetings.

11. Governance

1. Receive reports from governors who have attended training and review impacts from training for the GB

VH attended the recent Induction Training and reported that it had been interesting to hear about the different named governors that other Boards had such as Sustainability Lead. BG noted that there was no set model for Governing Boards other than the statutory duties and Ventrus governance is different for former VA schools. Discussions on governance within Ventrus to start at meeting with Diocese and Ventrus on 26th March.

	<p>It was confirmed that most governors had completed the online prevent training.</p> <p>2. Collate governor impacts from previous half term No further updates other than those noted in the meeting.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>1. Safeguarding termly data update Governors were made aware that JH had already noted in his report about numbers. AH reported that 1 MASH had been submitted since the last GB meeting. AH challenged this as there was confusion about whether it was going to a strategy meeting or not, AH requested permission from parent but not received, school keeping close eye on it. AH advised that 6-weekly ARC meetings taking place to discuss all children under Child Protection or CIN (Children In Need), and in school concerns to discuss and give time to any running concerns, supervision for Jo, being held to account. The meetings follow a robust process and are held ahead of a holiday and each family is RAG rated. AH confirmed that the school do not have high numbers of Child Protection or CIN and a small handful of Early Help.</p> <p>2. Training scenario facilitated by Headteacher AH presented governors with a scenario in which a 7-year-old girl regularly arrived distressed at school drop off time, clinging to their mother, a senior leader observed the parent on one occasion stressed and shouting at the child. 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. The age of the child was significant, a note should be made on CPOMs, conversation with her teacher, contact made with the parent/family, set up process to help make drop-off easier, context needed to be clarified and whether a change of teacher, change of homelife, domestic abuse was what was causing the child to be so distressed about leaving her mother.</p> <p>AH confirmed that it would be an issue of concern and a conversation with the teacher would be appropriate to ascertain whether the child continued to be distressed throughout the day, or whether they were fine and had good relationships in class. Governors felt that a MASH was not necessary at this stage. AH went on to say that it was important to hear the voice of the child – not just the parent by the process of ‘Tell, Explain, Describe.’ Drawing is helpful.</p> <p>JH asked whether school staff know what to look out for in respect of domestic abuse? AH confirmed that it was part of the annual safeguarding training and that a ‘1 minute guide’ had also been sent to staff recently as a reminder.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<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"> ● Confirmed Headteacher appointment ● Governors discussed and were now aware of spirituality abuse ● Sustainability ● Inclusivity not pushing back too hard on Fair Access ● Joining in with other Ventrus schools including those who were CofE schools (more church schools joining the Trust as Ventrus changed to Majority Articles in October 2023) ● New effective sound system in the hall which will help develop children’s characters so they can be heard and be able to hear more clearly.
<p>14.</p>	<p>Meeting finished at 20:03hrs</p>

ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING		
Action	Person responsible	Date to be completed by
1. Review guidance on gender neutral toilets and whether it may affect the school in the future	AH	1.4.24
2. Update GB on HE's completed safeguarding observations when received.	AH	13.4.24
3. Update the Board to ensure that she is the named DSL.	AH	19.3.24
4. 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.	BG	September 24
5. Ensure all trips and residentials uploaded to the school website	AH	May 24
6. Add spiritual abuse to annual safeguarding training and JH to attend to present.	AH/JH	September 24

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB ratified the substantive appointment of the Headteacher.
- The GB approved the purchase of the School Absence Insurance.
- The GB approved the agreement that the school will keep nursery fees in line with (and raise in line with) Early Years funding amounts
- The GB approved the review of the following policies:
 - Finance
 - Disciplinary
 - Redundancy

Next meeting: Monday 13th May 2024 at 6.15-8.15pm
 (to be preceded by a meeting of the Management Partnership Joint Committee 5.45-6.15pm)

Signed as accurate by the Chair:

Name of Chair:

Date: