**The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust**

**A red letter in a black circle

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting**

**5.30pm on Wednesday 31st January 2024 at 5.30pm**

**PRESENT:**

Mr J Briggs (Headteacher), Mrs E de la Motte (Chair), Mr M Fryer, Dr L Bryant, Mr N Little, Mr G Buchanan , Mrs A Gibbs, Mr A Phillips and Mrs C Stow-Smith

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr S Leigh – Clerk to the Governing Body

**Action**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Procedural Business** | | |
| **1.** | **Welcome**  The meeting opened at 5.30pm with all welcomed. Governors noted that Mrs de la Motte was running late but would be joining the meeting. In her absence, Dr Bryant agreed to Chair the meeting until her arrival. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could move to business. |  |
| **2.** | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies for absence were received from Mrs N McDowell who was unable to attend due to personal commitments.  ***Directors RESOLVED to consent to the absence of Mrs N McDowell.*** | **Clerk to Board** |
| **3.** | **Notification of items of any other urgent business**  There were no other items of urgent business to raise for discussion at item 16 of the agenda. |  |
| **4.** | **Declarations of Interest**   1. **Declarations of Personal or Pecuniary Interest**   All Directors were reminded that any personal or pecuniary interest relating to items on the agenda should be declared. There were no declarations of interest made by any governor in relation to items on the agenda.   1. **Register of Business Interests**   Directors were reminded of the requirement to maintain a register of business interests and for this to be updated on a regular basis. ***All governors present confirmed that their registers were up to date at the time of reporting.*** |  |
| **5.** | **Approval of Governing Body Meeting Minutes**   1. **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 18th December 2023**   ***Directors RESOLVED that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 18th December 2023 be approved for signature by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting with a signed copy being provided for the school file.***  At this point, Mrs de la Motte joined the meeting tending her apologies for a late arrival.   1. **Minutes of the Governing Board meeting held on Monday 18th December 2023**   ***Directors RESOLVED that the minutes of the Governing Board meeting held on 18th December 2023 be approved for signature by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting with a signed copy being provided for the school file.***   1. **Matters Arising from the minutes**   There were no matters arising from the minutes of the AGM or the Governing Board meetings that were not already covered elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting. It was confirmed that all actions noted at the previous meetings had been completed.  At this point, Mrs A Gibbs joined the meeting tending apologies for a late arrival. | **Chair**  **Chair** |
| **Items to Consider** | | |
| **6.** | **Autumn term 2023 – Headline Data**  Directors received copies of headline attainment data for the Autumn term 2023, covering Early Years through to Key Stage 2.  ***Questioning the Good Level of Development (GLD) scores for the term, Directors were provided with details of the learning objectives that make up GLD.*** With scores of 81% and 82% being secured for Maths and Reading respectively, a score of 75% had been secured for Writing, providing a combined total of 72%. ***Questioning how this performance compared with other schools, it was highlighted that Writing was presenting similar results in other schools with gaps becoming notable as a result of the impact of the Covid pandemic period, particularly on Writing, and was a prime focus for Melrose Learning Trust across all of its schools for the year***. Abbey Schools were now accessing the CPD that was being offered in support of Writing.  Directors discussed the supportive strategies and interventions that were in play to bring about improvements, noting in particular the introduction of ‘Grammasaurus’ which was beginning to have a positive impact. The situation would continue to be closely monitored. |  |
| **7.** | **December 2023 Management Accounts**  Directors received copies of the Management Accounts for December 2023. It was highlighted that despite a high incidence of staff absence and required cover over the Autumn term, the year-end position was still looking OK at this point.  Noting the additional SEND funding that had been received over the term compared against original estimates, Directors were informed that Abbey was now providing for more EHCP pupils than any other Darlington primary school. Directors discussed the ongoing challenges that this position continued to present.  ***Questioning the average cost of served meals over the term and the jump from £1.86 in October to £2.30 in December***, it was explained that this was likely to be due to an increase in food purchases leading up to the Christmas festive period.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive the December 2023 Management Accounts as presented.*** | **All to note** |
| **8.** | **Numbers on Roll**  Directors received a copy of the SIMS reports for both infant and junior schools, setting out current numbers of pupils on roll across each year group. Levels of attendance and numbers of exclusions were also highlighted in the reporting.  Reflecting on the number of reported exclusions for the year to date, ***Directors questioned if the reported number of exclusions for Reception (5 in total) was unusually high.*** It was explained that this number related to one pupil who was struggling to adjust to their autism which manifested itself into physical attacks on members of staff. It was noted that the old library area was now being used as a sensory area and a space for time out of class which was having a real, positive impact on those pupils who needed this type of intervention and support. Directors acknowledged that the levels of support provided by staff was exceptional. |  |
| **9.** | **School Self Evaluation / School Development Plan 2023/2024**  Directors were provided with an overview of the SchoolIP system which the school had now embraced to capture the detail of its Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and its School Development Plan for 2023/2024. Directors acknowledged that they had been provided with their own login details and could view progress being made over the year against defined priorities and objectives at any point. |  |
| **10.** | **Risk Register**  Attention was drawn to the Federation’s Risk Register for the year to date, noting in particular those sections relating to:   * Human Resources * Policy * Equality & Diversity   There were no issues to raise with no changes in RAG ratings to identified risks at this point. Directors acknowledged that the register would be migrated over to the Melrose Learning Trust Risk Register template over the course of the coming months with continued review work being undertaken as part of this process.  Staff had commended the quality of staff induction that had been received.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive the reviewed risk register for the year to date as presented.*** | **All to note** |
| **11.** | **Safeguarding Report**  The Headteacher presented his Safeguarding Report for the year to date which had been circulated.  Mr Fryer provided details of the latest Single Central Register review that had been undertaken, commending the robustness of the processes and procedures that had been observed. There were no issues to report. The next review of the SCR was scheduled for May 2024.  Noting the Safeguarding support that had been commissioned through Melrose Learning Trust, the Headteacher outlined the levels of support and available resources that would now be received from Clennell Education Solutions. This included:   * Termly safeguarding audits * Staff and governor training * Parent support   It was noted that the next Safeguarding Audit was scheduled later in the week with a report to be received shortly after that which would identify any issues requiring action.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive the Safeguarding Report as presented.*** | **All to note** |
| **12.** | **Proposed changes to Admissions Arrangements 2025/2026**  Directors were reminded that at their meeting of 21st September 2023, approval was given to the progression of an admissions consultation for the Federation’s admissions arrangements effective from September 2025 in line with the suggested widening of the catchment area for the school to include the Blackwell area of Darlington. It was confirmed that the consultation had been progressed with only 1 response being received (which related to distance from the school). The parent was happy with the explanation to the question raised.  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the implementation of the reviewed and consulted admission arrangements for the school with effect from September 2025 with supporting documentation to be updated and communications advising of this change in arrangements to be prepared and circulated as appropriate.*** | **Headteacher** |
| **13.** | **Policies**  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the following reviewed policies for adoption with immediate effect:***   * ***Charging and Remissions Policy*** * ***Whistleblowing Policy*** * ***Suspension and Exclusions Policy*** * ***ICT and E-Safety Policy*** | **Headteacher** |
| **Company Business** | | |
| **14.** | **Arrangements for merger with Melrose Learning Trust**  **14.1 Reaffirm Local Governing Body composition**  Directors acknowledged that the local governing body composition under Melrose Learning Trust governance arrangements was as follows:   * Parent Governors (x2) * Headteacher (ex-officio) * Staff Governor (x1) * Director appointed governors (x5)   **14.2 Arrangements for closure of FAST accounts**  Directors acknowledged that the accounts for the Federation of Abbey Schools would be closed over the next 3-month period. This would be overseen by all governors with a minimum of 3 governors to attend any meetings arranged to conclude this closure.  **14.3 Board membership to oversee closure of FAST**  As noted under the previous item, it was agreed that all governors would be invited to any meetings arranged to oversee the closure of the Federation. All acknowledged that this business would need to be kept very separate from that of the role of the local governing body under Melrose Learning Trust governance arrangements.  **14.4 Governor monitoring – Spring term 2024**  Directors were requested to provide the Headteacher with some suggested dates for monitoring visits over the remainder of the Spring term 2024.  An invitation was also extended to all Directors to attend the Subject Leader Staff meeting which was scheduled for Wednesday 20th March 2024 at 3.30pm.  Directors were also invited to express their interest to the judging panel for this year’s Easter Egg competition. | **All to note**  **All to note**  **All to note**  **All to action**  **All to action**  **All to action** |
| **Concluding items** | | |
| **15.** | **Agenda items for the next meeting**  Directors were provided with a copy of the MLT Standing Agenda for the Spring term 2024.  Noting the opportunity for Directors to be further engaged with curriculum monitoring, book scrutiny and meeting pupils, it was agreed that the Headteacher circulate some suggested dates for such a focussed visit over the Summer term 2024. | **Headteacher** |
| **16.** | **Any other items of urgent business**  Governors were reminded that members of the MLT Board would be visiting the school on Friday 2nd February 2024. An open invitation was extended to all Directors for them to join this visit if they were able.  On behalf of Melrose Learning Trust, the Clerk to the Board extended thanks and appreciation to the Headteacher and his team for all of the work and effort that had been expended in preparing to join the Trust which had facilitated a very smooth transition up to point of merger. | **All to note** |
| **17.** | **Approval of documents for inspection**  ***Directors RESOLVED that the agenda and supporting papers circulated for this meeting be approved for inspection. Papers to be exempt from such requests were noted as:***   * ***Management Accounts, December 2023*** | **Headteacher** |
| **18.** | **Date and Time of Next Meeting**  Noted as follows:   * Wednesday 13th March 2024 at 5.30 pm   There being no further business, Directors were thanked for their attendance and contributions to the meeting and the meeting closed at 6.58pm. | **All to note** |

Chair…………………………………………………………………

Signed……………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………………….