**Abbey Schools**

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**Minutes of the Local Governing Body Meeting**

**5.30pm on 13th March 2024**

**PRESENT:**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms S Tomlinson – HR & Compliance Mgr, Melrose Learning Trust

Mr S Leigh – Clerk to the Governing Body

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome**  The meeting opened at 5.30pm with all welcomed. A special welcome was extended to Ms Tomlinson. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could move to business. |  |
| **2.** | **Apologies and Consent for Absence**  Apologies for absence were received from Dr L Bryant and Mr G Buchanan who were unable to attend the meeting due to work and personal commitments.  ***Governors RESOLVED to consent to the absence of Dr Bryant and Mr Buchanan.*** | **Clerk to Board** |
| **3.** | **Governor Information Update**   1. **Declarations of personal or pecuniary interest in items of the agenda**   All governors 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. |  |
| **4.** | **Any other urgent business to raise for discussion at item 15**  There were no other items of urgent business to raise for discussion at item 15 of the agenda. |  |
| **5.** | **Staff / School Council Presentations**  It was acknowledged that School Council would be invited to offer governors of presentation of their working at the next meeting of the Local Governing Body. | **Headteacher** |
| **6.** | **Minutes and matters arising**   1. **Minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2024**   ***Governors RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2024 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 that were not already covered elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting. It was confirmed that all actions noted at the previous meeting had been completed. | **Chair** |
| **7.** | **Governor Information Update**   1. **Register of Business Interests 2023 / 2024 – Update**   Governors 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.***   1. **Membership update**   There were no membership updates to report on this occasion.   1. **Publication of governance information on GIAS and school websites**   It was confirmed that the school website was up to date in its governance information with the ***Get Information About Schools website to be updated following the Federation’s merger with MLT***.   1. **Governor Monitoring Schedule 2023/2024**   Governors acknowledged the monitoring schedule for the remainder of the academic year with dates and themes for monitoring confirmed as follows:   * 15th March 2024 - Maths (learning walk, books and children – EY to Y6) - Mr Buchanan and Mr Philips) * 15th March 2024 – Writing (learning walk, books and children EY to Y6 ) * 15th March 2024 - Behaviour (observation, discussion with deputy heads and pupil voice) – Mr Little and Mrs de la Motte * 20th March 2024 – Subject leader staff discussions – Mrs Gibbs, Mrs de la Motte, Mr Philips (others tbc)     **Summer Term**   * Premises, SEND, Pupil Premium and Safeguarding – tbc * 15th May 2024 – Governor learning afternoon (discussions with pupils, teachers and staff re curriculum) – Mrs Gibbs, Mr Philips, and Mrs de la Motte.  1. **Reports from Governor Monitoring Visits**   There were no governor monitoring reports for presentation on this occasion.   1. **NGA Skills Audit**   Governors acknowledged the Trust’s intent for all local governing bodies to complete a Skills Audit exercise on an annual basis, informing any needed CPD activities as well as identifying required skills / experience to vacant governor positions. The Trust had chosen to use the NGA’s Skills Audit matrix and copies had been circulated for governors to complete and return. Results from this exercise would be reported back at the Summer term meeting of the LGB. | **School Admin**  **All to action as appropriate**  **All to action** |
| **8.** | **Headteacher’s Report**  Attention was drawn to the Headteacher’s Report which had been circulated for prior reading with questions invited to its content. Governors were reminded that this was a new reporting platform and format which the Trust was trialling for the next 12-month period. The approach allowed for cumulative reporting over the academic year, with updated narrative for the year to date being highlighted within the report and allowing for ease of tracking. All data presented was taken from the school’s MIS for the academic year to date.  As the platform’s licensing arrangements had to recognise both the infant and junior schools as separate schools, two reports had been produced (data only for the infant school with supporting narrative captured in the junior school report. It was also highlighted that there were a few formatting issues which related to the functionality of the platform. These had been raised with the software developer for a solution.  Key points from the reporting were highlighted as follows:  **Spring term overview** – key highlights for the term to date were headlined as follows:   * Although there had been a few minor glitches during transition, the process of merger with MLT was overall very smooth. Special thanks were extended to Jodie Scott and Claire Rochester for their support to this. * Staff have continued to access MLT CPD and feedback has been positive. * Teachers continue to work with subject leaders across Darlington and are working on common issues. The year groups meet 4 other schools termly to share good practice. * Parent drop-in sessions have started this term and will be complete for all year groups by the end of term. * Performance management for TA's was completed by SLT. Reviews are planned for the second half of the summer term. There are 2 targets connected to the SDP and 1 personal one. * Parent, pupil and staff questionnaires have been sent out at half term and will be analysed by the end of term. * Incidents of vandalism have reduced significantly. Behaviour in class continues to be very good for the vast majority of children. * As part of due diligence there have been a number of surveys/reports across both schools (Safeguarding and Health & Safety Audit Reports provided for governor information. I have attached the safeguarding audit, the health and safety and the building and conditions for your information.   These areas were covered in further detail within the reporting.  **Pupil data** – governors noted that there has been little movement in admissions over the year. Infant numbers remained at 270 pupils. In KS2, the numbers remained consistent. There were 3 children in KS2 who have a change of placement on their EHCP but there are no spaces at the provision they would like to attend. Behaviour nurture provision was now in place in the infants on an afternoon which utilised the old library and an outdoor space from Early Years.  Noting the contextual data, ***governors questioning the meaning of FSM (Ever 6).*** It was explained that this figure referred to the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and have been so for at least one day in the past six-year period. Governors appreciated that schools receive Pupil Premium funding to support the learning of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and this funding continued for a further 6 years even if the child was no longer to FSM entitlement.  **Pupil Attendance** - attendance levels for the school were highlighted at circa 96.3% for the year to date with levels of persistent absence at 7.2%.***Governors discussed the importance of good levels of punctuality***, noting the school communications which reminded parents to reinforce the importance of getting to school on time.  ***Questioning the number of suspensions since last reporting (8) which was notably higher than the national average over the reporting period***, governors were informed that whilst the number had increased, this related to the same pupil with challenging needs who had now secured a place at Beaumont Hill.  Noting that there has been an increase in the number of behaviour incidents logged on CPOMS, ***governors questioned if this poor behaviour was having a detrimental impact on other pupils.*** Governors were assured that the situation was being managed extremely well to minimise any adverse impact on wider groups of pupils. Governors were provided with details of a number of actions / interventions that have been pursued (classroom and lunchtime). Governors were also provided with details of the specialist behaviour plans that were in place for pupils where required which were having a positive impact. In general terms, behaviour was good and attitudes to learning remained very positive across the schools.  Looking ahead, governors were informed that the Trust was currently exploring the provision of Alternative Resource Provision (ARP) across a number of its schools. The Headteacher of Greatham CE Primary Schools was leading this feasibility work for the Trust and had visited Abbey, commending the work and support being provided to Abbey pupils. The provision of an ARP at Abbey was now being explored.  **Safeguarding** – attention was drawn the Safeguarding Audit Report that had been produced by Clennell Education Solutions as commissioned by the Trust for all its schools. Governors agreed that the audit and resulting report was very thorough. The Headteacher commended the level of responsive support that had been received from Clennell to date and the quality of advice with that support. It was also highlighted that Safeguarding Training was accessible for all governors as part of the support arrangements in place.  **Personal Development** - governors were provided with details of the range of educational visits and activities that had been pursued over the year to date. Governors recognised the efforts being made to support these opportunities, commending the work that was being invested to this.  **Quality of Education** – key points of note to date were highlighted as follows:   * Early Careers Teachers have settled in well and providing good levels of support. * Writing book look highlighted consistency across year groups and good progress since the start of term. Staff have completed or about to complete a number of NPQ's (Senior Leaders, Teaching and Learning, and CPD. * Grammarsaurus now used from Y1 - Y5 * Parent drop ins for all year groups in the Spring term * Darlington writing moderation for EY to Y6 attended by all teachers * Website updated, although photo’s used across the website required further refresh. * All planned monitoring has taken place - staff meetings, monitoring and data collection now shared at the beginning of the year to support teacher wellbeing.   **Leadership & Management** – governors acknowledged that both the School Development Plan (SDP) and School Evaluation Form (SEF) were now being maintained on the School IP platform which all governors had login access to. Following the meeting, governors were invited to view the platform to discuss progress that was being made in the delivery of the School Development Plan priorities for the year. In general terms, good progress was being maintained in the delivery of all actions / activities supporting the delivery of priorities.  As referenced earlier in the meeting, extensive CPD activities were being access by the staff as detailed in the report.  **Staffing Updates** – governors were provided with updates to the school’s staffing establishment as detailed in the report. There were no major issues or items of concern to identify at this point.  There being no further questions, the Headteacher was thanked for his report and the responses to the questions raised. Governors welcomed the clarity of the report and the level of information / data presented.  ***Governors RESOLVED to receive the Headteacher’s Report and supporting documents for the Spring Term 2024 as presented***. |  |
| **9.** | **Finance Report**   1. **Budget Monitoring 2023/2024**   Governors were presented with a copy of the January 2024 management accounts with variances in income and expenditure against the original budget highlighted. At the time of reporting, the forecasted position for the year-end was better than anticipated. It was highlighted that the accounts showed a surplus revenue position of circa £23k for the period 1st September 2023 to 31st March 2024. Added to the b/fwd reserves of £284k from the previous financial year, this provided an estimated cumulative reserve figure of £307k.    Capital reserves showed a balance of £35,476 to carry forward.  ***Governors RESOLVED to receive the financial information as at January 2024 as presented***. | **Headteacher** |
| **10.** | **Melrose Learning Trust Update**   1. **Updates from the CEO**   **MAT growth –** governors were informed that the Trust had now grown to 9 schools with the Federation of Abbey Schools officially joining the Trust as from 1st February 2024. In terms of pupil numbers, circa 2,100 pupils were enow being provided for under the Trust arrangements. Conversations were currently in play with 3 other schools who were interested in joining the Trust.  **Link Directors** – governors noted that the Chair to the Board and another of the Trust Directors had made a visit to the school at the beginning of February, being provided with an opportunity to walk the schools and talk to staff / pupils. Great feedback had been received from the Directors who commended the quality of the environments observed and the discussions they had with staff and pupils.  **Staff Wellbeing Steering Group** – further endorsing the Trust’s commitment to its staff, governors were informed that the Board of Directors had requested the establishment of a Staff Wellbeing Steering Group who would be tasked to consider staff wellbeing issues and further actions / initiatives to support the workforce. The Steering Group had its first initial meeting with a representation of staff from across the Trust and considered the results of a recent staff survey. One of the key outcomes from the group would see the establishment of a Trust-wide Staff Wellbeing Charter which would be shared with governors for discussion when drafted. Further supporting the agenda, the next Trust-wide CPD event had been arranged for 28th March 2023 with Mental Health & Wellbeing as its core theme.  **HR Updates** – governors were provided with an overview of changes in employment legislation that would be coming into effect as from 1st April 2024 which related to:   * Flexible Working * Parental Leave * Protection Rights (maternity / adoption leave)  1. **Governance Portal**   Governors were informed that Office 365 Email accounts had now been set up for each individual governor. The accounts would also provide governors with access to the Teams Governance folder which would support all documentation in support of the governor role. This would be continually revisited with governors at each meeting to ensure all had good access.   1. **Governor Training**   Governors acknowledged the governor CPD that was in place for the year. All were being delivered via video conference and recorded for future access. Two remaining sessions for the year related to Early Years / Early Reading and SEND.   1. **Scheme of Delegation – Annual Review**   Governors were presented with the Trust’s current Scheme of Delegation, noting that the Trust was required to review this on an annual basis. Governors were invited to offer any comments / suggestions to the current scheme which would be reported to the Board as part of the review process. The approved scheme for the coming academic year from this review exercise would be presented to LGBs at their Summer term meetings.   1. **Feedback to the Board**   Governors noted the minor issues that had been experienced during the transition phase in joining the Trust but commended the immediate responses made to address these issues.  Governors also welcomed the visits that had been made by the Directors to the school and valued this interest / commitment. | **Clerk to Board**  **All to action as appropriate**  **All to action as appropriate**  **Clerk to Board** |
| **11.** | **Risk Register Review**  Governors were provided with a copies of the Trust Risk Register template together with the latest version of the original risk register maintained by the Federation. The Headteacher agreed to work through the population of the Trust template with support from the Chair. There were no significant issues to raise at this point.  ***Governors RESOLVED to receive and note the reviewed Risk Register for March 2024 as presented.*** | **Headteacher / Chair** |
| **12.** | **Policy Reviews**   1. **Policy Review Table**   ***Governors RESOLVED to receive the updated Policy Review table as presented.***   1. **Academy Policies**   ***Governors RESOLVED to approve the following reviewed policies for immediate adoption:***   * Behaviour Policy * RSE   Governors also agreed to adopt the recently reviewed Trust Health & Safety Policy which was currently with Directors for approval.   1. **Trust Policies**   ***Governors RESOLVED to receive the following Trust policies for adoption with immediate effect:***   * Pay Policy 2023/24 * Central Services Policy and Appeal Process * Reporting low level concerns * Whistleblowing Policy | **Headteacher** |
| **13.** | **Chairs Correspondence**  The Chair informed governors that a parental complaint that had been received and responded to. There were no items of correspondence to report. |  |
| **14.** | **Any other items of Urgent Business**  There were no other items of urgent business to raise for discussion. |  |
| **15.** | **Approval of documents for inspection**  ***Governors RESOLVED that the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and all supporting papers circulated for this meeting be approved for inspection.*** | **Headteacher** |
| **16.** | **Date and Time of Next Meeting**  Date and time of next LGB meeting was noted as follows:   * Monday 1st July 2024 at 5.30pm   Governors were thanked for their attendance and contributions to the meeting. There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.00pm. | **All to note** |

Chair…………………………………………………………………

Signed……………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………………….