

ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

<b>FULL GOVERNING BOARD</b>		<b>DATE:</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> March 2023</b>
<b>CHAired BY: John Clements (JC)</b>		<b>CLERKED BY: Jacqueline Brooks (JB)</b>	
<b>GOVERNORS PRESENT:</b>		<b>Also Present:</b>	
John Clements (JC) Russ Green (RG) Gemma Tozer-Howe (GTH) Jennifer Elliott (JE) Rev. Jon Holder (JH) Amy Hardinge (AH) Brian Gravenor (BG) Ruth Marsh (RM)			
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>			
<b>Absent without apology:</b>			

*Governor questions are highlighted in grey*

<b>Agenda Items</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Opening Prayer &amp; Welcome</u></b></p> <p>1. Opening Prayer taken by BG.                      JC welcomed RM to the GB as this is her first meeting where she will be appointed as LA Governor. The GB also gave warm thanks to RG for his time as Staff Governor and all he has brought to being both a governor and member of staff. RG leaves at the end of term.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Apologies and sanctions of absence.</u></b></p> <p>1. None.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b><u>Declarations of Interest &amp; Correspondence</u></b></p> <p>1. No declarations of interest.                      2. No correspondence.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b><u>Approval of minutes from last meeting (27.2.23) and update on actions</u></b></p> <p>1. Parts 1 and 2 agreed as accurate by the Full GB and signed by the Chair.                      2. Actions from 27.2.23 Full GB Meeting</p>

- Action 1 – Completed
- Action 2 – Completed
- Action 3 – Completed
- Action 4 – in process. Not due to be completed until 31.3.23
- Action 5 – Completed
- Action 6 - in process. Not due to be completed until 31.3.23

3. Update on outstanding actions from 6.2.23 Full GB Meeting

- Action 1 – work continuing, decision scheduled to be made at 22.5.23 Full GB meeting.
- Action 2 – Completed
- Action 3 – signatories changed, waiting from bank to complete closure of account
- Actions 4 and 5 – in process. JB has discussed with BT and has a meeting 26.4.23 to discuss accessibility within school further.
- Action 6 – in process
- Action 7 - Completed

**5. School Development**

1. JC had circulated information he has obtained to date regarding options for entering a Management Partnership/joining a MAT prior to the meeting. JC advised that his view was that the school should join a MAT via a Management Partnership first.

BG noted that the decision at the 6.2.23 meeting had been to defer the appointment of a new Headteacher until September 2024 and queried if the new proposal to join a management partnership/MAT would supersede that decision. The GB agreed that it did.

BG observed that the national picture is that recruitment of Headteachers is proving very difficult, in part due to the drive towards academization and the changes in roles this creates.

RG acknowledged that being a standalone school can be a lonely place. AH noted that at a recent HT briefing, there was a conversation around Local Learning Communities and that currently St. Martin's is not part of one. The GB discussed that St. Martin's had previously undertaken joint inset with other schools in the East Devon Church Schools Partnership (EDCSP) but this had not happened again since Covid restrictions lifted. Leadership has changed at the other EDCSP schools and headteachers are only recently appointed. It was agreed that it is valuable for there to be a structure in place for schools to support each other e.g., when moderating work.

JE raised that as she learns more about MATs, the more she sees that they have to offer, although it would be important to address concerns that have been raised ref the possibility of losing autonomy and the workload of governors in MATs.

RM works in a school which is now part of a MAT. She felt that the OfSTED at the school went well because the work could be shared amongst the larger SLT and there was so much support available. Being in a MAT has also been beneficial at RM's school for sharing best practice and sharing pressures.

GTH acknowledged the concerns that parents have raised around whether the ethos at St. Martin's could be lost if it joins a MAT but sees that it will be the role of the GB to thoroughly research options and to ensure the ethos and level of autonomy remains. GTH felt that being a standalone school has contributed to the difficulties in recruiting governors to the GB.

JC has discussed the process with Christina Mabin at the Diocese – she believes MATs work well and that a CofE MAT does ensure that the Christian ethos remains as the Diocese would not endorse it if it didn't. The MATs St. Martin's can consider will have a Christian ethos. JC is very conscious of the pressure AH and the rest of the SLT have been under since SH resigned,

especially as there has been no support given from DCC. JC feels being in a MAT might have reduced these pressures.

AH has discussed the potential options for joining a MAT with Alice McShane (School Advisory Lead). She has advised that the school needs to be careful around exit fees of management partnerships if the school elects to not join a MAT after the partnership ends. The GB will also need to consider the impact on existing staff – if responsibilities change amongst the leadership team, then pay may need to be amended to reflect this. This could potentially impact upon people deciding whether to remain at St. Martin's on a lower pay grade or not. Once a school is in a MAT, schools cannot return to being a standalone school. The GB agreed that it will be essential to ensure that the decision taken must be right for both children and staff.

BG raised that there is a need to ensure that a MAT Board can relate to the schools within its Trust.

The GB discussed work needed to take this forward:

- Each governor (or a governor team) to each take on a Trust to research
- Research template document to be created so a consistent approach taken
- Day(s) to be arranged when MAT CEOs are invited to meet with SLT and GB
- Staff to be invited to submit questions to be put to CEOs
- SLT and Governors to undertake site visits – important to look for links between what governors see/feel at the schools, what is on the Trust website(s) and what CEOs are saying
- Decision day to be held before Summer half term to enable Management Partnership to be in place on second half of the summer term.

The GB agreed it was important for staff to be part of the process and to be aware of each step of this process, so they felt involved.

JC has communicated planned steps with parents/cares via dojo. JC has received five emails from parents and carers. One supportive of the school joining a MAT, one against due to concerns about losing ethos and individual character of the school. The others were a mix. It was noted concerns raised by parents appear to be based on their experiences of a local MAT not being very positive. This MAT is not one that St. Martin's could join due to the requirements for Church schools joining Trusts.

**Decisions:**

- **The GB agreed to undertake further research to inform their decisions on school development**
- **The GB agreed that the previous decision to recruit a substantive Headteacher for September 2024 has been superseded by decision to explore MAT options**

**6. Headteacher Report – Questions from Governors**

1. This had been circulated prior to the meeting.

JC noted that there has been quite a lot of fluctuation within SEND attendance and asked whether reasons for this had been identified. AH explained that she is currently investigating this and will be putting actions into place in class for support as required. Currently 22% of pupils have SEND – she will be exploring potential connections between absence, and children who have SEND or who are looked after or disadvantaged. AH is also planning to look at the curriculum and whether that impacts upon the attendance of SEND pupils (not the pupils in the Hub, more the ones who need scaffolding on a day-to-day basis). AH is writing attendance support plans on an individual basis.

JE observed that attendance had been a key focus for AH when Deputy HT and asked if she still had the capacity to continue with this now she is Acting HT. AH advised that she is continuing to try and prioritise this work given its importance. AH believes that the parent meetings being held with the Headteacher have an impact, although AH continues to ensure it feels like a supportive process. The

GB noted that 24% of Devon children in both primary and secondary are persistent absentees. It has worsened since the pandemic. St. Martin's level of persistent absenteeism is better than this.

JC referred to the ongoing focus the GB are having on progress and attainment being made by Year 3 and asked if the latest data would be available soon, and if it would be possible to discuss it at the first GB meeting in the summer term. It was agreed it would be added to the agenda for the meeting on 24.4.23. AH advised that informally, accelerated progress for this group in reading, and teaching has been assessed as very consistent and good.

JC noted that the take up for the Early Years reach out sessions had not been so good, and asked if the reasons for this had been identified, and also whether more could be done to engage parents. MT is trying to broaden the offer provided and the community outreach e.g., bowel and bladder team support, Parent Music classes (free for Nursery age). RG advised that parents are busy and often can find it difficult to find the time to engage with services. RG queried if it would be better if messages giving information about these services could be targeted to families identified as needing this particular support. AH advised that the school had ensured that it had sent information to specific families, but that this had not made any difference to engagement levels. RG suggested that these groups and services could be raised at Parent Voice, so that they can share this information with the other parents.

The GB discussed the revised self-evaluation statement (SES). AH explained that this had been rewritten so that SLT owned the document, following recent leadership changes. Areas for development have been clarified and revised, and the school improvement plan (SIP) has been updated to mirror the SES. Governors were advised that being familiar with the SES and revised SIP will be good preparation for a potential OfSTED. SLT have also had a practice OfSTED call with the School Advisor to support their preparations for inspection.

The GB discussed that AH has been working on developing the curriculum further – it has been identified specifically that science curriculum needs improving. Work is being undertaken to ensure that both teaching and aims are clearer and tighter, with substantive and disciplinary knowledge achieved for each unit.

Subject leads have been given time out of class to work on improving the curriculum and are being given opportunities to work in pairs. AH advised that there are lots of strengths within teaching but there are areas that need improving.

**7. Finance**

**1. Budget Monitor.**

The budget carryforward is approximately £100, 000. BT can forecast more accurately as the end of the financial year approaches. BT has forecast that 2023-24 should be financially secure but that there will be issues in 2024-25 as the carryforward is likely to have been used by then. This will put the school in a vulnerable position. There are a number of decisions around potential job shares which need to be made, and these could impact upon the budget.

GTH noted that it will be important to consider during the MAT exploration work, that the GB considers the impact any decisions around partnership working may have on the budget. This budget is for St. Martin's as a standalone school.

**2. Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) 22-23**

The completed SFVS and proposed action plan had been circulated prior to the meeting. The GB noted that recent leadership changes mean that more finance training is needed for people who are acting up in new roles. There are also plans to upskill school staff to improve cover if BT is absent, and for more financial planning discussions to be held at SLT meetings. Financial benchmarking will be undertaken next year by BT and the Lead Governor for Finance,

**Decision: The GB approved the SFVS and action plan.**

**Action: JB to submit the SFVS to Devon Audit by 31.3.23.**

3. Review LA Service Contracts and Service Level Agreements and agree services buyback.

The proposed services to be bought back had been circulated to the GB prior to the meeting. AH explained that these services are the basic ones needed for the school to operate administratively and for the benefit of the children. Services have been cut back as much as possible.

**Decision: The GB agreed to approve the buyback of services as proposed.**

The GB discussed school staff insurance quotes recently obtained by BT and agreed to approve the provider proposed by BT.

4. Review arrangements for raising nursery fees.

**Decision: The GB agreed for another year that the school will keep nursery fees in line with (and raise in line with) Early Years funding amounts.** This will be reviewed and determined again in twelve months time.

**8. Behaviour Principles**

1. RM asked how the new SHINE principles will be launched with the children. AH advised this will happen in the following ways:

- In assemblies
- By linking them with 'Being the Best We Can Be'
- Through discussing positives of introducing SHINE
- Through role playing any tricky scenarios children could face
- Graphic discs will be worn by staff to be used with children

JE advised that it had been discussed at the ETHOS Group, and that there had been a suggestion as to whether they could be turned into a song the children could learn. RG advised he will try to write one before he leaves.

RM asked whether the SHINE principles will be displayed in school, suggesting that different classes could each take on a different principle and create posters to represent them. AH confirmed that they would be. The graphic discs will also help embed the language and support the consistency of language being used by staff.

**Decision: The GB agreed to approve the SHINE behaviour principles. These will underpin the Behaviour policy of the school.**

**9. Governance**

1. Appointment of Local Authority Governor and Leadership & Teachers' Pay Committee members

**Decisions:**

- The GB agreed to appoint RM as LA Governor on the GB for a term of four years.
- The GB agreed that the L&T Pay Committee members will be BG, JE, JC and (on a temporary basis) GTH. The next Pay Committee meeting is on 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

2. GB Self-Evaluation

JC circulated the template to be used for self-evaluation. Results will be RAG-rated, and JC will produce a summary report of actions that may be needed. The GB discussed whether the GB could be more active in how it recruits new governors, and in how diverse a membership it has. JB is in the process of revising new governor documentation to be more explicit in saying that the GB welcomes all members of the community to join, and to include information on accessibility.

JH has links with the local parish and will look at exploring possible recruitment options. JE suggested that the GB could consider targeting local firms and advertising governor vacancies.

3. Election of Vice-Chair

**Decision: The GB elected BG as Vice-Chair until the end of the September 2024 Full GB meeting.**

4. Newsletter item planning

**Actions:**

- **BG to provide a newsletter item on being a governor in April 2023.**
- **RM to provide a newsletter item on being a governor in May 2023.**

5. Reports from governors who have attended training and impacts for the GB

JE attended training on improving effective governance, with key points being around preparing fully for meetings, understanding strengths and weaknesses, and the importance of sharing information between governors. The training also provided recruitment ideas and strategies.

**Action: JB to add a Record of Learning Impacts template form onto GovernorHub.**

GTH advised she had attended a day conference with the Virtual School and a SEMH Day briefing. This provided information on Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and that up to 50% of children are undiagnosed.

Future training booked:

JH – Diocese New Governor Induction

BG – Diocese New Governor Induction and DES SEND for Governors

6. Collate governor impacts from the last half-term

Identified as follows:

- BG as new Lead Governor for SEND has spent time with AH and AliH as part of his induction for this role.
- Governors are undertaking their Lead Governor work.
- School Development monitoring work is on-going.
- RG advised that there has been a very noticeable increased governor presence in school since SH left, in order to support staff. The GB agreed that it is important to them that teachers know that the Board is committed to and interested in the school.

7. Confirm progress of GB Annual Impact Statement

JC confirmed that this is progressing in line with the schedule and will be presented and approved at the final meeting of the term.

8. Review of New Governor Induction process

JB is continuing to send out induction feedback forms to new governors once they have been on the GB for six months. All governors were encouraged to provide any feedback or suggestions for improvements to JB at any time.

**10. Safeguarding**

1. Termly data update

This data was included on the cover page of the most recent HT report. The next At Risk Children meeting is about to take place. This process was rated in the recent DCC Safeguarding audit as being very good practice. Other items highlighted as good practice in the audit were the welcome and safeguarding guidance provided by the admin team when visitors arrive.

**Decision: The GB agreed that JH will be Lead Governor for Safeguarding.**

2. Safeguarding Training Scenario exercise

AH delivered the same training scenario to the GB as she had done for staff at the most recent staff meeting – one where a child has a bruise and they have disclosed that this was caused by a member

	<p>of staff in school. Governors discussed what their approach to dealing with this would be and confirmed the process of raising it with one of the Safeguarding Leads, and passing them written notes which could be added to CPOMS. The GB identified that governors would not become involved in investigating the incident. The governor could reassure the parent that their concern would be taken seriously and be investigated. No photos should be taken of a child at any time. Any marks or bruises should be recorded on a body map and described.</p> <p><u>3. Confirmation of termly Single Central Register check</u> It was confirmed that this was checked by JC on 9.3.23 and all was in order.</p>
11.	<p><b><u>School Term Dates 2024-25</u></b></p> <p>1. The GB noted that these dates have not yet been provided to the school from DCC and this item will need to be postponed until they have been received.</p>
12.	<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>Identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RG – Discussion around MATs demonstrated governors' commitment to ensuring that decisions taken are right for the children.</li> <li>• GTH – governors' understanding has been developed through learning about and discussing the curriculum.</li> <li>• JC – the GB self-evaluation has shown the GB's main priority is the children.</li> <li>• JE – GB approval of the SHINE behaviour principles is very positive</li> </ul>

<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>
1. Submit SFVS to Audit	JB	31.3.23
2. Provide a newsletter item on being a governor.	BG	30.4.23
3. Provide a newsletter item on being a governor.	RM	31.4.23
4. Add a Record of Learning Impacts template form onto GovernorHub.	JB	22.5.23

#### SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

- The GB agreed to undertake further research to inform their decisions on school development/partnership working options.
- The GB agreed that the previous decision to recruit a substantive Headteacher for September 2024 has been superseded by decision to explore MAT options.
- The GB approved the SFVS and action plan.
- The GB agreed to approve the buyback of LA services as proposed.
- The GB agreed for another year that the school will keep nursery fees in line with (and raise in line with) Early Years funding amounts.
- The GB agreed to approve the SHINE behaviour principles. These will underpin the Behaviour policy of the school.
- The GB agreed to appoint RM as LA Governor on the GB for a term of four years.

- The GB agreed that the L&T Pay Committee members will be BG, JE, JC and (on a temporary basis) GTH.
- The GB elected BG as Vice-Chair until the end of the September 2024 Full GB meeting.
- The GB agreed that JH will be Lead Governor for Safeguarding.

**Next meeting: Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> April at 6.00-8.00pm – training session in school**

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

**Name of Chair: .....**

**Date: .....**