



Minutes

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING OF PEGASUS ACADEMY TRUST

Friday, 23rd of April 2021 at

13.30pm

Virtual meeting (Google Meet)

Directors		
Richard Hill	Director	Present
Ian Patterson	Director	Present
Gary Griffin	Director	Present
Nina Pogossova	Director	Present
Fiona Fearon	Director	Apologies
Shelley Davies	Director	Apologies
Emma Whapham	Director	Present
Jolyon Roberts	Executive Principal	Present
Lynne Sampson	Executive Principal	Present
Trust Staff		
Jo Ridge	Chief Financial Officer	Present

Clerked by:	Katie Bird
Supporting documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAT BoD Agenda 23.04.21 • PAT BoD Minutes 11.12.20 • PAT BoD Confidential Minutes 11.12.20 • BoD Action Log • Executive Principals' report to directors Summer 2021 • AIP Parts 1,2,3 and 4 • Requests for flexible working • SRMA Report • Relationships and Sex Education Policy • BINF Minutes 23.11.20 • CYP Minutes 11.11.20 • ECCS Minutes 09.11.20

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHINF Minutes 18.11.20
Meeting closed at:	16.05pm

1. Apologies for absence and confirmation of quorum

Apologies for absence were received from Shelley Davies and Fiona Fearon.

The meeting was declared as quorate.

2. Declaration of changes to register of interests

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3. Executive Principals' Report

The Executive Principals' report contained within the papers was taken as read. Lynne Sampson spoke to the report and highlighted key points for directors.

Performance

Directors heard that the teachers had performed exceptionally well throughout lockdown. They had returned to school with positive attitudes and had been ready to return to face to face learning. The children had also returned with positive attitudes and were ready to learn. Throughout lockdown the children had shown great resilience but following the second period of home learning some gaps in learning were apparent. An example was given of those pupils in Year 2 who had missed the 'money' topic in Year 1.

The end of Key Stage tests and Phonics Screening check would not be held this year. The children would be assessed internally and the secondary schools receiving the current Year 6 pupils would be provided with comprehensive reports regarding each child.

Attendance

Attendance across the Trust had been good with only a small number of pupils unable to return to school due to being abroad or self-isolating.

School Improvement

Nina Achenbach, Head of School at Whitehorse Juniors, had been driving the school improvement plan, which had been compiled and included in papers for directors.

JRo explained that the move between in school learning and home learning, and then back to school learning had reduced the consistency of learning. This would improve over time with the hope of no further lockdowns.

Directors heard that there had been some creative ways of using Covid catch up funding seen across the Trust, including a focus on emotional welfare and interventions involving speaking and challenging exercises.

Lesson observations were about to recommence. Two forms of monitoring were taking place; 'Pick and Flick' where a senior member of staff attended a lesson and

chose a book to flick through and 'Book Looks' which were a more systematic way of monitoring. These had proven successful in highlighting classes and areas where some improvements could be made.

A director questioned what was being done to drive the improvement in those areas and heard that the Heads of School were supporting some of the teachers with the work set and the quality of marking.

Governance

Attendance at Local Academy Council meetings had been high throughout lockdown and consideration was being given as to whether a proportion of virtual meetings would continue.

People in Leadership

Directors heard that there was currently limited mobility amongst staff. It was raised that there were some staff members in acting leadership roles who would not have room for progression within the Trust. In addition, there are currently no Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) coming into the Trust for September. The temporary teaching assistants, currently funded with the Covid catch up grant, would not be able to continue in their posts due to a lack of funding. LS was meeting each of these members of staff to explain the process and inform that they would receive an "end of fixed term notification" letter.

There had been four applications (three external and one internal) for the Deputy Head role at Cypress Upper School. Interviews would be taking place in the coming weeks with the Executive Principals and Nicola Carpenter, Head of School at Cypress Upper School.

There had been eight applicants shortlisted for the Educational Welfare Officer role. Directors heard that this was a challenging role, but that recruitment was easier than pre pandemic due to a higher number of people looking for work.

Financial Sustainability

Directors heard that there was an overspend in the extended schools' provision caused by the loss of income from parents during lockdown. The Trust continued to pay staff during this time. The overspend had been balanced by less spending in areas such as sports coaching and school lunches.

The School Resource Managers Adviser Report had been conducted professionally and had stimulated useful discussions. The Trust had implemented the recommendations of the internal audit.

Directors were reassured to hear that the schools were relatively full and that a number of new children had joined.

Discussion moved on to the nurseries at Whitehorse, Beulah and Ecclesbourne and it was raised that all three were having trouble filling their provision for September. Due to their favourable location, Whitehorse had placed some advertisements outside of the nursery and as a result had an influx of applications. This meant that Whitehorse was now almost full with 22 children for September, Beulah and Ecclesbourne had 16 confirmed children each. Directors discussed the possible changes that could be made to the offering including offering full time places, increasing the age range to include two-year olds and offering start times throughout the year. It was of note that these amendments to the provision would come with additional cost and a requirement for a higher ratio of staffing.

A director questioned whether the nurseries were individually run and heard that there was central oversight from the Early Years Lead but that each nursery offered a daily three-hour educational provision.

A director asked whether parents would be happy to be offered a place at one of the other nurseries if their first choice nursery was over-subscribed, and heard that this might be a possibility between Thornton Heath and Whitehorse Manor if there was parity of provision.

A director questioned how many of the nursery children subsequently joined the school and heard that the majority did attend the school but that there was no automatic transition and that all parents had to apply in the same way.

ACTION: LS to speak to Heads of School regarding nursery numbers and put together a proposition paper looking at different options to improve numbers, taking into consideration the increased cost and staffing requirements. (Item 107)

4. The Future of PAT; beginning a discussion

Paul Robins (PR), Head of School at Ecclesbourne Primary, joined the meeting at 2.15pm.

Directors welcomed PR to the meeting and heard that following the news that the Trust had been unsuccessful in the process of bringing another school in Sutton into the Trust. PR had approached the Executive Principals with some thoughts and ideas regarding the future of the Trust. PR had been invited to the Board of Directors meeting to share his thoughts.

PR spoke to directors and questioned whether the current model that the Trust used was the most effective, noting that some schools may like to run their own projects and work on different priorities. This raised the question of whether the current model hindered some schools and whether they would benefit from more autonomy. An example was given of some schools within the Trust being further ahead with Maths Mastery. PR wondered whether one school should lead on this and whether individual schools should have more control over their finances.

PR explained that directors and the Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) within the school had a responsibility to consider the strategic direction of the Trust. With the end of the pandemic hopefully in sight, this was a valuable opportunity to think about where the Trust wanted to go. Consideration must be given to the types of schools joining the Trust. In the past the introduction of Requiring Improvement schools had been successful as they had appreciated the extra support in planning.

PR raised the possibility of a small group of SLT given the task of thinking about broader development of the Trust. Directors heard that there were several members of staff who had reached their top end of achievement within the Trust and consideration should be given as to what provision was being made for the future.

In PR's opinion some of the energy that was prevalent amongst the staff when he first joined the Trust appeared to have lessened, and this needed to be renewed in some way.

The Executive Principals agreed that some of the energy may have dissipated. They reflected that the autonomy given to some schools had been earned and the financial offer that the Trust presented to the Sutton school could not be surpassed. Despite many staff not being able to progress further within the Trust, it was noted that the development of these staff members was something to be proud of.

A director questioned whether the Trust was allowed to directly approach schools about joining. LS confirmed that this was allowed.

A director questioned whether the Trust had previously been approached about a merger and heard that there had been one possibility in the past but there were complications around who would be in charge and ultimately it did not come to fruition.

Directors asked whether the Executive Principals would like to expand the Trust into secondary schools. LS confirmed that they would like to do this and firmly believed that all Trusts should be cross phased if possible.

A director queried whether there were any schools that were currently looking to move into a Trust. JRo explained that there were not any that the Trust were aware of.

Directors agreed that it would be beneficial to see the presentation that was shown to the Sutton school and carry out some research into what other Trusts do, then best decide how to drive the value proposition. It was agreed that ahead of a specific meeting to discuss the expansion of the Trust (subsequently agreed for 11th June 2021) IP would draw up the terms of reference.

ACTION: IP to draw up terms of reference in relation to expansion of Trust. (Item 108)

ACTION: Distribute presentation to directors that is used to promote Trust to new schools. (Item 109)

Directors discussed the possibility of expanding the Trust outside of the immediate geographical area and agreed that since Covid and a more remote way of working this would be an area worth exploring. Directors and the Executive Principals discussed the possibility of putting a public statement on the website to talk about who the Trust were and what they could offer to schools wishing to join. It was agreed that JRo would write a piece to go on the Trust website explaining the desire for growth, detailing the benefits of joining the Trust, and a matrix to show the support available at different stages of joining.

ACTION: JRo to write a marketing piece for the Trust website to include a matrix of support the Trust would offer to a school at different stages of joining. (Item 110)

Paul Robins was thanked by directors and left the meeting at 2.55pm.

5. SRMA Report

Directors noted the SRMA report, which was spoken about at length during the Finance Committee meeting.

6. Finance Report

The Finance Committee Chair highlighted the current financial position for directors.

At the six month point the Trust had a current in year surplus of £381k. £274k had been spent on capital items. JRo agreed to provide the Committee with a 'wish list' of future capital spend. A year end surplus was predicted.

ACTION: JRo to provide a 'wish list' of future capital spend. (Item 111)

7. Risk Register

Directors heard that there had been no changes to the Risk Register.

8. Staffing Update

Please see Confidential Minutes

9. Governance Update

Directors discussed the possibility of holding a MACs day virtually and agreed that it would be difficult to run online but consideration would be given to whether this would be an option including a key-note speech, break out rooms and link MAC sessions. Depending on the easing of lockdown restrictions, a date would be arranged after 21st June.

ACTION: RH, JRo and LS to speak regarding the possible running of an online MACs day. (Item 112)

The Chair reported that he would be meeting with a potential director next Friday. Unfortunately, there had not been any success in recruiting new members. LS thanked the Chair for his support in recruiting additional MACs. It was noted that this would be the last year that Richard Hill would be chairing the Board and urgent consideration to a predecessor must be considered. LS, JRo and RH agreed to discuss the succession planning offline.

ACTION: RH, LS and JRo to discuss Board of Directors Chair Succession. (Item 113)

10. Facilities Update

JRo updated directors on the office build at Cypress Primary School and the resurfacing work at Whitehorse Manor. Directors were pleased to hear that both the resurfacing work and the office work at Cypress were costing less than the approved amounts. The boiler project was also expected to come in on budget. The Cypress roofing project was ongoing and being funded by a CIF grant of circa £400k.

11. Policies

RSE Policy

The Policy was taken as read.

A director queried whether the aim of 'take into account the age and religious background of all pupils and ensure our teaching is appropriate to their age and religious background' implied that parents from certain religious backgrounds could dictate what was being taught to their child. LS explained that this sentence related to ensuring that the children were taught things that were appropriate to their age. Despite families' religious beliefs, the school had a duty to inform the children, within the correct environment, about the law allowing for same sex marriages.

A director queried the 'moral code' referred to in 3.2 and whose moral code this was. It was agreed that there were varying moral codes depending on someone's life experiences and that the wording of this should be revisited.

A director queried the 'it should be taught about in the context of marriage, or a trusting stable relationship, and family life' and wondered whether the 'stable' should be replaced with 'consensual'. Directors discussed the wording of this paragraph and how the Trust should approach the 'right to say no' and respect for others personal space.

ACTION: EPs to look at the wording of Section 3.2 of the RSE Policy. (Item 114)

RESOLUTION: With an amendment to 3.2 to reflect the above discussion directors approved the RSE Policy.

HR Contract

Directors heard that the HR support with the Local Authority had increased to £90 per member of staff. JRo requested directors' approval to amend the Service Level Agreement to a lower rate.

RESOLUTION: Directors approved the change to a lower level of HR support.

12. Academy Councils

Directors noted the Academy Council minutes.

Directors requested the most up to date minutes be presented to them, even if this meant them being received in draft format.

13. Board Membership Changes

There were no changes to the board membership.

14. Minutes of the previous meeting (11th December 2020)

RESOLUTION: Directors agreed that the minutes represented a true and accurate picture of the meeting.

ACTION: Copies of minutes to be printed and signed by the Chair when possible. (Item 115)

15. Matters arising not discussed elsewhere and Action Log

There were no matters arising.

Action Log

Item 104: Ongoing. JRi is dealing with this matter and chasing the Local Authority to uphold the terms of the SLA that was paid for last year.

Item 105: Complete

Item 106: Complete

AGM:

Item 04: Complete

Item 05: Complete

ACTION: Clerk to distribute Action Log to directors, EPs and JRi following each Board of Directors meeting and Finance Committee meeting. (Item 116)

16. Correspondence to the Chair

There was no correspondence to the Chair received.

The Chair reported that he had been notified that the 'view my financial insights' website had been updated. He had tried to access it but had not found the information particularly useful. JRi commented that the data may not be completely up to date, but that it was useful to look at data and get an idea of things that might be of concern.

IP and NP reported that they were still unable to access the system as they were still awaiting approval. JRo promised to look into this.

ACTION: JRo to look into IP and NP's approval for VMFI system. (Item 117)

17. Confidential Items

Directors agreed that two items should be included in the Confidential Minutes.

Please refer to the Confidential Minutes

18. Any Other Business

Buzzacotts

JRo informed directors that Buzzacotts had produced a benchmarking report and recommended the reading of it.

ACTION: Provide NP with a copy of the Buzzacotts benchmarking report. (Item 118)

LAC Meetings

LS observed that the next round of Local Academy Council meetings were due to take place in the coming weeks, and questioned whether this was too close to the meetings

that took place just before the Easter break.

ACTION: RH and LS to discuss the need for two further LAC meetings this year (May and July). (Item 119)

Board of Director Meetings

Directors agreed to meet virtually on 11th June 2021 at 1.30-3.30pm to discuss the possible expansion of the Trust. A speculative agreement was made to meet in person on 16th July to discuss the strategic plan further.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting	
Chair's signature	
Chair's name	
Date	