

Henleaze Infant School

Full Governing Body Meeting
Wednesday 13 December 2023,
6.00pm



Governors Present:		
Jude Bramton, CG	Richard Lukes, PG (Chair)	Sally Wood, SG
Melissa Finch, CG	Alana Samarasinghe, CG	Vincent Smith, LA <i>from item 4</i>
Gemma Fricker, HT	Amar Shah, CG	Janet Bremner, CG <i>virtually</i>
Rebecca Lawrence, CG	Louise Walton, PG	Emilie Poletto-Lawson, CG <i>virtually</i>
In Attendance (non-voting):		Apologies: Leanne Sowersby (Clerk)

Item		Action
1	<p>Welcome, Apologies & Introductions - RL welcomed everyone.</p> <p>Declarations of Interests - No declarations of interest.</p>	
2	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>HT talked through the key highlights and changes. There were some questions in advance. Highlighted that LW and GF met for a safeguarding update.</p> <p>Also gave an additional staffing update – two part-time Teaching Assistants have been appointed, on fixed term contracts. to support children with SEND funding, as well as offering additional hours top existing staff to meet the requirements. The total of these additional hours is slightly less than we had planned for. The impact of this is that we will have less support staff outside of SEN provision.</p> <p>Also noted the resignation of the school administrator and it would be useful to have a governor involved in the recruitment for this. ASH volunteered, another volunteer would be useful.</p> <p>GF highlighted the response to the Ofsted action around personalising learning in the school improvement section of the report.</p> <p>GF talked through some questions that were received before the meeting.</p> <p>Monitoring</p> <p>Q - Any particular reason the Maths element was not seen in T2 review and needs T3 focus? Our initial assumption was that the maths was accessible to all in the teacher-group model, so adaptations weren't required for most. We want to check this assumption through lesson observations and see whether there is enough challenge.</p> <p>Q - For Y1 are the interventions not getting engagement with Boys for any particular reason? What are the changes proposed? Plan some rainbow challenges to be outdoors, find ways to follow their interests e.g. making and labelling models for mapping.</p> <p>GF talked through the due diligence that has been happening with CST, and the dialogue that she has been having both with them and the Junior School.</p> <p>Governors noted their thanks to staff for their hard work in another challenging term, and their engagement and professionalism in the MAT process so far.</p>	
3	Policies	

	<p>Behaviour – This was discussed at Curriculum Committee. The only material change was to remove the word, ‘choice’ throughout the policy, reflecting our increased understanding that much of the time children are not making a choice in their behaviour. Some repetition was also removed. A flowchart to support staff in actions to take to support children has been added. Noted a few typos and formatting errors.</p> <p>Q – Would parents know where the agreed language scripts and visuals are?</p> <p>Q – Is there guidance for staff to use the risk rating form? Yes, there is guidance on the form, but this should be in the policy.</p> <p>Behaviour Policy Approved with those changes.</p> <p>Instrument of Government – No changes are recommended - Approved</p> <p>Children with health needs who cannot attend school – This was picked up as a statutory requirement and follows the model policy from The Key. Some queries were raised via GovernorHub.</p> <p>Q – Would the issues re provision in the family home still apply to other providers that are not in control of the school? If they are on the school roll, they are still the school’s responsibility, and will still need assurance that the safeguarding processes are being undertaken. Discussion around this and when children move from the school roll to another one. GF would not do day to day safeguarding once we have assurance that safeguarding processes are in place. Could include a line to clarify this.</p> <p>Children with health needs who cannot attend school Policy Approved with that amendment.</p> <p>Pay Policy – Formally noted the prior approval of this policy</p>	
4	<p>Curriculum Committee Update</p> <p>ASa gave an overview of the meeting. Noted that this was a trial of the new format for the meetings where the action plans are discussed rather than detailed link reports.</p> <p><i>VS joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>Feedback on the new format is welcome. ASa found it useful, and that the discussion was fruitful. Hopeful that this meant less work for the staff members involved.</p> <p>GF noted that the engagement of the committee in monitoring has made this very valuable.</p> <p>ASa will share the minutes.</p>	
5	<p>Dissolution of H3C Committee</p> <p>VS and GF attended the last meeting of this, and it was decided unanimously that this committee was no longer useful. Agreed that this would be agreed at the various FGBs. Collaboration will continue through HT meetings and other avenues.</p> <p>Governors agreed to dissolve the committee</p>	
6	<p>Minutes of the last meeting & Action Points – 20 October 2023 – EYFS to be added to the KS1 phonics learn along, and add, ‘health’ to, ‘mental first aider’.</p> <p>Otherwise approved as correct.</p>	
7	<p>Matters Arising & Actions – See actions report.</p> <p>Parent survey – Had previously been asked for suggestions for the survey. EPL had raised some on GovernorHub. To put in an email to GF.</p> <p>40:15</p>	
8	<p>MAT Update</p> <p>There will be a vote at the end of the discussion: to appoint legal advisors, to declare to the Local Authority that we will be converting to an academy (this is a statement of intent, not a request for permission) and to begin formal consultation with stakeholders.</p>	

Will also vote on the resolution stated on the agenda: Henleaze Infant School to convert to Academy Status.

This step is required before joining the MAT, although there is not a period of time between the two.

Q – Is this a binding thing? At the moment the binding bit is to move forward with the process. It is an intention to join a MAT. We have to name the MAT in order for the application to be considered.

There is documentation on GovernorHub, particularly the due diligence document. Talked through the points in this document.

1 – Finance.

Q - Is there any reason the annotated report to trustees cannot be accessed electronically? It does not seem very practical. We have requested a copy but have been advised that the hard copy is the only option. LO can access if needed in their offices. Any governor who wishes to see a copy should make arrangements to go to the CST office.

Q – What is the annotated report to Trustees? This was the last annual report to Trustees, but the annotated version. GF and LO will flag anything of interest with governors.

Q - Understanding is that we are joining the MAT to be in a better position financially. Is this risk (from their in-year deficits) still better than our anticipated deficit?

Q - To what extent has CST provided any further detail on plans to reduce the deficit? I assume that this position is not sustainable long term? These are in-year deficits, and there are healthy reserves. The Chief Financial Officer will set and manage the budget alongside GF and LO. Anything outside of the agreed budget will require the permission of the Trust, as they control the budgets. This does not stop us from considering things that we might need or consider.

Q – Could our reserves be used for another school? Although the reserves are, ‘held’ by the Trust, CST enables each school to use their own reserves, and the Trust has its own reserves to draw on to support schools.

Q – Is the Trust still in a Landlord / tenant relationship with the LA? Yes. GF has discussed this in terms of indemnity etc. CIF bids also become a possibility.

Q – Do the LA retain responsibilities as a landlord? No more than they do currently. They do works currently as we buy into an indemnity scheme – this would end as we would no longer buy into that.

Q – Do we know what percentage the reserves are? No

The MAT will not bolster the budget. The ‘top slice’ will provide better value for money rather than leave us better off. In future years (after the initial buy into the CUSP curriculum) we are likely to see some savings. We will have better back office support and school improvement support. The support and service is likely to be better than we currently receive from the LA.

Noted that the LA have asked the Schools’ Forum for more money in order to be able to deliver the school improvement service. If this is successful, it will impact funding across the authority-maintained schools.

Discussion around the difference between the LGB and Trust. Most larger financial decisions will go directly to the Trust, there is likely to be no role for a separate Resources committee. Noted that the LGB is not included in the scheme of delegation for finance.

Discussion around the numbers in the report, believe these to be as accurate as possible and there is a net gain in a better service.

Further discussion around the landlord / tenant relationship and whether this has worked well in other such situations. The property is the responsibility of the school / MAT. The only likely material impact is the utilities in, but other than that, the responsibility will lie with the school.

Q - CUSP subscription – is this annual as per the summary on the last page? Would also like to understand our/HJSs experience with this system. There is a one-off payment of £11,500, with a small yearly fee thereafter (@ £350). The £22 000 figure includes resources that may be needed to support the change in curriculum, things such as the books that the reading curriculum is planned around. This is difficult to estimate as it is aimed at primary schools – the numbers included are worst-case scenario. Have not yet factored in the possibility of sharing any of this with the juniors.

We have no ‘experience’ in using CUSP, but both schools had a presentation and were given the opportunity to explore the resources. Two HIS senior leaders joined CST planning sessions to get some on the ground understanding.

2 – Staffing

Q -Re the number of staff leaving the trust - it would have been good to know out of how many as while it is not a small number if it is 1% that tells a different story. This is partially due to fixed term contracts ending. GF has looked at the staff survey, which didn’t raise any concerns, although there was an area of development around staff response to a question about CST enabling staff to reach career goals, so they are looking at ensuring recruitment is internally advertised.

CST have a very clear and inclusive offer for all levels of staff in terms of professional development and this is not at a cost to the school.

Q – How many staff filled in the survey? Can provide that. It was over 50%.

Q – Do we know if staff complete an exit questionnaire? They do, but we do not have these. It would be useful to have some more numbers to identify how many of those leaving were fixed term contracts, how many staff there are in total and a snapshot of the staff survey. GF can share the survey.

Q – There is a mention of 1 day a week SEND leadership? What does this mean for the school and will we have our own SEND leader? We would maintain our same SEND leadership in school. There is someone working at Trust level to work on SEND priorities across the Trust, such as the SENDCo network, or the action plan etc. GF feels this is not a great deal for the level of SEND in the Trust. The action plan and priorities are very aligned with ours, but as the Trust is going, they may need to increase that capacity. We probably do not have the equivalent from the LA now.

We may be able to positively influence SEND within the Trust.

Q - Can the MAT move staff between schools? TUPE will protect staff contracts for 2 years, but it is not usual for MATs to enforce staff movement. Many staff who do move are doing so for career development. Have never heard of staff being, ‘forced’ to move. Staff and governors can find out details of CST contracts for staff during consultation.

Q - CST have commented in answer to another question that they may look to align support staff pay. Does this mean support staff pay could be negatively impacted? TUPE will protect staff contracts for 2 years. MATs tend to adhere to national scales as this supports recruitment and retention. They are in line with Bristol Grades currently. Staff and governors can find out details of CST pay scales during consultation.

Q – Can we get feedback from the schools that have joined recently? GF has done this, aside from Hotwells where the Business Managers have met. They have been more than positive about their experiences and there have been no red flags. GF has felt confident that each of these schools are schools with very strong identities and leaders that GF respects, and there is nothing to suggest this is any different having joined CST. ASH and RL met the CoG of one of the secondary schools who was very complementary about the support provided.

The lack of questions about governance indicates that this is an area of strength.

Q - How can we guarantee support will indeed be happening in this phase? And also appropriate support (are the curriculums different?) Support offered from January for the

'on-boarding' phase. Current support model feels extensive. There isn't a guarantee, but it would be in CSTs best interests to support schools and no red flags from other schools have led us to doubt the current school improvement offer is genuine. There are HT meetings with the Head of Primary and subject leader meetings. There is likely to be another large primary school joining at the time to work with us to develop curriculum. There is no directive to adopt a particular curriculum, but not doing so would diminish the school improvement support offer as we would not be working collaboratively. The model of pedagogy does not cause GF concern, but there will definitely be some change, which will need to be managed carefully to be right for our cohort.

Q – Is there a risk of losing key staff with the likelihood of changing the curriculum?

Would not want to suddenly impose any change – staff would be part of any conversation around change and this decision would be one we will make. The staff will be on board with positive change for the children. There will always be a risk, with any change of this nature, of staff not wanting to be part of that. There have been people who have not liked the change in other schools, and have moved on, but this will always be a risk.

Q - In the original '2 schools 1 vision' document that it was noted that if HJS and HIS joined, there would only be one Head. Will there still be 2 Head positions for HIS and HJS going forwards? This was when we were looking at a 2 school MAT (HIS and HJS) with a CEO model. There is no plan to change the staffing structure for 24-25, but in previous modelling for future years based on reduction in PAN there was a structure costed out with 1 Headteacher. There is no plan to do this, it is just a possibility. The two schools are joining separately, not together. Future plans will be in discussion with the Trust.

Q – Are there any other primaries within CST with the infant/junior split? No, Elmlea is the only comparable school in the area. The trust have said they have no intention to merge the schools. To change this would lose £128k in funding. It is in everyone's interest for the schools to align more closely in terms of policy etc.

We cannot predict at this point what will be right in the future.

3 Policy

The union rep has asked whether CST follow burgundy book and green books for staff?

On the whole, there are some areas which are different and these will be addressed during consultation.

Q - Staff Question: Do CST accept sponsorship / money from sponsors? There will be very strict rules around this, detailed in the Academies Trust Handbook. A trust is a charity governed by charity law, academy law and education law.

Q – Does the Church of England have a function in this Trust? Yes, they are a member of the Board of Trustees, but that is it. The Trust are one of two Bristol trusts with Church Articles which allows Church schools to join them. But in terms of influence, it is not a majority. The make-up of the Trust Board includes a variety of experience and expertise – it is a mixed MAT with a mixture of Church and non-Church schools.

5 Governance

JBr felt this was very strong and was interested in responses around how communication is facilitated between the different layers of governance – felt this was positive. Likes the support in place for the clerks with a Trust Governance Professional.

Q – What about the training for governors? Does not have direct experience of it, but the model looks good, and the governor conference looks good. Noted that they do not subscribe to GDS.

6 Education - No questions

8 Other questions

Have already touched on the burgundy / green books.

Had been a comment that CST do not recognise the collective bargaining power of unions – they recognise all unions but do not pay a fee to them. There are ongoing negotiations to find a way forward to this. Discussion around union rights and how this could be managed.

GF will need to follow up re the question on LGPS contributions.

GF and LO have had guidance regarding staff on fixed term contracts, to either make them permanent or end them. The LA will not allow us to keep staff if there is not the funding to match it, but CST are likely to be more pragmatic.

ASh thanked everyone for reading and engaging with the information and asking questions.

Q – If we raise funds in school, does that go into a central pot? No, that would stay with the school. However, the current school fund will need to be spent before joining.

Q – Does the CST financial year run April to March? This is likely to be 1 September to 31 August.

Would hope that the school will remain a happy place to work. GF does not feel that the Trust will be a looming presence, and there is no branding required. The Trust staff were very positive when they came to visit.

Governors were asked to vote to appoint and instruct Legal Advisors, to declare to the Local Authority that we intend to convert to academy status and on the resolution: Henleaze Infant School to convert to Academy Status.

Governors voted unanimously in favour. The Resolution: Henleaze Infant School to convert to Academy Status was passed.

Shared that the Junior school have also voted in favour, and the CST Trust Board has also voted in favour.

There is a meeting on Friday to discuss ways for the schools to work together, particularly on communication.

If there is further information that governors would like, they are asked to raise this as soon as possible.

Next steps will involve submitting an academy order and then there will be consultation with parents and staff. Formal consultation with parents will start in mid-January, ASh talked through how this would work. Noted that this is to seek opinion and will not change the decision. It may raise issues that have not been considered, but many of these can be pre-empted with FAQs. Discussion around this.

Discussion around parent governors and communication with other parents when the letter goes out and how to manage this.

Noted that the existing governing body will be reconstituted. Discussion around this and the value of consistency in the transition.

Q – What are the timescales for consultation? There is a minimum of 3 weeks and maximum of six weeks for both staff and parent consultation.

Q – Are there plans to contact the parent governor candidates? ASh has given a loose warning and explained that the successful candidate would have a briefing if they were successful.

There was a discussion around whether staff would prefer to know before or after Christmas. GF will need to discuss with the Junior school. Feeling that we should let staff know – they are aware the vote is coming, and would be withholding if they are not told.

Q – Are those weeks term-time weeks? Believe so.

Date of next meeting: Friday 15 March 2024, 4.00pm