



Whinless Down Academy Trust

Trust Board Meeting

Tuesday 26th March 2024

Interim CEO: Kelly Brown

Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting

Held at Trust Office at St Martin's School at 4pm.

Board Trustees Present: Alison Mackintosh (CoTB), Tricia Sherling (vice chair), Sandie Butcher, Pam Brivio, Anne Siggins, Kelly Brown

Others Present: Michelle Noden (Trust Business Manager), Anthony Welch, Carol Rayfield
Ruth Bishop (4pm- 4:30pm)

Governance Professional: Claudia Sawyers

| | <u>Welcome, Introduction and Apologies</u> | <u>Actions</u> |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1. 1.1 | <p>All Trustees were welcomed to the meeting. Ruth Bishop (EYFS Lead and Computing Lead) is present to give update and presentation on Cyber Essentials Accreditation.</p> <p>Resignations There are no resignations to report.</p> | |
| 2. 2.1 2.2 | <p><u>Minutes from Meeting 14th December 2023</u></p> <p>Approval of Minutes The minutes for the meeting held on 14th December 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were signed by the Chair of the Trust.</p> <p>Matters Arising A trustee asked whether the LGB Code of Conduct has been shared at the LGB meetings, clerk confirmed it has been. The Roles and Responsibilities document was updated to reflect the and agreement at the last meeting. The Vale View Asset Register is still a work in progress and this will be followed up before the next meeting.</p> | |
| 3. | <p><u>Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests</u> All trustees were given the opportunity to make annual updates to business interest forms which were completed. There were no interests declared against this agenda.</p> | |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <p>4. 4.1</p> | <p><u>Updates</u></p> <p>Cyber Accreditation Presentation</p> <p>RB joined the meeting to present on the cyber essentials accreditation, which is a government backed scheme to help ensure WDAT is protected against a range of cyber attacks. Certification will peace of mind that that the security defences will protect against the vast majority of common cyber attacks and because the attackers are often looking for targets which do not have the Cyber Essentials technical controls in place.</p> <p>There is a self-assessment tool to upload evidence of how the Trust is meeting the criteria and RB gave an overview of the steps taken so far to meet the criteria; which includes ensuring all devices are secure and software is licenced and supported by updates, ensuring adequate admin accounts, password policies introduced for staff and children and all devices are protected by anti-malware.</p> <p>The Cyber Essentials requires board level approval for the self assessment and all Trustees agreed to submit. Trustees thanked RB and IT team for their efforts in meeting the criteria and ensuring cyber safety for the organisation.</p> <p>Trustees also discussed the issue of aging IT and renewal of equipment will need to be thought about, due to the need for all devices that connect to the internet to receive software updates and many devices such as IPads are not able to support updated software after a few years.</p> <p>Verbal Update by Interim CEO – See confidential minute</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p><u>CEO Report</u></p> <p>The CEO report was sent to trustees prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Staff absence was a key point of the report which has been discussed earlier in this meeting (confidential), it continues to have a significant impact on key priorities as high levels of absence has resulted in senior leaders needing to cover which results in their crucial work not being completed.</p> <p>Another feature of the report was the successful Ofsted report at St Martin’s in February; trustees received a copy of the full report and commended.</p> <p>There is a focus for Vale View this year on outcomes and improving Key Stage 2 results, which TS has recently monitored (report below).</p> <p>The RAG rating of Trust level KPIs is currently ‘amber’ which is expected for the mid-way point of the year and the report details actions being undertaken in each area.</p> | |
| <p>6.</p> | <p><u>Standards Report</u></p> <p>Two visits have been made by TS to monitor mid-term school reviews and Vale View targets. Reports were written and sent to Trustees prior to the meeting. TS gave brief overview of the reports.</p> <p>School reviews took place at the end of term 3 and TS reported it was very interesting to see differences in the strengths and challenges in each school. In all schools it was suggested that data could be refined to include bigger picture for vulnerable groups. It was recognised that</p> | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>this particular cohort is challenging at St Martin's and outcomes may reflect this, but TS could see the work being put in.</p> <p>As a result of the school reviews, TS conducted a monitoring visit to VV and looked at books of target children in years 2, 4 and 6, as well as talking to some children alongside KB. TS felt the outcome of that was positive and KB is following up with weekly meetings.</p> | |
| 7. | <p><u>MAT Strategic Plan</u></p> <p>The MAT Strategic Plan was sent to Trustees prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The majority of the Key Priorities have progress made towards them, however much of the in-school work is hampered by capacity due to staff sickness.</p> <p>Under KPI 2 (Ensure a calm, safe and supportive environment for all) A trustee asked what was the outcome of the play therapist trial at VV. KB explained that it was not felt to be as effective as hoped, however is the nature of a trial it is unknown before trying.</p> <p>Opportunities to wide provision across the Trust was discussed, but again has not been able to be prioritised due to capacity.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether the collaborative work with the two local MATS that was initiated by AS has continued. KB was due to meet with them tomorrow, however it has been rescheduled for next term.</p> | |
| | <p><u>FSARC</u></p> <p>Chair of FSARC gave verbal feedback following the recent FSARC meeting.</p> <p>TS explained the three schools are maintaining rollovers well, with some minor changes month-to-month but no large variances. At the time of the meeting, the indicative budgets had not yet been received. TBM confirmed budgets have now been received, however with roll numbers down in each school the funding is lower. Careful planning and consideration to budgets will need to be done when planning staffing structures over the coming weeks. The KPI for total expenditure is 104.8% which is high and may become untenable, although acknowledged not usual during the year. The idea of supporting attendance with the use of a pool car was also discussed at the meeting and was agreed in principle, budget permitting.</p> <p><u>TBM Update</u></p> <p><u>CIF Bids</u></p> <p>TBM gave verbal update and announced that the CIF bids at both Vale View (for the mobile unit) and St Martin's (for the roof), have been successful.</p> <p>For Vale View, the bid included a £64,000 CIF loan with repayment over the course of 10 years, so that will now need to be factored in to budgets. Trustees thanked TBM for repeated hard work in securing CIF bids.</p> <p><u>Kent Range</u></p> <p>Last year, the Trust Board opted to bring forward the pay award cycle for support staff from September to April due to the increase in minimum wage, which had a big implication on the budget at that time as support staff salaries were increased by £2000 each. This year, the minimum wage is again due to increase above the current KR3, KR4 and bottom of KR5 salary.</p> | |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| | <p>All members of staff will need to be moved to at least the new minimum wage from April as a minimum. One option could be that those on KR 3-5 are moved up to the new Kent Range, or to move all support staff up to the new range, bringing the pay cycle forward for a second year. Trustees agreed that the legalities need to be more thoroughly investigated with regards to the Pay Policy and working within the Kent Framework. Ideally, bringing pay in line with local authority schools who work on an April pay cycle would be preferred to ensure staff are paid fairly and beyond the national minimum wage would be the preferred option. Finances also need to be considered in the decision due to this not being originally budgeted.</p> | |
| | <p><u>SRMA</u></p> <p>The School Resource Management Assessment has been completed by TBM and KB. The assessment tool was shared with Trustees to approve the responses.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether Q21 would be a 'yes' given the Trust does not use an Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning Tool, TBM confirmed the guidance states that the usage of a tool is not compulsory and for small trusts, the measures used within our trust is adequate for the answer to be 'yes'.</p> <p>All trustees approved the SRMA.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>KB has written the update report following actions that have taken place in terms 3 and 4 and internal audits have been carried out. A few safer recruitment 'best practice' issues were identified, such as not requesting references in timely manner and some filing system improvements could be made. Only one school could provide TA meeting minutes that evidenced regular safeguarding update training and when investigated, the ability to hold regular TA meetings appears to be an issue. Only one school was publishing online safety tips for parents and this is an action for the other two schools and will remain on audit for next time.</p> | |
| | <p>Minutes from LGB Meetings (Term 3) DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Due to time constraints with preparing for this meeting (due to CEO interviews), LGB meeting minutes will be shared after this meeting and any questions or comments will be shared at the next meeting.</p> | |
| 8 | <p><u>Policies</u></p> | |
| 8.1 | <p><u>Pay Policy Update</u></p> <p>A portion of the pay policy wording has been updated to ensure the wording reflected current practice with regards to performance review of staff who have been absent during the school year. Trustees agreed the update.</p> | |
| 8.2 | <p><u>Admissions Policy Update</u></p> <p>The Admissions Policies 2025-2026 were updated at the request of the Local Authority due to clarification of existing processes for measuring the nearness of a child's home to the school in relation to properties not registered to the NLPG, such as new build properties. The Local Authority confirmed this change does not require consultation, but that the change does need to be discussed and minuted with boards. Trustees agreed the change.</p> | |

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 8.3 | <p><u>Privacy Notices</u> The privacy notices are due to be renewed. Due to the resignation of trustee MA, there is currently no named DPO for the Trust. The privacy notices need to be updated with the named DPO. Clerk is going to investigate external providers that can provide the DPO service.</p> | Clerk to investigate external providers of DPO service. |
| 8.4 | <p><u>Managing Absence and Ill Health Policy</u> The Managing Absence and Ill Health Policy has been reviewed and updated in line with HR Connect's model policy. A new section of the policy relating to time off for fertility treatment requires trust's to determine own arrangements as to whether paid time off will be allowed. Trustees agreed with the recommendation made by HR Connect to include 3 days paid leave per year. Trustees agreed the policy.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>GDPR Update No breaches.</p> | |
| 10. | <p>Confidentiality of Proceedings Section 4 – Verbal update by CEO Section 11- AOB</p> | |
| 11. | <p>AOB <u>Outcome from Interviews - CEO</u> Chair AM, Vice Chair TS and Member CR conducted the interview process for CEO alongside independent advisor, Diane Browning (CEO from Bourne Alliance). The panel undertook a two day interview process and appointed KB to the role. All trustees and members agreed the appointment with immediate effect. Action: letter to be written to parents to announce appointment.</p> <p>Confidential item- see confidential minutes</p> <p><u>Roles</u> Roles for trustees SB and AS need to be discussed and agreed, this will need to be at a future meeting due to time constraints.</p> <p><u>Governance Guide</u> The DfE have released a new 'Governance Guide' for MATs which replaces the Governance Handbook.</p> | |
| 12. | <p>Dates The date of the next Trust Board meeting is Thursday 23rd May 2024 at 4pm.</p> | |

Minutes taken by Governance Professional Claudia Sawyers

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8.3 Policies | Clerk to investigate DPO services |
| | |

Signed by Chair of Whinless Down Academy Trust:
Alison Mackintosh



Date: 23/5/24



Whinless Down Academy Trust

Board Meeting

CONFIDENTIAL

Tuesday 26th March 2024

CEO: Kelly Brown

Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting

Held at Trust Office at St Martin's School at 4pm.

Board Trustees Present: Alison Mackintosh (CoTB), Tricia Sherling (vice chair), Sandie Butcher, Pam Brivio, Anne Siggins, Kelly Brown

Others Present: Michelle Noden (Trust Business Manager), Anthony Welch, Carol Rayfield
Ruth Bishop (4pm- 4:30pm)

Governance Professional: Claudia Sawyers

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 4. | <p>Updates</p> <p>KB gave a verbal update on the main challenges currently being faced by the senior leadership team. Whilst the PF HT has been on maternity leave, it was not felt feasible to recruit for the position due to the short-term basis and needs of the school and the duties of the role have been shared between several members of staff. However, KB has naturally had oversight of the role which has been difficult alongside her own duties. There has been a level of strain due to staff absences; this term alone there has been 22 days of absence by teachers and 142 days lost by support staff. There are also 6 teachers on maternity leave and there were two immediate resignations (both due to personal circumstances). There have been days where supply teachers have been needed which has not been the case for a number of years at priory Fields. Behavioural issues have also increased, which takes priority due to the disruption it involves and this impacts on the ability to deliver interventions and impacts on the workload of senior leaders and SENCOs. Wellbeing is also being affected as a knock-on impact of the high level of need and staff absence. The drive for improvement has not stopped however there has been no choice but to delay the deep dives that were scheduled in.</p> | |
|----|---|--|

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>SENCOs have, where possible, taken time to work from home to complete the necessary paperwork without interruption, however have faced serious issues with the Local Authority's recommendations and appeals have been unsuccessful.</p> <p>Overall, it has been extremely challenging times and there is nowhere near as much capacity as needed. A trustee asked whether staff absence is an issue across the board and at other schools. KB has been told anecdotally, such as at KMA meetings, that absence issues are common. KB feels that a relaunch of the absence policy is needed and the management of absence may not have been handled consistently in the past, there needs to be an alignment in Head teacher discretion and good management of long term or repeated absence and return to work meetings. KB has a long term aim of developing a 'People Strategy' to work on changing the culture and approach to absence.</p> | |
| 15 | <p>AOB</p> <p>Trustees discussed the appointment of Headteacher at Priory Fields since KB has been appointed as CEO. It was agreed by all that CH will be appointed as PF Headteacher to be reviewed in August 2025.</p> | |

Minutes taken by Clerk Claudia Sawyers

Signed by Chair of Whinless Down Academy Trust
Alison Mackintosh



Date: 23/5/24