

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST**

***held on Thursday 22nd February 2018***

***at The Lansdowne Club, London***

**MINUTES**

Directors Present: Ms L. Adams Mr D. Bateson OBE

Mr J. Beswick Mrs J. Cutchey

Mr M. Kerr Ms M. Lloyd

Mr G. Peile

Members Present: Mrs H. Capron Mr R. Dool

Mr S. Staite

Officers Present: Mr D. Hilton Mrs K. Jarvis

Mr C. Paskell Ms M. Toft

Also Present: Mrs C. Claydon (Headteacher of Gusford Primary School)

Mr C. D’Cuhna (Principal of Chantry Academy)

Mr J. Rowe (observer)

**22.** **WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Ms Adams welcomed all present. She introduced Mr Jeremy Rowe, who was attending as an observer. Mr Rowe is a Governor at Grove Primary School and CEO of Waveney Valley Academies Trust.

Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr Bush, Dr Boddison and Mr Hely-Hutchinson.

No new declarations of interest were declared.

**23. REPORT & PRESENTATION: GUSFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL & CHANTRY ACADEMY**

Directors confirmed that they had reviewed the Headteacher Reports that Mrs Claydon and Mr D’Cuhna had provided prior to the meeting. Both were asked to highlight areas of particular note:

**Gusford Primary School**

Mrs Claydon explained that she had been in post since September 2017, and outlined some of the challenges faced during this time. These included Gusford being in the OfSTED category of Required Improvement and recently being confirmed as being in a ‘coasting’ category by the Regional Schools Commissioner. On joining she found staff morale was poor - primarily due to the turmoil through staffing changes. Mrs Claydon explained how these challenges have been met by re-building a stronger leadership team, including appointing a new deputy, assistant head and SENCO. These new colleagues have injected fresh thinking into school with positive feedback from staff.

Turning to the previous Ofsted inspection, Mrs Claydon stated that Gusford staff have worked hard on ensuring the personnel files and SCR were complete and kept up to date. A key issue is to improve attendance with persistent absence a particular concern, but Gusford are working hard on parental engagement in this area. Conversations with parents in the playground are mainly positive, but there have been instances of negativity on social media which have been addressed.

Mrs Claydon stated that outcomes are set to improve this year, although Year 6 prior high attainers are an area of challenge. Additional lessons are being offered to Year 6 in Maths and English with recent assessments (December 2016) showing that this is having impact.

The NAHT Aspire programme has been embraced at Gusford, encouraging staff to work at a faster pace. The Maths curriculum has been overhauled, moving to the White Rose Mastery structure which is having a positive impact. Other areas of the curriculum have also been updated, and an on-line staff room has been set up enabling staff to share good practice.

Mrs Claydon finished her report by informing Trustees that there will be a vacancy in the leadership team after Easter as a long-term member of staff has resigned.

Following her presentation, Mrs Claydon responded as part of a Q&A session as follows:

In response to questions from Dr Boddison

How many SEND learners are in receipt of pupil premium funding and how is this allocated?

Mrs Claydon explained that 46 children are in both groups. Pupil premium at Gusford is 26.9% across the whole school, but the numbers across the school differ across year groups, e.g. 46% in Year 6 – 16% in Reception. Pupil premium funding is spent on interventions, particularly in Year 6, and TA support directed to SEN pupils.

There is a combined Reading, Writing and Maths target of 39%. How confident is Gusford of reaching this target?

Mrs Claydon explained that the current Year 6 cohort is different in terms of prior attainment than last year, for example last year 10 pupils did not sit SATS (but counted in results) – this year 1 child might not take the tests due to being offered a place in a PRU. She added that the teacher assessments based on the 2016 SATS papers scored at 49% combined, so school are confident of reaching the target. Mr Peile reminded Trustees that the previous head had said something similar, but feedback from visits is good. He asked if Gusford take part in the PiXL tests. Mrs Calydon explained that Gusford only did one PiXL test in the Autumn term as the second test was due at the same time as the Year 6 pupils did the 2016 SATS papers.

Mr Peile asked Ms Toft if the Trust could offer support with attendance. Ms Toft suggested Mrs Claydon contact Red Oak Primary School as they have had huge success in this area.

Mr Peile confirmed to Trustees that the progress of high prior attainers is a concern across a number of schools in the Trust. Mr Hilton stated that this is being addressed but agreed there is a greater awareness this year. Ms Lloyd asked if there was any way the Trust could gather these pupils together. Mr Peile said that he would further challenge the secondary heads to provide support to the primary schools. Mr D’Cuhna advised that, whilst this was a good idea, it is more important to concentrate on high quality first teaching.

Mr Beswick asked if Mrs Claydon knew the reasons for teacher departures. Mrs Claydon stated that they were all personnel reasons. Mr D’Cuhna (who had been an exec head at Gusford prior to Mrs Clayton taking up her role) added that there has been a significant culture shift at Gusford and the focus is now more pupil-orientated. Mastery and Aspire were explained in more details for the benefit of Trustees. Both are being assessed carefully.

Mr Dool asked what the Trust has done to support Gusford, and if the Trust should have been aware of problems at an earlier stage. Mrs Claydon stated that superficially Gusford looked OK on the surface. It is only whilst digging deeper that issues have been discovered. Mr Peile added that in the two years prior to Mrs Claydon joining Gusford there had been a lot of work around behaviour (previously held to be a real barrier to learning) that was supported by the Trust. Mr Hilton explained that when Gusford joined the Trust there were a large number of staff at the top of the scale that were ineffective. He added that the Trust is now better placed to get behind these issues – there is good teaching and data tracking which means schools are unable to mask lack of progress. Mr Peile reminded Trustees that action was taken quickly once problems were discovered at Gusford, and the Compliance Officer role has been introduced as a direct result of the situation.

**Chantry Academy**

Mr D’Cuhna gave context to Chantry Academy by explaining that it serves an area of significant disadvantage. 48% of pupils are in receipt of free school meals and 50% of pupils generate pupil premium funding. Students join Chantry with a low prior attainment score of -2.7, and the current Year 7 are of particularly low prior attainment. There is an increasing roll at Chantry, and they are expecting to be full for September 2018 admissions by first preferences. Although the school buildings are new, accommodation is a problem in terms of its size compared to the numbers of pupils now on roll, but Mr D’Cuhna explained that they are being creative with the lack of available space.

Mr D’Cunha had been given prior notice of a question from Dr Boddison and in reply explained that exclusion rates are high with 63 students being excluded over 40 days. However, 3 of those students are no longer on roll and behaviour is improving for those effected due to interventions or specialist provision. 97.5% of behaviour is as expected. Statistics show that behaviour improves as students move through the school, and Mr D’Cuhna asked Trustees to note that although fixed term exclusions are high, repeat offenders are lower than national average.

Mr D’Cuhna highlighted areas of risk as being new style GCSEs (and the uncertainty that this brings) and recruitment of quality teachers. These are being addressed by staff marking harshly to assess student position, and talent spotting of staff that can be progressed in-house. He added that Chantry is fully staffed at present.

Ms Lloyd asked what was being done to address the progress of high prior attainers. Mr D’Cuhna explained that Chantry are now working closely with feeder primary schools and have introduced strong Year 6 transition. An additional appointment has been made working with primary schools on a social mobility project.

Mrs Cutchey asked about the CAGEN structures. Mr D’Cuhna explained that these are where students take more responsibility for their learning and share knowledge amongst themselves. The method has been proven to increase thinking and learning, and gives a common language across the school.

Mrs Cutchey asked about the enrichment activities at Chantry. Mr D’Cuhna gave examples such as sports activities, local community links and visitors to classes (eg a judge & mock trials).

Mr Dool, whilst reminding Trustees that he is Chair of Governors at Chantry, stated that he believes there is a strong leadership team at Chantry now. Progress is good. Mr Peile added that expectations of staff is significant, with low standards no longer acceptable. He asked if Mr D’Cuhna had considered applying for awards such as PE. Mr D’Cuhna replied that he had considered awards, but felt that the priority should remain pupils and results at present.

Mrs Claydon and Mr D’Cuhna was thanked for their interesting and informative presentations and congratulated on their successes.

**Arts Strategy**

Mr Peile explained that he had asked Mr D’Cuhna to take on a cross-Trust role to lead an ALT Arts strategy. This is supported by grants from The Bridge and ALT central funding. Mr D’Cuhna spoke passionately about is role, and how it will meet the wider curriculum objectives of the 2019 Framework. He explained that the strategy will not only focus on Arts skills, but aims to improve confidence and be part of the approach to address mental health, making pupils better all-rounders. The elements of the strategy were explained, and how it is planned to move forward, allowing for schools being at different stages. The strategy acknowledges that the Arts curriculum can be impacted if school attainment is below expectations, and suggests ways that the Arts can support progress rather than be challenged by it. Skills within Arts are encouraged with the aim of improving broader life-skills. Three models are being developed (hub, secondary and all-through academy) which will be reviewed regularly to assess impact over an extended period of time.

Mr Bateson expressed his support of the Arts and how he believes its impact is underplayed in education. He would like to see all Trust pupils guaranteed an enriched “Arts experience” and agreed that the strategy be a “quality process” and not only focus on outcomes. He stated that all students have the right to access Arts opportunities.

Mr D’Cuhna concluded his report by explaining how it is believed the strategy will also impact on employability skills through mock interviews, communication skills and teaching students how to function outside of their comfort zone.

Ms Adams thanked Mr D’Cuhna for his report and said that Trustees looked forward to hearing more about the Arts strategy in the future.

***Mrs Claydon and Mr D’Cuhna left the meeting at this point.***

**24.** **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13th DECEMBER 2017**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2017 were accepted as a true record, with no technical corrections required.

Mr Peile informed Trustees that no feedback had been received from the DfE following their visit to the last Board meeting.

**25.** **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

Directors were asked to note the Minutes of the Finance & Audit committee meeting held on 13th December 2017, and also note that the Personnel & Remuneration committee did not meet on 13th December 2017.

**Finance & Audit Committee**

No matters were raised.

*The Minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting that was held on 13th December 2017 were accepted by directors.*

**26. CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Ms Adams reported one Chair’s Actions since the last meeting. This was to inform schools that they should not enter into any agreement relating to purchase of IT services without the permission of the Director of Finance.

**27. STANDARDS REPORTS**

**a) Primary Standards**

Mr Hilton introduced his report and explained to the board that the data produced following 2017 SATs tests had been published at MAT level by the DFE and how this has been analysed by the newly appointed Data Manager. Progress in Writing is as expected, but Maths and Reading were not. He explained the weighting for schools that had been with the Trust for a longer period of time. Mr Hilton pointed out that there is an improving year-on-year picture. He added that Academy Improvement Groups have been rolled out and their impact has already been significant with harder messages being relayed to schools. The use of PiXL data, particularly against other schools, helps focus on issues.

Mr Kerr asked if this type of data can be produced annually and can it be benchmarked against similar MATs. Mr Hilton confirmed that data can be annual and benchmarking is now easier to facilitate. Mr Peile stated that he was initially disappointed in the data, but has compared ALT with other Trusts and data is similar. The weighting given to Gusford and Burrowmoor is significant, and if these two schools perform well the data will improve.

Mr Beswick asked if the Data Manager would have the opportunity to compare ALT schools against other schools in East Anglia. Mr Hilton replied that a region by region comparison has already been completed, but he will ask for East Anglia in particular.

Mr Bateson reminded Trustees that there are two Opportunity Area Groups in East Anglia, and suggested that these be used to support the moral purpose of ALT schools. Trustees recognised that if Burrowmoor and Gusford don’t improve, and therefore results don’t improve, it could impact on applications for another school to join the Trust. Data should be used to give a clearer picture and a corporate approach be used for strategic purposes.

Mrs Cutchey stated that she believed it was right that Challenge 1 schools be chaired by either Mr Hilton or Mrs Parke, but asked if chairs of governors should be included so that there is a clear structure for schools, local governing bodies and the Trust. Mr Hilton agreed to look at this. He ended his report by stating that the rigorous challenge from the Academy Improvement Groups needs to be transferred across the whole Trust.

**b) Secondary Standards**

Mr Peile explained that the report had been produced by Mr Bush, in his role as Chief Adviser. He asked Trustees to note that there is an error at 3.1, where the progress score should read -1.03. He explained why ALT secondary schools do not appear in any performance tables but, if they did, they would be just below the expected national figure. The data has been produced by comparing ALT schools against each other and against national figures. Mr Bush shares this data with headteachers, using it as a basis for challenge. Mr Peile concluded by stating that activities are taking place in all three secondary schools to raise standards.

***Directors thanked the Director of Standards and the Chief Advisor for their reports and noted their content.***

**28. TRUSTEE VISITS**

Mr Peile thanked the Trustees that participated in the recent school visits to Cambridgeshire, and reported that they were successful and allowed Trustees the opportunity to triangulate their work. The format worked well and the feedback sessions were particularly beneficial. Trustees who took part thought the visits were useful and meeting the students was particularly powerful. Trustees found the report proforma helpful for hints and prompted questions, but felt it was not appropriate to complete as a visit report as staff may feel they were being inspected.

Ms Adams commented that it was interesting how heads organised their visits, and it was suggested that heads be given a list of definite areas that Trustees want to see as a starting point. These would include meeting students, things heads are most proud of, and the biggest challenges they face. All agreed that schools in the North Suffolk Hub should be visited next term.

***The board noted the actions being proposed by Mr Peile in response to the visits and notes from trustees and looked forward to his updates at a future board.***

**29. CENTRAL FINANCE REPORT**

Mr Peile referred Trustees to his report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. He explained that this was being presented to the full Board in the absence of a Finance & Audit committee meeting. He confirmed that there are no significant movements, and a small in-year surplus is expected. Mr Peile finished his report by stating that the central finances are secure in the current year.

***Directors thanked the CEO for his report and noted its content.***

**30. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE**

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report on health & safety prior to the meeting. They were pleased to note the improvement to the RAG ratings.

Mr Beswick asked for an update on the situation with Engie (mentioned in the report as it was part of the delivery mechanism around some elements of H&S analysis). Mr Paskell explained that he had had a meeting with senior Engie staff and was confident that all statutory items will be completed by 1st March. He added that it had been a complex process and lessons had been learned on both sides. Schedules are in place, and a defect system is being set up.

Ms Lloyd asked if it was possible for Handsam scores to be available for governors. Mrs Jarvis explained that all schools have access to their own Handsam system, and it was expected that governors would be informed of the RAG ratings at local governing body meetings.

***Directors thanked the CEO for his report and noted its content.***

**31. RISK REGISTER**

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the Trust Risk Register that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Mr Peile made particular reference to areas that had changed since the last report. He reminded directors that the Risk Register is reviewed every six weeks by the Senior Leadership Team. Two new risks have been added, which relate to GDPR and Mental Health.

***Directors recognised the updates to the central Risk Register, and the counter measures being applied to mitigate the risks listed.***

**32. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms Toft invited Trustees to attend the Symposiums planned for Leading Active Learning Advanced, during March 2018.