

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST**

***held on Thursday 23rd May 2019***

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

**MINUTES**

Directors Present: Ms L. Adams Mr D. Bateson

Mr J. Beswick Mr C. Bush

Mrs J. Cutchey Mr G. Hely Hutchinson

Mr M. Kerr Ms M. Lloyd

Members Present: Mr R. Dool Mrs H. Capron

Officers Present: Mr D. Hilton Mrs K. Jarvis

Mr C. Paskell Mrs J. Steel

Ms M. Toft

Also Present: Mrs H. Madsen Head of Red Oak Primary School

Mrs M. Mills Head of Albert Pye Primary School &

Ravensmere Infant School

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**44.** **WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr Boddison, Mr Staite and Mrs Steel.

No new interests were declared for items on the agenda.

**45. SCHOOL REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS:**

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the reports that Mrs Madsen and Mrs Mills had provided prior to the meeting. Ms Adams explained that this section of the agenda would take a revised format, with heads highlighting one or two areas in detail, and then move to a discussion about the report with Trustees, rather than a traditional presentation.

**Red Oak Primary School (RED)**

Mrs Madsen spoke about the reasons why she felt RED was close to ‘outstanding’ and how this point has been reached. She believes that a combination of factors contribute to this, including the standard of books, recent results in all areas, parent and pupil views, monitoring and assessment, and the support given to other schools.

Mr Hilton asked that Mrs Madsen to speak about the journey RED has been on since she joined the school. Mrs Madsen explained that there were many challenges at the start, but the staff have worked together and the key message to parents and pupils is that there are high expectations that will not be compromised. There had been issues around attendance and teaching and learning, but the curriculum has been reviewed and teaching is considered of a good or higher standard in all areas. Pupils have a say in school issues, and parental engagement has been achieved by good communication and persistence. Mrs Madsen is relentless on consistency when it comes to behaviour and staff receive regular in-house CPD, which is led by all staff as part of their own PD. Weaker staff are paired with mentors who acted as role models with support from Mrs Madsen.

Mr Dool asked how the initial weak teaching was addressed. Mrs Madsen replied that frank conversations were held and teachers who did not respond to CPD, mentoring and did not improved were placed on support packages. She added that this is the third year that there have not been any teaching resignations at RED which brings its own challenges as, although staffing is consistent and experienced, they are on higher salary scales. The ALT CPD programmes offer staff the opportunity to develop in school and so staff do not tend to move for promotional reasons. Support staff are less consistent, but support plans are in place where required. Mr Bateson asked how the school leadership is structured. Mrs Madsen explained that the subject leaders are strong, and they are paired with others to develop leaders by coaching in school. She feels there is robust distributed leadership and the school would continue to function well if any member of the senior leadership team was away.

In response to a question from Mrs Cutchey, Mrs Madsen explained how RED have reviewed and adapted Maths to address gaps in learning in Year 6 using the White Rose Scheme alongside Maths Makes Sense. The Maths predictions for this year are in the 90%s.

Mr Bush asked Mrs Madsen to give some background on how steps forward have been achieved in both reading and writing. Mrs Madsen explained that RED is situated in a traditionally disadvantaged area and pupil premium funding is used to allow additional opportunities for students. Examples were given of a theatre trip being followed up by linked writing for a half term, writing connected to the Top 100 books, plans being written linked to Oracy and vocabulary, and all after-school clubs being free of charge so that pupils can experience a range of extra-curricular activities. Key words for every topic are introduced and rewards given for both parents and pupils using them. The Thrive Programme is used to encourage development in school and other individualised programmes such as a Nurture Group are available. The school is fortunate to be able to fund a Speech and Language Therapist, which teachers can refer students to if necessary.

Mr Kerr asked how Trustees can support Mrs Madsen and keep her engaged. Mrs Madsen replied that she is proud of the school, but it is not ‘outstanding’ yet. She believes that belonging to the Trust is empowering and has enjoyed being able to support other schools within the Trust CPD pathway. She also stated that she is excited about the two room build planned for RED, which she believes will have a huge positive impact on the school, allowing staff to do offer even better facilities and support.

Mrs Adams thanked Mrs Madsen for her attendance and for her continued good work at RED and across the Trust. It was noted that her passion shone through.

**Albert Pye Primary School (APS) & Ravensmere Infant School (RIS)**

Mrs Mills started by saying how proud she is of both of her schools, and both are in a strong position. Two areas that were highlighted were teaching and learning and a broad and balanced curriculum. She spoke about the work at APS with boys reading. Two-thirds of the current Year 6 are boys and their reading is strong due in part to a programme introduced to encourage reading by using text the boys find exciting and enjoyable (Mrs Jarvis will forward video clips of this work to Trustees). Reading progress has been phenomenal and there are high hopes for SATs this year due to this rigorous approach across the board. Ms Adams asked if this successful approach could be used across the Trust. Mrs Mills replied that a current Year 6 teacher is a product of Trust-wide CPD with a project focus on growth mind-set that has led to opportunities for him to share his work across the Trust. She stated that this is an example of how a teacher has taken other staff with him, and expanded his work to other schools.

Mr Dool asked about the retention of staff and their well-being. Mrs Mills replied that staffing is stable and the schools support them by investing in good quality CPD within the Trust and with access to national providers. There is a team safeguarding approach and DSLs work in partnership on all matters and support each other. Staff well-being is prioritised in directed time and is part of school culture.

Mrs Mills explained the system of leadership across both schools. There is core leadership supported by extended leadership, which allows for full support where needed. She added that the schools have a very positive reputation in the community which makes them schools of choice, but also has meant an increase in parents of SEN children selecting via EHCPs. Trustees noted that there is little or no support from Suffolk LA for SEN in schools and children are regularly inappropriately placed. It was also noted that pupils with SEN do not generate additional income, Beccles is not considered a disadvantaged area, and pupil premium is slightly below average.

Mrs Cutchey noted that there is a strong emphasis in Mrs Mills’ report on curriculum enrichment, and asked for examples. Mrs Mills listed a whole range that included some unusual activities such as climbing, Pony Club, residential artists, the Family Scrap Challenge, and Kite Flying on the beach. There are over twenty five clubs that are run by willing volunteers and allow pupils to experience things they wouldn’t normally be able to access. Mr Bateson referred to ‘This Girl Can’ – an initiative mentioned in Mrs Mills report. Mrs Mills explained the project as identifying girls who were not attending clubs and targeted them specifically. It resulted in a successful performance at the leaving Prom last year and a marked increase in confidence for girls involved.

Mrs Mills referred to the “uniqueness” of Ravensmere as it only has three year groups and 57 pupils. The infant children on roll have a love of learning and are a joy visit. The school is loved by the local community of all ages and this year’s addition to the outdoor reading area was funded by the family of a volunteer who recently died.

***Ms Adams thanked Mrs Madsen and Mrs Mills for attending and for their reports.***

***Mrs Madsen and Mrs Mills left the meeting at this point.***

**46.** **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 14th FEBRUARY 2019**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2019 were accepted as a true record with

the exception of Ms Toft not being recorded as present. There were no matters arising.

**47.** **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

Trustees were asked to note that the Finance, Audit & Personnel Committees did not meet separately on 14th February 2019, and all items were considered within the full Board meeting.

Trustees were asked to note the minutes of the committee meetings held on the following dates. It was further noted that these committees met via phone conference.

Audit Committee: 25th March 2019

Finance Committee: 25th March 2019

Personnel Committee: 20th March 2019

***Trustees noted the content of the minutes as presented.***

**48. CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Ms Adams informed Trustees that she had not undertaken any chair’s actions since the last meeting.

**49. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT**

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report from the CEO that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Bush highlighted the following:

1. No action plan has been written in direct response to the Summary Evaluation from Ofsted. The recommendations already form part of the Trust Development Plan, which is reviewed and updated regularly by the Trust SLT.
2. The schools overview states that the CEO feels ALT is on track, and even ahead, of national expectations. All schools are challenged effectively and healthy discussion is able to take place.
3. Ms Toft’s work with PTI has supported strong curriculum intent, which is built upon the good practise across schools.
4. School staffing at leadership level was discussed. A Deputy Head at Westwood has resigned, Chesterton has an Interim Head and Cromwell are appointing a Head of Primary Phase. Hillside will be advertising a leadership role that is being funded directly from the DfE.
5. All schools consider My Concern a valuable and useful system, however it is acknowledged that we are not yet using it to its full potential. There is concern around the consistency of data, but it is a work in progress that has already improved recording.
6. Central data collected for Attendance has been compared against 2017/18 national data. Ms Toft recognised that, now data is available, more work is needed to compare schools across the Trust and establish why some schools perform better than others. She added that parental engagement is always key. Mrs Cutchey reminded Trustees of the Red Oak approach, where children must have no unauthorised absences to be allowed to access enrichment activities. Ms Toft stated that we need to focus on the relationship with the local authorities. Mr Bush agreed, stating that inappropriately placed students are effecting attendance data significantly in some cases.
7. An archaeological investigation is needed at Cromwell Community College before building work can go ahead as planned. It is hoped that temporary accommodation for opening in September 2020 can be avoided. It was agreed that Mr Paskell has the approval of the Board to speak/write on their behalf if required to move this forward.
8. A funding agreement for Linc 19 has not been secured from the DfE, under their due diligence processes. The reasons given are challenged, but there is no official route for redress. The LA have agreed to fund the project for another year, and will support ALT with a second application next year. The overriding concern is that young adults may have funding withdrawn and will therefore not be able to access the support they need.

***Trustees noted the content of the report and the activities across the Trust to support staff and pupils.***

**50. RISK REGISTER**

Mr Bush gave an overview of the amendments to the Risk Register since the last review by Trustees:

No. 21: Funding implications for decrease in pupil numbers. RAG increased to medium

No. 38: Impact of senior leader post in schools being vacant. New RAG at medium

No. 39: Issues raised in Summary Evaluation. New RAG at low

Following the amendments listed above, Mr Beswick asked if any review of funding was expected from the LA. Mr Bush does not think so. It was noted that the central budget, although strong at present, cannot sustain in-year spending at the current level going forward. Mr Bush suggested that once the new CEO is in post an overarching strategic review of the Trust is procured, including whether the current sponsor fee should be reviewed.

**51. SAFEGUARDING**

No issues were raised at this point as this was covered under the CEO report.

**52. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Mr Dool asked that Mr Jack Abbott be approved as a Trust governor for Hillside Primary School. Following a brief bio of Mr Abbott, the recommendation was approved.

Mrs Jarvis asked that all Trustees sign and return a form from Companies House that will allow Cromwell Community College to be removed as a separate entity, and only be registered as part of the Active Learning Trust.

**53. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 11th July 2019.