



Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Local Board held on 23 January 2017 at Sommerfords' Walter Powell Primary School

Chair: Claire Kennedy Clerk: Samantha Forrest

Governors Attending: Claire Kennedy (CK); Jill Rowe (JR); Evelyn Bone (EB); Andrea Kaye (AK); Julia Harle (JH); Shirley Palmer (SP); Rich Jefferson (RJ); Elaine Naughton (EN); Emily Edmonson (EE); Debbie Luter (DL); Nick Jarman (NJ); David Stokes (DS)

Governors Apologies: Heather Lee.

Non Governors Attending: Samantha Forrest.

Opening Prayer

EB conducted the opening prayer.

Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Heather Lee and were sanctioned by the Local Board.

Declaration of interests

No interests were declared, either pertaining to the evening's agenda or to update previous declarations.

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising and not covered later in the agenda

Mobile classroom: DL reported that she had met with the project manager the previous week and had discussed the timetable. Work was still expected to commence in February, but this depended on the newt survey being completed in time. Handover of the new classroom was scheduled for the end of the Easter holiday. JLB training: CK informed members that access to Modern Governor was free, as it was included in the annual subscription to Governor Services. SF asked members to click on 'Sign Up' to register and to contact her in case of any problems. Pupil profile proforma: CK confirmed that she had circulated this after the previous meeting. SP said that it was proving powerful when used in case studies. JR added that other DBAT schools had adopted it for use with SEND pupils.

Feedback from member of the month

NJ was member of the month in December and confirmed that he had carried out school visits focusing on PE, as one of his link member responsibilities. He had been generally impressed and cited the daily 'Wake and Shake' as an example of best practice. DS, member of the month for January, had not yet arranged any school visits but would do so in the future. No correspondence had been received in January so far.

ACTION:: DS - to arrange school visits

NJ had looked at how the PE premium was being spent and asked for further explanation, as he felt that this could be something of a grey area. JR said that approval was sought for any purchases that might require further justification and CK confirmed that Ofsted had been happy with the spending of this money when looked at in the recent inspection at CM.

Questions arising from committee minutes

Resources committee: the committee had met on 5 December. Members had discussed the maintenance plan for the three schools, which would be shared with LB members. They had also looked at the school budgets but would come back to those in more detail at forthcoming meetings. Minutes had not been shared widely but would be circulated. S & P Committee: the committee had met on 10 January. Key items had been the results of the staff survey (which featured later in the evening's LB agenda) and the process for staff to request a leave of absence. On the latter, it was felt that, in some cases, insufficient information was given to enable a fair judgement to be made on requests. CK has clarified what was required to staff. The minutes of the meeting would be circulated, for information, in the near future. C&S Committee: the committee had met on 13 January and the minutes had been circulated. SP highlighted some key items. One was the succession planning that was being done within the committee, which had resulted in JH becoming Vice-Chair, with a view to standing for Chair in the future if and when SP stood down. The committee had also been working with the Executive Principal on the professional development of school leaders and SP was supporting Lisa Shibley in her role as curriculum lead. They were due to meet in February to progress this. On pupil performance data, SP would use the work already done by AK on T2 data as the basis for her analysis of predicted outcomes. She commented that the case studies were very important in giving the context behind the data. There had been some discussion about disapplied pupils. It was explained that this referred to pupils who were working below ARE and so would not be reflected in the school SATs statistics. However, high level data, both with and without this group, would be presented to the LB at a later date. In its policy role, the committee was looking at a new Teaching and Learning Policy, on which AK was leading and a new Curriculum Policy, on which LS was leading.

ACTION: RJ to circulate maintenance plan and minutes of December meeting.

CK to circulate committee minutes.

To report back on results of Staff Survey

M CK had prepared a written overview of the results of the staff survey for the LB. Overall, she said that there had been a good response rate across the three schools and that it had been a positive exercise. A small number of issues had been raised by a minority of staff, which were being addressed and feedback given to staff. Specific ACTION: following the survey included JR meeting with the Heads of School to discuss the results and issues raised and the holding of lunchtime staff meetings. JR

stressed that these were being held at lunchtime to ensure that teachers, TAs and support staff were able to attend. CK intended to follow this up by writing to all staff to thank them for participating and to give some more general feedback. CK said that the survey would now be held annually in order to compare results and track progress. The committee would also consider whether to conduct separate surveys for teaching and support staff in the future. This would have the advantage of ensuring that the questions were directly relevant to each group of staff (and, therefore, the results more meaningful) but the small numbers involved in each group could make it difficult for respondents to retain anonymity when the returns were analysed per school. Finally, it had been agreed that both the LB Chair and the Executive Principal would be subject to a 360 degree feedback system in the future.

ACTION: CK to write to staff.

Governance structure for pre-schools

CK first updated the LB on recent progress with bringing the three pre-schools in to the schools' governance structure. She said that the age range extensions had been approved by the schools commissioner and that the change of governance had now been approved by two of the three pre-schools' governing bodies. Templates for gathering information for the transfer of staff under TUPE had been issued and received back from two of the pre-schools. CK agreed to follow up on the outstanding template. NJ asked about the timing in relation to the pre-schools' membership of the Pre School Learning Alliance. PJ said that the membership of Acorns (CM) had already run out and had not been renewed pending the forthcoming change in governance. It was also reported that DBAT had confirmed in writing that all existing pre-school assets would transfer with the pre-schools and be retained for their use. CK presented a paper setting out proposals for the method of including the pre-schools in the LB governance structure. A transitional arrangement was proposed, under which a pre-school committee would be established for the remainder of the current academic year. It would comprise the Executive Principal, a member of the pre-school working group, and three co-opted members from the existing pre-school Trustees (one from each pre-school). From September 2017, the pre-schools' operations and strategy would fall under each of the LB's existing committees. The LB's EYFS link member would be responsible, on an ongoing basis, for linking with both the pre-schools and the Reception classes in each school. CK invited views on these proposals. NJ asked whether any particular challenges were expected over the first two terms that necessitated the two-step approach. CK replied that no particular difficulties had been identified but that this approach was designed to ensure a smooth transition that would allow the LB time to familiarise itself with the pre-schools and their governance priorities and enable all parties to work together well from the outset. Members felt it was important to invest time with pre-school staff to explain the changes in detail. CK confirmed that Liz Gibbons intended to run staff sessions for this purpose. Also, as the proposed approach would involve three members being co-opted from the existing pre-school Trustees, CK had checked the situation with DBAT but would follow up with Clare Stansfield once again before implementing the proposals.

ACTION: CK to contact Seagry pre-school about the TUPE template.

CK to double-check with DBAT about co-opted members.

DECISION: On this basis, the LB agreed the proposals for both the interim and longer-term governance arrangements.

Executive Principal's report

JR updated the LB on events since she had compiled her written report. Chief among these were the two occasions on which she had met with Jez Piper, the new SIA at DBAT. He had visited all three schools. JR explained that these were introductory visits in which he had toured the schools and observed some teaching. He had liked the pupil performance profile and the assessment system and JR felt that his input would be valuable, especially as he came with a primary school background and small school experience. JR said she would receive a summary of his observations in advance of more formal meetings/visits being arranged. The Clerk would add his details to the Trust Governor system so that he would be able to access LB meeting agendas and papers and would be able to attend some of the meetings if he wished. Further updates were given on the following items: a) attendance, in particular the clear correlation between attendance and attainment, which had become more evident since attendance had been included on the pupil performance pro-forma. JR stressed that the schools were very strong on attendance matters, including following up on persistent lateness. DS suggested that the data on attendance and attainment be used in parent communications. This was agreed; b) resources, where a DECISION: had been taken at a staff meeting earlier that evening to purchase an interactive whiteboard that would be shared between the schools; c) the cloud-based SIMS, which had still not been installed DL had advised that it needed to be up and running by half term at the latest and had been assured that this was on track. Members noted from the written report the concern expressed by Malmesbury headteachers about the lack of capacity in the primary schools there to take all the children from the new housing estates who required school places and that she had contacted Wiltshire Council about the possibility of prospective parents being directed to SPS and SWP. As ever, the problem was the lack of free transport to the villages from Malmesbury (although this was provided to other village schools). EN suggested that, in the absence of transport being provided by the local authority, the LB consider whether the schools could fund a school bus which, she said, was about equivalent to the funding for one child. This would depend on the number of pupils that might be covered by this arrangement but JR agreed to explore the cost and viability of such an approach. She would make the information known to the Resources Committee, which would discuss the options at its next meeting. All agreed that, if affordable, this provision would form a powerful addition to the marketing strategies for those schools.

ACTION: SF to add Jez Piper to the Trust Governor system.

JR to explore the cost of funding a school bus from Malmesbury and report to Resources Committee

RJ to include item on agenda for next committee meeting

JR/CK - Include attendance/attainment message, backed by data, in parent communication.

DECISION: The LB agreed to use attendance/attainment data in parent communication.

School Development Plan

The school Development Plan (SDP) had been circulated with the agenda papers. This covered all three schools, presented in a way that showed both the commonalities and the differences. The Chair thanked the Executive Principal for the clear and helpful format. JR pointed out the targets that dealt with the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted at CM. These had been recognised and were therefore in the document prior to Ofsted's visit but were now highlighted in yellow. JR was also ensuring that targets relating to the schools' Christian ethos and practices were fully represented; these would also be highlighted in the future. Finally, JR reiterated that the SDP was a working document and encouraged members both to view it regularly and to contribute to it where appropriate. This could be by annotating the monitoring and evaluation column following certain activities (especially the committee Chairs) and by giving views at LB meetings. CK also reminded

members that it was important to link activities and observations at school visits with the SDP wherever possible and that the form had been redesigned to facilitate this.

ACTION: All to note - link school visit activities with SDP via visit form.

Update from Strategy Group

The Strategy Group had not met since the previous LB meeting but the notes of the meeting on 21 November had now been circulated for information and CK recapped on the main points discussed. Its role was made clear in that it was not a DECISION:-making group. Rather, its role was to do some horizon scanning and to raise questions which would then be directed to the committees for consideration and ACTION: In answer to a question from EN, CK explained that the group would look at the overall strategic direction of the schools, as influenced by wider issues and trends in the environment in which they operated, and to advise the LB and committees accordingly. The group's next meeting was scheduled for 23 March 2017.

Approval of local policies

The Anti-bullying policy had been reviewed by the C&S Committee, having previously been looked at by both staff and pupils. There were no substantive changes and it was recommended for approval. This was given. The 2018/19 Admissions Policies were also presented for approval. CK confirmed that these had been out for consultation in accordance with requirements, with the only person or body to return any comments being the Admissions Team at Wiltshire Council. SF said she had been in touch with the contact there, who had asked for a small change in wording to one section. This had been made. The policies were approved by the LB and SF would forward them to Wiltshire Council and DBAT by the required date of 15 March. She also undertook to meet the requirement to publish on the school websites the date by which any objections should be made.

ACTION: SF to submit Admissions Policies as required and publish date by which objections should be made on the websites.

DECISION: The Anti-bullying policy and 2018/19 Admissions Policies were approved.

Adoption of DBAT policies

DBAT had updated its Exclusions Policy (a level 1 policy). This was adopted by the LB.

DECISION: The DBAT Exclusions Policy was adopted.

Finance report

JR had met with Alistair Pickering and Paul Smith and had discussed the impact of the Fairer Funding Formula. She said that, as with many other village schools, the three schools were set to benefit overall. A further change was that all schools would now receive their funding direct, rather than via the local authority - something that had hitherto been available only to academies and free schools. In this situation, JR wanted to be sure that the schools were receiving value for money from the Top Slice paid to DBAT and had raised the issue with Alistair. This led to a discussion about CPD and the cost of attending conferences and training courses provided by DBAT and/or the Diocese. DL said she had previously suggested to DBAT that participation in such events should be covered under the Top Slice and members agreed with this in principle. DL reported that she had completed the current forecast against budget. On current figures and assumptions, a surplus was forecast for SPS at the end of the

year, with a deficit for the other two schools. In part, this was due to the loss of one child from school and the necessary addition of a TA that had not been accounted for in the original budget. DL explained, however, that this would be mitigated by some funds that were being returned from DBAT. She had proposed that these be made available for use as revenue rather than capital but awaited a DECISION: on this. DL said that she had also been asked by DBAT to do a forward look for 2017/18. This had showed a risk that all three schools could be in deficit by the end of that year, but DL stressed that this was based on current staff levels and a predicted number of incoming pupils but that both could change, making it far too early to make any accurate predictions. However, she had some ideas as to ACTION: that could be taken to balance the books should this be necessary. One potential source of savings might be to combine the contracts for support services across the three schools but this would depend on the expiry dates of the current contracts being coterminous or at least nearly so. DL mentioned that DBAT was considering putting in place trust-wide contracts, this was a topic for a coming School Business Manager meeting.

Clerk's update

SF thanked members for their forbearance and messages of goodwill during her recent illness and also thanked CK for keeping vital communications going in her absence. On the subject of training, she reminded members to keep their training details up to date on the Trust Governor system and said she planned to add more courses to the drop-down list to facilitate this process. However, she asked members to let her know if a course they had attended was not shown on the system and she would add it to the list. SF informed the LB that DBAT had updated its Central Safeguarding and CP Policy, which applied to the Trust itself, rather than its schools. The LB had not been asked to re-adopt the policy but the updated copy would be replace the former one in local records and files. SF highlighted recent correspondence from Governor Services, which had been sent direct to members, containing the latest edition of The Wiltshire Governor as well as David Marriot's summary of Ofsted's Improving Governance report. The former featured the updated Governance Handbook and the Competency Framework for governors. She recommended that members peruse the Governance Handbook and thought that the Competency Framework would be useful when conducting the next Skills Audit as well as when recruiting new members to the LB. The Chair also took the opportunity to update members on the movement of members in and out of the LB. She formally confirmed the resignation of Margaret Palmer with effect from the end of December and would write to her to thank her for her work and commitment. HL was working to identify a suitable candidate for the foundation member vacancy. If unsuccessful, CK would consider other options including changing the status of an existing member and then looking to recruit a new member from the wider local community. She also referred to the forthcoming change of governance of Acorns, which would render PJ a member of staff. On that basis and at that time, PJ proposed to step down from the LB. CK thanked her for her time and effort, both on the JLB and on the former CM LB. This would leave a vacancy for the CM community member slot. CK proposed to place an advertisement in Parish News. Ideally, she would like to recruit a member with an interest and/or experience in health and safety and maintenance to take over as link member for this area. The other option raised by members was to recruit someone to take on the role of link member for EYFS, although that person would not necessarily need to have a background in this area. CK agreed to take the recruitment forward and to follow up on potential leads.

ACTION: CK to write to MP.

CK to advertise for a new CM community member and follow up on potential leads.

Progress against LB objectives for 2016/17

CK led the LB in reviewing progress against the current year's objectives, both since the previous meeting and in the discussions made and DECISION:s taken at tonight's meeting. Objective 1 (pertaining to Christian core values): EB had met with the Worship Committees at both SPS and SWP to evaluate the themes pursued during the previous term. JR confirmed that one teacher was to attend the Diocese's Understanding Christianity course and would share the learning across all three schools. EB said that one of her church colleagues was also due to attend and that she might, in fact, take up a place herself, funded by the Church. JR added that she was due to meet with Katy Staples later in the week. NJ questioned whether the reference to core values in the objective should be changed to British Values to reflect the wider responsibilities that the schools had to promote British Values in accordance with government guidelines. This was already being done but the LB agreed to make specific reference to British Values alongside Christian Values in the objective. Objective 2: all agreed that the three schools were working well together and realising the benefits of collaboration. As well as sharing staff expertise across the schools on an ongoing basis, the example was given of how ACTION: to address the areas for improvement identified in the CM Ofsted report had been applied across all three schools. The results of the staff survey had also been shared in general terms with all staff in the three schools, as well as focussing locally on the specific issues raised at each school. CK acknowledged that the advantages of collaboration across the schools needed to be communicated more effectively to staff. This would be easier now that there was an evidence base that showed clear benefit, especially in Teaching and Learning. However, it was important to demonstrate more clearly how the children also benefited from the arrangement, especially where the cohorts in their own school were very small. Objective 3: the C&S Committee was looking at staff development, with particular focus on senior leaders. Members had acknowledged that budgets were tight and so methods to supplement formal training were being considered. One idea had been for senior leaders to put in 'bids' to the Executive Principal for time to carry out particular tasks. JR added that it was evident that the teachers were now confident in making predictions for the end-of-year outcomes and that this had been reflected in the Ofsted report for CM. Objective 4: much work had been completed to bring the governance of the pre-schools into the LB governance structure, as reported on earlier in the meeting. This was on track, with the proposals for the future governance structure having been approved earlier in the meeting, including a transitional phase to start this academic year.

ACTION: CK to amend the first objective to include British Values.

CK/JR to ensure that the benefits of collaboration are communicated clearly to staff and to focus on the evidence of the benefits for the children.

Closing prayer

EB rounded off the agenda with a prayer of thanks. The Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.