

DGAT Chairs of Governors' Forum

Meeting notes – 30 April 2019

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<p>In attendance David Minns – North Cerney Bob Lloyd-Smith – St James (Cheltenham) Neil Grecian – Dursley Anna Hay – Winchcombe Mark Catt – Minchinhampton David Jennings – St John’s (Coleford) Ian Wills – Whiteshill Jo Grills – Clearwater (Quedgeley) Diane Bainbridge - Longney Sarah Nicholson – Hardwicke Keith Withers – Lakefield (Frampton-on-Severn)</p>	<p>Susan Holmes – St Lawrence (Lechlade) Harry Ives - Primrose Hill Tim Brock – Trustee Kenny Lynch - Trustee Rachel Howie – CEO Apologies Jackie Hall – Field Court Infant (Quedgeley) John Sanders - Coaley</p>
<p><i>Red text denotes an action point</i></p>	
<p>The CEO welcomed everyone to the meeting and Bishop David opened the meeting with a prayer. Introductions were made and the CEO thanked everyone for their attendance.</p>	
<p>I. Actions from last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adding Chairs to the circulation of Finance Officer notes – this was noted as completed - Central staff restructure – the new central staffing structure chart was circulated and explained - Access to the School Condition Allocation dashboard – RH confirmed that log ins for this had been circulated. Chairs were asked to check their email Clutter/Trash. If the relevant email could not be located Chairs were asked to contact Rob Jones. - Governor lanyards – it was confirmed that these had been distributed - Local governors as trustees – RH confirmed that local governors could be appointed as Trustees should there be a vacancy and they had the appropriate skills. It was further noted that should this be the case, the individual would not be representing their school but rather the interests of the Trust as a whole. - Teachers’ Pension contributions – it was confirmed that plans for government subsidy for pension contribution had not been confirmed beyond 2019/20. 	
<p>2. DGAT central updates including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The curriculum statement for the Trust had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The CEO explained that this had been written with the HTs in a recent HT forum meeting, similar to the teaching and learning statement written last term. It was noted that this statement identifies the underpinnings of each school’s curriculum while enabling each one to be appropriate to the setting. KW identified that the grammar could be improved and agreed to identify the areas that were causing concern. - The CEO reported that St Matthews CofE Primary School, Cainscross, Stroud would be sponsored by the Trust from August 2019. - A new Ofsted framework will be introduced in September 2019. It is currently out for consultation and is being trialed. The CEO advised governors not to attend any training at this stage until the final framework is announced. Training would be provided for DGAT governors in Autumn Term 2019. 	

3. Trust board update

- The minutes from the March Trust Board meeting and the Report to the Trust Board had been circulated prior to the Forum meeting.

A question was asked (KW) regarding Section 4a in the minutes – central procurement. The CEO noted that this would be covered in the next item.

A question was asked (MC) about Section 6a in the minutes – the comments made by the RSC regarding the ‘*fragmentated financial approach*’ of the Trust. The CEO noted that this would be covered in the next item.

TB noted from the minutes that he had attended a ‘Gov Meet’ and had circulated the notes he had made. He encouraged other governors to attend such meetings.

BLS reported that he attended a meeting of the Gloucestershire Governors Association (GGA) recently and was troubled to note that the meeting had been called to discuss the winding up of the association, however the meeting was not quorate and a decision could not be made. BLS suggested that the organisers of the Gov Meet may want to meet with the GGA and discuss a potential joined up approach.

- The CEO noted that a Trust Board meeting was held last week with a single item agenda – to discuss the Trust’s growth strategy and financial sustainability as identified in the March meeting minutes.

The key headlines were:

1. Following some financial analysis, the Trust Board have agreed that for the present time the Trust will not be able to agree to any small schools joining the Trust. This is not a ‘No’ but rather a ‘not yet’.
2. The Trust Board are considering the inclusion of secondary provision within the DGAT family.
3. There was a discussion about central procurement to provide economies of scale in a time of increasingly squeezed budgets. The CEO asked the meeting to consider with their governing bodies, which services they would be keen to see centrally procured. KW, MC and SH noted that the preferred option would be for the central team to make a decision about the services that would yield the best saving to schools and provide a business case. MC noted that if savings could be made while maintaining the same level of service it would be difficult for governors to decline centrally procured services.

The issue of absence insurance was raised and the history of an attempt at central procurement was explained. The meeting agreed that this was a costly area that caused schools anxiety and acknowledged that not every school’s requirements are the same depending on the age and gender profile of the staff.

DB noted that there had previously been discussions about central ICT procurement but nothing had been forthcoming as a result.

4. Following the comments made by the RSC regarding the ‘*fragmentated financial approach*’ of the Trust and her recommendation that a review is undertaken. The Board discussed a range of responses to this and agreed to commission the central team to undertake research into how the most successful trusts (in both outcomes and financial terms) organise their finances to take back to the next meeting. Further to this the CofGs suggested that **a letter be sent to the RSC** asking for the rationale behind her comment, and any recommendations the RSC has for MAT financial organisation. It was agreed that **the report that is developed as a result of this research will also be circulated to HTs and Governors for comments**. SH noted that different options would result in each school being impacted differently and stated that it would be important to identify how each school would be affected.

Finance

- MC requested clarity around the messages coming from the central team about surplus balances as there appeared to be some mixed messages.

The CEO clarified that a number of schools in the Trust have significant reserves. Some schools have previously identified plans and timescales for the use of these reserves, but some have not articulated this and there is no central record of it. During this year's budget setting process the central finance team will ask about the plan for the reserves and any associated time scales.

It was noted that a reserve of between 5 % and 10% would be a reasonable contingency but reserves above this level should have a clear plan in place.

It was explained that should a school wish to set an in-year deficit budget and utilise reserves, some commentary should be provided to identify the rationale behind this and how this would relate to future financial planning. It was also noted that the budget is set by the HT and governors, with the support of in-school finance staff and the with advice and guidance from the central finance team. The budget is then sent to the central team for scrutiny and ratification by the Trust Board.

- The CEO reported that the Trust SCA allocation is £372k – based on a £115 per pupil formula. The condition surveys for the 16 schools cost £35k. The remainder of the allocation has been prioritised according to the condition information in the SCA dashboard. It was noted that the cost of the recent emergency works at Dursley would be borne centrally and not taken from the SCA allocation. Rob Jones will be sending information out about the projects that are to be undertaken. He has also made appointments to visit each school to discuss individual condition reports.

Some schools have allocated their additional capital allocation from the Chancellor to projects identified in their condition reports.

- It was noted that the roll out of the new compliance software - PS Assets – will begin at the next SBM meeting in May.

AOB

There was no AOB.

Dates

The CEO asked for feedback for the scheduling of meetings for the 2019/20 academic year and views on the number of meetings to be held.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm