



WYMONDHAM HIGH ACADEMY TRUST
GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Company Number: 07725111
A Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England

Minutes of a Board Meeting
held on Monday 29th June 2015

Present:	Mr N Collins (M)	Dr R Cross	Mr A Hurst	Mr S Moore	Mr M Scharff
	Mr S Blease	Mr J Gillett	Mr J Lansdell	Mr J Robson	Mr P Wadlow
	Mr R Boulton (M)	Mr M Heard	Mr S Mears	Mr M Savage	Dr J Winpenny
In Attendance:	Mrs L Fox	Mr J Rockey		Rev'd A Slater	

1. Governance Matters

1.1. Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum

Apologies were received and accepted for Mrs Lee. Mr Dickson and Mrs Dinwoodie sent their apologies, they were involved with the Sixth Form formal. It was noted that the meeting was quorate.

1.2. Declaration of Interests

None.

1.3. New Staff Governor

Neil welcomed Simon Moore to his first meeting of the Board and recorded his thanks to Adrian Fehners, whom Simon replaced.

1.4. Governors leaving the GB

Neil thanked Steve for his many contributions to the Board as a governor, vice chair of the GB and Responsible Officer, saying he would be hard to replace.

Neil thanked Rodney and Julian for over 50 years' of service between them; for their time, effort commitment.

Julian replied that he had been part of a learning community, for staff, students and governors and he had been reflecting how much he has learned and hoped governors would also take this on board.

Rodney replied that each governor sees the school from a different perspective and it is the composite views of a strong GB that takes it forward.

1.5. Notice of AoB

None.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

These were agreed as a true record and signed by the chair.

3. Matters Arising

Page 1 – Matters arising – Julian advised that his expectation was that the rugby club would have submitted an appeal and that the GB needed to have this to mind.

Action points summary sheet – School Counsellor Service – Neil advised that following strong guidance from governors this had been built into the AIP. Russell advised that there were no obvious funding sources, however, the last GB meeting had only been a few weeks ago and teenage mental health is in the news and he had hopes for future funding.

Jeff had offered to look at voluntary links – Jeff advised that he had followed up on this and had a note from a professional qualified lead which he would pass onto Andrew Slater.

Action: Jeff

Item 5 was taken next.

5. Sponsor Academy Application

Neil advised that he had posted a proposal for consideration tonight to convert to a MAT, now that we have received approval from the DfE to become a sponsor academy. Part of the proposal is to change our GB

structure and, following the DfE guidance to reduce the number of committees. The NGA recommend having only two committees. (Refer to Wymondham High – Conversion to Multi Academy Trust document).

Neil proposed reducing to two standing committees:

- Resources – encompassing personnel, finance and premises
- Teaching & Learning – encompassing curriculum and standards and
- the Audit committee

Moving the Members out of the GB to sit above the Local GB as a Board of Trustees. There would be a LGB in each school/academy.

Q. Jeff asked whether, if we take over another school, we oversee their conversion.

A. Neil confirmed that we would. The Board of Trustees would make the decision to take on the school and manage the conversion process – there is funding from the EFA to cover legal costs.

We would need a name for our MAT.

Neil proposed the following structure for our MAT – not necessarily the same model used in many other MATs. Our MAT would set the core ethos and perform the administration functions, centralising most services to the schools. School under their LGBs would decide the character of their school and be responsible for T&L and raising standards – as long as they remained as good or above.

Mike H added that most of the services, whilst provided by the MAT, would still need to be managed directly by the LGBs.

Steve M commented that as MATs get bigger they become more like small LAs. On initial conversion to an academy the aim was to just to get autonomy this is turning a MAT into a LA.

Neil agreed with this. He said that whilst some services would be optional from us, some would be mandatory and some would be sourced externally.

John R added that the LGBs can influence the MAT and could bid for extra funding from a joint fund. Peter commented that this was not good for some schools.

Jeff said that the LGB would be able to hold the MAT accountable for those services through a service level agreement.

Steve B commented that key to sharing services was saving money through economies of scale.

Neil added that they were looking at setting up a trading company to sell these services, both to the MAT LGBs and externally. The first step for us will be SLAs for IT services.

Management Structure

Executive Head – MAT

Senior business director – MAT

Central support staff – MAT

In school

Head of school

Support staff

Teaching staff/teaching support staff

Board of Trustees would manage the Executive Head

Heads of School would be managed by the Executive Head

Russell advised that if/when we are asked to sponsor a school it would be because it is either a new school or a poorly performing school. In both cases the Executive Head would want to be assured of the quality of the staff, either newly appointed or, even more importantly, that of the current staff. Neil added that external expertise can be bought in as required. Central support staff could be TUPE'd across into the trading company.

Simon commented that for an established MAT with several schools the costs would be spread over a number of schools. However, in the first instance with a newly formed MAT this would not be the case and there would be budgetary implications.

Neil agreed that there would be a transitional period, initially for example with Russell spending only part of his time at the other school, extending this as more schools are added to the MAT.

Q. Simon asked whether that meant that the Executive Head and Head of School would be the same person initially.

A. Neil replied that this would not necessarily be the case. John R added that the Head of School is essentially a deputy head and paid at that level.

Peter commented that this situation had moved on significantly since it had first been proposed at the December meeting when governors agreed as a primary goal to look at WHA becoming a MAT and to speak to local schools for their views. This was based on the LA inviting us to put in a bid to take on the new local primary. Now the discussion is about taking on a new primary and a failing school.

Q. Peter asked what funding was available for this.

A. Neil replied that taking on the new primary school alone would still mean a review of our current structure and the focus for growth would still be on the local area. Funding is still the same with a view to taking a top slice from each school for services to fund the central MAT. There is a small amount of funding from the EFA to help with the conversion process.

Q. Peter asked whether the schools would have a choice to buy services from the MAT.

A. Neil advised that some services would be mandatory and some would be optional.

Meetings and membership

Board of Trustees (10) - would meet once a term

Responsibilities include, PM for Ex Head, oversight of services, which schools to add to the MAT.

LGB (10 – 12 governors) – would meet once a term

Responsibilities similar to a FGB with two committees but reporting back and accountable to the BoT

Committees (5-6 governors) – would meet twice a term – reporting back and accountable to the LGB

John R commented that if/when we are asked to take on a failing school governors/SLT should not underestimate the amount of work involved in taking it on. His experience has been that the structure is usually wrong and GBs that take on a failing school do not take the time to make a detailed and honest appraisal of the school before entering into the agreement. Neil added that consideration also has to be given to the impact on the Ex Head and SLT.

Q. Mike H asked how WH would be affected if we take on a school and do not have a successful outcome and how we could end our association with this school.

A. Russell advised the DfE would make this decision.

Q. Steve M asked whether a failing school could bring down a successful academy.

A. John R replied that it could.

Mark commented that careful consideration should be given to funding, but we would have more flexibility with resources and expertise.

John R added that a major issue is often a lack of leadership, it is a big workload for all the SLT and staff, with expertise from one school going into the failing school.

Q. Alex asked for confirmation that whilst the DfE may make a recommendation to the MAT it does not have to be accepted.

A. Neil confirmed this.

Q. Simon questioned how, if a Head of School is not paid as Headteacher, we would be able to attract the right candidate.

A. Neil suggested that there would be the possibility of career progression within the MAT. John R added that it would attract professionals who want to aspire to a Headteacher role but are not quite ready, so a Deputy Head would apply to gain experience for a couple of years before being ready to move to Headteacher role.

Neil commented that the improving schools in Norfolk programme was struggling and part of this development would be towards helping the LA in Norfolk.

Julian commented that there is a trend for schools and single academies to move to MATs, and we should be aware of potential threats of being taken over by a larger MAT.

Steve M expressed concerns about having a business model with a divergence between the teaching and business side. He said that he didn't see enough links between the two so far and would like to see more of one structure reporting to the other.

Neil replied that this was a deliberate division. Services in education are often very poorly run and were not an efficient business model.

Steve M commented on the membership of different tiers and expressed concerns that there were no teaching representatives on the BoT. The spirit of conversion in 2011 was to keep the governance model we had.

Neil replied that there couldn't be a representative from each school as this would increase the numbers above the recommendation from the DfE, however, he recognised Steve's concern.

Steve M suggested that how members are appointed should be detailed.

Neil replied that members appoint trustees and the board can appoint the LGB – however, this would differ if the school is failing.

Membership

Board of Trustees: Peter, Alex, Primary expertise person, Ex Head, LA rep. (Members)

LGB – as it stands now after retirees plus a LA rep to replace Steve B

Committees: (suggested subject to election) John W and Jeff and initially Neil as chair of the LGB until we take on another Academy then move to be on the board of trustees

Process

Decision tonight/Restructure WHAT from Sept – JD for senior business manager and structure of GB/Bed in structure 2015/16/Sell services/Sept 2016 take on first school – (hopefully primary in Wymondham).

Q. Jeff asked who would ensure the legal process was undertaken.

A. Neil replied that the SBM would take the on this.

Neil proposed that his plan was accepted, this was seconded by Steve B. On a vote there were two abstentions with all other governors voting yes. The proposal was agreed.

4. Committee Reports

These reports were taken as read and no questions were raised.

6. SLT's Report

This report was taken as read. Neil asked for questions.

Q. John W commented on the staffing report and noted that in science 5 teachers were listed as leaving and asked why there were only 2 replacements.

A. Russell advised that 2 new science teachers had been appointed last Friday and some staff had been on fixed term contracts which were not renewed, he confirmed that the science department would be fully staffed in September.

Q. Neil asked whether these appointments would improve the quality of teaching in the department.

A. Russell replied that he had appointed a strong deputy head of science and on Friday another physics teacher; this had strengthened the physics department to 4 specialist teachers.

Jonathan added that the curriculum change in core subjects over a number of groups had also had an impact on staffing levels.

Q. John W asked about staffing levels in chemistry and biology.

A. Jonathan advised that chemistry remained difficult to recruit to. Biology is well staffed.

Q. Alex asked what plans or measures were in place to mitigate the weakness in chemistry.

A. Jonathan advised that there was training for the new staff to develop their A level teaching.

Q. Alex asked what was in place for existing staff.

A. Jonathan acknowledge that there was more to be done to support these colleagues.

Q. Alex asked that monitoring of this be picked up by the Teaching and Learning committee next term.

Action: Clerk

Steve B reminded governors that Victoria had made a request for governors to become sixth form mentors.

Please make contact through the clerk.

Q. Jeff asked when Michael Wyard was coming in to perform a review.

A. Jonathan advised that he would be in next week to plan for next year when he will come in one day a week. Jeff asked that he be invited to a governors' meeting.

Action: Jonathan

Jeff commented on D:3 - the behaviour report and said he would like a review on how effective we are on our policies. Andrew advised that, as previously agreed, he would give his annual report on behaviour, exclusions, racial incidents etc in the Autumn term.

Q. Jeff asked how they could be confident that our policies are implemented and embedded.

A. Andrew replied that for the number of students the number of incidents is very low.

Q. Alex asked when the Behaviour policy was due for review.

A. Andrew replied that it would come to governors in the autumn term.

Neil asked that Andrew's report provide clear evidence of the impact of the policies on behaviour.

Action: Andrew

Russell advised that behaviour was an AIP focus for next year with reporting of behaviour to be put on Go4Schools by all staff.

Jeff commented on the F6 item on student subject leader positions and suggested that they link to governors next year. Russell advised he was keen for the student voice to be heard. Simon M added that he tried to include students into the process of governance within a subject and this will engage students and give them ownership.

Neil asked Russell to give more opportunities for direct student feedback to governors next year.

Action: Russell

Q. Peter referred to item G2 – SEND – 3rd para – and the comment made by Sarah that it would be almost impossible to meet statutory requirements. He expressed concern and said that we should be confident that we meet all statutory requirements.

A. Jonathan advised that following the tradition pattern of TAs providing in class support had been broadly ineffectual and had significant financial implications. Results have shown that it is better to remove students in need of additional support and teach them as a discrete group and this is what is being proposed and it does meet our statutory requirements, but in a slightly different way.

Julian suggested further investments in IT to create an internal social network for students. Jonathan advised that the Yammer network was already in place and used extensively by students and staff through our internet domain.

Q. Mark asked how the finance team was managing under the difficult staffing circumstances.

A. Russell advised that they were bearing up well under pressure; the new finance manager starts in two weeks' time, however, he acknowledged that it would be difficult for next the few months.

Q. Jeff asked if he could see the JD.

A. Russell will share this for comments.

Action: Russell

Mark offered to sit on the interview panel.

Q. John W asked who would be responsible for preparing the end of year accounts.

A. Russell advised that he was working with the Auditors and buying in their services to meet any areas not covered by the finance team. The field worker who worked in school last year has been assigned to us and will provide support in September for the year end.

Neil commented on the CPD conference saying it was excellent and very well organised. Peter added his agreement. Jonathan advised that he had received some very positive comments from staff. Simon Moore added that he highly recommended it.

Julian noted that Adrian Fehners had organised the event and asked that the GB formally record their thanks.

7. Academy Improvement Plan 2015-16

Russell advised that the huge focus on punctuality this term had resulted in a significant improvement with only 3 lates recorded this week. Parents have been invited into school to discuss punctuality strategies where there have been issues. Attendance has been over 96% for the last few weeks.

Assessment and data flows and life after levels are given a high focus in the plan. Early identification for intervention and getting the data right will be very important to this process.

Homework is always a high focus for parents, and there is a package that bolts onto Go4Schools so parents can see and be aware of homework set and deadlines. This will be launched in September and reported on to governors after the first term.

Neil commented that he had struggled to pull out the main focus points of the AIP. He suggested that an outcomes section be added where evidence can be shown. He also suggested using 'One Note' which would enable the plan to be a live document. Alex suggested adding target dates.

Steve B suggested a review of last year's AIP and commented that there was nothing in the plan about monitoring our HR services.

Action: Russell

Neil commented that once finalised the GB's annual plan would be based on the AIP.

Neil asked for any further feedback on the AIP to be sent to him directly.

7. Finance

7.1 Financial Statements – these were taken as read. Neil advised that they had been covered in full by the finance committee. No questions were raised.

7.2 Approval of Budget – again this was covered in finance in detail. Neil added that finances remained tight. Governors were being asked to formally sign off the budget and he asked for questions. Mike H added that the long term picture meant there would be a surplus after 3 years. He confirmed that the finance committee were happy to recommend the budget to the board. Neil commented on the higher than usual in-year surplus but advised that this was a prudent move by Russell to increase our contingency fund to mitigate any risk associated with a pending DfE funding policy review which may have a negative impact on the budget. Russell added that if there was no surplus we would not be able to give a deficit budget. He reminded governors that we are funded retrospectively on pupil numbers and we have increase our PAN this year to 271 from 230.

Mike H proposed accepting the budget, seconded by Neil. With two abstentions everyone else was in agreement and the budget was approved.

8. GB Self Review Action Plan

Neil advised that the GB self-review would be undertaken by himself with Mark, Jeff, Russell and Jonathan who would then take the AIP and plan the committees' agenda's around monitoring progress and targets.

9. Policy Statements

9.1 Safeguarding

Andrew advised that the policy had been updated to include the new prevent duty. This relates to radicalisation and a new duty to prevent; staff need to be vigilant. Andrew said that he was keen to ensure staff are aware that they can all contact the LADO directly if no one in school is available.

Andrew commented on the huge impact social media has had on youngsters. In school it is easier to monitor and control. Neil asked the clerk to find out what training was available for governors.

Action: Clerk

Q. Alan asked whether we have any representations from other faiths in school for the students.

A. Andrew replied that whilst he has been in discussion to try and include this for students it hasn't been introduced as yet.

Action: Andrew to develop links.

The policy was agreed by all and signed by the chair.

9.2 Antibullying – Andrew advised that the policy had been updated to include recent legislation to include transphobic and biphobic as protected characteristics. Andrew pointed out that most students and staff understand that racist terminology is unacceptable and will be challenged. The focus now is on gender and homophobic issues and bullying.

Q. John W asked whether this included Cyber bullying.

A. Andrew confirmed that it did and could be recorded under the first appendix for general bullying incidents.

The policy was agreed by all and signed by the chair.

10. Action Research Project Proposal

This document was taken as read. Jonathan advised that as good practice he was advising the GB that they would be undertaking a research project next year as a focus for next year's CPD session. This will be undertaken on an individualised basis and is outlined in the CPD programme for next year.

Q. Neil asked why this had been chosen as a focus.

A. Jonathan advised that it was through feedback from staff who wanted to work more in collaborative groups and expand on work from this year into a project next year. It will be conducted within the same groups next year but they will be used as a sounding board. It will provide a forum for a deep learning focus on how to engage students in deep learning.

Neil asked Simon for his perspective. Simon said that he was slightly concerned about cross departmental working but only from a personal perspective. Fundamentally, he said that the engagement focus is excellent.

Q. Jeff asked what the rationale was for staying in the same groups.

A. Jonathan replied that there would be a much greater level of trust within the groups which has developed over this year. Simon added that he was very supportive of this approach.

11. Governor Visits

Neil said that these visits still don't happen enough, although some visits have been excellently focused ie in science and sixth form and we need to build on this. Any visits not documented please pass on to the Clerk. Neil asked Governor to click onto their profiles in GovernorHub and update their individual training profile. Any relevant training should be added.

Mike H advised that he attends the parents' evening but doesn't complete a visits form. He commented that it is a largely positive process and he can signpost to parents.

Adrian collects specific feedback from these events from parental questionnaires.

12. Any Other Business

None.

5. Items Deemed Confidential

None.

6. Date of the Next Meeting - Monday 14th September 2015

The meeting closed at 20.16