

**THE GOVERNING BODY OF A ROBERTTOWN CE (VC) JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL**

Minutes of the special meeting of the Governing Body of Roberttown CE (VC) Junior and Infant School held at 6.30 pm at the School on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

**PRESENT**

Mrs M Hoole (Chair), Ms C Cockerill, Mrs S Goodall, Mrs J S Laycock-Smith, Mr M Overend, Mr J Pickles, Mr A Toft, Mrs L Wood.

**In Attendance**

Mrs G Hewitt (Minute Clerk)

Mrs E Watson (CEO, Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust)

Mrs G Falconer (Finance Officer, Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust)

Mrs S Senior (Head Teacher, Skelmanthorpe Academy)

Item	Minutes	Action
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	Apologies for absence were received from Mrs E Bolt (consent), Rev R Burge, on sabbatical for 3 months (consent), Mr E Messenger (consent) and Mrs H Wells (consent).  There were no declarations of interest.	
2. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS TO BE BROUGHT UP UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS	No items were notified to be brought up under Any Other Business.	

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<p>3. REPRESENTATION</p>	<p>The following matters of representation were noted:</p> <p><u>Appointments</u></p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="551 363 757 402"><u>Name</u></th> <th data-bbox="981 363 1122 402"><u>Category</u></th> <th data-bbox="1339 363 1585 402"><u>With Effect From</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="551 437 815 475">Mr E J Messenger</td> <td data-bbox="981 437 1032 475">LA</td> <td data-bbox="1339 437 1464 475">01.09.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="551 475 763 513">Ms C Cockerill</td> <td data-bbox="981 475 1088 513">Parent</td> <td data-bbox="1339 475 1464 513">30.07.18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Chair informed Governors that although Mr Messenger had been reappointed. He has now resigned from his role as Governor effective from 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018.</p> <p><u>Resignations</u></p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="551 769 757 807"><u>Name</u></th> <th data-bbox="981 769 1122 807"><u>Category</u></th> <th data-bbox="1339 769 1585 807"><u>With Effect From</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="551 842 808 880">Mrs J Smart-Gant</td> <td data-bbox="981 842 1117 880">Co-opted</td> <td data-bbox="1339 842 1464 880">05.09.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="551 880 815 919">Mr E J Messenger</td> <td data-bbox="981 880 1025 919">LA</td> <td data-bbox="1339 880 1464 919">25.09.18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>With Effect From</u>	Mr E J Messenger	LA	01.09.18	Ms C Cockerill	Parent	30.07.18	<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>With Effect From</u>	Mrs J Smart-Gant	Co-opted	05.09.18	Mr E J Messenger	LA	25.09.18	
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<p>4. ELECTION OF VICE- CHAIR</p>	<p>The Chair advised that the resignation of Mrs Smart-Gant meant that there was now a vacancy for Vice-Chair.</p> <p>Governors were asked to consider whether they would be interested in taking on the role. The Head Teacher stated that it is a vital role and it is essential that the vacancy is filled.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What would happen if nobody offered to take on the role?  <b>ANSWER:</b> There is an expectation when joining a Governing Body that people are willing to take on additional roles. Hopefully somebody will step up. We can discuss this further when all Governors are present.</p> <p>The responsibility of Governors within a MAT was discussed. The Head</p>																			

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	<p>Teacher advised that the Local Governing Body would continue with the same responsibilities as before.</p> <p><b>ACTION POINT:</b> Governors are asked to consider whether they would be interested in becoming Vice-Chair.</p> <p><b>ACTION POINT:</b> The Head Teacher is to send a skills audit to Governors for them to complete and return.</p>	<p><b>All Governors</b></p> <p><b>Head Teacher/All Governors</b></p>
<p>5. LEARNING ACCORD MULTI ACADEMY TRUST</p>	<p>Introductions were made between the Governors and the representatives from the Trust. The following presentation was given:</p> <p>(a) <u>The MAT</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson advised that there are currently four schools in the Trust which are a mix of Community and Church schools. These are Scissett Academy, Skelmanthorpe Academy, Helme School and Saint Aidan's Academy. She stated that all schools are equal partners in the Trust. They all retain their autonomy and distinctive character.</p> <p>Of the schools in the Trust, one has been judged as Outstanding, one is Good, one Requires Improvement and the fourth has been judged as Inadequate and is being sponsored by the Trust. The Trust has been working intensively with the schools in difficulty to ensure they are given the necessary support to improve.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What support do you give to the schools requiring improvement?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We carry out a lot of visits to the schools, share expertise, work on the SEF, observe teaching and learning, carry out book scrutiny, help with planning and attend Governing Body meetings. We visit all schools regardless of their Ofsted judgment, but those who require our help receive more.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> Do you move resources around the schools?  <b>ANSWER:</b> Yes. We were recently successful in our application for a DfE grant and have appointed an Academy Improvement Officer and a PA for the CEO. The Academy Improvement Officer works in all the schools to ensure they all benefit from the support. The Head Teachers all work together and act as mentors to newer Head Teachers. They visit each other's schools, meet with other members of the SLT and look at data.</p> <p>(b) <u>The MAT Vision</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson advised that the MAT's strapline is Partnership Promoting Excellence. The vision includes high standards, professional development, high aspirations, outstanding progress and attainment and nurture and achievement for all. As there are increasing complex high level needs in all of the schools, nurture is extremely important. The MAT ensures all schools are inclusive.</p> <p>(c) <u>Benefits of the MAT</u></p> <p>The benefits of belonging to the MAT include a Heads' Group; the Head Teachers meet every half term. There are also teacher networks; teachers from each of the schools meet with a different focus each time and carry out moderation and book scrutiny. Mrs Senior advised that this has been reaffirming for her staff and has improved their self-esteem to see that they are on par with the other schools. MAT training days are also held together to enable the teachers to carry out group tasks involving a variety of activities in different subjects and areas.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> Are all training days held together?  <b>ANSWER:</b> Not all of them as it is still important that we work in close partnership within each school's pyramid. We have two MAT days, one pyramid and ensure there are another two dedicated to our own schools.</p>	

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	<p>Another benefit is the sharing of resources. Staff can work temporarily in another school to cover absence if possible. No staff member would be permanently moved unless it was their own decision and a post was available. As all schools in the Trust are fairly small, the schools have a bigger buying power collectively and can make large savings on resources such as CPOMS. Mrs Falconer advised that she negotiates contracts as much as possible to bring costs down. The MAT can also help with any crisis management, such as the unexpected absence of a member of the SLT. Support is always available and issues can be discussed. Mrs Senior stated that Mrs Watson is always very supportive and will talk through any issues and problems and help to resolve them. Support is also given during Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>The MAT continues to liaise with the LA and the Diocese and ensures schools are kept up to date with any developments.</p> <p>The development of teachers ensures that pupils benefit from being part of a MAT.</p> <p>(d) <u>Joining the MAT</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson explained that the day to day life of the school wouldn't feel any different after converting to an Academy. Staff receive the same pay and conditions. Pay is split equally over 12 months which makes managing the cash flow easier.</p> <p>The same Governing Body will remain at the school and will be known as the Local Governing Body. There will also be Trustees, whose main focus will be on the business side of the Trust. They will also include Committees to focus on Trust-wide attainment and progress, finance and pay. There will also be an Audit Committee although the annual accounts are dealt with by a separate company.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> Who is the auditor?  <b>ANSWER:</b> A Huddersfield based company called Simpson Wood. We will ensure this is changed every three years.</p> <p>The day to day teaching and learning will remain as it currently is. There will be no need to change the school name or uniform. However, if the school name does change the uniform will require a new logo.</p> <p>Each school has their own Policies although there are some generic MAT based HR Policies. These have been checked against LA Policies to ensure that our staff are not disadvantaged in any way.</p> <p>The school day will also stay as it is. Relationships between the school and the LA and Diocese will be the same as they previously were, however, the LA leave it to the Trust to ensure that the schools are supported as the LA doesn't have the capacity to support schools as fully as the MAT.</p> <p>(e) <u>Executive Head Teacher/CEO</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson explained her role to the Governors. She advised that her duties include challenge and support, school improvement and carrying out a comprehensive risk assessment on prospective joining schools. She also carries out Head Teacher's Performance Management if required at no charge to the school. As she is familiar with the schools and the staff, realistic and achievable, although challenging targets can be given.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> How do you deal with any resistance from staff or Head Teachers to any suggestions?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We would have a frank conversation, however as we know all the schools so well, we have not come across this.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> How does funding work?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We don't pool funding. Each school's GAG is paid into the MAT bank account. The MAT then takes a top-slice of 3.5% and the rest is distributed to each school's bank account to spend as previously agreed. The Finance Officer spends time in school prior to setting the budget to discuss and help with plans. The top-slice is low compared to other MATS. We ensure that we make the best use of funding. We have also been successful in obtaining significant funding towards school improvement works which would not have been the case with the LA as the Condition Improvement Fund is available to Academies only.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> How would you manage an Academy going overdrawn?  <b>ANSWER:</b> The Finance Officer meets with the School Business Managers each month to look at income and expenditure, discuss any coding issues and look at income and expenditure to date. Bank accounts are also checked at least once a week. If any potential problems arise, we will look at essential spend against non-essential spend and see where savings can be made.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> Do purchases have to go through the MAT first?  <b>ANSWER:</b> All purchases are agreed as they were previously, based on agreed financial limits within the school.</p> <p>It was noted that it is very healthy to have somebody external keeping an eye on finances. Mrs Falconer stated that after conversion, the biggest impact is on the Business Manager, therefore a lot of support is given through the central team and Business Mangers in the other schools.</p> <p>(f) <u>Where is the Trust to date?</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson explained that the trust was established in March 2017. The Central Team is growing. The Trustees meet regularly with the Committees focussed on core strategic work. The Trust is now an approved DfE sponsor. The Trust liaises</p>	

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	<p>with the Diocese and DfE regarding the growth strategy. Mrs Watson stated that they do not want to grow too quickly.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> Are you anticipating that any more schools will join this year?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> We are having conversations with others but we are not yet sure how this will go. A due diligence process is carried out to ensure the joining schools are not too much of a risk.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What could potentially stop you from accepting a school?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> Standards wouldn't be an issue as we can help with school improvement. Things such as a budget deficit with no plan in place to address this or building issues could be a problem. We include recommendations in the due diligence report which, if acted upon, may mean we could accept the school at a later date.</p> <p>(g) <u>Structure and Governance</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson explained the Governance structure and identified the Members and their roles and responsibilities. Governors were informed that all members are skilled people who provide challenge and support.</p> <p>(h) <u>Growth Strategy</u></p> <p>Mrs Watson advised that the Growth Strategy is regularly reviewed and the Business Plan is included on the Learning Accord website.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What would be the limit for schools?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> We want to retain the personalised MAT we have at the moment. It would be difficult to give a number of schools as it would depend on the size. We believe we need to at least double the total number of pupils we currently have to ensure we achieve better savings on purchases. We would look at pupil numbers rather than number of schools. In future we may consider clusters of local schools which would enable them to work together.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> Who would the Chair of Governors report to if there were any issues?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> We still buy into the LA services, however, the Chair could access support from the CEO or Governor Services.</p> <p>Governors were informed that not all schools have representation on the Trustees Board. There are also no Head Teachers in the nine members on the Board, however, they are welcome to attend any meeting if they wish. The MAT is open and transparent with all schools. Mrs Watson also explained that the MAT has remained with Kirklees HR and Payroll.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What has been your biggest challenge to date?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> There are challenges every day with the work we have to do around school improvement and staffing. The CEO has a huge workload but it is manageable at the moment. As the MAT grows, more support will be required.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What were your biggest fears when converting?</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> Mrs Senior experienced converting as both a staff member and Head Teacher. Both were very positive experiences. The main concerns for the Governing Body and the Community were that some parents had specifically chosen a non-church school. The staff were concerned that they would be made to do exactly as the MAT says and they would be moved to other schools. There were concerns around keeping the school's identity. However, the school has retained its own identity. It is still possible to contact the LA for help and there are the same buybacks. There is not much change in the day to day life of the school other than for the School Business Manager. All schools work together to provide support with this and to ensure that any expenditure is right for the children.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the school would like to be proactive rather than reactive and maintaining its identity is essential. Mrs Watson advised that all schools are valued equally regardless of the length of time they have been a part of the MAT.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> How did you ensure you had the support of parents?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We shared frequently asked questions and answers with them, kept them updated on the consultation process and explained why we wanted to convert and what benefits this would bring. Drop-in sessions were held at each school with some members of the Local Governing Body, Head Teachers and the CEO but these were not very well attended.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What would be the approximate timescale if there were no major issues?  <b>ANSWER:</b> It would take at least three to four months.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What is the average TUPE consultation period for staff.  <b>ANSWER:</b> This is around four weeks.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> What are the costs of conversion?  <b>ANSWER:</b> The school will receive funding towards the conversion, this will cover solicitor costs which are typically £7,500. The grant is paid directly to the MAT, however, if there are any funds leftover, these are transferred to the schools to pay for any other associated costs for the conversion.</p> <p><b><i>Mrs Watson, Mrs Senior and Mrs Falconer were thanked for their time and left the meeting.</i></b></p> <p>Governors discussed what they had learned about the MAT.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> Do we feel we are any closer to a decision?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We would like to think so, it has been in discussion for a very long time.</p> <p><b>QUESTION:</b> Would it be worth going through this process with another MAT to see how they compare?  <b>ANSWER:</b> We have spent a lot of time researching suitable MATs and agreed that this one is the best match to our school.</p>	

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	<p><b>QUESTION:</b> Would there be any benefit to speaking to other Head Teachers within the MAT.</p> <p><b>ANSWER:</b> The Head Teacher has already spoken to them and they have advised that they feel being part of the MAT is beneficial to their schools.</p> <p>The Head Teacher stated that she now needs to discuss the matter with the staff. Governors raised concerns that there may be the possibility of losing some members of staff should the conversion go ahead. The Head Teacher advised that she feels staff will be reassured to know that they won't be moved to another school and their Terms and Conditions are TUPE'd across. It could also open up other opportunities for them.</p> <p>Governors noted that the Terms and Conditions could still be changed at a later date and the top-slice may increase. However, the majority of Governors were in favour of joining the MAT as long as staff and the SLT were happy with the decision.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Head Teacher update staff and a Special Meeting of the Governing Body be held between Committee meetings on 11 October 2018.</p>	
6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	There was no other business to discuss.	
7. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS AND POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS.	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the next meetings of the Governing Body be held at 6.30pm at the School on:</p> <p>Tuesday, 2 October 2018  Thursday, 6 December 2018  Wednesday, 13 February 2019  Monday, 25 March 2019  Wednesday, 22 May 2019</p>	

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	Monday, 8 July 2019	
8. AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY	<b>RESOLVED:</b> That no part of the agenda, minutes or related papers be excluded from the copy to be made available at the School, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.	