



## MINUTES

# Local Governing Board Meeting 17:00 on Tuesday 15 November 2022

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**PRESENT:** Babu Bhattacharjee (VC), Chris Weavers (Ch), Aaron Mulhern (Headteacher), Helal Ahmed

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Lisa Tharpe (Deputy Head), Jesse White (T4, Interim CEO), Asad Muzammal (Clerk)

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**1. Apologies for Absence and welcome of any new Governors:**

- a. Apologies for absence were received from Akilah Jeffers.

**2. Business Interest and Related Party Transactions Form (annual declaration) and Declarations of pecuniary interest in any of the agenda items:**

- a. There were no declarations of pecuniary interest in today's agenda.
- b. Governors acknowledged that an annual return of Business Interest forms should still be completed even if there are no interest to declare.

**Action 221115/01:** Business Interest forms to be completed and returned to the Clerk. (All Governors)

**3. Membership Matters:**

- a. The Headteacher advised that the Chair of the Residents Association declined the invitation to join the LGB.
- b. Governors agreed that the size of the LGB should be increased and were encouraged to propose suitable candidates to join the LGB to the Chair and Headteacher before the next meeting.  
Governors acknowledged that they should also seek representation from parents and staff on the LGB.
- c. Governors noted that the NGA has updated their Governors Code of Conduct template document to clarify the Board's role to advance equality of opportunity for all; and to make clear that Staff and Parent Governors are not to act as representatives of Staff and Parents.

**Agreed:** To adopt the NGA Code of Conduct 2022.

#### 4. Minutes of the previous meetings and matters arising:

**Agreed:** The Minutes of the meetings held on 9 May 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### 5. Headteacher's Report:

- a. Governors received the Headteacher's Report.
- b. The Headteacher discussed the school's work towards the two actions from the Ofsted inspection earlier in the year, where the school retained its grading of Outstanding. The actions were related to the breadth and depth of the curriculum with a specific focus on English and phonics.

The Headteacher said that plans had been set back, as the teacher of English is on maternity leave. The post is being covered by an agency teacher. A fixed term contract to cover the maternity leave has been advertised for a January start.

The school has identified two phonics programmes. For the older students, the school is using the Teenage and Adults Phonics programme. The school has appointed a phonics specialist with experience of delivering literacy and phonics in both primary and secondary settings. Students are currently being reassessed on their reading ages and phonics training has been arranged for the next INSET day.

- c. The Headteacher said that the school had intended from September to work on improvement of assessment recording and reporting. Unfortunately, the ML that had been appointed to lead on this has been off on long term long term sick leave since early September. There have also been difficulties in the delivery and set up of the Science and Computing curriculum, as the Science teacher has not returned to work yet.
- d. The school has appointed a Mental Health & Wellbeing Lead, who is in the process of preparing an action plan to deliver whole school wellbeing. Each group of students receive a formal thought session on different elements of mental health and wellbeing. The school has also signed up with a company to support the school in working towards the mental health and wellbeing award.

The school is also working towards the award for Best Practice with TAs.

In discussing the Staff Wellbeing Survey, Governors agreed that the questions in the next survey should be prepared in a way that also captures any negatives that staff may be feeling, so that Governors and the school are aware of any issues and can look at how these might be addressed.

**Action 221115/02:** The Staff Wellbeing Survey to be an Agenda item for the next meeting. (Clerk, Headteacher)

- e. The school has appointed four TAs, to replace the two TAs who left this term and to meet the needs of increasing number of students at the school, which now stands at 54. The Headteacher said that as the roll has stabilised, the school is looking to appoint additional TAs so that there will be less reliance on agency staff. The Headteacher advised that the school had received an additional four referrals this week and it is possible that the school roll may exceed the PAN.

The Headteacher said that referrals continue to be quite healthy, but this has meant that there was a turbulent start to the term, with an increase of incidents amongst the new students in Yr7 and Yr8. They have now started to settle as the staff get to know them and

their families and put in place the required support. A number of these students are very vulnerable and traumatised.

- f. The Headteacher advised that one student had to be excluded for an incident which included over £3K of damage to furniture and walls in the new ground floor area. The police were called to the incident.
- g. In response to questions, the Headteacher advised that the Barista Bar is up and running and provides all types of coffees and smoothies. Staff are charged for their coffees and the unit has so far recorded sales of £196. JW said that the students enjoy the experience of running the Barista Bar and learning new life skills that may support their future employment prospects.

## **6. Safeguarding:**

- a. LT said that all staff received training on the updated KCSiE Guidance at the start of term. Mandatory training was also provided on Prevent, online safety and anti-bullying. All agency staff are also required to complete this training.
- b. All Governors present confirmed that they had read at least Part 2 of the updated KCSiE Guidance 2022.

LT summarised the changes:

- The term “child-on-child abuse” rather than “peer-on-peer abuse” is used throughout the updated Guidance. LT said that the reason for the change is because the word ‘peer’ was implying potentially discrepancies in age groups between the children who might be abusing each other and using the word ‘child’ makes it clear that all parties are children, who may be much older, or younger, or the same age.
- The section on Disclosure recognises that the psychology of child abuse is complex and now discusses children not always feeling ready or knowing how to tell someone they are being abused. It could also be that the abuse has become normalised for the child and they do not recognise that there is anything unusual about it, or they might feel ashamed, or they might feel protective of the abuser. LT said that staff at the school invest a lot of time in getting to know the students and families and are usually able to very quickly pick up on a change in a pupil's demeanour or behaviour in the classroom. This is then reported to the DSL to investigate further.
- Domestic abuse has been added to the list of safeguarding issues that all staff should be aware of and the Guidance makes it clear that domestic abuse:
  - can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional
  - can impact on children through seeing, hearing, or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse and/or experiencing it through their own intimate relationships.

The school uses the CPOMS system for recording and tracking of safeguarding issues and this allows the SLT to have oversight of all safeguarding issues in the school.

- Governors should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction and then at regular intervals. The training should provide them with the knowledge to ensure their college's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. LT said that Governors should contact her to receive an electronic link to online training. Governors discussed being involved in the college's annual Safeguarding audit.

**Action 221115/03:** The LA to be contacted to confirm that the Governor Safeguarding training available from The Key meets the KCSiE requirement of safeguarding training for new Governors at induction. (LT)

- The Guidance now makes it clear that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, may breach children's rights, as set out in the Human Rights Act.
- The Guidance sets out the significance of the Equality Act 2010 to safeguarding, including that schools and colleges:
  - must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics
  - must consider how they are supporting pupils with protected characteristics
  - must take positive action, where proportionate, to deal with the disadvantages these pupils face. For example, by making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils to ensure the curriculum provides them with the equal outdoor education opportunities.

The Guidance also looks at the implications of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) for education settings, including the need to be conscious that pupils with protected characteristics may be more at risk of harm and integrate this into safeguarding policies and procedures.

- Online safety additions to the Guidance state that governing bodies and proprietors should regularly review the effectiveness of filters and monitoring systems. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff are:
  - aware of and understand the systems in place
  - manage them effectively
  - know how to escalate concerns when identified.

Schools and colleges should use communications with parents and carers to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. Schools should share information with parents/carers about:
 

- what systems they have in place to filter and monitor online use
- what they are asking children to do online, including the sites they will ask to access
- who from the school or college (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

- The Guidance has been updated to reflect the extension of the role of virtual school Head to include a non-statutory responsibility for oversight of the attendance, attainment and progress of children with a social worker. Virtual school Heads should identify and engage with key professionals to help them understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children.
- The Guidance now emphasises the importance of providing LGBTQ+ children with a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.
- On safer recruitment, the Guidance clarifies that a curriculum vitae (CV) should only be accepted alongside a full application form and is not sufficient on its own to support safer recruitment. Checks Information has been added to highlight that schools should consider online searches as part of their due diligence checks on shortlisted candidates.

LT said that online checks being carried will need to be reflected in the job application form and advice is being sought from EPM. Governors discussed the difficulty in checking candidates' social media accounts if they have been set on private and how this could also be difficult to apply uniformity if some candidates' accounts have privacy settings and others do not. Governors agreed that such checks would also need to be systematic and methodical, with a robust paper trail. Governors discussed how schools would also need to be wary of unconscious bias when reviewing candidates' social media. For example, in cases where a candidate may express a view or opinion online, which is different to that of the person who is checking their social media. Governors agreed that staff could not be expected to use their own social media accounts to check the social media accounts of potential candidates and it would be impractical to expect schools to set up social media accounts across different platforms and train staff on how to access these. Governors also

discussed how employment agencies would need to provide assurances to schools that they had completed those checks before presenting candidates to schools.

**Action 221115/04:** EPM to be contacted for advice on online checks and on providing a Trust-wide Recruitment Policy. (JW)

- Regarding allegations made against/concerns raised in relation to teachers, the Guidance makes it clear that learning lessons applies to all cases, not just those which are concluded and found to be substantiated. Low level concerns information has been updated to make it clear that a Low-level Concerns Policy should contain a clear procedure for confidentially in sharing concerns. The school can decide whether concerns are initially shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/nominated person or directly with the Headteacher/Principal. The Headteacher should ultimately be informed of all low-level concerns and make the final decision on how to respond. Where appropriate this can be done in consultation with the DSL. The Guidance also clarifies that low level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers; and schools and colleges should consult with their LADO if unsure whether low-level concerns shared about a member of staff meet the harm threshold.
- The section on child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment provides new information, emphasising:
  - the importance of explaining to children that the law is in place to protect rather than criminalise them
  - the importance of understanding intra-familial harms, and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
  - the need for schools and colleges to be part of discussions with statutory safeguarding partners.

17:35 – Babu Bhattacharjee left at this point.

- c. Case management meetings have taken place for the seven new students who started this term. The Headteacher advised that one of the new students is struggling to come to terms with the fact that he is at a Special School and he has been very derogatory towards the other students at the school. This has made it difficult for him to be a part of the school community.
- d. LT said that some of the new students had arrived with undiagnosed needs. A few of them have also been in and out of schools over the last two years and have got into a cycle where they know that if they present in a certain way, then they will be excluded and moved on. The school is working alongside parents to help change that culture. LT said that when parents have contacted social services in the past, they have not been provided with the right support. The school has since supported parents by organising six MASH referrals so far, which were only initiated due to the school's recording of evidence to support the referrals and the school's good relationships with social services in a number of LAs. As an example of the type of robust evidence gathering the school provides, LT presented details of the evidence presented to social service for one student who was then placed on a CP plan,. Governors wished to record their thanks and appreciation to the school for its continued support of families of students at the school and for having built those positive relationships with the different LAs.
- e. The Headteacher advised of a student from Enfield who had been referred last year. The family then went on an extended overseas visit and the referral was paused. The student has now arrived back in the country, but much of his information was missing and his EHCP has not been reviewed in over five years. Once further information was obtained, the school

assessed that IMHS is not an appropriate provision for this student as it does not have the resources to meet his needs and there is a risk of harm to the student and the other students at IMHS. There is also a lack of parental engagement.

Enfield insist that the student comes to the school and were naming IMHS on his EHCP. This was challenged by the school and has been escalated to the Head of Service at Enfield. HA offered to represent Governors at the meeting with Enfield. Governors agreed that a meeting with Enfield was preferable to the case becoming a legal matter and going to tribunal.

## **7. Finance Update:**

- a. Governors received the redacted (IMHS only) August T4 management accounts. The overall financial forecast for the Trust is an in-year deficit of £150K. This is made up from a £339K in-year deficit at ArtsX combined with the £188K in-year surplus at IMHS. The T4 central budget forecasts a breakeven position.

JW said that ArtsX is expected to return to a breakeven position by the end of this year, which will free up more funding for IMHS for projects such as development of the outside space.

Governors acknowledged that the Trust has a Finance & Audit Committee, which reviews the college's finances regularly and in detail.

- b. In discussing staffing costs, JW said that in July, the Government announced that it had accepted the recommendations of the School Teacher Review Body (STRB) that teacher starting salaries increase by 8.9% from September alongside a salary increase of 5% for more experienced teachers and leaders (on the upper and leadership pay scales); and a flat £2,355 (London weighting) for Support staff, pro-rata the number of hours and weeks that they work. This is an unfunded pay award and has significantly impacted the budget. Governors noted that the Government is currently consulting on a revised School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). JW said that Academies do not have to comply with the STPCD, however the Trust has taken the decision to follow the recommendations.
- c. Governors discussed implementing an inflationary increase to the banding of students, as it had been a few years since they were set and an uplift is due.

## **8. Policies & Documents:**

- a. LT confirmed that the Child Protection Policy has been updated with reference to the updated KCSiE Guidance. Other policies, such as the Health & Safety Policy have also included updates from the KCSiE Guidance.

**Agreed:** Governors approved the following policies and documents:

- Child Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

## **9. Chair's Action:**

- a. CW advised that the CP was approved by Chairs Action in September so that the school could proceed with the updates from the KCSiE Guidance.

## **10. LGB Development Plan:**

- a. Governors noted the availability of NGA online training.

## **11. Any other Business:**

- a. Forward Agenda
  - Outdoor Space Development

**12. Date of the next meeting:**

a. JW advised that going forward, the meeting structure will change to once every half-term to termly meetings (three per year).

■ 13 March ■ 10 July

**13. Any Confidential Items:**

a. CW advised that a staff member no longer works at the school following a Disciplinary Hearing and an Appeal Hearing.

The meeting closed at 18:50

..... date  
Chair

**Decisions**

**Agreed:** To adopt the NGA Code of Conduct 2022.

**Agreed:** The Minutes of the meetings held on 9 May 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**Agreed:** Governors approved the following policies and documents: ■ Child Protection Policy ■ Health & Safety Policy

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**Actions**

**Action 221115/01:** Business Interest forms to be completed and returned to the Clerk. (All Governors)

**Action 221115/02:** The Staff Wellbeing Survey to be an Agenda item for the next meeting. (Clerk, Headteacher)

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