

MINUTES OF MEETING



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Academy: The Aspire Multi- Academy Trust
Meeting title: Meeting of the Board of Directors
Date and time: Thursday 4th February 2021 at 6:30pm
Location: Virtual via ZOOM

Membership

'A' denotes absence

Mr K Daniell	KD
Mr M Skinner (CEO)	MS
Mr P Golightly (Chair)	PG
Mrs C Meese	CM
Mr M Fielding (arrived at 6.40 pm)	MF
Mr C Anderson	CA
Mr R Sewell	RS

In attendance

Mrs. S Harrison -Clerk to the Board
Mrs H Detheridge – MAT Finance and Business
Manager
Ms. C Bills (Headteacher at GPS) left at 7.10 pm CB

Glossary

ABC	Archbishop Cranmer CofE Academy
ABM	Academy Business Manager
BJ	Brown Jacobson (Solicitors)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DBE	Diocesan Board of Education
EBSP	East Bridgford St Peter's CofE Academy
FWC	Finance & Workforce Committee
GPS	Gunthorpe CofE Primary School
KWS	Kirkby Woodhouse Primary School
LA	Local Authority
LGB	Local governing body
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
MFBM	MAT Finance & Business Manager
RSC	Regional Schools Commissioner
SJS	Sir John Sherbrooke Junior School
OTS	Oak Tree Primary school
WPS	Winthorpe Primary school

Action

BD/21/01 Apologies for absence

MF had advised he would be slightly late joining the meeting.

BD/21/03 was discussed at this point.

Opening Prayer by RS

BD/21/02 Conflicts of interest

There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for items of business on the agenda.

BD/21/03 Report from Claire Bills, Headteacher at GPS.

GPS was a small school with 100 pupils on roll and was in the 20% of the smallest schools in the country. Many children travelled from outside of the catchment area, and the numbers of children with SEND and FSM were outlined.

The vacancies on the LGB had now been filled and the membership supported the vision and ethos of a church school.

The last OFSTED inspection rating had been GOOD in 2013 and the school were now aspiring to gain an OUTSTANDING rating at the next inspection.

SIAMS inspection in 2019 rated GPS as a GOOD school.

The school were experiencing high levels of pupil attendance during the current lockdown.

The challenges, strategies put in place and pupil engagement during the pandemic period were outlined.

Staff wellbeing and personal development were a priority.

The advantages and challenges of being a small school were highlighted.

A recent parental survey was overwhelmingly positive with 82% of responses finding the level of the children's' work just right, which had been set as per DfE guidance; this survey result had a positive impact on staff.

CA asked about the projected pupil numbers given the difficulties of promoting the school during a pandemic.

CB responded that they had been unable to do all the usual things they would normally do to engage prospective parents but had tried to do as much virtually as possible. There was a full cohort of reception children this year and whilst the projected numbers for the following year were less, the 2 subsequent years were higher, which was reassuring. During the last year one child had left the school but five children had joined, so the numbers had grown during the year.

CM asked how the school were ensuring that all children received an equitable amount of teacher contact given that the children attending school were in 'bubbles' which were being led by TAs.

CB replied that the children who were in school were accessing the virtual lessons delivered by the teachers with the TA supporting them in the same way that a parent would support them if they were at home. The TAs were also facilitating communication with the teachers so that all the children were receiving an equitable education.

In response to a question from PG. CB outlined how the wellbeing of both the staff and herself personally were being addressed.

Directors thanked CB for her presentation and her dynamic leadership of GPS and offered further support if required.

CB noted that she had a strong network of support from other headteachers both within and outside of the Aspire MAT.

Ms. Bills left the meeting at 7.10 p.m.

RS led the opening prayer.

BD/21/04 Minutes of last Board meeting – 3rd December 2020

The minutes of the previous Board meeting held, 3rd and 10th December 2020 having been previously circulated, were approved and electronically signed by the chair subject to the following amendment:

BD/20/76 REMOVE 'A coding error at KWS had been identified by the accountants which affected the revenue balance.'

And **REPLACE** with 'The prior year revenue reserve balance at KWS had been incorrectly reported in the 2018/19 Accounts due to a misallocation of Capital Spend from revenue to the Fixed Asset Fund. The auditors will re-state the 2018-19 balances this year in the 2019/20 Accounts.'

BD/20/73 Appendix 4 **REMOVE** 'HD informed that the computing figure was 33% and not 20% as written in the document'
And **REPLACE** with 'HD informed that the depreciation rate for computer equipment should be 33% and not 20% as written in the document'

BD/21/05 **Matters arising** (not otherwise on agenda)

BD/20/72 - A meeting for the LGB Chairs was provisionally planned for the following week.

BD/20/73 – PG reported that the final accounts had been updated, electronically signed and submitted to ESFA. The hard copy required for Companies House had to be submitted by May 21.

PG/MS

BD/21/06 **CEO's report** (including updates on COVID-19, Staffing and Expansion)

The CEO's report had been previously circulated for consideration. MS highlighted:

There had been very few days in school since the last meeting due to the national lockdown, and schools would not be reopening until at least 8th March. The SATs had been cancelled for the second successive year so reading, writing and maths would need to be teacher assessed. This would impact on performance targets however targets would remain ambitious.

OFSTED inspections for ABC and EBSP would be full section 5 inspections as both schools had not been inspected since pre 2015. Schools that had not been inspected for more than 10 years would be prioritised for an inspection, so both schools would be in this category. MS would be providing support to these schools to help them to prepare for inspection.

MS noted that objective 4 of his priorities for the Spring term (To engage in the quality control of teaching and learning across all academies) had been made more difficult due to the national lockdown. The MAT SIP model outlined that MS would work with academies to address this however consideration was being given to a project that would utilise an external reviewer (a working OFSTED inspector) to work alongside MS in this. This review would cover the remote learning offer and fuller reviews once pupils were back on school sites.

PG asked if OFSTED were doing any inspections remotely.

MS replied that they were not doing grading inspections remotely however were monitoring schools that were rated as RI via TEAMS and ZOOM to ensure that adequate provision was being delivered during lockdown. OFSTED had stated that they would resume inspections in the Summer term and KWS was the most likely academy to receive an inspection so preparation support was currently being offered to them.

CM asked if MS had undertaken any monitoring of the online provision delivered by KWS or any of the other academies or was this something that he would consider for the future.

MS responded that the first few weeks in January had been very stressful for staff following the announcement of the national lockdown and he had been supporting staff with the many dilemmas that had arisen as he was very conscious of maintaining staff wellbeing. He intended to present his monitoring plan to HTs on Tuesday of the following week which would be implemented in 3-stages during February, March and the Summer term.

CM noted that OTP were providing paperwork packs but no online learning which was more difficult to monitor.

MS replied that there was digital poverty in the area and parents had voted for paper-based learning.

CM asked if there was more that the MAT needed to do to address the challenges at OTP. Other areas with similar levels of deprivation had managed to acquire second hand devices to enable children to access professional teaching online as currently the children at OTP were not accessing any professional teaching. In the longer term this posed the question of how the MAT was going to be able to move OTP out of special measures, as the school could not be dependent on the HT teaching in KS1.

MS informed that the staffing situation remained the same, and more children were accessing school than during the last lockdown. Parents had refused devices and voted against engaging with online provision, opting for paper-based work packs. The HT had to engage with them in a way that was acceptable to them and they were responding; staff were also able to visually see the children when the packs were delivered. The HT and MS were aware that when the children were back on site the teaching that they receive would need to be outstanding. A social worker had been appointed so this had reduced the burden on the HT's time. OFSTED would take the level of deprivation into consideration.

See confidential note

CM noted that this would need to be kept under review, as it was the Board's responsibility to be aspirational for the children, and the current targets were not an improvement on previous ones.

OTP IEB

MS agreed to discuss with the HT.

MS

PG suggested that an IEB meeting at OTP be planned for the next half term when the issue could be raised.

PG

RS suggested that distribution of USB sticks could be an alternative to online and may be more acceptable to parents.

MS would need to discuss with the HT.

MS

CM agreed to forward the names of some similar schools to MS so that he could research the issue further.

CM

RS asked how the teacher assessments could be quality controlled to ensure consistency with subsequent years given the lack of external assessment.

MS informed that teacher assessments did take place annually in order to ensure validity for Y6 writing work. Samples of work were moderated across the Aspire academies so this would be done for reading, comprehension and writing and past papers could be used for Maths.

PG thanked MS for his comprehensive report.

BD/21/07

Finance & Workforce

- Budget status of academies and MAT

HD reported that some of the academies were facing challenges due to the lockdown as a result of the loss of parental income from out of school clubs, in house catering, and the need for additional supply staff. A few staff had been furloughed as in the last lockdown. All academies would be supported to review their forecast in light of the data, staffing and the impact of COVID-19.

KWS had the largest deficit last year, MS and HD had met with them to look at their requirements.

Funds were to be made available for COVID-19 support however the final details regarding these funds were still awaited from the DfE.

- CIF bids

A report of the CIF bids for 20/21 and 21/22 had been available for Directors to view prior to the meeting. The outcome of the submitted bids for the current year would not be known until after Easter.

HD updated Directors on the progress of the project works funded from previous successive bids.

- Development of websites and central contracts

HD informed that one element of the central contracts was to achieve a discount for several schools who purchase a service together such as development of websites.

HD had looked at the central contracts due for renewal. The contract that would need to be addressed was the contract with RM as this expired early in January 2022 and included a 4-month notice period. This would be discussed at the next Finance meeting.

**Finance
agenda**

- Staffing

There had been a query relating to the entitlement of annual leave for new staff in post which had been circulated via email. PG advised that he would deal with comments via email and respond to the query in the next few days.

PG

BD/21/08 Standards Committee

There were no issues to report.

MS noted that the next meeting was planned for 21st April, however in order to review two terms of progress data he suggested holding a further meeting in March. MS to liaise with committee members.

MS

BD/21/09 Oak Tree IEB

See confidential note.

BD/21/10 MAT policies

The following draft policies had previously been circulated to Directors for consideration. PG noted that the policies contained minor revisions as there had been no changes in law or regulations in respect of the policies.

- Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy (incorporating Gifts & Hospitality)
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

CA noted that there was a minor inconsistency relating to the review period in the Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy, and the wording of point 7.1 was unclear. PG agreed to review these two minor points with CA.

PG/CA

PG

KD noted that the sum of £25 was quite low in current terms in relation to gifts. PG agreed to review this.

Directors unanimously

APPROVED

The Conflicts of Interest Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy (incorporating Gifts & Hospitality) subject to the minor amendments noted above.

BD/21/11 Approval of new LGB members

There were no new members to approve.

BD/21/12 AOB

There was no AOB.

BD/21/13 Confidentiality

Directors **AGREED** that all papers and reports be made available as necessary with the exception of discussions deemed confidential at items **BD/21/06 and BD/21/09**

BD/21/14 Dates of meetings for 2021/22

PG proposed moving from the 5 meetings per year schedule to a 6 meetings per year schedule which was in line with the recommendations.

Directors unanimously **AGREED** to a 6 meetings/year schedule for 2021/22

- Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 6.30 pm
- Tuesday 20th July 2021 at 6.30 pm
- Thursday 16th September at 6.30 pm
- Thursday 2nd December at 6.30 pm
- Thursday 3rd February 2022 at 6.30 pm
- Thursday 7th April 2022 at 6.30 pm
- Tuesday 24th May 2022 at 6.30 pm
- Thursday 14th July 2022 at 6.30 pm

Meeting closed at 8.37 pm.

Signed (chair) Date