

**Directors (ie trustees) meeting
Meeting held on 30th January at 5 pm,
at Brixington Primary Academy,
Draft Part I Minutes**

Present: in person: A Walmsley (chair), P Walker (CEO), A Denner, and M Williams
virtually: P Wimsett and C Bromfield

In attendance in person: I Candy (C Sec)
virtually: T Winn (Trust safeguarding lead, up to item 4), C Fegan (DSI), K Powell (DoI), A Jenkins (DPD) and R Warwick (candidate to the role of trustee)

Quorum: the meeting was quorate

Circulation: Directors and members (through GovernorHub), Dioceses (EDEN and SDBE via GovernorHub), schools & public (through Trust website)

	Decision		Action due
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	1. Welcome, introductions and apologies		
	Apologies were received from R Shaw (clash with work commitments) and A Gavin (annual leave). R Warwick was expected late but was unable to attend due an emergency at work. M Platten arrived late due to traffic. A Jenkins joined late due to traffic.		
	2. Prayer		
	Led by P Wimsett.		
	3. Declaration of Conflict of Interests		
	Declarations of conflict of interests were invited by the chair. None was made. I Candy will make contact with R Warwick in due course to ensure the required declaration of interests form is completed.		I Candy
	4. To receive and discuss the report from the Trust Safeguarding Lead (T Winn)		
	The Trust safeguarding strategic plan for 2024-25, Trust safeguarding lead report, Jan 2025 school safeguarding RAG rating report, contextual safeguarding spreadsheet and DSL excellence in safeguarding document were circulated ahead of the meeting. <u>School safeguarding RAG rating report</u> T Winn highlighted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She had amended this report to add the definition of what it means for safeguarding to be effective in the FFT, in response to the feedback from directors when she had last reported to them in July. • She was waiting for the reports from two external safe reviews to rate the two schools that do not have a rating in the document. • Currently of the schools that have been rated, 24 out of 27 are deemed to be effective. • Safeguarding at Mardy Dean's had been deemed as effective by Ofsted but was rated as amber for FFT because of the improvements that still need to be made for the school to be secure in this area. • Safeguarding at Hawkchurch was also rated amber, mainly due to some events in the autumn term, around managing allegations and intimate 		Appendices 1 - 5

care. These matters were rectified. There is an action plan in place, supported by regular visits from H Davies (Trust safeguarding officer), to ensure good practice becomes embedded.

- Safeguarding at Salcombe was also rated amber. There is now new leadership in place: F de Beer (HoS, Aveton Gifford) was supporting the school, then a new head was due to start after February half-term. T Winn was confident that the school would be rate green in the summer term. Staffing had been an issue, with the deputy DSL having been on maternity leave. H Slater was also supporting the school and the transition to the new leader.
- For the three schools that came from Acorn, it was noted as part of their safe review that their child protection and safeguarding policy had not yet been transferred to the FFT format. This was actioned promptly. There were no other concerns but some recommendations for best practice.
- She was not expecting any concerns to be reported for the two remaining schools transferring from Acorn whose report had not been received yet (Mrs Ethelston's and St Andrew's).

The board queried the time frame for the three schools rated amber to turn green. They also wanted to know what would happen if significant change did not happen within the expected timeframe.

T Winn was expecting both Salcombe and Hawkchurch to be rated green by the end of the Spring term, possibly a little longer for Hawkchurch. She was working with the school linked directors and the SI officers to achieve this.

However, the situation at Mary Dean's was more complicated. The school has a Rapid Improvement Plan and clear safeguarding milestones to achieve. If these milestones were not met, T Winn would be following this with A Jenkins so that appropriate action is taken.

The board commented that they found this document very helpful.

T Winn further reported that:

- H Davies was now working three days a week (up from one) and this was working really well, to help with the operational focus on schools, supervision, developing guidance for Family Support Workers, and to match the capacity needed for the enlarged trust.
- T Winn had also focussed on SCR for administrators. The DES safeguarding team ran a free trial training session for the Trust administrators whose content she helped to develop. The Trust business managers were due to be doing bespoke follow-ups to the session, working within the three partnerships.
- R Shaw (Lead safeguarding trustee) had visited Mary Dean's and St Budeaux to validate the Trust assessment. (The visit reports were circulated at the December 2024 board meeting). This had been useful to have both support and challenge and a fresh pair of eyes.
- She had provided support to St Budeaux, together with C Bennett (SI officer) following the death of the baby sibling of a pupil. A rapid review process was completed for the sibling. There were no concerns to follow up from this. The HoS was due to meet with T Winn to understand the process which the Trust had not come across before and so she could continue to support the school.

The board queried whether T Winn had any concerns arising from the Ofsted investigation at Axminster following the outcome of the TRA process for a previous head.

T Winn was due to visit the school the week after this meeting to follow up the safe review. The Trust was expecting to get a section 11a report from Ofsted. The head, C Hulbert, had done some useful work around whistleblowing and reporting concerns, following comments from staff when the outcome of the TRA process was made public.

The board asked whether the "Excellence in safeguarding" document had been internally produced.

<p>It was developed by T Winn in response to the heads wish to have a reference document.</p> <p>[A Jenkins joined the meeting at this stage]</p> <p>This set outs what the role of the DSL requires, how to access practical information, as well as key the Trust safeguarding culture and key expectations. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads are expected to review the situation of vulnerable children regularly, to make sure support is in place and progress is made. • CPOM testing is to reflect on whether systems do what the Trust wants them to do, whether all staff log concerns, and whether the school safeguarding team acts timely and appropriately. <p>The board queried whether this formed part of the Trust central team visits.</p> <p>This forms part of visits by either T Winn or the linked directors/SI officers or is done as part of the safeguarding network meetings.</p> <p>The board asked whether T Winn could share a few specific aspects of safeguarding to have it mind when doing visits / for hub board meetings to ask.</p> <p>The information on the back of the document provides a good prompt to ask questions: when did you do your last CPOM audit? What did it tell you? When did you last check the SCR? What checks did you do?</p> <p>Being aware that harmful sexual behaviours are prevalent nationally and also within the trust schools, trustees asked what the Trust does when a child is repeating these behaviours.</p> <p>Low level concerns and managing allegations is something that is regularly raised. It would be useful to ask staff during visits if they know how to report allegations. And to ask heads if they have had any reports and what they have done about them.</p> <p>T Winn was thanked for her reports and attendance and left the meeting at this point.</p>	
<p>5. Minutes of the last meeting</p>	
<p>5.1. To approve the minutes (Part I and Part II) of the last meeting (held on 19 Dec 2024)</p>	
<p>The draft minutes (Part I and Part II) of the previous meeting were circulated shortly before the meeting.</p> <p>These were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the chair.</p>	
<p>5.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda</p>	
<p>The list of matters arising was circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>The following points were raised and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles of Association update to include Bath & Wells DBE as Foundation Member: there were some "tweaks" to be made so the Articles can be approved. • During the AGM, Members asked probing questions around school improvement, Westcliff and Mary Dean's because of the outcome of their Ofsted inspection, as well as whether trustees had been aware of the situation for these two schools and had acted on concerns quickly enough. Members also asked about any current concerns and how quickly these were being dealt with. • The addition of Bath & Wells meant making changes to Members to retain but not exceed a simple foundation majority at Members level. In addition, the non-foundation member has resigned. Therefore it had been agreed that Foundation Members would appoint the University of St Mark and St John as a Non-Foundation Member. A Walmsley had contacted Exeter University to see if they could suggest someone to become a Non-Foundation Member, to replace the one who had resigned. If there were able to do so, A Walmsley would step down from being a Member as chair in order to keep the appropriate foundation majority. • It was agreed that the actions linked to Mrs Ethelston's and the Bestic Trust would be followed up by the Strategic & Finance committee. 	<p>Appendix 6</p> <p>S&F committee</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of expertise of Portesham academy committee community member: now that the head has been informed that the academy committee has been disbanded, I Candy will approach the community member around becoming a member of the Dorset Hub. Chickerell committee: It was agreed that C Fegan would follow this up with the school as part of her next visit there. <p>The meeting went into Part II to discuss confidential matters arising. The meeting went back into Part I. [M Platten joined the meeting as this point]</p>	<p>I Candy C Fegan</p>
<p>6. To receive the verbal feedback from the committee chairs</p>	
<p>There was no feedback to share as there had been no committee meetings since the last board meeting.</p>	
<p>7. To receive and discuss the CEO report</p>	
<p>The CEO report, anticipated 2025-26 pupil numbers, central team appointment update following the transfer of the Acorn schools, and the final reports for the recent inspections at Chickerell and Lady Seaward's were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p><u>Exeter Road:</u> P Walker reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He had met with Devon new Head of Inclusion and Learning (HoIL) to talk about the partnership. The new HoIL was very positive about the impact of the partnership and wanted to know whether the Trust wished to continue to support the school and agreed to it potentially joining the Trust. P Walker had confirmed this was the case but the financial situation of the school remained a barrier. Staff redundancies have been made to address the ongoing in-year deficit, but this did not address the substantial, historical deficit. The Trust will need to review the school financial position jointly with Devon to assess what the final deficit would be if the school were to join in 2025-26. The Joint Management Partnership committee had met once and is due to meet termly. <p>The board queried why the deficit amount was not clear. The full deficit amount is not known because some redundancies have been different from what was planned and some staff have volunteered to reduce their hours. The deficit may reduce by about half, but it would still remain significant. In addition, the school may need to add one class in Sep 2025 due to the predicted 2025-26 intake. It will also look at income generation.</p> <p>The board enquired how the head was finding the extended secondment. She would not stay at the school if the school did not become part of the FFT. It is always difficult to go through a redundancy process in a school. She is having a positive impact on SI.</p> <p><u>Ofsted inspection outcomes:</u> The board noted that the inspection reports for Lady Seaward's and Chickerell had both been very positive.</p> <p><u>Class organisation:</u> P Walker reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The central team had just started to review class numbers vs pupil numbers but needed to look at this in more details, taking into account class physical sizes and how the year groups fitted together in order to provide a good standard of education. The aim was to decide this as quickly as possible so that staff have enough time to make any resulting changes in curriculum to reflect any changes. Primary schools are now seeing the peak of the decrease but should see a smaller decrease in future. <p>The board probed around the structure for the smallest school within the Trust (Membury). The financial situation worked for the school because of the lump sum and sparsity factor. Parents choose the school because of its small size and because it suits their</p>	<p>Appendices 7 – 9</p>

<p>children. It is getting more regular support from the Trust because of its size and links with Axminster for some activities.</p> <p>The board asked whether it would be helpful for the school to have more visits to help them prepare for Ofsted. [Addition post meeting: the fact that pupils were not used to visitors was cited as a reason for the outcome of the last inspection].</p> <p>Visits would be helpful to help the school get used to visitors.</p> <p>C Bromfield reported that she had visited the school in her role as East Hub chair and the visit had been very positive.</p> <p>The school will be supported by the Trust during Ofsted as the head is a teaching head and also to communicate the specific context to Ofsted. The school timetable has been reviewed to help support this so that the support is planned depending on what the situation is on different days.</p> <p>The chair reminded all present that the Trust had been advised to follow up a specific potential H&S risk to see whether it still applies during the due diligence process. P Walker was asked to follow this up with A Gavin.</p> <p>The meeting went into Part II to discuss confidential matters linked to the Trust central team and a premises issue at one school.</p> <p>The meeting went back into Part I.</p>	<p>P Walker / A Gaving</p>
<p>8. To receive and discuss KPIs for suspensions</p>	
<p>The Trust wide suspension dashboard and dashboards for the school that had suspended pupils in the current year were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>The board queried how the FFT figures compare to national averages.</p> <p>It is difficult to compare because published national averages are at least one or two terms behind. However, the Trust has one of the lowest figures for suspensions in Devon. The number of suspensions increased by 33%, during the autumn term, but the Trust is quite static in numbers where other trusts numbers have been increasing. The biggest issue for the Trust is repeat suspensions for a small number of pupils in a small number of schools. Schools are trying hard to accommodate needs despite the issues with the wider SEND system. The length of suspensions is also shorter than in other trusts.</p> <p>The board probed whether schools had enough time to do something different for that small number of pupils within the short time they are suspended.</p> <p>This is being looked at. Currently the Trust is not collecting reintegration information centrally. It is planning to do so in order to see what is being done different to / alternative to and whether schools have enough time to put things in place before pupils come back to school.</p> <p>A small number of parents are unhappy about suspensions or in one case a suspension that included days where their child was due to access Alternative Provision which is there to support the child.</p> <p>A lot of the incidents are physical and linked to needs which are not easy to meet in a mainstream setting.</p> <p>The board enquired whether any Trust school was an outlier in terms of suspensions.</p> <p>The Trust is working more closely with one school where the number of suspensions may be linked to teaching.</p> <p>All suspensions have been made for sound reasons. Schools always check with the Trust educational team first, who challenge the need to suspend. The Trust wants to do the right thing for children and is probably more lenient than some other settings e.g. a primary trust in Cornwall which are permanently excluding small numbers.</p> <p>The Trust is also supporting staff and leaders. The current approach may not be sustainable in a very small number of cases.</p> <p>The board asked about the impact of the incidents leading to suspensions on staff, and whether schools were making clear that some children were close to permanent exclusion where necessary.</p> <p>Staff affected by incidents are supported.</p> <p>The Trust educational team felt that schools were not yet at the stage where pupils were at risk of permanent exclusion. Children may need to be suspended for longer and over AP. The Trust will also consider off-site directions where possible as an alternative to help prevent permanent exclusion.</p>	<p>Appendices 10 - 17</p>

<p>9. Policies and compliance</p> <p>The policy and compliance report and the proposed policies were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>SEND policy: This was updated by K Powell in H Evans's absence (Trust SEND lead) and in consultation with H Slater (Trust SEMH lead). The policy was approved by the board. K Powell explained that the Trust was looking at developing a more bespoke policy in future.</p> <p>Staff leave of absence policy: This was updated because one sentence had accidentally been omitted in a previous update. The policy was approved by the board.</p> <p>Nursery admissions and charging policies for Axminster, Charmouth and Chickerell: I Candy explained that these had been developed so the appropriate policies are in place and the Trust is compliant. These policies were approved by the board.</p>	<p>Appendix 19</p>
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Meeting start: 5 pm; meeting close: 6.45 pm

Date of the next meetings: SFC 30 Jan 2025, EC 13 Feb 2025, SFC 20 Mar 2025, ARC 20 Mar 2025, EC 3 Apr 2025, Full board 24 Apr 2025

These minutes are agreed by those present as being a true record.

Signed:.....
Chair of Directors

Date:.....

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