

Meeting of the OLICAT Directors
 19th May 2021
 18:00 by video



Attendees: Christopher Donnellan, Bill Nelson, Lucia Debertol, Catherine Leong, Joe Burns, Nathan Wells, Nathalie Young, Sue Robinson, Tony Bishop, Andrew Waterhouse

Apologies: Deacon Michael O’Leary

Agenda item	Actions
1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda None declared.	
2. Minutes and Matters arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification on 5.7 (BN) that the example complaint was external to the organisation and poor handling/policy/process had created the complaint. • Minutes accepted as a fair record. 	
3. Chairs Action The Chair at the Good Shepherd has resigned due to ill health. The Vice Chair as a parent governor by the scheme of delegation would not ordinarily be able to assume the Chair’s role. This can be excepted as the Directors discretion for an interim period to enable continuity/stability.	
4. Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) No critical issues arising in any of the schools, none flagged in LACs or in conversations with heads. b) TB reported moving ahead we’re looking at a more systematic approach to safeguarding and are trialling an audit tool with the aim this will be rolled across all schools from September. It has been shared at LAC chair meetings. One aspect of this is to have a clearer way of giving a safeguarding overview across the trust. c) Covid 19 – there are no bubbles out at the moment. We have had two positives since full school return – 1 secondary, 1 primary. Some staff have also tested positive but no additional self isolations. 1 confirmed as Indian variant in Bedford. We are in a position where we could reduce measures, but all heads have decided to maintain existing measures staggered start/ends, movement controls, masks etc. We will review at end of half term. JB queried what is situation with LA schools – are they doing the same thing. TB confirmed it varies by area with Bedford is doing the same as us but no specific guidance from Nhants as yet. We are working on the premise of schools looking locally at needs and putting appropriate measures in place. CD noted Bedford’s Chief Education Officer has been sending out regular updates due to the Indian variant. We have and remain generally in line with LAs. Other Bedford schools have been having more positives. 	a.

5. School Improvement

Nathan Wells gave an overview of actions carried out so far and direction of travel. Nathan reported Ofsted reports and school reviews informed the first three initiatives: Pupil Premium, Inclusion, and SEND.

Pupil Premium will be an ongoing initiative/process. Initial reception has been encouraging. Key points to note:

- No tool available to establish effectiveness. Guidance document used to develop self-evaluative process.
- Audits carried out in each school feeding into a shared audit and action plan.
- Identification of shared trends/needs and good practice.
- Budget/strategy was largely cyclical and retrospective – no linkage to actual individual needs.
- Development of standardised planning requirement consisting of a barrier map and school strategy document identifying how student need will be met those students in terms of planning and budget. Submission and collation by NW in May with an annual cycle initiated in September.
- Measurable targets now linked to budget. Every spend has a purpose and a measure for success.
- Implementation of a pastoral impact measure process to sit with academic success measures.

JB asked for further elaboration of the pastoral measure and how this differs. NW outlined in prior pastoral experience it was very difficult to measure the impact of pastoral structures without it being subjective and anecdotal. PASS assessment places a number against a range of categories (ie sense of belonging) and allows us to start to look at impact of interventions. Some of these will be academic, but some student needs will be pastoral. JB observed this sounds like a useful item for schools to place in front of OFSTED.

BN – something I use in a business context, particularly in underperforming groups. A 1 question survey – if there was one thing you could ask me about. Questions link to priorities and language registers being used.

LD queried if there has been a review of the validity of the data coming out of it ideally parallel with longitudinal surveys of learners. NW stated we're aware it isn't a precise science, and we have only used for 1 year. Whilst it gives data and numbers for the first time we do not yet have enough data yet to monitor patterns. LD queried as a tool that's been used elsewhere is there any research on data validity worth looking for. TB confirmed we do have that assurance as it is something that has been used for around 20 years now ,, and as a Trust we are marrying it with baseline and progress data.

LD wondered with implementation, analysis, gap, paperwork if SLT in schools have capabilities/support to be able to implement that what is needed? NW reported impression is on visiting is, other than dictating systems, leaving the how to address open to them, and schools have decided to address in a range of ways. Some have costed and done 1-2-1 packages, others have focused on areas. That's their decision, focus was on having tools to set clear targets and evaluation. Over the next few years we should be able to cost benefit analyse what's had the most

effect and come up with a trust wide best practice approach. LD queried how do we ensure the leadership is able to implement the strategies, and are we confident the capability is there or do we believe they need additional support? NW reported the short version is we'll see. This is live from September and we will monitor the reality. We are aiming for support to be fluid and when and where needed. TB noted LD is right and some will need support and we won't leave them on their own to do this. LD queried how LACs fit in to this? NW reported he met with each after the audit and included their involvement on the action plan. Some LACs were involved with the audit, some required additional PP training. CD observed the accountability matrix has PP responsibilities set out and LAC responsibility in this process. We're ensuring its done effectively everywhere and will monitor to see what fits which seems to be an effective model for development over a couple of years, but allows us to draw on effective approaches earlier.

Inclusion

NW reported the focus of term 2 was inclusion and low level behaviour. Again there was no national model available to use to guide and the question 'what is good inclusion' means different things to different people. Research was needed to start the project. With pressures on heads we wanted to move the strategy to middle leaders. All schools were asked to appoint an inclusion lead. NW met with all leads for long workshops looking at behaviour theory and inclusion theory and how to create a policy. Collectively we came up with an agreed inclusion model for the Trust and how we would measure the effectiveness. Secondly we looked at behaviour management, and the theory of how to manage escalation. We advised schools should look at a 3 tiered approach with most behaviour handled in classroom with a clear systematic processes that is easy to articulate. It was also essential praise and recognition was built into this process. Moving ahead, we will be looking at a support layer over the teacher to support and liaise with external agencies/parents and provide a buffer between teachers and senior leadership. Schools were asked to submit their own inclusion projects and make the proposal to the head. These have all now been agreed and progress being monitored.

SEND

Term 3s focus is SEND. We are working collectively with SENDCOs to define a Trust approach derived from national research comprising a list of desirable characteristics. This is now in a framework for triad audits, which will then drive action plans.

CD observed the report contains a substantial amount of information and NW has clearly hit the ground running. Interesting to note the approach to inclusion, and that this approach can benefit the wellbeing of leadership teams who have been under considerable pressure this year. NW noted we have some very good developable middle leadership across the trust and this can support the breathing space SLT need.

LD queried if these projects be included in middle leadership objectives and appraisals? Increases responsibility, but can also help them in career development. NW thanked LD for the suggestion as it should be something we recognise that way and will include.

6. Health and Safety

Nathalie Young presented a report on the recently implemented Trust approach to Health and Safety.

Handsam were appointed in January as the Trust's external provider, advisor and competent person. First step was the carrying out of audits across all the schools (hampered somewhat by Covid). Summary audit results distributed, to note:

- High level of red items, but this was from an 'on the day' approach so some were rapidly addressed or information found after the event.
- Each school has been given an action plan from the audit which is being supported and monitored centrally on a monthly basis.
- As compliance is reached/evidence provided this is updated on the portal to give a 'live' perspective.
- Where we are conscious of areas in which they are struggling additional support is provided.
- We have a baseline position, and whilst concerning we are now fully aware and addressing.

JB observed Handsam is a good tool, but may be a final straw for some heads in smaller schools where capacity remains a concern. NY confirmed the reason for the portal was to be able to take uncertainty and worry and give an overview. In smaller schools senior administrative staff already provide a lot of the support in this area, and this now places information and oversight in one area. Central staff spend a day a month (more if required) working with the site supervisor and senior administrator monthly on H&S, and then report to Head what has been covered at the end of the day. We expect the process/system to be administered by staff other than the head who then report upwards.

JB queried how have the administrators received this? NY confirmed generally they like the portal as historically used to dealing with huge amounts of paperwork which is now electronic and all in one place. We anticipated it would take to end of academic year to introduce this fully. One big area is going through all the policies as needs drive these, and not one size fits in all circumstances.

JB observed policies are time consuming but are important to get right have to get it right and recent experience on LACs is clusters arriving. NY noted things will get easier, but we're not at that stage yet. CD observed a process of trying to get trust wide in place at same time recognising schools individual need.

CD noted what's been described is finding our base level and what problems we face and queried if there is an assessment of things that have to be dealt with urgently. NY confirmed those items have been started on – particularly water checks and fire inspections. CD queried within each school who is the person who believes they are responsible and accountable. NY confirmed heads are ultimately responsible, but in most a senior administrator/site supervisor is taking a degree of responsibility. CD noted ultimately we are responsible for the company, and we need to be assured that each person in the chain has done their bit, and understands what their bit is and our systems/processes ensure things are picked up.

NY reported additionally lack of training is a significant issue. Trust training for all heads is scheduled in July, but as the same issue is reflected at admin/site level this will be addressed in the holidays.

Nathalie Young presented the revised Health and Safety Policy. This document has been created in conjunction with Handsam to meet our specific needs.

LD queried where in the policy is the clarity that H&S is responsibility of all staff? Confirmed paragraph three covers that element.

LD suggested the risk assessment table have some form of descriptor/indicator of volume as a scale of risk. NY noted needs modification for each school and to look into.

BN noted some points that could use better wording and stressed de-coupling policy and process, but will work with NY outside of meeting to address/discuss.

Directors agreed policy.

TB noted we need to recognise this is a huge piece of work across the trust led by NY. A piece of work we had to do, and probably more information than we've ever had before but gives a clear pathway to where we need to be. Schools are pleased with the clarity given.

7. Finance

Sue Robinson presented the finance reports. Key points to note:

- SRMSAT has been issued to all schools and are being reviewed by LACs. SR attended Bedford LAC and heads are being challenged.
- March monitoring was delayed and emailed to all schools. April went to heads last week. No concerns on these, everyone currently under projected outturn.
- Have claimed back 35k on FSM claims.
- Cashflow, all main accounts now closed. Few small residual accounts struggling due to lack of signatories.
- Recent fraudulent transaction - we aren't insured for this one. The bank are declining because we authorised the payment. The supplier was hacked and their account details changed which we didn't check/pick up. The supplier is asking us to pay some of the invoice. CD queried if this is within the authority of TB/SR to agree or if director discretion being sought. SR confirmed this would need authorisation. This is partially our fault (and partially theirs). LD questioned if the destination account could not be tracked and payment reverted. SR confirmed this was a holding account and was moved quickly out. BN noted it was understandable the bank is reluctant to refund but this should be challenged. CD agreed, and also agreed option of paying half subject to this.
- SCAF is higher than expected – affected by per head and school condition survey. 1million in to spend. First tranche received now (250k).
- Trust monitoring, no concerns.

- Budgets big area of work being discussed at LACs. Still an ongoing process, and there is still movement with staff on interviews.

CD noted Budget monitoring documentation comprehensive and accessible, and directors are grateful to receive in this form. SR highlighted:

- OLWel – meeting on Monday to look at school structure. High on benchmarking.
- St Edwards a concern due to very small year group – rolling impact.
- SJSJG – attended meeting, head has assured us it will reduce for final budgets.
- ST Marys, low projected intake. Meeting with head to discuss staff options.
- STMS, ongoing concern, head now actively aware he has to address.
- TBCS is growing and lag funding will balance deficit.
- Trust showing a deficit but holding reserve funding.

LD noted it seems the business models in most schools are too expensive for the income so we are covering with grants/reserves which is not sustainable. TB confirmed that is the basis of the discussions we've been having with LACs. Some grants do cover additional needs but the aim is to balance within the year. Reserves should be spent for the benefit of the pupils not ongoing costs. Reserves should also be built up for emergencies.

JB queried what is a sensible reserve for a primary as 880k on SJSJG seems very substantial. TB confirmed this historical with various events a few years ago that brought sizable income into the school, including loaning out the head. SR stated we would expect each school to have at least a months salary bill in reserve and in reality most carry more than that. However we do have an issue with low birth years now coming through. TB noted such high reserves could cause issues as we don't pool income/reserves as some MATs do. Where some schools with low reserves are applying for grants they do sometimes look at trust as a whole.

CD observed the summary succinct and really helpful but does raise the point if we should pool and reallocate funding. BN observed hold a steady course as we are making tremendous progress but haven't yet been through a full normal cycle. Leave reserves as is for now, we'll deal with if it becomes an issue. CD agreed we need stability.

Expenditure approvals:

- Boiler expenditure was approved by Directors.
- FSW at TBCS Safeguarding audit flagged low capacity for dealing with Looked After Children and safeguarding children and we need to increase that. Most effective way is to increase the capacity of the FSW. This wasn't sufficient pre lockdown at 4 days/week and post lockdown is placing system under strain. Budgets will support. BN queried can that remit cover dealing with disaffected parents? JB noted role is to work with families and hard to reach parents. They need the distinction of a non teaching support role. CD confirmed FSW are a crucial part of schools,

<p>costs aren't great but they can have a great impact across the board. Post was approved.</p>	
<p>8. AOB Updated matrix circulated from NORES. Directors approved.</p> <p>Confidential Item See part B.</p>	