

Meeting of the OLICAT Directors

8th December 2021

Minutes

Attendees: AW TB JB CL BN LD SR Richard Monkhouse



Agenda item	Key information
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda BN – supporting SJ on an invitation to tender. No direct interest in process. No further items declared.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted Bad debt write offs as Companies House flagged old liabilities were transferred. Minor exercise in tidying up. • Review of Scheme of Delegation to take place in discussion with diocese/diocesan time frames. • Policies as listed in last agenda approved following meeting • Zoom meeting details – AW will send email 10 minutes prior to meeting start in addition to allow ease of location. 	
<p>3. Chairs Update CD reported a complaint was submitted from the ESFA to the Chair from a parent at St Mary's. This was a known issue going through the complaint procedure. We have responded in full to the ESFA and have been notified the matter is closed.</p>	
<p>4. Ofsted Update This Section is confidential as reports are not yet released TB gave a verbal update on the two OFSTED inspections that had been carried out. These have been anticipated for some time and we have a number of schools still that should be inspected imminently.</p> <p>St Mary's is led by Kirstie Yuen (also head STG). Prior inspection of 'Good' was some time ago and monitoring 3 years ago suggested it was no longer good. The grading of this inspection was 'Requires Improvement' which whilst a disappointment is what both the leadership team and central team expected and an improvement on our evaluation on taking on the school. The inspection identifies good overall for early years and hitting good criteria in some sections. Whilst the right direction of travel and in a timely manner on paper it is a downward move so community perception will be tricky. Leadership is strong and leaders knew what the school needs but needed more time for things to embed. We are looking at how we put out a statement and additional messaging linked to monitoring report and movement. BN noted there is scope and opportunity for some really positive messaging.</p> <p>TB stated we're not looking for quick fixes and we're putting in sustainable solutions that may take longer.</p> <p>LD observed whilst it is – comment, important to reflect the real picture publicly there is a concern around the teachers' morale and how they responded to inspection. Has the HT seen any impact from trust intervention? TB confirmed on the whole yes, and we saw this when we went in. One issue is primaries over the years have developed quite a narrow curriculum, and the new framework addresses that and requires broad and balanced. Primaries have had to fundamentally redevelop curriculums, and this has been the case for St Mary's. We expect the report to say it has a good curriculum intent and plan, but the implementation needs embedding and developing. As a trust we move now from support in planning to implementing.</p>	

One of the challenges has been belief what they're doing is OK because they're a good school and the grading might challenge that in some areas. It's about not working hard, but how it's being done. As a one form primary resistance can have a big impact.

LD was training/support done in how to present/report to OFSTED? TB confirmed it was, particularly focusing on leaders but we are looking at how to cascade to classroom teachers more. Out of necessity we worked with leaders to start with. We are presenting a trialled methodology to heads tomorrow mimicking a deep dive approach around curriculum – better articulation of what they mean and what they've done.

BN observed resistance & clarity are 2 words that are interlocked, and lack of the latter breeds the former. However, we can take reassurance in what is being done, and that what we see chimes with Ofsted's evaluation.

TB report St Edwards inspection was last week, and they were sitting on Requires Improvement from a prior inspection. They were also expecting a full visit. Outcome here is they have moved up to "Good". Good in all sections and good overall. This was also our evaluation. Inspectors did consider some outstanding statements. This school has had time to work on curriculum implementation. They work together very closely and effectively as a team. It was a very positive feedback meeting. It's a strong good.

Both schools have moved forward from where they were and in line with our judgements.

CD stated this indicates central teams' assessments are correct and directors can rely on judgements and information. Pass relay directors thanks to them.

5. Finance

a. Finance report

Update period 2 report circulated based on our evaluations rather than auditors. Will revise funds as of 21 august. Removed ringfenced items as it gives a more realistic picture for schools.

October census is out and the main budget driver for 22/23. It has some significant drops we need to monitor. Bedford increments are out and we're waiting for Nhants. Looks like we will get funding for NI increase.

Condition allocation grants – there is still a large amount still to use.

SAGE – we have moved business support away as wasn't meeting need as an educationalist, to a company called DATA. There is no additional cost but an improved response. We are looking at their education reports for use.

b. Expenditure approval

St Gregory's outdoor play area. CD queried if there was any input from children on selection. SR said this is unknown. CD noted in future a good thing to consider. Directors agreed spend.

Condition survey expenditure. Directors approved spend.

TBCS Head of English. This is currently covered by an AHT who is training as SENDCO. There is saving coming in elsewhere through unreplaced staff. Directors agreed spend.

TBCS supply. BN noted historically supply costs are high whilst moving skills internally and developing is far better. JB queried do we know why historically and is one of the new heads targets to bring these costs down? SR confirmed this has been raised with Paul alongside wider staffing structure and costs. Historically they've appointed a supply teacher for the year, Paul is looking at this differently. TB observed rather than advertising they have used long term supply. Directors agree spend but want a plan to bring supply costs down.

6. Safeguarding
Covered in confidential item (9)

7. Operational plans

- Flexible teaching team

TB reported this is an early stages proposal that requires further evaluation but presented as a rationale for further discussion. Staffing is a major barrier and lack of causes good work to be lost/halted. We have two unfilled vacancies in primaries we still haven't been able to appoint to and have resorted to filling with SLT or agency staff. The consideration is how we move to employing a team of flexible long term primary staff to address longer term vacancies/short notice departures.

CD observed we are then effectively creating our own supply pool. CL asked can we get stats/data to look at the probability of maternity etc as this is like hospital bank staff. TB confirmed we have looked at numbers and indicates up to 5, so are working on basis of 3. There are concerns about overstaffing. Considerations are fixed term contract with an end point if it doesn't work, but these risks reducing calibre of staff who will apply.

LD noted she supports the idea, but it needs exploration. Looked at average – but that's on paper and it will peak and trough. Suggest reviewing numbers looking at max/min figures and range.

TB noted it is hard to get a realistic picture because of all the additional noise – covid, being a young MAT etc.

JB noted there are some real reservations. It is not always easy to remove staff and there will be questions around responsibility for performance management.

Directors agreed for proposal to be reviewed in light of comments and brought back at the next meeting.

- Educational Psychologist

TB reported following on from work on inclusion and wellbeing one of the barriers is access to specialist services. We want to move ahead immediately on directly employing an educational psychologist (and want to look also at speech services etc). We anticipate inhouse will be broadly cost neutral compared to current outsource but value for money will be far greater. CD observed this is currently 54k across all schools for 11 days per school. SR said this is different by LA, but approximately the case. The additional 20k additional gives a fuller service, more days, and reduced waiting time, but also knock on has reductions in impacts elsewhere. BN agreed and stated this seems fundamental to improving schools and giving support to children that need it. TB reported a working group is fleshing out what the role is with a view to advertising after Christmas. A couple of schools already use private edpsychs who've expressed an interest with being involved with the trust.

<p>LD queried who will sit on panel for recruitment that has the expertise to evaluate the experience of the applicants. Could we bring in someone outside the trust. CL reported she may have contacts used professionally. BN observed southern MAT may have contacts from HR community.</p>	
<p>8. AOB a. Union consultative committee We were asked on formation by the unions to consider a JCC. We did so and declined at that time. They have suggested this again. Directors suggested the union representatives put the proposal forward in writing for the next meeting to consider.</p>	
<p>9. Confidential Issue Redacted</p>	