

**Southfields Multi-Academy Trust
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Southfields Academy, 333 Merton Road, SW18 5JU
Wednesday, 4 December 2019**

Present:	Susan Hayday	Trustee / Member / Chair	Chair / SH
	John Moore	Trustee / Member	JM
	Liz Buckley	Trustee	LB
	George Dryja	Trustee	GD
	Andrew Gardner	Trustee	AG
	Wanda Golinska	Trustee / Secondary Head	WG
	Alexis Martinowsky	Trustee	AM
	Deborah Rix	Trustee / Special Head	DR
	Sarah Taylor	Trustee	ST
	Sian Tyler	Trustee	STy
	Jackie Valin	Trustee / MAT CEO	JV
In attendance:	Stephen Elson	Finance Director	SE
	Heather Williamson-Cole	Member	HWC
Clerk:	Kathleen Formosa		Clerk / KF

Minutes

1. Welcome, Apologies & Quorum

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting at 18:07 welcoming Trustees, Members and others in attendance.

1.1.1 Sarah Taylor was especially welcomed to the meeting as a newly appointed Trustee.

1.2 It was reported that no apologies had been received in advance of the meeting.

1.3 The meeting was **confirmed** quorate and proceeded to business accordingly.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no interests declared.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the 10 July 2019 meeting of the Board of Trustees (**Paper 1**) were **reviewed** and **approved**.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The list of actions and matters arising from the previous meeting (**Paper 2**) were **reviewed**, and **discussed** as follows:

- Regarding item 4.1, it was **noted** that the action had been held over from the 13 March 2019 meeting of the Board of Trustees. DR reported that a mental health and well-being strategy was in place and that an update would be discussed as part of the agenda.
ACTION: DR to circulate the agreed strategy and action plan to Trustees.
- Also regarding item 4.1, JV reported that training in the new KCSIE guidance and training in the new Ofsted framework had been arranged for the winter term.

- Regarding item 4.1.1, SE reported that a meeting with the MAT's tax advisors to discuss the potential tax liability on lettings was in hand, but had been delayed as the audit had taken priority.
ACTION: SE to report back the outcome of the meeting with the MAT's tax advisors regarding the potential tax liability on lettings.
- Regarding item 9.3.3, SE reported that the options for deposit accounts at Lloyd's Bank and elsewhere had been reviewed. He stated that Lloyd's Bank were offering instant deposit to a new account and offered the best interest rate. The risk of keeping all the MAT's funds in one bank were acknowledged. It was discussed and **agreed** that SE should proceed with opening the deposit account at Lloyd's
ACTION: SE to proceed with opening the deposit account at Lloyd's Bank.
- Regarding item 12.2.2, the sensitivities around sharing feedback from staff surveys at Linden Lodge with colleagues at Southfields Academy were **acknowledged**. It was **discussed** that the Trustees need to take assurances regarding staff well-being and satisfaction as employees. It was **agreed** that the reports of the headteachers at each school should include key outcomes from their respective staff surveys. It was **noted** that the Southfields Academy staff survey was in hand but not yet complete.
- Regarding item 14.1.3, DR reported that funding to support an in-house pharmacist at Linden Lodge was unlikely. The volume of medicines held at Linden Lodge and the number of pupils who have MAR charts was **acknowledged** as a concern, particularly as the school was no longer supported by St. George's. It was **noted** that in comparison with other schools with a similar profile of pupils, Linden Lodge's operations were robust. It was **agreed** that involvement of a pharmacy professional was needed to provide input into clinical governance, but that this could be by way of periodic review.

4.1.1 There were no other matters arising.

The meeting was paused to convene the Annual General Meeting at 18:26.

The business of the meeting resumed at 18:38.

5. Chair's Report

5.1 The Chair's report (**Paper 3**) was **taken as read**.

5.1.1 The Chair thanked Trustees for completing the skills audit. She stated that she had compiled the responses and would circulate the results at the next meeting.

ACTION: Chair to include a review of the skills audit outcomes at the next meeting.

6. Chief Executive's Report

6.1 The Chief Executive's report (**Paper 4**) was **taken as read**.

6.1.1 JV thanked the Headteachers and staff for a successful start to the new academic year. She stated that there were high levels of parent and student satisfaction in evidence at both schools, for which staff and leadership were commended.

6.2 JV reported that a new Ofsted framework was now in force.

6.2.1 The four key areas of the new Ofsted framework were compared with the MAT's strategic aims, and it was **noted** that these were very much in alignment. JV reported that the Headteachers at each school were now writing their reports in line with the strategic aims.

6.2.2 JV reported that Ofsted visited the Linden Lodge residential facility two weeks ago. She commended the staff at Linden Lodge who handled this visit for their hard work.

- 6.2.3 JV reported that the report from Ofsted was expected next week, unless it is impacted by purdah. She stated that because Linden Lodge does not have a permanent Head of Care, there would not be an outstanding rating from Ofsted. She stated her view that an outstanding rating would have been received otherwise.
- 6.2.4 JV reported that the MAT was part of the local authority's Ofsted review of SEND provision. She thanked all staff who participated in the review. Ofsted's report is expected to be available in January.

ACTION: JV to circulate the Ofsted report on the local authority's SEND provision to all Trustees in January, or once available.

- 6.2.5 JV reported that it was likely that both schools in the MAT would have Ofsted inspections in 2021. Ofsted preparations at both schools were therefore in progress. JV stated that both schools are looking at parental engagement. Southfields Academy is looking to Linden Lodge to adapt some of the good practice already in place there to enhance its level of parental engagement.
- 6.3 JV reported that the Regional Schools Commissioner would like the MAT to consider taking on an additional school. JV stated that the MAT is open to taking on another school, but has emphasised that it must be a local school, the ethos of which is compatible with those of the two schools currently in the MAT.
- 6.3.1 Trustees **confirmed** their view that the MAT should be open to an approach from another school, but not actively searching for one.
- 6.3.2 A Trustee asked about the likelihood that the MAT would be approached by another school.**
- 6.3.3 JV stated her view that an approach was likely, citing school funding as a driver. She stated that schools may find it increasingly difficult to manage their finances in an environment of continuing budget tightening and this would be the driver for schools to join with others having a strong infrastructure.
- 6.3.4 It was **discussed** that the MAT's approach to supporting schools in maintaining their own identity, while providing the advantage of strong administrative and operational support, would be a key advantage in attracting new schools to the MAT.
- 6.3.5 GD shared his view that as Chair of the Linden Lodge governing body at the time of the school's merger with the MAT had brought about very positive change for the school. He stated that there had been no change to the school's teaching and learning approach or any imposition of a new identity on the school, but that the merger had been beneficial in terms of the administrative and operational support offered.
- 6.3.6 A Trustee asked what might be the risk to the MAT in taking on a school in financial difficulty.**
- 6.3.7 JV stated that schools that find themselves in financial difficulty often have very expensive staff at the top of their pay range who would not be needed post-merger. From this perspective, the most significant risks sit with the management of the merger process rather than in taking on a new school.

7. Headteachers' Reports

- 7.1 The Southfields Academy headteacher's report (**Paper 5**) was **taken as read**.
- 7.1.1 WG reported that the school was expecting a Section 8 Ofsted inspection in the near term. The school's quality of education therefore had been evaluated against the headings in the new Ofsted framework. The school's judgments against each of these headings were **noted**.
- 7.1.2 A Trustee asked about the level of funding available for the school's post-16 provision, and why this appeared to be so low in comparison with other funding received.**

- 7.1.3 WG reported that post-16 funding is provided for only 15 hours of provision. The school heavily subsidises the provision to enable its students to stay on site full time. She stated that the MAT's view is that providing full-time post-16 provision is what is right for the school's cohort and has committed to continuing to support this.
- 7.1.4 It was **noted** that the school's Level 3 vocational courses had returned high scores, but that these were not included on the performance tables. The A-level results however, which are included on the performance tables, had declined.
- 7.1.5 The subject performance tables were **reviewed** in detail with attention to performance in comparison with national averages. It was **noted** that the school is performing above the national average in sciences, maths and computer science.
- 7.1.6 The school's success in XL provision was **noted**.
- 7.1.7 The Trustees **commended** WG on her work to reduce absenteeism. It was stated that for the cohort of pupils in the school, this work was clearly paying off with good results.
- 7.2 The Linden Lodge headteacher's report (**Paper 6**) was **taken as read**.
- 7.2.1 DR reported that, like Southfields Academy, Linden Lodge was focusing on readiness for Ofsted with attention to the school's performance against the new Ofsted framework. She reported that as a special school, the curriculum is bespoke to pupils within the school. Given the cohort, the curriculum is sensory based with an emphasis on physical skills. As such, creating a meaningful and accessible curriculum with clear outcomes that also tracks with the Ofsted criteria is a challenge.
- 7.2.2 DR reported that another key area of challenge for the school will be its systems. She stated that Linden Lodge is system poor, with many systems still paper-based. She stated that the school is looking at simple and affordable management systems in which to invest that will assist in the transition away from paper-based systems.
- 7.2.3 It was **noted** that Ofsted had been positive in their feedback during a recent visit, particularly regarding the school's ambition.
- 7.2.4 A Trustee asked whether it was realistic to put the school's offer into the Ofsted framework, which was oriented toward mainstream settings.**
- 7.2.5 DR stated her view that developing a strong narrative to explain the value of education provided to the school's specific cohort of pupils would be key to a successful Ofsted inspection. She stated that benchmarking against other special schools was not always useful for Linden Lodge given the profundity of need for some of the pupils in the school.
- 7.2.6 DR reported that safeguarding remained a key priority at Linden Lodge, particularly around the dispensing of medication. She stated that the daily activities of keeping pupils well and learning was an important part of the narrative the school would need to develop to ensure Ofsted's understanding of this aspect of the school's offer.
- 7.2.7 It was **discussed** that the number of support staff at Linden Lodge presented risks as well as opportunities. It was **agreed** that ensuring there were substantial CPD opportunities for support staff was critical, as support staff were critical to the impact and quality of pupils' education and experience in the school. It was **acknowledged** that adapting for a 21st Century workforce would also be very important, as new roles and new ways of working would need to be accommodated within the school's complex setting.
- 7.2.8 A Trustee asked whether there had been an audit undertaken to determine whether there were sufficient numbers of trained staff to deal with the specific medical needs of pupils.**
- 7.2.9 DR reported details of how the various medical needs of pupils are covered and the arrangements in place for these were **discussed** in detail. She stated that many children at Linden Lodge also required specifically trained staff to travel with them to and from school. If these staff are not available, then that child is not able to come to school.

7.2.10 Trustees **commended** DR on the positive outcomes for the school's pupils, with credit given to the emphasis on pathways for life after school in the curriculum. It was **noted** that five pupils were to be put forward for GCSEs, and that there were several work placements.

7.2.11 A Trustee asked about the parent feedback provided in the headteacher's report that 48% of parents felt that their child received appropriate homework for their age.

7.2.12 It was **acknowledged** that most pupils at Linden Lodge were not able to do homework. DR reported that there is a learning book that goes home with pupils to provide guidance to parents on how to support learning at home (e.g., support for communication such as Braille).

7.3 It was stated that committee papers for both schools had been included in the board pack for information. The following were **noted**:

- ECM Southfields (**Paper 7**)
- Linden Lodge WSSS (**Paper 8**)
- Linden Lodge Clinical Governance (**Paper 9**)

8. Local Governing Body Feedback

8.1 STy reported that there were no actions arising from the Southfields Academy local governing body needing the attention of the MAT Board.

8.2 GD reported that there were no actions arising from the Linden Lodge local governing body needing the attention of the MAT Board. There were, however, several items to report for information.

8.2.1 GD reported that he had recently retired as Chair of the Linden Lodge local governing body, but would remain as a school governor. He would be replaced by two governors in a co-chairing capacity, one of whom would be LB.

8.2.2 GD reported that the local governing body's focus this year had been on consolidation and working to integrate with the MAT. He reported that working within the different framework provided by the MAT had been very positive, particularly regarding streamlining its committee structure and bringing focus and rigour to the local governing body's activities.

8.2.3 GD reported that there had been several retirements from the local governing body during the year, and that finding new governors to replace those retiring had been a challenge. Thus far, one new co-opted governor and one new parent governor had been appointed. An additional co-opted governor and another parent governor were currently being sought.

8.2.4 GD reported that a parent-teacher association had been established at the school. Because Linden Lodge has such a far-flung cohort (i.e., 31 boroughs are represented within the school's cohort) establishing a parent-teacher association had been a challenge, but had been successful. The school and parents have reported their views of it as a positive development for the school.

8.3 The Chairs of the local governing bodies were thanked for their reports.

8.3.1 It was suggested and **agreed** that work should be done at both schools at governance level to ensure readiness for Ofsted.

ACTION: STy / GD to consider actions to be taken by local governors to support their respective schools' readiness for Ofsted and report back.

9. Finance Report

9.1. The Trustees' Report and Financial Statements (**Paper 12**) were **received** and **accepted**.

9.2 The Audit Findings Report (**Paper 13**) was **reviewed**.

9.2.1 SE reported that the Audit Findings Report included four recommendations, three of which were medium priority recommendations, and one low level recommendation. It was **acknowledged** that the critical incident plan included in the report was an error and should have been removed by the auditors before circulation of the report.

ACTION: SE to follow-up with the auditors to correct the Audit Findings Report.

9.2.2 SE reported that the two medium priority recommendations – one concerning VAT, and another concerning an undated declaration of interest – were in hand. SE expressed confidence that both matters would be fully dealt with before the next audit visit.

9.2.3 SE reported that the low-level recommendation concerned an unsigned declaration of interest form, which was a simple administrative oversight.

9.3 The finance report and management accounts (**Papers 10 and 11**) were **received and accepted**.

9.3.1 SE reported that in line with new ESFA requirements, monthly financial forecasts would be circulated to all Trustees.

10. Premises Report

10.1 The premises report (**Paper 14**) was **taken as read**.

10.1.1 A Trustee asked about the accuracy of the statement in the report that there were no premises incidents to report.

10.1.2 It was **noted** that Southfields Academy had lost water for a day during the period covered by the premises report. JV stated that this matter had not been included in the report as it had been resolved within 24 hours.

10.1.3 It was explained that on the day the school lost water, the children were sent home with a letter of explanation. It was found that there was a faulty valve in the water tank, controlled electronically, that shut off water to the whole school. It was reported that the valve had since been removed and replaced with a manual valve so the problem cannot reoccur.

10.2 A Trustee asked if the MAT had engaged an external auditor to review the health and safety management across both schools.

10.2.1 JV confirmed that there was an external consultant responsible for reviewing health and safety management across the MAT.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 There was no other business discussed.

11.2 Trustees who were also employed by the MAT and those in attendance were excused from the meeting at 19:52, ahead of the discussion of confidential business.

12. Confidential Business

This portion of the minutes has been removed to Confidential Annex A.

The business of the meeting concluded at 20:08.

Next meeting of the Board of Trustees – Wednesday, 25 March 2020 at 18:00.

KF/kf: 29/12/2019