

Chairs of Governors Forum

Meeting notes – 28 January 2021

	<p>In attendance</p> <p>Bibury – Did not attend Clearwater – Jo Grills Coaley – Carole O’Donnell Dursley – Neil Grecian Field Court Infant – Apologies sent post meeting Hardwicke – Apologies sent Lakefield – Keith Withers Longney – Diane Bainbridge Minchinhampton – Did not attend North Cerney – Rev’d David Minns Primrose Hill – Jayne Sargent St John’s – Anthony Griffiths St James – Kelley Sutton St Matthews’ – Jacqui Powell St Lawrence - Susan Holmes Whiteshill – Ian Wills Winchcombe – Anna Hay</p> <p>Central Team - Rachel Howie (RH), Nicki Wadley (NW).</p> <p>Trust Board: The Venerable Hilary Dawson, DGAT Chair of Trust Board</p>
1	<p>Opening prayer, introduction and apologies</p> <p>RH introduced and welcomed Jayne Sargent representing Primrose Hill CoE Primary Academy.</p> <p>Apologies: Apologies were noted and accepted from Sarah Nicholson, CoG Hardwicke Parochial Academy.</p> <p>RH warmly welcomed and introduced The Venerable Hilary Dawson (HD) as the newly elected Chair of the DGAT Board. Those present introduced themselves to HD and explained their role. HD explained that she is keen to visit schools and meet local governors when it is safe to do so.</p> <p>RH opened the meeting in prayer.</p>
2	<p>Actions from last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chairs to speak to clerks and their LGBs and contact NW if they have an interest in GovernorHub or would like more information. Feedback from St James’ following a demo of GH was positive and the LGB have reflected that it will be a useful tool that they will likely purchase. RH asked that Chairs contact NW if they would like to arrange a demo for their LGB.- NW and KB to arrange Pay Panel training/guidance – This will be arranged for early in the Summer term.- RH to share request for LGB Chair representation at the next Trust Board meeting. RH explained that she sought the position of the RSC on this issue who continue to strongly recommend that Trust Board membership reflects a skills-based model and not a representative model. RH will share the view of the RSC and feedback from this forum with the Trust Board at their meeting on 02/02/2021.- RH to share funding for school’s petition with Chairs – done. Petition link sent with notes from last meeting.

3	<p>Welcome to Archdeacon Hilary Dawson, DGAT Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductions: Completed at the start of the meeting. - Update on Trust Board membership: RH confirmed that Tim Brock has been elected as Vice Chair of the Trust Board and that following a recruitment process and consideration of the Board's skills audit, Rob Jones (Head of School, Rendcomb College) has been appointed as a co-opted Trustee.
4	<p>Feedback from LGBs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lateral flow testing for staff: There were no issues identified from those present regarding the lateral flow testing taking place in school. RH provided an overview of the process taking place in school and action to be taken if a positive result is received. - Main issues from the start of Spring term: What issues do the central team need to be aware of and raising with external stakeholders e.g. MPs, RSC. RH invited feedback from those present on the main issues impacting on school leaders during this period of national lockdown. The main issues identified were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued pressure of increased workload: Chairs are concerned at how sustainable the current workload is for headteachers and school staff. The decision that schools will close for the February half term was welcomed by all but post-Covid impact on the wellbeing of leaders is a concern. RH shared that the central team continued to support HTs to manage their workload and assess priorities and what can be paused. A Chair shared that the tool INSIGHT on Teams can be used by headteachers to monitor in a positive way the times that staff were working in order to support them to manage expectations and workload. RH confirmed that this had been shared with headteachers. RH also confirmed that an optional wellbeing workshop had been organised for headteachers and that all school staff were being strongly encouraged to use available resources from other sources e.g. The Oak Academy to minimise their own workload – these resources are of a good enough quality to be used by leaders and teaching staff. ▪ Increasing numbers of pupils in school: The impact of a ballooning boundary of children of critical workers against Covid safety regulations was reported by Chairs, with a significant rise in the number of children attending school. ▪ Parent community support needs: Chairs highlighted how an increasing demand on parents to be able to support home learning and the technical aspects of remote learning is impacting on teaching staff. Parents are overwhelmed and exhausted and are looking to school staff for support but school staff are not trained to support the wellbeing of parents. A discussion took place about the expectations on parents during the time children are accessing remote learning and how parents can be reassured that doing the best they can is ok. RH to write to all parents to reassure them of the Trust's understanding of the challenges faced and reiterate expectations. ▪ IT equipment – A concern was raised about the suitability of IT equipment being available and the consideration needed for supplementary equipment such as webcams, headphones and bandwidth etc. RH explained that the LA has allocated £200k to a Covid contingency fund and that they have been asked to consider using some of this money to fund peripheral devices to support home learning.
5	<p>Governance: Spring term and beyond: NW thanked Chairs for their continued support and encouraged Chairs to continue to make pragmatic decisions about the priority agenda items for LGB meetings and committee meetings and to consider their local context. There will not be a data drop this term so LGBs will not have pupil data to consider, this will happen when all children return to school. Helen Springett will attend the next Chairs' Forum to talk to Chairs about the school improvement team priorities for this term and beyond and how LGBs can align their monitoring and meeting agendas with these priorities.</p> <p>NW reminded that the school's Covid-catch-up plan will likely need to be reviewed when all pupils return to school following the national lockdown as pupils needs will have changed again and how the funding is used may need to be reconsidered to meet those needs. LGBs should maintain oversight over the way the funding is spent, the intended impact and that the appropriate information is published on the school website.</p>

	NW confirmed that SIAMS inspections had been paused until at least Easter. Monitoring visits are still happening - if schools want them and will be undertaken remotely.
6	<p>DGAT central updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lateral flow testing: RH confirmed that central staff who were working in schools were able to access lateral flow tests prior to visiting. Rob Jones from the central team is continuing to make site visits, where necessary and unavoidable, to progress capital projects. RH and HS have discussed with headteachers the school improvement team's work in schools. The team will continue with their flexible and supportive approach. - Finance team virtual visits: RH confirmed that finance visits will continue remotely and that a smooth system was in place. On site visits will be made where needed. - School condition allocation projects: These are continuing as planned. - School budgets and Covid expenditure: RH shared that supply costs continue to rise and are of concern to some of the HTs. Costs are also rising due to making schools as Covid safe as possible. These costs will not be reimbursed by the DfE who has said that schools must use available reserves. This is a concern for schools who do not have sufficient reserves and for schools who have been financially prudent and saved money for specific projects. This will be discussed by the Trust Board who will consider how to escalate concerns.
7	<p>Scheme of Delegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Format review: NW shared that over the remainder of this term she is undertaking a review of the format of the scheme of delegation – delegations will not be reviewed on this occasion. NW explained that she and RH listened to feedback from Chairs and Clerks who had shared that the format in its current form was inaccessible, overly wordy and a challenge to engage with. NW invited further feedback with the caveat that she completely understands the challenges being faced at the present time and that Chairs may not have the capacity to consider this. NW reassured Chairs that as always, any review of the scheme of delegation would be shared with LGBs.
8	<p>Policies</p> <p>The following policies will be considered by the Trust Board at their meeting on 02/02/2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial Procedures Policy – Supporting Children with Medical Needs and First Aid approval – Complaints Policy – NW explained that due a change in guidance from the DfE the Complaints Policy has been updated again to reflect the expectation that schools will consider complaints during this period of a national lockdown, particularly in relation to remote education. It is permissible to adjust the timescales set out within the policy if required and that any change is communicated transparently to the complainant at the start of the process. – Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy – NW confirmed that this policy has not needed to be updated following changes to the post-Brexit arrangements for checking the identity and right to work for staff from outside of the UK. <p>DGAT Policy arrangements and provision: NW provided an overview of a document she is developing which sets out clearly the policy arrangements within the Trust and a local school level. It is hoped this will be available to be shared with the notes of this meeting.</p> <p>NW to share DGAT Policy arrangements and provision guidance with the forum meeting notes.</p>
9	<p>Trust Board</p> <p>Update from Trust Board meeting 8/12/2020: RH provided an update from the last Trust Board meeting, including a focus on pupils return to school and priorities relating to writing across the Trust and continued monitoring of maths. The Trust Board also received a</p>

	<p>presentation from Bishop Fleming on risk management and spent time considering the Trust's approach to risk management, risk appetite and the Trust's risk register.</p> <p>Agenda for 2/02/202: RH shared the agenda for the next Trust Board meeting includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is happening in schools and what support is needed? - A review of the annual plan in light of the national lockdown - A summary of progress and processes from Keren Bass, Head of Finance. - Impact of Covid on school budgets - GDPR <p>RH asked if there is anything Chairs would like raised or feedback to the Trust Board. It was asked that a request for someone from this forum, or a rotation of representation, be included at Trust Board to reassure LGBs that Trustees are undertaking their role for the benefit of children and not the RSC office. RH and HD noted this request and agreed to share with the Board. RH explained that she would be sharing the request along with the advice from the RSC office, which she was obliged to do. RH explained that the Trust Board must govern and lead the Trust in line with the Trust funding agreement, and any deviation from this would have a serious consequence for the Trust. HD assured those present that she had heard the request and would share with the rest of the Board. RH and HD to share request and feedback from RSC with the Trust Board and feedback at the next Chairs' Forum.</p> <p>DGAT Sickness Policy: RH explained that she was proposing to the Trust Board to add a Covid addendum to the DGAT Sickness Policy to protect staff who may currently be at a disadvantage if they suffered with long-Covid. A minimal number of staff would currently be disadvantaged if they suffered long-Covid due to length of service. RH shared that it felt morally right to rectify this to align the policy with the Trust's vision and principles as staff have to attend school. RH explained that there would be a commercial impact.</p> <p>Related questions: Q: Where will the additional money come from? Will it be the school's own budget? A: Yes. Q: How many staff will this affect and what is the financial load? A: RH has tasked the finance team to identify how many staff are exposed to the risk and to provide a budget analysis and potential cost to be presented to the Trust Board.</p> <p>Chairs to contact RH outside of the meeting to share their thoughts on the proposed Sickness Policy Covid addendum ahead of the Trust Board meeting on 2/2/2021.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Chair of governors' Forum 2021 Tuesday 2nd March 2021 Tuesday 8th June 2021</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>A question was asked about new SIAMS national arrangements. RH confirmed that the SIAMS framework is not changing but that the organisation of inspections was moving from local arrangements to a national structure and process. This will affect the scheduling of inspections locally as within Gloucestershire SIAMS inspections are organised locally, but this will change to the national scheduling.</p> <p>Thanks were offered to RH and the central team for their continued support of headteachers and schools and for the supportive leadership.</p> <p>RH, HD and NW expressed their thanks to those present and their LGBs for the support and time they continue to offer, recognising that their time and expertise is generously volunteered.</p>