

## Chairs of Governors Forum

### Meeting notes – 8 June 2021

	<p><b>In attendance</b></p> <p>Bibury - Did not attend Clearwater - Jo Grills Coaley – Did not attend Dursley – Neil Grecian Field Court Infants – Did not attend Hardwicke – Sarah Nicholson Lakefield– Chris Robbins Longney - Diane Bainbridge Minchinhampton - Stephen Draper North Cerney – Rev David Minns Primrose Hill – Graham Hoskins St John’s– Tony Griffiths St James– Kelley Sutton St Matthews’– Jacqui Powell St Lawrence - Susan Holmes Whiteshill – Katie Blaney Winchcombe - Anna Hay</p> <p>Trustees – Tim Brock Central Team - Rachel Howie and Nicki Wadley</p>
	<p><b>Acronyms used</b></p> <p>ESFA – Education and Skills Agency NQT – Newly Qualified Teacher FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions La – Local Authority SCA – School condition allocation SCR – Single Central Record CPD: Continued Professional Development</p>
1	<p>RH opened the meeting in prayer.</p> <p>RH welcomed Chris Robbins, representing Lakefield, Graham Hoskins, representing Primrose Hill and Katie Blaney, Chair designate for Whiteshill. RH welcomed and introduced Tim Brock, Vice Chair of the Trust Board. Apologies were received from Katherine Clamp and Keith Withers.</p> <p>RH noted that last week we had celebrated Volunteers Week and offered sincere and grateful thanks to all present for the support and commitment they provide in DGAT schools. RH recognised the contribution of governors and assured that their contribution is never taken for granted.</p>
2	<p><b>Actions from last meeting:</b></p> <p>NW to discuss Trust-wide use of acronyms throughout with the central team – <b>completed.</b></p>

	<p>NW to share feedback on DGAT governor training with central team colleagues – <b>completed.</b></p> <p>NW to share upcoming governance training with Chairs via email – <b>completed.</b></p> <p>Chairs to share HS's school improvement update from 2/03/2021 and the remote education note of visit with their LGBs – <b>confirmed by Chairs present.</b></p> <p>Chairs to consider providing a pen portrait for the DGAT newsletter – <b>thanks to Carol O'Donnell for supplying a pen portrait and to Kelley Sutton for offering.</b> RH and NW asked Chairs to consider providing a pen portrait for future editions of the Trust newsletter and to ask Clerks and other Governors if they would like to contribute or share good news or good practice.</p>
3	<p><b>Feedback from LGBs</b></p> <p><b>A discussion of key issues from this term:</b> A question was asked regarding DGAT's approach to budget agreement and planning. It was suggested that DGAT is slow to approve budgets, with most schools approving budgets in April/May. It was suggested that this is negatively impacting on teacher recruitment with schools losing out on quality teachers, especially NQTs. RH explained that the financial year for an academy trust is different to maintained schools and that DGAT work to a budget setting timeline set by the ESFA and is not behind on this. Budget setting should not have any impact on teacher, or any staff recruitment and schools can recruit at any time of the year as and when needed. RH was thanked for the clarification.</p> <p>Chairs felt that schools were now well rehearsed in Covid issues and that issues were arising from the more expected challenges in schools. Clarification was asked around outstanding maintenance jobs and responsibilities to resolve. RH explained that the executive team would be available on a rolling program during Friday FAQs for HTs to contact with any questions.</p> <p>A Chair raised a predicted challenge that as schools open more and restrictions lift there is a risk of doing more whilst still focussing on key Covid challenges such as catch-up, preparing for future inspection and recovery. It was also raised that there is an anxiety around the next announcement from the Government regarding restrictions and the impact on schools. RH shared that she has been clear with HTs that they should plan for the rest of term and not change these plans in the light of any new or lifting of restrictions. RH and Chairs agreed that some HTs may feel they have to change these plans and offer the usual end of term activities, but the clear message is to make a plan, set expectations and stick to it. It was agreed that the priority is to get staff to the end of term well.</p> <p>A question around place planning at Secondary provision was raised, along with an account of issues one school is experiencing with local housing growth and a lack of Secondary places. <b>Action: RH agreed to raise this issue with the LA during her weekly meetings. RH will feedback to the forum.</b></p> <p>A Chair shared that governors were returning to a focus on school improvement and the quality of teaching and learning and striking the balance between wellbeing and ensuring consistent and ambitious standards.</p> <p>It was highlighted that some governors had only been in post during the pandemic and that establishing a cohesive team and inducting them into the role as it is in more normal times has been a challenge. It was noted that some governors may need some additional support as more usual governance emerges.</p> <p><b>Developing effect communication between Trust governance layers:</b> RH set out the current information and communication channels between the Trust Board and LGBs. NW explained that she and RH are keen to hear of any further</p>

	<p>ideas from Chairs to support LGBs sharing the impact of their work with the Trust Board. Ideas shared included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of minutes by NW and a summary to the Trust Board.</li> <li>• Trustees attending an annual LGB meeting.</li> <li>• NW's visits to LGB meetings and feedback to the Trust Board.</li> </ul> <p>A discussion took place about the regularity of minutes being shared with the central team and challenges with this. RH noted that had there been more appetite for GovernorHub then this may have solved some of the issues of Clerks having to submit information to the central team. RH suggested that we run with a pilot of implementing GovernorHub with those LGBs who wish to participate. <b>Action: Chairs to discuss GovernorHub pilot with their Clerk and HT and those interested let NW know by Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June.</b></p> <p><b>HR support:</b> A discussion took place regarding some recent challenges with HR support at the appeal stages of some polices. Feedback was noted by RH. A query was raised about the reliability from HR around which policy to use for which situation – RH advised seeking clear direction from David Wasley-Wood at GCC at the start of any process. It was noted by a Chair that having a suite of DGAT HR policies was helpful and removed some of the potential personal conflict in managing staffing issues. <b>Action: NW and RH agreed to create flow charts for DGAT HR policies over the Summer break.</b></p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Trust Board</b></p> <p>Update from Trust Board meeting 23/03/2021: RH shared that the Trust Board had focused on the following key areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full reopening of DGAT schools</li> <li>• A DGAT bid for a free school at Bishops Cleeve</li> <li>• DGAT risk register and the Trust's appetite for risk</li> <li>• Trust Board skills audit</li> <li>• Vacancy for a Trustee (shared with all Chairs)</li> <li>• Trust Board committee's feedback</li> </ul> <p>Update from Trust Board meeting 11/05/2021: RH shared that the Trust Board had focused on the following key areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on financial efficiencies, including income generation and central procurement</li> <li>• Individual schools and priorities</li> <li>• SCA projects update</li> <li>• How information can be shared between the Trust Board and LGBs</li> </ul> <p>RH shared that at the next Trust Board meeting in July, Trustees have decided to have a strategy day and focus on the Trust's small school strategy, financial strategy and growth plan. RH also explained that the Trust is involved in a peer review with another MAT to identify good practice and 'even better ifs'.</p> <p>TB shared that Trustees had recognised the hard work and support of LGBs and expressed thanks and appreciation from the Trust Board.</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>NW attendance at LGB meetings</b></p> <p><b>How trends and key learning will be shared:</b> NW thanked those Chairs and LGBs who had warmly welcomed her to their recent meetings over the last term. She noted that she visited LGB meetings aware that governors were emerging from</p>

	<p>a time of high support and low challenge. NW explained that some Chairs had requested specific feedback following her visit which she is happy to offer. NW will share generic learning from these visits with Chairs and LGBs once she has undertaken all planned visits. Learning will identify good practice, identify trends and summarise 'even better ifs'.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme of Delegation</b>  Review of format: NW shared that she has completed the format review of the scheme of delegation, the main changes being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of the existing document into LGB terms of Reference and the scheme of delegated responsibilities</li> <li>• Language in each resource adapted to make more accessible</li> <li>• Inclusion of new terms to define the roles and responsibilities of Members, the Trust Board, LGBs and the Headteacher/Principal more clearly – these have been defined as Decide, Consulted, Monitor and Deliver.</li> </ul> <p>NW explained that delegations have not changed and any changes to the documents have been clearly identified and explained in a changes log. The draft Terms of Reference, Scheme of Delegation and changes log will be shared with Chairs with the notes of this meeting and should be shared with all governors for feedback. Feedback can be sent to NW directly. Once feedback has been reviewed the documents will be finalised for implementation in September. <b>Action: Chairs to share draft documents with all Members of their LGB and encourage them to review and feedback to NW by 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021.</b></p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>DGAT central team updates</b></p> <p>RH confirmed that all school's budget proposals have been received and reviewed. Some are ready to be submitted to the Trust Board for approval and some RH has asked questions of for clarity. RH has asked a number of schools to relook at their budget and implications of their proposal for this year on years 2-5. RH explained that three HTs have been invited into the central office to discuss their budget, this is not because of any concern but will become a regular exercise to develop conversations around budget planning across the Trust.</p> <p>Keren Bass, Head of Finance is piloting new finance reporting with several schools and will be developing pilots for a number of finance system developments.</p> <p>Catherine Leahy, Quality Assurance Lead has undertaken a Trust wide safeguarding audit. NW reminded Chairs that a governor should visit school to check the SCR and that this is permissible under current restrictions as long as the school's risk assessment is followed. <b>Action: Chairs to ensure a check if the school SCR is completed before the end of term.</b></p> <p>NW also reminded Chairs that governors should monitor the actions arising from the annual Section 175 safeguarding audit.</p> <p>The Herald will continue to be published twice weekly.</p> <p>Headteacher Huddles will take place fortnightly as will Friday FAQs which is a pastoral drop-in and Q&amp;A session with the executive leadership team.</p> <p>RH shared that she has been holding 1:1 meetings with all HTs and has been asking 3 questions – How are you?, What are the benefits of being a school in DGAT? And 'It would be even better if...?'. RH explained that these meetings have been incredibly valuable and as a learning organisation we want to be the best we can be and to do that we need to listen and learn. RH suggested that she and NW roll then</p>

	<p>out to Chairs. Action: RH and NW to be in touch with Chairs to offer a 1:1 call before the end of term.</p> <p>PS Assets is being rolled out to all School Business Managers. RH is working with Neil Grecian, Cahir at Dursley to recruit a new HT following the resignation of Paul Daniels. RH shared that Paul will be greatly missed and has been a much-valued member of the DGAT family.</p> <p>RH highlighted that the term NQT will be replaced by ECT (Early Career Teacher) from September 2021 and support will be available for teachers in their first and second year of teaching through the Early Careers Framework. DGAT is updating its NQT and CPD policy ready for September. <b>Action: Chairs should ask their Headteacher to share any implications and considerations for their school related to the Early Careers Framework.</b></p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>The following policies have been ratified by the Trust Board and are now available on the DGAT website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs</li> <li>- First Aid</li> <li>- Intimate Care</li> <li>- Adoption and Surrogacy Policy</li> </ul> <p>NW noted that the Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs and First Aid Policy were one policy but have now been separated.</p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Clerking update plus new and updated resources for 2021/22:</b> The next Clerks forum is being held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, there will be a demo by ChoiceVoting and also updates on Trust resources including parent and staff election documents. Clerks will be given time in breakout rooms to network, as this is something NW has identified they have missed during the pandemic.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Next meeting:</b> 28th Sept 2021 23 Nov 2021 1 March 2022 26 April 2022 7 June 2022</p> <p>Following a discussion about meeting start times and travel, start times will be agreed in the new academic year.</p>
<b>11</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>NW asked for volunteers to review the draft DGAT Chair of Governors Handbook. Thank you to those who offered to support.</p>