

Chair of Governors' Forum
Meeting notes – 27 September 2022



	<p>In attendance Bibury – Anthony Godwin Clearwater – Apologies Coaley – Carole O’Donnell Dursley – Neil Grecian Field Court Infant – Carl Curtis Hardwicke – Sarah Nicholson Lakefield – Keith Withers Longney – Diane Bainbridge Minchinhampton – Stephen Draper North Cerney – Piers Ormerod Primrose Hill – apologies St John’s – Ella Beard St James – Kelley Sutton St Matthews’ – Ali Spencer St Lawrence – Susan Holmes Whiteshill – Dr Katie Blaney Winchcombe – Anna Hay</p> <p>Trust Board – Tim Brock, Vice Chair (Chair of meeting) Central Team - Rachel Howie CEO (RH), Nicki Wadley Governance Lead (NW)</p>
1	<p>Opening prayer, introduction and apologies</p> <p>TB welcomed all present and explained with the intention of further enhancing the relationship and integration between local governors and the Trust Board, either the Chair of the Trust Board or he would chair this meeting moving forward.</p> <p>RH welcomed Ella Beard, new Chair of Governors for St John’s CoE Primary Academy.</p> <p>Apologies were noted and accepted.</p> <p>RH opened the meeting in prayer.</p>
2	<p>Actions from last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RH to share the Trust’s growth strategy with CoGs. - Chairs to ensure the updated Complaints Policy is published on their school website – no indication from Chairs present that this has not been actioned. DGAT central team will undertake a compliance check of websites to confirm.
3	<p>CoG Forum purpose and terms of reference</p> <p>TB explained that draft terms of reference (ToR) for this forum had been shared in advance of the meeting, reminding that it was good governance to have terms of reference in place for all committee meetings. TB noted that the draft ToR reflected how the forum currently worked in practice and recognises how the forum has evolved over recent years. Having a Trustee chair the meeting removes any filter to the Trust Board through the CEO and central team and clarifies the link between the Trust Board and local governance. Questions and comments were invited.</p> <p>Membership question – Has the CoG been missed off meeting membership in error? Yes, will amend.</p> <p>Frequency of meetings – two in the first term feels a lot. RH explained that no maximum number of meetings had been included to account for exceptional events such as the</p>

pandemic. Following discussion, it was agreed to move to three core meetings a year – one per long term. The planned November meeting will be cancelled.

What will happen to these meetings once the Trust grows, are they sustainable? RH explained that we will probably move to regional meetings, with the same agenda and information repeated. This will be reviewed in line with the Trust's growth plan.

A CoG re-iterated their view that the Trust Board should seek to involve local CoGs at a strategic level and use the talent and expertise around the table in a more structured way. RH explained that this forum is the strategic link for local governance to the Trust Board and is the place for this expertise to be used. Trustees seek feedback on key issues via this group. TB reiterated this and explained that DGAT looked to evidenced based research when developing Trust governance and that DGAT practice is considered appropriate and effective. The CoG stated he fully recognised the board as the accountable body but still felt there were missed opportunities. He acknowledged that agreement on this issue was unlikely.

A question was asked about the Trust Board's accountability to local governing boards and a view shared that language in the terms of reference should reflect this. TB and RH spoke about the importance of dispelling myths and misunderstandings of the accountability structure in MATs. They noted that the Trust Board is not accountable in governance terms to LGBs. They recognised the importance of ensuring a feedback loop between the group and the Trust Board, both taking views and opinions to the Board and providing feedback afterwards. TB reiterated that the Trust Board demonstrates its value and respect of LGBs through discussion and seeking feedback at these meetings.

A comment was made that the term of reference wording felt 'top down', some adjustments were discussed and agreed to address this.

A comment was made that there is no mention of any responsibility or duty for the Trust Board to reflect and consider the views sought from LGBs via this forum. It was agreed this would be added this to the ToR. In addition it was agreed that feedback would be provided to the group after Trust Board meetings.

It was agreed that the Trust Board would add an agenda item to their meetings to receive feedback from the CofG forum. NW shared that this was a good example of how this forum directly feeds into the Trust Board.

Action: ToR to be updated following agreed changes and submitted to the Trust Board for approval.

Action: The Trust Board to provide LGBs with a written update following board meetings, specifically in relation to those items that Chairs had been consulted about.

A CoG asked about opportunities within this forum for CoG to network and interact. It was acknowledged that this can be a lonely role, but it is important to balance how much is asked of volunteers. NW shared that whatever was implemented it had to be accessible to all and provide equal opportunity for all Chairs. Options were discussed and NW invited CoGs to contact her if they would like to explore these options further.

A chair asked if CoGs could be given a buddy. NW explained this has been offered several times and anyone can get in touch with her for this to be arranged.

Action: Individual CoGs to contact NW if they would like to support the exploration of a Chairs' network meeting or buddy.

It was noted that CoG and LGBs had not yet received any response to the feedback given to Trustees at the Trustee/CoG event in June. NW explained that this is a timing issue – the Trust Board meeting at the end of the academic year did not have the capacity to discuss the feedback fully and Trustees have not yet met this Year. The feedback will be shared with Trustees at the next meeting, and a response shared with CoGs and be an agenda item at the next Chairs' forum meeting.

Action: Trust Board to share feedback from CoG feedback.

	TB thanked everyone for a robust and helpful conversation.
4	<p>DGAT wellbeing survey</p> <p>RH explained that a whole Trust wellbeing survey has been undertaken, and all staff were invited to complete the questionnaire. Results are being analysed and will be shared as ‘big picture’ Trust-wide results and also at individual school level. This will be shared with HTs at the next HT meeting and with LGBs following this. It will also be an agenda item at the next Chairs’ Forum meeting.</p> <p>Action: RH to share wellbeing survey results with LGBs by the end of October.</p>
5	<p>DGAT written update</p> <p>RH shared that, following feedback from the Trustee/CoG event, a written report would be shared with CoGs ahead of each forum meeting. The purpose of this would be to prevent the meeting from being focused on information sharing. TB invited questions on the update.</p> <p>A CoG asked why the Trust had decided to grow as the rationale is unclear. RH explained that the Trust is not yet financially sustainable and needs to grow to become so. It is also important that the Trust shares its good practice with more schools, so more children can benefit from the quality of education which is provided within the Trust. The Trust also needs to respond to the recent White Paper and provide a home for Church schools looking for a good MAT to join. The Trust has a moral imperative to contribute to the education of children across the Diocese in line with the Diocesan Board of Education’s strategy for a Trust led system.</p> <p>How many schools does the Trust need to be sustainable? It depends on the number of schools and size and needs of those schools. The current 5% levy (topslice) does not cover the central services provided to schools. To increase this 5% would put financial pressure on schools which the Trust Board does not want to do. Around 30 average size schools would make the Trust sustainable. The Trust currently receives an annual grant from the Diocesan Board of Education, but this is likely to reduce year on year. The Trust also applies for external grants, for example the Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF). RH noted that is an important transitional period for the Trust.</p> <p>RH explained that DGAT are inefficient as an organisation – procurement is a good example of this, and this is why we are starting to centralise services. The Trust duplicates procurement across the 19 schools and this is not good business practice.</p> <p>How will central services expand to support growth? TB shared that this is something the Trust Board are currently reviewing but he is not yet able to share any information. Trustees are considering the strategic needs aligned to growth and have tasked the CEO with reviewing central services in line with the growth plan. The Trust Board is committed to pushing as much financial resource into teaching and learning as possible.</p> <p>RH shared a conversation she had with HTs at the recent HT day where HTs were asked to share what central functions could be developed to help them concentrate on their key focus of teaching and learning. She noted that this is an exciting opportunity to look at what the HT role may look like within the Trust, rather than being defined by the maintained school model. A CoG asked if this would de-skill HTs? RH responded that this was a good point of challenge and one she will reflect on further. HTs are beginning to take on Trust-wide responsibilities which are upskilling and developing them.</p> <p>A CoG asked if the change in the HT performance management (PM) process was part of this change in central services? RH stated no, the PM process has not changed, and it has always been delegated to the CEO and DCEO with an invitation to governors from the LGB to attend. RH explained that in the past 3 governors attended the HT PM meeting – the change to one governor at the meeting was made this year. Many governing boards had already taken the decision to send one governor.</p>

	<p>A CoG asked if there was a conflict if community schools want to join the Trust? NW explained that DGAT already has a community school within its family and that the Trust welcomed interest from community schools.</p> <p>CoGs thanked RH for the useful written update, and opportunity for robust discussion.</p>
6	<p>Trust Board</p> <p>Updates from the Trust Board: One of the Trust's Members, Canon Andrew Braddock will be stepping down from his role in January.</p> <p>A new Trustee has been appointed, Dr Robert Gwynne. Dr Gwynne has previously worked for the Church of England Education Office and has extensive MAT and policy experience.</p> <p>Schools joining the Trust – RH provided an update on the number of schools seeking conversations with the Trust about joining. A timeline for conversions has been produced that provides a structure for bring 3-4 schools into the Trust each year.</p>
7	<p>GovernorHub</p> <p>14 schools are using GovernorHub but 4 who have purchased it are not actively using it. NW asked that these schools make this a priority for this term. GovernorHub enables governing boards to work efficiently and effectively in terms of communicating with one another, sharing and storing documents. It also enables the central team to share information with LGBs more efficiently. Where GovernorHub works well, the Clerk has been instrumental in implementing it, but the Chair needs to set the expectation that the platform is used.</p> <p>If you are not using GovernorHub, please consider doing so.</p>
8	<p>Policy update:</p> <p>Governor Visits Protocol: NW shared that this has been written following a request from Clerks and will be taken to the next Clerks' forum for discussion.</p> <p>All policies updated over the summer have been shared via the Herald and are available on the website. The policy arrangements guidance has been updated to show which policies have been recently implemented or reviewed.</p>
9	<p>Next meeting: 24 January 2023 on Zoom</p>
10	<p>AOB</p> <p>Pay Panel: Performance management must be completed for teaching staff by 31 October and for HTs by 31 December. NW noted that the recent Pay Panel training was cancelled for the second year due to low sign ups and asked if training was needed or would a guidance document be more helpful? CoGs requested a guidance document.</p> <p>A CoG offered thanks for the Trust Menopause Policy and shared what a positive impact it had been for wellbeing amongst female staff.</p> <p>CoG succession planning: We have Chairs who are standing down this academic year, and there is an opportunity for any local governor who would like to explore the role of Chair to do so. Please encourage them to speak to Nicki. This has worked successfully already within the Trust.</p>