

**Ninestiles Academy Trust
Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday 19 December 2017 at 6.10pm
Venue: Ninestiles Academy Trust Boardroom,
Ninestiles, An Academy
Minutes**

Members:

| | | |
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| Catherine Anwar | CA | CEO |
| Ateef Azam | AA | Trustee |
| Richard Beamish | RB | Trustee |
| Neal Clements | NC | Trustee |
| Karen Crowston | KC | Member – Vice-Chair of Board of Trustees |
| Fiona Dennis-Stephens | FDS | Trustee |
| Vrigu Dey | VD | Trustee |
| Dexter Hutt | DH | Member |
| Mary Le Breuilly | MLB | Trustee |
| Rona Miller | RM | Member |
| Alan Price | AP | Member – Chair of Board of Trustees |

In attendance:

| | | |
|-----------------|----|---|
| Steve Ralph | SR | Finance Director (Ninestiles Academy Trust) |
| Janice Hamilton | JH | Clerk (Vice-Principal at The Sixth Form College Solihull) |
| Janet Parkes | JP | Minutes (PA at The Sixth Form College Solihull) |

1 Welcome and Apologies

Alan Price welcomed everyone to the meeting. A discussion took place on the start time of future meetings, and it was agreed that in future Trust meetings would begin at 5.30pm.

Apologies: Shilpa Unarkat (SU) and David Werry (DW).

Absent: Jonathan Bridges (JB)

2 Declaration of Interests and Presentation of Papers

AP said there is an expectation that attendees have read the papers therefore presenters are to assume this prior knowledge and to take questions or clarifications as required. There were no declarations of interest.

Trust Vision and Values: CA and AP attended the initial session of the MAT CEO course in November and wished to share the main points with a view to exploring further in coming months. CA gave a presentation beginning with the vision and values of the Trust going forward, and asked members to think further about the five key questions that had been put forward: How deep do the values of the organisation flow? What is our MAT dividend? How effective is our improvement strategy? How clear to parents is our governance model? Why is my child better off in NAT?

Members were asked to write on post-it notes what their responses were to each of the questions. Key points to note were the inclusion of 'learners' to the flowchart; exploration of

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what is the Trust's USP; discussion on the need for the vision and values to be owned at every level, consideration of why NAT would be chosen rather than any other MAT; why there must be a shared vision across Principals, but also some freedom within leadership teams; the need to create teams of excellence across the Trust and agreement that communication with parents is key, as is the clarity of the website. The vision work timeline was noted.

Action: CA will compile a report to include the comments made at this meeting to take forward to the next Trust meeting.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 19 September 2017 were agreed.

4 Matters arising

Item 2: Trustees have been issued with Ninestiles email addresses.

Item 5: Kate Purchase will be in contact with those Trustees who need to complete DBS checks.

Item 6: Fiona Dennis-Stephens has joined the Audit & Risk Committee; Ateef Azam is now the Academy Council Chair for Oaklands & Yarnfield; the first Academy Council meetings have taken place, and minutes are provided at agenda item 7. AA asked for a volunteer to replace him on the Audit & Risk Committee now that he has taken on the role of Academy Council Chair.

Item 7: Meetings of Progress & Standards Panels have taken place, and minutes are provided at agenda item 7. Review of the impact of Panels will be calendared into next year's cycle of business. Staff code of conduct: it was agreed that pupils' wearing of ties would be left to the discretion of Principals.

Action: Trustee volunteer required to take the place of AA on the Audit and Risk Committee. Please contact Kate Purchase if you are willing to take on this role.

5 Chair's Actions

AP updated members on involvement of Trustees in recent events. The excellent Fisher Family Trust training session in November was well attended. NC and KC attended the MAT Governance Meeting on 17 November and found it very useful; NC and AA attended the National Governor Association day on 18 November. AA said the NGA's set of training modules for governors may be worth considering. Sir David Carter is due to visit the Trust on 11 January 2018 and will meet with CA, AP and KC. The Chair approved the 1% pay rise for support staff at The Sixth Form College Solihull.

6 CEO Report

6.1 Vision & Values: this had been covered at agenda item 2.

6.2 Strategic Plan: CA presented the NAT Self-Evaluation 2016/17, NAT Strategic Priorities 2017/18, NAT targets and priorities for Improvement 2017/18, NAT Improvement Plan 2017/18 and NAT Five-Year Growth Plan. CA reported that there is a clear, central message that single academy trusts should join a larger MAT to realise efficiencies. However, research has shown that MATs with over 15 schools are usually less successful at improving standards. The Trust has submitted three bids to the National School Improvement Funding. Neal Clements proposed that the Strategic Priorities 2017/18 document (last section on governance) includes a line "do not go into deficit overall" and this was agreed. AP said this is a very important set of documents for Trustees and thanked CA

for ensuring they were available for this meeting. VD asked why the consultation on a new name for the Trust would not take place until year two.

Action: At the request of the Chair, an initial discussion on rebranding will take place at the next meeting of Trustees.

6.3 Safeguarding: almost all schools have been externally reviewed by a national safeguarding expert with positive reports from these visits and some minor recommendations..

6.4 Progress & Standards Panels: the first meetings took place in October and aspects of discussions fed into schools' self-evaluation forms and school improvement plans. Interim progress reports will be presented to Academy Councils in January 2018. CA said that DW had asked about tracking systems at Primary and CA confirmed that action is in place to look into this.

6.5 External Reviews: Early Years reviews identified strong leadership in most primary schools, with some concerns at Oaklands. A new early years lead has been appointed at Oaklands, and the new Principal is an early years specialist, so the issue will be addressed swiftly. The Dfe Educations Advisor reports for Yarnfield, Oaklands and Cockshut Hill were also provided for Trustees.

6.6 Governance: CA wished to formally thank Kate Purchase who has supported the organisation of meetings since the departure of the previous clerk. In the interim, Janice Hamilton is providing support to KP, and Janet Parkes is taking minutes of meetings. From January 2018, the Trust has appointed an external clerking and support service for governance (S4S – Services for Schools).

6.7 Health Care Insurance: senior post-holders at The Sixth Form College Solihull are provided with private health care insurance. The Trust is exploring the cost of this cover for other senior leaders in the Trust. It was agreed that this be followed up.

6.8 Appointments and other activities: CA had listed recent staff appointments in her report, and these were noted. Also noted was the number of external reviews, visits and meetings that had taken place, links brokered and initiatives underway. The central team review and reorganisation is also underway.

6.9 Actions for the future: plans are in place to support identified areas for development. Some systems in place in the Trust and in schools are under review e.g. HR. An induction programme will be put in place in January for the new Principals. Three companies have presented their GDPR approaches to a panel of Trustees and senior leaders and their reports are awaited.

6.10 Confidential item; minuted separately

7 Feedback from Academy Councils

The Chair commented that the Academy Council Chairs had done tremendous work in leading the first meetings of the year. He invited the chairs to briefly report on their meetings.

7.1 Cockshut Hill & Lyndon: RB spoke of the late arrival of some papers and the lack of data for the meeting held on 11 October 2017. He is disappointed that there will be no panel

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meeting before the next Council meeting. CA said it is important going forward that minutes of Progress and Standards meetings are prepared swiftly. She said this had been the first meeting where two schools had come together as one Council and already improvements have been made since that first meeting. In response to a question from AP, RB said the aim of the Council is to recognise areas of great progress and discuss issues of concern and how they are being tackled. CA said it would be useful if, at the end of AC minutes, the challenges could be listed so that progress can be tracked. CA said the two Principals would be in touch with the Chair to discuss future meetings.

7.2 Ninestiles & College: VD reported on the meeting held on 2 November 2017. VD said the Council needs to work on bringing together the two institutions. Discussions took place on performance, with particular emphasis on the loss of senior staff at Ninestiles and ensuring that outcomes do not slip further. At the College, BTEC courses did well but A level results dropped slightly in terms of high grade attainment. Two AC vice-chairs have been appointed.

7.3 Erdington Hall & Pegasus: Confidential item in relation to safeguarding minuted separately.

Action: CA and KC to follow up

7.4 Oaklands & Yarnfield: AA thanked MLB for attending the meeting with the DfE. MLB commented that the DfE is very keen for the school to quickly address issues and had provided six-week deadlines for actions to be completed. AA spoke of the reluctance of parents to sign up for free school meals, which may be due to a lack of understanding of the process. KC said it is important to consider how free school meals and pupil premium are communicated to parents. Confidential item minutes separately

RB said that Academy Councillors do not yet fully grasp the role they should be playing on Councils, and the challenges they should be making. CA said that Principals are now reporting more visits to schools by Academy Councillors, which is a positive move.

8 Report from Committees

8.1 Audit & Risk Committee: The Acting Clerk provided a report on the meeting held on 4 December, when it had been agreed to change the name of the Committee. JB, as chair, has signed the College's audit committee annual report for 2016/17. This report provides assurance to the Trustees on the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's systems and control, its audit arrangements and arrangements for risk management control and governance, and the processes for securing the effective, efficient and economic use of resources, the solvency of the College and the safeguarding of its assets. The signed report will be passed to SR for inclusion with the College's financial statements. The Committee had considered the two (Trust and College) financial statements for 2016/17, and recommended them to the Finance & Resources Committee for approval. The Committee had also approved the two management letters, and recommended them to the Board for approval. The two risk management reports were received and noted. Discussion will now take place with CA on a combined risk management document for the Trust.

8.2 Finance & Resources Committee: the meeting followed on from the Audit & Risk Committee held on 4 December. The Committee approved the financial statements for the College and for the Trust and recommends them to the Board for approval.

9 Approval of Financial Statements and Letters of Representations: for the Trust, year ending 31 August 2017; for the College, year ending 31 July 2017

SR presented the two sets of documents. On the recommendations of the Audit & Risk Committee and the Finance & Resources Committee, the Board approved the Trust's Financial Statements for year ending 31 August 2017 and letter of representation, and the College's Financial Statements for year ending 31 July 2017 and letter of representation.

10 Policy Schedule

CA said that DW had suggested that all policies be the subject of review in six months' time, after the appointment of the HR Director. NC pointed out that the Treasury Policy is not included in the schedule. SR agreed that the new policies need to be added to the schedule. Some discussion took place on College entry requirements and it was suggested that this could be included in the Trust's Admissions Policy. It was agreed that changes to the entry requirements for the College should be discussed and approved at Academy Council level. MLB suggested that many of the policies are quite straightforward, whilst others are key to management of the Trust.

Action: CA agreed to re-issue the policy schedule, highlighted with key policies for Trustees.

Post meeting note: The College has its own admissions policy. MS/CA to decide whether it remains stand-alone or is incorporated into Trust Admissions Policy

11 Determination of Confidential Items

Approved: that the Clerk would determine confidential items prior to issue of draft minutes to the Chair.

12 **Any other business:** none notified in advance.

13 Review of the Meeting

Six completed review forms were returned.

Any obstacles to contributing to the meeting: printed papers were not numbered as the electronic versions so it was difficult to refer back; historic context and understanding.

Any other comments: Trustees with special responsibilities to report back (eg SEND, safeguarding, disadvantaged pupils); unsure about what was agreed at meeting regarding the College entry policy;

14 **Date of next meeting:** 6 February 2018 at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.