

STA Board Minutes 23/09/2024

▶ Cossington ▶ Monday, September 23, 2024 ▶ 4pm ▶ Chair: Sarah Noon ▶ Clerk: Jennifer Barnacle

FINAL: The minutes are confirmed and locked.

Governors Attending:	>Jo Anderson, David Hall, Sarah Noon, Immaculate Wilson-Mbah, Justin Morgan, Brian Underwood, Maria Jane, Mary Mihovilovic, Terry Smith
Governors Apologies:	>Fr Raphael Imoni
Non Governors Attending:	>Jennifer Barnacle, Neil Lockyer (For relevant item: Antoinette Bouwens, Mary Robson, Tom Shannon, Marcella Gillespie, Ruth Elmore, Ruth Hurcombe, Mike Hobbs)
Non Governors Apologies:	>

Agenda Item 1

▶ **Welcome & Prayer**

MINUTE

The meeting opened with a prayer.
A confidential pre meeting with Directors only had taken place immediately before this meeting and the minutes are held by the the Company Secretary.

Agenda Item 2

▶ **Minutes of last meeting , matters arising and conflicts of interest and business and pecuniary interests**

MINUTE

The minutes of the last meeting were noted and approved.
There were no declarations of interest for the purpose of this meeting.
Matters arising
Executive Team to provide update re actions arising from committees to Clerk in advance of September Board meeting. **Done and included on agenda . Will be carried forward to committees.**
H&S and Secondary Standards link directors to be appointed in A1 **Defer to December meeting.**
Requested that an extra column be added to Trust restructure protocol to show date that each step completed and who was involved in the decision.NL **Done - on TG**
Confirm JM willing to sit on Finance and Pay review. **Confirmed**
A final revised budget will be sent to the Board for approval on 2/8/24 with a view to submitting on 9/8/24. The Clerk will coordinate the approval. **Approved and submitted - see 8**
Phoenix should be approached to see if they can match or better the Softcat quote. AB **Phoenix matched the**

	<p>better Softcat quote therefore contract placed with Phoenix for Microsoft Licenses. (£67,484) AB to inform schools of how much capital expenditure will be spent at schools for the A1 meeting. School condition report now included on Every system.</p>
ACTION	<p>H&S and Secondary Standards link directors to be appointed in December.</p>
Agenda Item 3	<p>▶ Legal & Regulatory</p>
MINUTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Trust Chair and Vice Chair - SN appointed as Chair and BU and MJ to be joint Vice Chairs. • Approval of Chairs and Vice Chairs 2024-25 - The nominations for Chairs and Vice chairs at all schools were considered and approved. St Claires Chair and Vice Chair to be confirmed in September. The Board approved the appointment of a new Clerk, Emily Britchford, at St Francis and St Martins. The low numbers of governors at some schools was noted and is raised regularly with the Diocese. An updated schedule will be sent to the Board after half term.. • Change to Funding agreement - There are two potential changes to the current Funding Agreements in place with the DfE. The first relates to an increase in the PAN at St Martin’s Catholic Academy from 140 to 150 pupils. The rationale for this was presented in a paper and noted. The Board approved this and it will now go to consultation. The second change relates to formally removing the SEND ‘Resource base’ from English Martyrs’, Leicester which has not been in place for many years. This was approved by the Board. The Board approved the process of raising St Martin’s PAN subject to diocesan approval. • The Board approved informing the DfE that there is no longer a SEND Resource Base at English Martyrs’ Leicester. • Board Approval of delegation of authority to NL and MH to sign contracts on behalf of the Board for 2024-25 financial year. • Board Received and adopted scheme of delegation. The Diocese have requested that directors make themselves familiar with all of the changes . • Board Received and adopted terms of committees • Board Received and adopted Codes of conduct for directors and governors • Reminder to directors to complete their TG profiles. (Instructions on agenda) • Board Approvals since last meeting: Approval of Attendance Policy (09/24) , Approval of Directors Code of Conduct (09/24), Approval of Governors code of conduct (09/24), Approval of Safeguarding policy (08/24), Approval of revised budget 24-25 (08/24), approval of the 2024/25 NRCDES contribution of £15 per pupil (07/24).
ACTION	<p>St Claires Chair and Vice Chair to be confirmed in September. Updated LGB numbers to Board after half term. Directors to make themselves familiar with all of the changes to the Scheme of Delegation. Directors to update their TG Profiles.</p>
DECISION	<p>SN appointed as Chair and BU and MJ to be joint Vice Chairs.</p>

	<p>The nominations for Chairs and Vice chairs at all schools were considered and approved.</p> <p>The Board approved the appointment of a new Clerk, Emily Britchford, at St Francis and St Martins</p> <p>Board approval to begin process of raising PAN at St Martins.</p> <p>Board approval to inform DfE that no SEND Resource Base at English Martyrs,</p> <p>Board Approval of delegation of authority to NL and MH to sign contracts on behalf of the Board for 2024-25 financial year.</p> <p>Board Received and adopted scheme of delegation</p> <p>Board Received and adopted terms of committees</p> <p>Board Received and adopted Codes of conduct for directors and governors</p> <p>Approval of Attendance Policy (09/24)</p> <p>Approval of Directors Code of Conduct (09/24, Approval of Governors code of conduct (09/24)</p> <p>Approval of Safeguarding policy (08/24)</p> <p>Approval of revised budget 24-25 (08/24)</p> <p>approval of the 2024/25 NRCDES contribution of £15 per pupil (07/24).</p>
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<p>Agenda Item 4</p>	<p>► Update on Summer activities</p>
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<p>MINUTE</p>	<p>AB presented the report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED lighting installed in 15 schools. All complete and some snagging to be done. • St Martins drainage work - complete. • St Martins toilets - almost complete. • St Thomas More - Heating redistribution work complete • CTK - boilers at both sites. Almost complete • St Josephs MH - Removal of RAAC. Almost complete. • 19 out of 23 schools had significant work done over the summer.
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<p>Agenda Item 5</p>	<p>► Facilitating Plans 2024-25</p>
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<p>MINUTE</p>	<p>NL presented the facilitating plans for 2024-25. The document will be circulated to the Board.</p> <p>There are 10 facilitating plans relating to 6 main aims. Progress will be monitored at appropriate committee meetings.</p> <p>NL met with the owner of each plan and agreed overall aims, identified the key actions needed to achieve the aim, the resource requirements and KPI's.</p> <p>Progress will be RAG rated 3 times a year.</p> <p>The Executive team will meet every two weeks and look ta plans in detail to monitor progress and to help ensure an understanding of each function.</p>
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	It is hoped that the plans will help inform the longer term strategic plan. The plans relate to the current academic year but it is recognised that some timeframes will be longer.
ACTION	Circulate facilitating plan to Board. NL.
CHALLENGE	How often will the Executive monitor progress?
Agenda Item 6	▶ Safeguarding update
MINUTE	<p>MG presented her report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPOMS is still unable to provide the CMAT wide data required . Numerous attempts have been made to resolve with CPOMS but they have been unsuccessful. Schools can access their data but the CMAT wide 'Spotlight' function is not working. This does make seeing trends difficult. However schools do report any high risk cases directly to MG so she is confident that these will not be missed. BU and MG to meet every half term to review any serious cases. Alternatives to CPOMS are being explored. • Governor engagement in safeguarding training is better this year. Non-compliance can now lead to governors being removed. • MG will run safeguarding training once at the end of every half term for any governors who join in the term . Clerks will advise her of any new governors. • Director safeguarding training will be run on 1/10. A recorded session and quiz will be made available for those who cannot attend. • All staff in all schools have had their annual safeguarding training and have signed to indicate that they have done so. • MG working on the documents attached to TG profiles re PREVENT and working together to safeguard children which governors and Directors have to read to see if they can be summarised.
ACTION	<p>MG to arrange mop up safeguarding sessions for governors (once each half term).</p> <p>MG to make recorded session available for directors</p> <p>MG working on the documents attached to TG profiles re PREVENT and working together to safeguard children which governors and Directors have to read to see if they can be summarised.</p>
CHALLENGE	Is there a risk in not being able to look at the CPOMS 'Spotlight' report? How is this mitigated?
Agenda Item 7	▶ HR and Staffing
MINUTE	<p>Restructures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Pauls consultation now closed. Feedback to be considered by Restructuring Panel • Implementation Programmes being drawn up for IT restructure, Finance restructure and St Patricks.

	<p>Restructuring Committee to review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructuring Panel (MM/SN/TS) to meet to consider all 4 on 30/9 at 5pm. MR to source a clerk. <p>Pay awards</p> <p>Teachers pay is out for consultation and expected to be finalised in November. Support staff - 2 unions are balloting members . Could be lengthy and no progress expected until at least November. Backdating to April can cause issues for some lower paid staff if they claim additional benefits.</p> <p>NL and HR are looking at Labours proposed new employment rights and a watching brief will be kept.</p>
ACTION	Restructuring Panel (MM/SN/TS) to meet to consider all 4 on 30/9 at 5pm. MR to source a clerk.
Agenda Item 8	▶ Catholic Life
MINUTE	<p>TS presented his report.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Jubilee Year and Saints Programme will be considered at the next CL Committee meeting. Chaplaincy provision is now in place in all schools, with 9 chaplains delivering it. The Chapalins meet monthly with TS to look at best practice, planning , CPD etc. . There will be a focus on sharing best practice and they will each be preparing a short presentation on what works well and an area for development. Guided discussion will then take place. The Young Leadership Programme was not effective last year and it will be replaced with the 'Called to be Saints' Programme. This will be delivered by the LLC and will involve schools chaplaincy teams , eco teams and mini Vinnies working together to put an action plan together for their school. They will meet to share good practice and ideas and hold a marketplace activity in the Pent term to showcase the work they have been doing. Mass will be celebrated . The Board requested that work is undertaken looking at three year strategic targets and to ensure that programmes and groups have a clear focus and purpose. A discussion took place on some of the language used in the programmes eg Disciples, Saints etc, and whether this should be changed to make it more accessible to other faiths. Consideration should be given to whether we need to be more sensitive to inter-faith dialogue. TS stated that the focus of the programmes is on having good human values whatever your faith and this is demonstrated in actions rather than language to ensure that programmes are accessible to all. Chaplains build in time for staff prayers in school and can also offer pastoral and wellbeing support to staff if needed. It was agreed that we should seek to provide more spiritual opportunities for staff.
ACTION	Consider being more sensitive to inter-faith dialogue in language choices. TS
CHALLENGE	<p>How often do the chaplains meet? See 2</p> <p>How do we ensure that non-catholics in the school feel included in programmes? Does the language</p>

used in programmes exclude other faiths? See 5
What support is in place for adults in the CMAT? See 6

Agenda Item
9

► Finance, budget submission update & Estates

The Estates Plan was presented by AB.

The plan is RAG rated. RED indicates a programme not started and Green is a completed programme. Amber indicates that pre tender work has been carried out and visits to schools made. Projects are split into years but it was noted that projects can move between years if priorities change or if there's opportunities to make savings if projects are accelerated or delayed.

YMD Boon update the document and the live document is available to Directors on Teams.

Condition surveys are on the Every system so that LGB's will have access to them.

At the last Estates committee a discussion was held about whether whether every tender recommendation needs to be approved, especially if it falls below the original cost estimate included in the Strategic plan and budget which has already been approved by Board, or within an agreed tolerance limit. AB agreed to explore what other Trusts do to streamline the process. She stated that OLOL Estates & Finance Committee are informed of projects that are intended for the next year. They do not particularly get involved in the how's and why's, just the total figure for each year. They don't sign-off on each individual project. It was agreed that there is no need for a tolerance level as the tracking will show figures and this can be raised if necessary. Condition projects are based on condition surveys, maintenance reports and H&S reports etc.. The Board agreed with this approach and it will be adopted within the STA CMAT.

The Board confirmed that tender sign-offs for projects listed on the Estates Plan that are over £50k will not require sign off by a Director via the Finance and Estates Committee.

MH presented the Finance Report.

1. Four Directors received training on the Academies Trust Handbook and a recording is available for those unavailable to attend. The updated Handbook has not introduced any major changes. Direct implications for our Trust are: our Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme has been paused for new leases from 1 September 2024 and it is now possible to take out finance leases under certain circumstances.
2. The Management Accounts for July were noted. This in-year deficit is slightly lower than had been budgeted, mainly due to unspent grants – some of which will be clawed back and some may need to be carried forward into 2024/25. Capital Expenditure is higher over the summer months when a lot of work takes place over the school holidays. This summer, work was undertaken in the majority of schools.
3. The Board approved the updated budget and it was submitted successfully to the ESFA by the 31 August 2024 deadline. The updated budget took into account the increase in teacher pay rise, and the associated funding. The associated funding was more than expected resulting in the overall in-year

MINUTE

deficit forecast reducing from £1.4m to £1.2m. Pupil numbers are currently higher than that forecast when setting the budget, particularly Sixth Form numbers. Assuming pupils are still on roll on 3 October (census day), it should lead to significant additional funding in 2025/26. Work to reduce costs is still needed to achieve our aim of an in-year balanced budget, although the additional numbers will lessen the depth of spending cuts needed.

4. The introduction of VAT on private school fees from January may have an impact on pupil numbers. However it must be noted that all of our secondary schools are full. There are vacancies at some primaries but not others. The City Council have identified a significant number of pupils requiring places in schools and a bulge year might be considered at certain schools if necessary.
5. An ESFA's School Resource Management Advisor has been appointed to look at if there further suggestions for savings/income as part of our deficit recovery planning. The initial focus will be reviewing the Secondary School curriculum / timetable plans, use of teaching staff, teacher contact ratio, class sizes etc. A report is due by Christmas so his suggestions can be taken into account when schools are planning their timetable/curriculum from January. When the initial Secondary School work has been completed, he will look at other areas (eg. non-staffing / income / governance) and provide recommendations for consideration.
6. The updates to the Financial Procedures and policies were noted and approved. SN requested that the handbook continues to refer to Finance and Estates Committee as that is its official title.
7. Using the approved Government framework, quotes were obtained for Staff Absence Insurance and a Discretionary Mutual Arrangement. All prospective suppliers were given the same information regarding numbers of staff, number of 'waiting days' per school and staff category (after checking with schools), and historical sickness absence data. Quotes have been scored using the framework template and data was presented to the Board. Tracked staff absence cost over £600k per annum last year. True costs are likely to be higher as some schools cover sickness internally. The insurance scheme will cover for staff absence not just sickness absence, eg suspensions, jury service etc. It was noted that it will only cover for a certain amount of time for Covid and data should be analysed to determine how much illness relates to Covid. Recording of absence data is improving in schools and training is being done with staff. When talking to schools using the insurance already there had been no evidence of absence increases. Most schools showed a decline due to the insurers working with schools and offering a range of benefits for staff. The Directors acknowledged the impact of absence on schools both financially and on pupils and the Board approve taking out staff absence insurance with Schools Advisory Service for the period 1 October 2024 – 31 August 2025 at a cost of £395,929. The decision is based on highest score, lowest quote, significant health and wellbeing offer, and focus on reducing absences and positive feedback from another Trust who currently uses them.
8. The increased premium on the Medicash benefit programme is no longer affordable. Many of the health service benefits will be replicated and in some cases enhanced by the staff absence insurance. There are some options to replace the 'cash plan' benefits - staff could be offered an opportunity to sign up to individual/family plans administered through payroll or alternatively they could just be signposted to such schemes that they could join personally if they wished to. It was agreed to signpost staff to cashplan schemes. In addition Specsavers (on the Government framework) has a vouchers scheme that we could use to fulfil our minimum legal obligation re eye tests and glasses. The Board agreed to cancel Medicash with effect from 1 November 2024. Staff should be signposted to plans they can take out personally to replace the 'cashplan' element and The Board approved using the Specsavers scheme to provide eye tests/glasses for any member of staff who submits a request.

	The removal of Medicash must be handled sensitively and a video will be sent to all staff at the end of the week so that there is good notice. The benefits of the sickness absence scheme will be stressed.
ACTION	The handbook should continue to refer to the Finance and Estates Committee as that is its official title. MH
DECISION	<p>Estates Committee will be informed of projects that are intended for the next year. They will not sign-off on each individual project.</p> <p>The Board confirmed that tender sign-offs for projects listed on the Estates Plan that are over £50k will not require sign off by a Director via the Finance and Estates Committee</p> <p>The updates to the Financial Procedures and policies were noted and approved.</p> <p>The Board agreed to cancel Medicash with effect from 1 November 2024. Staff should be signposted to plans they can take out personally to replace the 'cashplan' element and The Board approved using the Specsavers scheme to provide eye tests/glasses for any member of staff who submits a request.</p> <p>The Board approve taking out staff absence insurance with Schools Advisory Service for the period 1 October 2024 – 31 August 2025 at a cost of £395,929.</p>
CHALLENGE	<p>Why is the spread of Capital Expenditure so much compared to other months? See 2</p> <p>Should our budget planning take into account the potential impact of the introduction of VAT on private school fees? See 4</p> <p>How much is staff ansence costing every year? Are there concerns it might increase absence? See 7</p>
Agenda Item 10	<p>► Performance & Standards</p>
MINUTE	<p>The DPS's presented their report.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CMAT-wide KS2 priorities will be Writing (especially at greater depth) and increasing combined (reading , writing and maths) attainment data. 2. Schools have been identified that require more support and monitoring regarding attainment. Often progress is good at these schools but attainment remains low. 3. Every school has had priorities identified and these will be reflected in the SIP's and in the school reviews which are currently underway. The school review report will be considered by the LGB's in Lent 1. 4. KS4 data was noted. Good progress has been made in all secondary schools and the overall CMAT picture has improved. There were some particularly pleasing outcomes in some schools / subjects where there had been previous concerns. 5. It was noted that there was a noticeable gender difference at KS4 in progression, with girls progress better. Work in ongoing to look at this and early indications are that girls are more engaged with revision strategies , especially outside of the classroom. It does not appear to be related to teacher gender but further work is being undertaken on teachers expectations of pupils. 6. Attendance can have a major impact on attainment and progress. The CMAT Attendance Lead is looking at data across all secondaries and is sharing the data with students and teachers. A report will come to the Standards committee. 7. PP progress and attainment has been a focus for several years. Attainment and progress has improved

	<p>but there is still work to do. There is a need to improve consistency across the year groups.</p> <p>8. Outcomes for SEND pupils have improved but will continue to be monitored. It was noted that data can be very cohort specific depending on the needs of SEND pupils in the cohort.</p> <p>9. Priorities for GCSE are Computing and IT in some schools, PE and the option subjects.</p> <p>10. 6th form results were noted. There had been some disappointments in some schools or subjects and there is a need to improve some of the procedures and processes in some schools. Generally teaching is good. A' level attainment will be a priority this year and the Teaching and Learning forum will have a focus on 6th form this year.</p>
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CHALLENGE	Is attendance considered when looking at attainment? See 6
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Agenda Item 11	▶ Policies
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MINUTE	<p>The following policies were reviewed and approved, subject to some typo's that will be fed back to AB.</p> <p>Data Protection:Following changes requested : AB to be identified more prominently, refer to Trust Board not governing body</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Policy: Supporting pupils with medical conditions</p> <p>Policy: Online Safety</p> <p>Policy: Equalities information and objectives</p> <p>Policy: Health & Safety</p> <p>It was requested that dates for review are standardised as different schools have adopted different dates (especially for Supporting pupils with medical conditions and Equalities information and objectives).</p>
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ACTION	<p>Amend policies for typos as supplied by SN. AB</p> <p>AB to be identified more prominently, refer to Trust Board not governing body in Data Protection policy. AB</p> <p>Final copy to be sent to Clerk.</p>
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DECISION	<p>Following policies approved (subject to minor amendments)</p> <p>Data Protection</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Supporting pupils with medical conditions</p> <p>Online Safety Equalities information and objectives</p> <p>Health & Safety</p>
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Agenda Item 12	▶ Closing Prayer
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MINUTE	The meeting closed with a prayer.
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Governor Agreed Actions set during this meeting: 0	
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STA Board meeting *dated:* 23/09/2024

Minutes approved by Jennifer Barnacle
