

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees
held at The Warren on 7pm on Thursday 10th February 2022

Present:

Ms C Barenbrug, from minute 4
Mr R Barlow, from minute 3.2
Mr A Blount
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO
Ms W Cartwright
Mr J Cliff, Chair
Miss R Punter
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair

In attendance

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO
Mrs G Sesli, EHT
Mrs V Bolton, COO

Miss K Crossley, Clerk

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mr Okafor and Mr Terry. No apologies had been received from Mrs Brookman.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

- 2.1 None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 9th December 2021 (appendix 1) were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.
- 3.2 Trustees were referred to the matters arising report (appendix 2) detailing the status of outstanding actions:
- 3.2, 5.2.1 The Chair of ACC asked whether outstanding actions from the external safeguarding discussed at the recent ACC meeting had been actioned. The CEO confirmed that they had and outlined procedures for checking the single central register (SCR), recording checks and checking the checks had been outlined. The Committee had since had sight of the safeguarding audit report, in which 4 of the 5 schools had been red-rated in relation to the SCR. These issues related to concerns from Heads about governance oversight of safeguarding. The CEO confirmed that internal audits were conducted by the executive team and advised that Heads' concerns related to the overall Trust model not being fully understood. The following was agreed:
- an internal safeguarding audit process would be drafted and brought to the next ACC meeting
 - summaries of audit findings would be brought to Trust Board, including actions taken to address issues identified in the audits. **JB to action.**

- 3.2, 7.3 A second paper on the Trust-wide music strategy had been circulated to Heads.

4. Executive report

- 4.1.1 Trustees noted the comments in the Executive report (appendix 3) on the Occupier's Liability claim relating to a pupil injury at SMCPA. Trustees were keen to ensure that the

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incident was investigated and lessons learned to try to avoid a recurrence of the incident at all Trust schools. The CEO would review the OPAL risk assessments. **CEO to action.**

- 4.1.2 An investigation had been conducted by a third party on behalf of the Trust's insurer and an internal investigation would be conducted by the Executive Headteacher. Trustees would be informed of the findings of the investigations in due course. **COO to action.**
- 4.1.3 It was suggested that consideration be given to reviewing historic records with a view to identifying learning points on OPAL risk assessments from previous records, accident logs and near misses as well as potential claims. **CEO to action.**
- 4.2 There were no questions from Trustees on the monthly management accounts to December 2021 (appendix 4).

4.3 Music strategy

- 4.3.1 Trustees were referred to the paper on the music strategy (appendix 5). The CEO reported that building work on the conversion of The Cottage at HPS to the Music Hub, which would offer a space for music to thrive as a centre of excellence for the Trust, had started. A two-year plan was in place, to be driven by a new music leader with support from BYMT. The facility would be shared with other Trust schools. In response to a question as to what measures and parameters would be established to ensure that the Music Hub would become a centre of excellence, it was reported that KPIs would be drawn up internally and taken to the next ACC meeting. **CEO to action.** Trustees asked why it had been necessary to convert The Cottage for the Music Hub and was advised that there were no break-out spaces in HPS for music tuition, practice and small chamber performances. It was suggested that the Trust plan an opening concert. **CEO to action.**
- 4.3.2 Trustees asked whether the vacancy for a Music Lead at HPS, which would in time become a Trust-wide role, had been filled. Candidates with a strong background in music were being sought and Trustees would be informed of any developments. **CEO to action.**

4.4 Follow-up plan re feedback from schools

- 4.4.1 The Chair reported on his follow-up visits to meet staff at all schools, accompanied by members of the executive team. Common concerns raised across the Trust had been identified, including low morale. Some misconceptions had been addressed. Targets would be drawn up to address concerns relating to education, support staffing and financial responsibilities. Communication would be a key element in improving common issues identified by staff. **CEO to action.**
- 4.4.2 The pastoral/site and admin support staff restructure conducted during lockdown in 2021 had emerged as cause for concern. Although a formal collective consultation had been held and feedback had been collected, it had not been possible to listen to the views of stakeholders face-to-face in the same way as in previous restructures. Heads had been consulted, but their agreement had been reluctant, leaving them feeling disempowered. The Trust had reflected on how to improve the situation going forward, and Heads would be given freedom to manage some budgets, such as a range of parameters for staffing costs. However, concerns remained about the impact of deletion of support staff roles, such as increased administration for teachers. Trustees noted the importance of communication, listening carefully to feedback and addressing issues raised with an action plan to build confidence and ensure that staff voices were heard.

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4.4.3 The CEO confirmed that records of staff feedback would form the basis of individual responses to all schools, setting out timescales for actions by the end of the spring term. A discussion followed on the best means of responding to schools, and the benefits of communicating in person. It was suggested that consideration be given to involving all levels of staff in a workshop to seek views on the best way to address the key concerns emerging from the school visits, with the support of external facilitator if deemed beneficial. **CEO to action.** A fundamental change of approach was required, resulting in a visibly changed culture in which staff felt valued, understood and supported by the Trust, for example, by inviting Heads to governance meetings, members of the executive team being more visible in schools, witnessing the pressures, supporting staff and developing relationships for team working. The Chair planned to visit schools more regularly. Consideration would be given to how to measure the success of the Trust's response to issues raised by schools and interim updates would be brought to the Board. **CEO/Chair to action.**

4.4.4 The CEO outlined plans for cover and recruitment following the resignations of the Headteacher at HPS and the Heads of School at MPS and SMCPA:

- Mrs Haig, Headteacher at EWPS, would be seconded to HPS as Acting Headteacher for the summer term.
- Mr Frost, Deputy Headteacher at SMCPA, would be appointed Acting Head of School for the summer term, supported by the Executive Headteacher.
- Mrs Sampson, Deputy Headteacher at EWPS, would be appointed Acting Headteacher for the summer term, with coaching support from the CEO.
- The Acting Deputy Headteacher roles at SMCPA and EWPS would be advertised internally.

Trustees noted the risk of a negative 'domino effect' on staff morale, wellbeing and retention, and the importance of appointing appropriate candidates to strategic positions, to act as ambassadors for their schools. **CEO to action.**

4.4.5 It was hoped that a permanent appointment for the Headship at HPS would be made by 30th April 2022. The recruitment was very important, given the collaborative nature of the role and the Trust-wide responsibilities. The advertisement was likely to attract high-calibre candidates and shortlisted applications would be forwarded to the Chair, Mr Blount and Mr Barlow. **CEO to action.** Trustees thanked Mr Barlow for his offer to support the Trust in ensuring robust interviewing processes would be in place. **RB to action.**

4.5 SMCPA party wall

4.5.1 Trustees approved the spend request for the rebuilding of a portion of the party wall at SMCPA at a cost of c£51k for building work and arboriculture (appendix 6).

4.6 Trustee training

4.6.1 Trustees were informed of proposed changes to KCSiE in September 2022, including specific references to safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety). From September 2022, Trustees would be asked to complete an annual EduCare safeguarding module, followed by a questionnaire. Trustees asked whether the Trust was satisfied that staff were aware of safeguarding compliance processes and were advised that this was the case.

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5. Trust Committee business

5.1 Minutes of FARCO meeting, 14th November 2021

- 5.1.1 Trustees were referred to the minutes of the FARCO meeting on 24th November 2021 (appendix 7). In response to a question as to the timeframe for the review of the KPI heat maps, the CEO undertook to email the Committee. **JB to action.**

5.2 Minutes of ACC meeting, 19th January 2022

- 5.2.1 There were no questions from the Committee on the minutes of the ACC meeting in January 2022 (appendix 8).

6. Local Academy Councils

- 6.1 Trustees were referred to the bullet points of recent LAC meetings at HPS, LPS and MPS and the notes of the Trust Academy Council meeting in January 2022 (appendices 9-11). The CEO would send written responses to LACs, copying Trustees. **CEO to action.** Going forward, responses to issues raised by LACs would be included in the papers of the following meeting. **KC to action.**

7. Policies

7.1 Accessibility

- 7.1.1 Trustees were referred to the Accessibility Policy (appendix 12), which was approved, subject to the Executive team checking the plans. **CEO to action.**

7.2 Allegations of Abuse against Staff and Volunteers

- 7.2.1 The Allegations of Abuse against Staff and Volunteers policy (appendix 13) would be reviewed and brought to the next meeting. **CEO to action.**

7.3 Equality and Diversity Scheme

- 7.3.1 The Equality and Diversity Scheme (appendix 14) would be reviewed and brought to the next meeting. **CEO to action.**

7.4 Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition

- 7.4.1 The Supporting Pupils with a Medical Condition policy (appendix 15) was approved. Trustees requested that Heads be asked to check that that practice in schools aligned with policy. **CEO to action**

8. AOB and date of next meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 31st March 2022 at 7pm at The Warren.
- 8.2 The meeting closed at 9:10 pm.

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Signed:Date:.....
John Cliff, Chair of Trustees