

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees
held at The Warren at 7pm on Thursday 18th May 2023

Present:

Mr R Barlow, from minute 4.2
Ms W Cartwright, remotely
Mr J Cliff, Chair
Mr M Ellis
Mrs N Sandigurskaia
Mr D Terry

In attendance:

Mrs G Sesli, Acting Joint CEO
Mrs C Sheehan, Acting Joint CEO
Mrs V Bolton, COO

Miss K Crossley, Clerk

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Blount and Ms Barenburg. No apologies had been received from Mrs Brookman.
- 1.2 Mr Terry was appointed Vice Chair of Trustees.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

- 2.2 None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting of 28th March 2023 were approved by Trustees and signed by the Chair.
- 3.2 There were no questions from Trustees on the matters arising report.

4. Executive reporting

4.1 Executive report

- 4.1.1 Trustees were invited to attend an event at Leeson's Primary School on 25th May 2023 to showcase the work of the Trust on Lyfta. Lyfta is an immersive learning programme which offers pupils a global perspective, seeing themselves reflected in videos relating to global issues, which is naturally woven across the curriculum. The event would be attended by representatives of the borough and neighbouring boroughs, as well as other schools. A video on pupils' views of Lyfta would be shared with Trustees who were unable to attend the event. **GS to action.** The Trust recently had blogged about how it uses Lyfta alongside Voice 21, a structured oracy programme, and the combination of both resources when combined are well suited to debating global issues.
- 4.1.2 Safeguarding had been very highly rated at two schools which had recently been inspected by Ofsted, and continued to be a strength of the Trust.
- 4.1.3 Further to discussion at the ACC meeting on 4th May 2023, the Deputy Headteacher (DHT) at SMCPA would be released to spend one day/week at LPS to support and add capacity. SMCPA understood the rationale for the secondment, which related to staff shortages and current SLT at LPS covering classes.

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- 4.1.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion remained part of the fabric of the Trust. A discussion had been held at the last HR Committee meeting on recruitment, including how best to attract a diverse range of candidates. Rather than reading adverts, candidates tended to look at school websites and there was scope for websites to be enhanced, to ensure that candidates saw themselves reflected in websites. The Trust was mindful of not forcing EDI and would approach recruitment from the perspective of inclusion, welcoming candidates. It was noted that candidates' first interactions with schools were a significant factor in the decision to accept an offer of employment. School websites would be reviewed to ensure that images reflected the diversity of current cohorts and the welcoming ethos of schools.
- 4.1.5 Trustees asked whether senior leaders worked on unconscious bias and were informed that awareness was raised as part of the selection process, including anonymising some data, such as removing personal information (name, gender, age). The Trust was mindful of the risk of unconscious bias in the recruitment process and consideration would be given to sharing good practice in Trust schools, such as LPS celebrating its multi-cultural diversity and exploring the factors which had resulted in higher-than-average numbers of male teachers at SMCPA.
- 4.1.6 Trustees suggested that the Trust may benefit from its own LinkedIn account for the purposes of recruitment, and it was acknowledged that this would be a useful means of raising the profile of the Trust, but would depend on capacity to maintain content. The immediate priority would be to update the photos on school websites. **CS/GS to action.** The Executive team thanked Mrs Sandigurskaia for offering to support the Trust with LinkedIn. **CS/GS/NS to action.**
- 4.1.7 Consideration would be given to buying in Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) support from the Borough to address the level of persistent absence in some schools. Trustees asked whether a Trust or school approach would be deployed and was informed that this would be done at school level. Trustees were reassured that systems were consistent across the Trust, such as first day calling. At the recent ACC meeting, discussion had been held on buying in EWO support across the Trust, but this had proved to be costly and had been suggested if the LA was no longer providing this service, which is now not the case. The Trust would work closely with the schools with the highest levels of persistent absence, SMCPA and LPS. **GS/CS to action.**
- 4.1.8 The Acting Joint CEOs had been in post for 12 months and had adopted an outward-facing approach, raising the profile of the Trust, networking and inviting external leaders into schools to meet staff. A National Leader of Education from STEP Academy Trust was working with LPS (support brokered by the Regional Director), and the Headteacher had had the opportunity to visit a local school and meet the Maths Lead, which had been beneficial. There are a number of important commonalities between TSPT and Step Academy Trust, such as an aligned curriculum, fund pooling, subject specialists, primary schools with the highest level of deprivation and quality/efficiency of centralised services. Trustees welcomed the outward-facing approach and noted the benefits of maintaining connections.
- 4.2 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 8.1.

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4.3 Trustee school visits

- 4.3.1 Trustees noted the value of visiting schools and interacting with staff. A list of events would be circulated to Trustees. **KC to action.**

4.4 Staffing updates

- 4.4.1 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 2.

4.5 Monthly management accounts to March 2023

- 4.5.1 There were no questions on the management accounts to March 2023, which had previously been circulated by email. The financial picture had significantly improved, with the deficit lower than the approved budget for 2022/23.

4.4 Contract approvals and/or spend requests over £20k

- 4.4.1 Trustees were referred to the spend request paper for the purchase of wooden outdoor PE equipment, following the site audits conducted by the Trust PE Lead. It was intended that the equipment would be installed at all Trust schools, with the exception of LPS, where such equipment was already in place. It was proposed that the work would be funded by the unspent PE grant in 2022/23 (which would no longer be clawed back by the government, provided that the equipment was installed by the end of the academic year) and brought-forward Pupil Premium funds. The work would be done in the second half of the summer term in line with the PE plan. Trustees asked whether the supplier was aware of the required timeframe for invoicing and were informed that this was the case. The request was approved.

5. Trust Committee Business

5.1. FARCO meeting, 27th April 2023

- 5.1.1 The final unadopted minutes of the FARCO meeting on 27th April 2023 would be uploaded to the secure area as soon as possible. **KC to action.**
- 5.1.2 As in previous years, Headteachers would be invited to the final FARCO meeting of the year to discuss their 2023/34 budgets.

5.2 ACC meeting, 4th May 2023

- 5.2.1 The final unadopted minutes of the ACC meeting on 4th May 2023 would be uploaded to the secure area as soon as possible. **KC to action.**
- 5.2.2 ACC members noted that the attendance of Heads at the start of ACC meetings was very useful, allowing supportive relationships to develop. It was pleasing to listen to Headteachers talk about their schools. Consideration would be given to how to make the Headteacher Reports more concise. **GS/CS to action.**

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6. Policies

6.1 Complaints Policy

- 6.1.1 Minor updates had been made to the Complaints Policy. Mrs Sandigurskaia would send suggested edits to the policy to the COO. **NS/VB to action.**

6.2 External Communications Policy

- 6.2.1 Trustees were referred to the External Communication Policy. A discussion followed on the risk to staff of reputational damage relating to personal social media posts. The COO would determine whether provision for this was made in other policies. **VB to action.** The policy was approved, subject to confirmation of the above.

7. AOB and date of next meeting

- 7.1 Trustees were informed that it was possible that a recommendation would be brought to Trustees regarding a change of energy (gas and electricity) brokerage and supplier contracts to avoid the Trust being in a position of paying high 'out of contract' tariffs. If required a proposal would be circulated by email, or brought to the next meeting depending on the timeframe. **VB to action.**
- 7.2 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 18th July 2023 at 7pm at The Warren.
- 7.3 The meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

Signed:Date:.....

John Cliff, Chair of Trustees