

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors
Held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Tuesday 8th December 2015

Present:

Mr C Lees, Chair
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair
Mrs J Covill
Mr N Holland
Mrs K Arnold
Mr I Raitt
Mr M Gibbs
Mrs B Simpson
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO/EHT
Mr S Whittle
Ms J Tagg
Mrs J Nelson
Mr K Colville

In attendance:

Mrs K Partridge, Trust Business Manager
Mrs C Sheehan, Trust Finance Manager
Mr N Vitarana, HPS Headteacher
Mr A Lowing, SMCPA Headteacher

Clerk:

Mrs V Bolton

‘How safeguarding and the Prevent Duty are incorporated in all aspects of the Trust’s/Schools’ activities’.

The meeting was preceded by a short presentation on the above subject. The Directors were informed that the Trust keeps its pupils safe in numerous ways, such as including ‘Rights Respecting’ messages and the teaching of core learning skills as part of the curriculum. Other examples of safeguarding practices include:-

- knowing children and parents well so changes in behaviour could be noticed
- continuing to educate pupils on e-safety and bullying
- making sure pupils know who to talk to if they need to
- being aware of young carers and the challenges they face
- working together with parents to create action plans for specific pupils
- ensuring a secure work site with enforced signing in protocol
- the use of DBS checks and the issuing of safeguarding statements and the whistleblowing procedure to all staff
- making aspects of child protection a regular part of staff meetings
- keeping lead safeguarding officers up to date with training requirements
- regularly carrying out safeguarding audits and relevant policy reviews with governors and directors.

The schools are fully compliant with the statutory requirements within the Prevent Duty and all stakeholders are aware of the importance of safeguarding and how it is embedded in the system. All staff and governors have undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking, the registered online Prevent training exercise. The link for this training will be circulated to the Directors. **VB to action.**

1. Apologies for absence, acceptance of absence, absence

- 1.1 No apologies for absence were received.

2. Pecuniary interests and confirmation of ‘Vice Chairs Action’ in temporarily appointing JN to PPC and Audit committees

- 2.1 No pecuniary interests were declared.
- 2.2 The Directors approved the Vice Chairs Action to temporarily appoint Mrs Nelson to the audit and pay and performance committees this term due to the absence of the Chair. The Chair thanks Mrs Nelson for taking on these temporary duties.

3. Minutes from the Board meeting held on 17th Sept 2015

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- 3.1 The minutes from the meeting of the Directors on the 17th September were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 The Directors were referred to the matters arising report (see Appendix 4) and discussed the following points:-
6.2, 3.6, 9.2 Compliance with Equality Act
It was confirmed that the equalities audit report had been circulated with the EHT papers (see EHT report Appendix 10). Updated accessibility plans and equality action plans are to be provided to the relevant LGB in the spring term. **JB, KA and JC to action.**
- 4.2 *6.8 Director biographies*
All Directors were requested to send a short biography to the Clerk as soon as possible if they have not already done so. **All to action.**
- 4.3 *7.6 Schools Financial Value Standard*
Whilst this process is not statutory for academies it was suggested that it would still be a worthwhile exercise to complete. This will be carried out at a point in the year that is suitable for the FM. **CS to action.**
- 4.4 *7.20 Stakeholder feedback*
It was confirmed that parent surveys had recently been carried out at both schools. The findings of these surveys would be discussed at the spring term LGB meetings and a brief summary would be included in the EHT report at the next Directors meeting. **JB to action.**
- 4.5 *8.8 Director/governor CPD*
The Board were referred to the training log for directors and governors from the autumn term (see Appendix 4a) and the high quantity and variation of CPD undertaken was noted and commended. The Chair emphasised the need for regular training to ensure that governance was professional.
- 4.6 *9.2 HPS LGB community, parent and pupil (CPP) items*
It was confirmed that a new CPP working party would be formed from HPS LGB members to deal with CPP issues so the LGB will have more time to deal with strategic issues (see minute 8.2).
- 4.7 *10.2 Director Input*
The Directors are to continue to be aware of how their role is developing as the Trust expands.
- 4.8 *11.5 HPS National Support School application*
It was confirmed that a full application had been submitted on behalf of HPS. As the school is not in an area of high need it is possible that the application will not be successful at the first attempt however repeat applications can continue to be submitted in future.
- 4.9 *6.7, 10.14 Trust Offer pack*
Information relating to this item had been included in the EHT Report. Work is underway to identify an appropriate financial and academic structure and system for an enlarged Trust.
- 4.10 All other items had been completed or were covered during the meeting.

5. Chairs Report and Commentary on agenda

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- 5.1 The Directors were referred to the Chairs report and commentary on agenda (see Appendix 5) and no questions were raised.
- 6. Trust Development**
- 6a) EHT Report**
- 6.1 The Directors were referred to the EHT Report and the relevant sub appendices (see Appendix 6 and sub appendices 1-11) and discussed the proposal to admit school C and school D into the Trust subject to the appropriate due diligence process being followed. The expansion group working party had recently met and had discussed the due diligence process used for the sponsorship of SMCPA and how this process could be improved upon for subsequent partner schools. It was agreed that the due diligence process would need to be substantially completed by the end of the spring term in order to admit two new partner schools in September 2016.
- 6.2 It was agreed that it was a priority to aim for the new partner schools to join the Trust in September 2016 as missing this deadline would create major difficulties in administration and financial planning. If September 2016 is not achievable it may be possible to admit the new schools as associate partners until full membership can be awarded in September 2017.
- 6.3 It was confirmed that the governing bodies of both school C and school D had agreed to put themselves forward as new Trust partners, and that the LA had agreed to fund certain site improvements at both schools in order to make them increasingly appealing to new applicants. It would be important to ensure that a maximum pupil intake was secured in order to provide additional funding going forward as the LA had agreed to fund any shortfall in funding on account of a class not being full for only one year at school C.
- 6.4 The Directors were informed that meetings had taken place with the parent bodies at both prospective member schools in order to address any possible concerns. It would be essential that the two new member schools work closely together and develop strong communication channels in order for school C and school D to work as one unit albeit split across two sites. The Directors requested that a business plan be brought to the Trust Board detailing what steps would be put in place in order to encourage the success of the relationship between school C and school D. **JB to action.**
- 6.5 Notes from historical discussions regarding the sponsorship of SMCPA were shared with the Board which described the thoroughness of the work involved prior to the decision to proceed with the sponsorship. The Board requested that the following be conducted as part of the due diligence process for the current proposal:-
- staff and parent consultations for all schools (including HPS and SMCPA)
 - staff at new partner schools would follow the legal TUPE process
 - research into pension deficits, existing contracts and any outstanding legal issues, with confirmation of who would be liable in the case of potential future claims
 - educational, financial, health & safety, safeguarding and governance reviews of both schools in order to ensure that the admission of school C and school D would not diminish the Trust in any way
 - information on pupil numbers and the viability of the proposal
 - it was requested that a project management plan be circulated. **JB to action.**
- 6.6 Aspects of the due diligence and negotiation process may differ to the process undertaken with SMCPA as a result of school C already having academy status. The Directors requested confirmation as to whether the Trust would carry out negotiations with the full governing body of school C, the LA or the DfE. **JB to action.**

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- 6.7 It was stated that the due diligence process detailed above would incur some costs. The Directors suggested that these costs could be funded by school C and school D or shared across the Trust as the process would be a shared benefit. There is a possibility that funds may be available from the DfE for schools agreeing to join MATs. The Board requested that these costs and how they be funded be clarified as a priority and that further information be circulated to the Directors via email prior to any funds being committed. **JB to action.**
- 6.8 The Directors enquired why other local Trusts had not expressed an interest in working with school C and school D. It was stated that other Trusts may be unwilling to take on additional KS2 classes, and that the EHT of the Spring Partnership Trust had been involved with both schools for some time now following a request for help by school D in the absence of a Headteacher, which had resulted in a strong working relationship.
- 6.9 The Directors enquired whether the expansion of the Trust would impact on the existing schools who are expecting an Ofsted inspection within the academic year. It was stated that the needs of each school would be considered and that the senior teams would be deployed sensibly and in a way that is not detrimental to their own success. The CPD benefits of providing senior staff with opportunities to work with other local schools was highlighted as long as the opportunities are realistically scheduled.
- 6.10 It was concluded that additional DfE input is required and that the DfE would ultimately have to provide their final approval of the project. It is anticipated that it is likely that this approval would be granted.
- 6.11 In order to be able to admit the new schools from September 2016, the Board agreed to consider the option of email approval of the proposal to admit school C and school D into the Trust subject to the due diligence process being carried out satisfactorily, the receipt of additional input from the DfE and the report and recommendation to proceed from the Expansion Group working party.
- 6b) Strategy**
- 6.12 The Directors were referred to the Trust strategic plan and the strategic intention 5 documents (see Appendices 6b)i and 6b)iv). A discussion took place on the need to have a vision statement for the Trust which encapsulates the Trusts motivation in reaching out to local schools. It was agreed that the Expansion Group working party would consider the content of both a Trust moral statement and a vision statement. The strategic plan was approved. **JB to action.**
- 6.13 It was agreed that the LGBs would develop school specific strategic intention documents in order to support the overall Trust strategy. **JC and KA to action.**
- 6.14 The Trust strategic intention 5 would be amended to include a section on expansion of the Trust and subject to this, was approved. **CL to action.**
- 6c) Approval of the latest Partnership Plan of RAPT and authority to approve dissolution of RAPT to be delegated to Authorised Representative**
- 6.15 The Directors approved the latest Partnership Plan for RAPT (see Appendix 6c).
- 6.16 It was acknowledged that while there had been many benefits to being involved with RAPT, and that all schools involved had gained from the relationships and communication that developed, the increasing emphasis on the growth of MATs may result in the proposal to dissolve RAPT in the near future.

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- 6.17 The Board agreed to allow the Authorised Representative for RAPT, Mrs Brinkley, to have the authority to approve the dissolution of RAPT. The possibility of actively resigning from RAPT was considered but it was agreed that the Spring Partnership Trust would continue as members. The board was also willing for the Authorised Representative to explore more radical changes to the Partnership Plan but that this would need director's approval.
- 6d) Report from ACC**
- 6.18 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the summer term meeting of ACC (see Appendix 6d)i) and were provided with an update from the committee as follows:-
- staff members would be presenting on curriculum changes and Y1 phonics testing from HPS and SMCPA
 - increased expectations in the curriculum have caused aspirational targets to be set by both schools as they are continuing to be set according to the previous assessment standards
 - SMSC, British Values and radicalisation prevention were due to be discussed
 - SMCPA had recently received an excellent Challenge Partners review which supported the 'good' self-assessment
 - a very successful ACC visit day had recently taken place at HPS
 - HPS had achieved the NAACE mark and the Inclusion Quality mark
 - both schools had received very strong RAISEonline reports.
- 6.19 The Directors were reassured that the committee are confident that the new curriculum is being rolled out effectively and appropriately at both schools, and that all statutory elements are in place. The Trust Board approved the curriculum for the current academic year.
- 6e) Report from FARCO**
- 6.20 A discussion took place regarding some 2014-15 variances against the budget that had come to light which had resulted in a total overspend of £119,839 from the HPS budget (£41,075 overspend on GAG and £78,764 for capital items). As there was insufficient GAG funding to cover the total capital spend across both schools £84,754 (£78,764 HPS and £5,990 SMCPA) has been funded from the unrestricted funds. The modular classroom project has therefore been put on hold for the foreseeable future. It was confirmed that HPS continues to hold more than the minimum for unrestricted funds as stipulated in the reserves policy. A full report on the causes for this overspend and the actions put in place to avoid the situation occurring again will be circulated via email to the Trust Board and brought for consideration at the next FARCO meeting. **CS to action.**
- 6.21 Initial findings suggest that the overspend could be due in part to variances in the teaching salaries budget. It was confirmed that had the systems that are now used (such as monthly salary monitoring and use of more accurate budgeting software) been in place throughout 2014-15, these variances would not have been able to occur.
- 6.22 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the October FARCO meeting and the November audit committee meeting (see Appendices 6e)i and 6e)ii) and were informed that there had been some disappointment in the auditors administration of the annual accounts. This issue had been discussed at the recent FARCO meeting and the committee had agreed to recommend the reappointment of the auditors subject to the auditors being informed of the expectation that the service provided would be improved over the course of the next year.
- 6.23 The Board requested that details regarding the notice period of the contract with the auditors be brought to the next FARCO meeting. **KP to action.**

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- 6.24 The Directors were referred to the final audited accounts for the year ending 31 August 2015 and the Trust responses to the audit management letter (see Appendices 6e)iii and 6e)iv). The staff numbers for 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 were queried as there had been a noticeable increase. It was subsequently confirmed that the increase was due to the 2014/15 accounts covering both schools while the 2013/14 data referred to HPS only. The Board approved the accounts and the responses to the audit management letter and agreed to recommend the decision to reappoint the auditors, UHY Hacker Young, to the Members at the AGM on Mon 25th January 2016. **VB to action.**
- 6.25 The Directors were provided with a verbal update of other recent activities undertaken by FARCO and were referred to the profit and loss reports for both schools (see Appendix 6e)vi). Clarification had not yet been received from the auditors regarding their recent comments relating to what extent the Board considers financial information. **CS to action.**
- 6.26 It was stated that CIF bids are to be submitted by both schools by the closing date of 17th December 2015. It was requested that FARCO be notified of any unsuccessful bids in order to identify site projects that should be considered in the future. **KP to action.**
- 6f) Safeguarding including approval of implementation of action plan following case review**
- 6.27 The Directors were referred to the confidential case review of a permanent exclusion at SMCPA (see EHT sub appendix 9). The review was carried out by the EHT following a request by one of the governor exclusion panel. The purpose was to identify any areas of improvement that could be introduced at the school. It was confirmed that some minor amendments had been made to processes undertaken by the school such as discussing specific pupils needs with external suppliers, specifically sports coaching companies, and ensuring that the staff supplied have received the appropriate training for dealing with pupils displaying challenging behaviour. It will be confirmed that this approach is also taken with suppliers working with pupils at HPS. **NV, AL,JC,KA to action.**
- 6.28 The case review highlighted that the exclusion review panel had agreed that the school had followed a thorough, careful and considerate process and that the senior team had dealt professionally and thoughtfully with the pupil and their family members. The Directors were informed that the pupil concerned was now thriving in an appropriate therapeutic provision. The Directors thanked Mr Lowing for the work put into the case review.
- 6g) Admissions Policy 2017-18**
- 6.29 The Directors were informed that the Admissions policy for 2017-18 would be brought for approval at the next meeting of the Board following the addition of several minor amendments – none of which would require consultation.
- 7. Administration**
- 7.1 The Directors approved the governor appointments of Carol Tarhan, Hazel Hatch, Nive Krishnamurthy and Andrew Scriven with immediate effect, and approved the proposed committee membership structure (see Appendix 7a).
- 7.2 It was agreed that the membership requirements of the pay and performance committee (PPC) would be changed to two directors and one governor. The quorum figure for PPC and the audit committee would be resolved in advance of the summer term committee meetings. **CL to action.**

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- 7.3 The Directors were referred to the revised governance arrangements document (see Appendix 7b) and approved the suggested amendments with the exception of making PPC responsible for HR policies rather than FARCO. It was agreed that the Trust Board would continue to approve the EHT Performance Management objectives.

8. Reports from LGBs

- 8.1 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the two autumn term SMCPA LGB meetings and the SMCPA update (see Appendices 8a and 8b). It was confirmed that there had been two site exclusions of family members which are enforced for a pre-arranged period. The Headteacher has the ability to continue to extend the period of the site exclusion in order to protect pupils and staff members. The police had been informed of the incidents concerned.
- 8.2 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the two autumn term HPS LGB meetings and the HPS update (see Appendices 8c and 8d). It was confirmed that a new staff governor, Emma East, had recently been appointed by the staff body, and that it is likely that two further governors will be co-opted onto the LGB next term who will run the community, parent and pupil working party as discussed under minute 4.6.

9. Reports from other committees

- 9.1 The Board were referred to the minutes of the autumn term PPC meeting (see Appendix 9a). It was confirmed that new staff at either school now receive a Trustwide contract which contains a clause allowing them to be asked to work at any partner school.
- 9.2 The Directors approved the EHT Performance Management objectives for 2016-17 (see Appendix 9b).

10. LGB / Director School visits

- 10.1 The Directors were informed that safeguarding visits had been carried out at HPS regarding safer recruitment and at SMCPA regarding pupil safeguarding requirements. The reports for these visits will be circulated with the papers for the next meeting. **VB to action.**

11. AOB and date of next meeting

- 11.1 It was agreed that final adopted Trust Board minutes dating back to the start of the academic year would be published on the Spring Partnership Trust page on the school websites. **VB to action.**
- 11.2 The Chair thanked Mr S Whittle for his involvement as a governor and a Director over recent years, and acknowledged his invaluable contributions to the Trust.

The next meeting of the Trust Board will take place at 7pm on the 17th March 2016 at HPS.
The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed:
Clive Lees, Chair of Directors

Date:.....