

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees
held remotely via Webex at 5:30 pm on Wednesday 10th February 2021

Present:

Mr R Barlow
Ms C Barenbrug
Mrs O Brookman
Mr A Blount
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO
Mr J Cliff, Chair
Ms K Hawker
Mr D Okafor
Miss R Punter
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair

Clerk: Miss K Crossley

In attendance:

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

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 None.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

2.1 None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 10th December 2020 (appendix 1) and the extraordinary meeting of 6th January 2021 (appendix 2) were approved by the Board and would be electronically signed by the Chair. **JC/KC to action.**

3.2 Trustees were referred to the matters arising reports (appendices 3 and 4), detailing the status of outstanding actions:

3.2, 4.6 The risk assessments for nurseries would be circulated to Trustees. **JB to action.**

3.2, 4.2, 4.25 It was confirmed that the status of some educational KPIs had not yet been finalised. A meeting had been arranged for the CEO and Trust Assessment Lead on the setting of Fisher Family Trust targets, which would be shared with ACC members before bringing to the next ACC meeting. **JB to action.**

4. Executive team reporting

4.1 Questions were invited on the Executive Report (appendix 5). Trustees asked how many devices had been issued to pupils and were advised that 137 devices received from the DfE and 160 devices purchased by the Trust had been allocated to pupils. A further DfE allocation had been announced which would be able to be ordered in the near future. A total of 31 pupils who had no access would receive devices after the half-term break; in such cases, hard copies of work were delivered by school staff. The Trust was satisfied that all pupils without access had been correctly identified and had or would shortly receive a device.

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- 4.2 In response to a question as to how the allocation of devices had been prioritised, it was confirmed that the DfE devices were issued to disadvantaged pupils and those with no access to devices. For other categories, schools drew on local intelligence as well as the results of a survey on access to technology which had been conducted in the autumn term.
- 4.3 A discussion followed on equality of access to learning for pupils using their own devices at home, those currently attending school and those with no access to devices. It was acknowledged that ideally all pupils would have access to chrome books, but the remote offer was accessible from a wide range of devices, including mobile phones. Schools supported families with technical issues where appropriate, and in the event of connection issues, support could be sought from the IT helpdesk by the teachers. The Trust was not aware of any connectivity issues and any access issues would be picked up through registration.
- 4.4 It was suggested that consideration be given to anticipating potential remote learning risks and ensuring contingency was in place, to avoid issues escalating. **JB to action.**
- 4.5 In response to a question from Trustees, it was reported that the Spring curriculum had been adapted for remote education. Positive feedback had been received from parents at a recent Local Advisory Council meeting, who were pleased with on-line learning. The offer would be reviewed in March 2021.

4.6 Draft Strategic Plan

- 4.6.1 Trustees were referred to the draft Strategic Plan 2020-25 (appendix 6) which had been discussed at a recent strategy meeting. It had been agreed that further work would be done on the wording of the success criteria to ensure that objectives were measurable. The revised plan would be brought to the Trust Board meeting in March 2021. **JB to action.**

4.7 KPI heat map

- 4.7.1 Trustees had provided feedback on the draft KPI heat map (appendix 7) at recent meetings of FARCO and ACC. The HR Committee would consider relevant KPIs at its meeting in March 2021. The next step would be to understand which actions were required to progress current red and amber-rated indicators to yellow and green. **JB to action.**
- 4.7.2 The Trust thanked Mr Okafor for offering support with IT KPIs. **JB/DO to action.**

- 4.8 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 7.1.

4.9 Monthly management accounts, December 2020

- 4.9.1 Trustees were referred to:
- consolidated monthly management accounts to December 2020
 - consolidated cash flow forecast, December 2020
 - consolidated budget report (appendices 9-11).
- 4.9.2 In response to a question from Trustees as to whether budget overspends at some schools reflected the need for further financial input, it was noted that funds would be freed up from savings realised from the second phase of the restructure with effect from January 2021 but

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would be retained centrally. In addition, curriculum funding would be consolidated now that the curriculum was centralised.

4.10 Internal audit update

4.10.1 Trustees were referred to the internal audit report (appendix 12), the first internal audit using an independent internal auditor, Baxters, which had been conducted remotely. Payroll, income pooling, conflicts of interest and management support to finance had been reviewed, with one medium-priority and one low-priority point identified. The medium-priority point related to the preparation of salary assessments for support staff. Trustees accepted the CFO's explanation that the standard process had been affected by the need to re-prioritise in the early days of lockdown and remote working in late March/early April 2020. The low-priority point related to maintaining internal register of interests for members of the senior leadership teams and the recommendation had been actioned.

4.11 Consider and approve any spend requests over £20,000:

4.11.1 Trustees ratified the approval by FARCO of the spend request for the internet provision contract (appendix 13).

4.12 External scrutiny of academic data

4.12.1 Further to an action from the Members' meeting, it was noted that it was not currently possible to arrange external academic scrutiny. The action would be diarised. **KC to action.**

5. Trust Committee Business

5.1 Overview of HR issues

5.1.1 Trustees asked how employees on long-term and/or stress-related absence were being looked after during the closure of schools and the central offices. It was confirmed that all staff could dial into an anonymous counselling service, details of which had been shared with staff. The matter would be considered at the next meeting of the HR Committee. **KC to action.** C-19 related staff sickness was being tracked and recorded monthly. It was noted the careful monitoring of stress-related absence would be important once restrictions began to be lifted and the full impact of the pandemic started to become apparent. Two cases of stress related absences linked to C19 had been reported and dealt with.

5.2 Minutes of FARCO meeting, 30th November 2020

5.2.1 The minutes of the FARCO meeting of 30th November 2020 (appendix 14), which had previously been circulated by email, were received for information.

5.3 Minutes of ACC meeting, 23rd September 2020

5.3.1 The final unadopted minutes of the ACC meeting of 20th January 2021 (appendix 15) which had previously been circulated by email, were received for information.

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6. Policies

6.1 Allegations of Abuse Against Staff

6.1.1 Trustees were referred to the Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy (appendix 16) and the following was agreed:

- cross-reference the policy against the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to ensure consistency
- clarification of precise escalation routes for allegations against members of staff, Headteachers/Heads of School and the CEO
- clarification of the roles of Heads and Designated Safeguarding Leads, which could be the same person
- clarification of the circumstances under which the Trust would not enter into a compromise agreement. **JB to action.**

6.1.2 The Board thanked Mr Barlow and Mrs Brookman for their support on the wording on compromise agreements. Trustees agreed the delegation of the approval of the policy to Mr Barlow and Mrs Brookman. The revised policy would be circulated to Mr Barlow and Mrs Brookman, cc'ing Trustees. **JB to action.**

6.2 Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions

6.2.1 Trustees were referred to the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (appendix 17) and the following was agreed:

- update reference to Primary Care Trusts
- replace Department of Health with Department of Health and Social Care and Department of Children and Family Services with Department for Education
- add wording on schools keeping supplies of generic epi pens. **JB to action.**

6.2.2 The policy was approved, subject to the above.

7. AOB and date of next meeting

7.1 Trustees received the Governance Handbook and Competency Framework 2020 (appendices 18 and 19) for information.

7.2 It was agreed that the Board would undertake a skills audit and self-assessment. **JC to action.**

7.3 The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 31st March 2021 at 6pm, venue tbc.

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