

Acton and Calveley Academy Trust

Meeting of the Board of Directors

13th December 2016 6.15 pm

MINUTES– PART 1

ATTENDANCE: Laura Leather, Jo Edwards, Elizabeth Ford, Fiona Sloyan, Penny Holding, Yvonne Wood, Leslie Latronico, Verity McKay, Nick Brown, Melissa Parry, Bev Dolman

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Neil Duncalf

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

VMc confirmed that she was an employee of Poole Alcock

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Richard Hastie has moved from being a Director to a Member - this had been included within the Members Meeting and a written resolution made. Company records will be amended to reflect this.

5. DECLARATION OF AOB

- a) Holiday dates
- b) Newsletter
- c) Director details and terms of office

6. MEMBERSHIP

There are no changes to current membership. A skills audit is being completed to target future new appointments.

7. FINANCE

a) EFA / Financial Management

YW had produced a report covering the 5 areas that the EFA were seeking assurance on. She ran through these with Directors:

Satisfied that lines of internal accountability are appropriate - the EFA were concerned that one person could have significant control over the finances and that Directors needed to ensure that appropriate checks and balances were in place.

Q: Do we need to mitigate the risks further?

A: discussion took place on the current process, segregation of duties and termly checks.

Outcome: Directors felt that the system does provide sufficient control.

Another area included the viability of family appointments and whether there was a system to address this conflict. Directors discussed this and felt that there were safeguarding in place.

Outcome: Directors felt that applications ask whether an applicant is related to a member of the school.

The EFA wanted assurance that there was sufficient scrutiny of leadership and transparency around decision making. Is the scheme of Delegation sufficient?

Outcome: Directors felt that there is sufficient scrutiny of leadership.

Establish and monitoring policies

Trustee Expense Policy - one area of concern was expenses paid to trustees and senior staff – are they a reasonable use of public funds? Directors discussed this and the fact that whilst there is a Trustee Expenses Policy, Trustees do not claim expenses and this has not been used.

Outcome: Directors were satisfied that the policy for out of office expenses is appropriate.

Staff recruitment and rates of pay - the EFA queried this and how Directors can evidence that appointments are made on merit and salary levels of new and existing staff are justified?

A discussion took place that highlighted the following:

- Staff are recruited against a set of criteria in a person specification.
- Safer recruitment training has been undertaken and is applied in all appointments.
- There is a pay policy that is used to determine pay.
- All appointments are ratified by Directors.

Outcome: Directors were satisfied with recruitment processes.

Evidencing compliance - this relates to dealing with any areas that the Responsible Officer (KE) brings to our attention or the external auditors. What is the channel of communication?

A discussion took place and it was agreed that she would need to alert the chair in the first instance.

Outcome: YW will add this procedure to the Financial Handbook.

Right mix of skills on the board - the EFA had asked whether there was adequate oversight and challenge of the trust's short term financial performance and long term strategy. Directors discussed this and felt that as a Board they are more fortunate than other boards with the skills of their Directors.

Outcome: Directors are future proofing skills by buddying up in areas such as finance.

Transactions with related parties - YW reminded Directors of the “at cost” requirement for supply of goods or services from a connected party (relative) exceeding £2,500 cumulatively in any one financial year. Directors discussed this and highlighted that related party transactions are disclosed in the annual accounts and registers of business interests are maintained.

Outcome: Directors noted this.

b) Approve Budget

YW ran through the budget and highlighted that the academy was making an in year loss but that it will not mean a deficit budget due to the carry forward. Funding for all schools is tight and since the budget was set the school has taken steps by appointing new staff on a temporary basis.

Q: What are pupil numbers looking like from next September?

R: It is early days however currently number are lower than desired - although this may change.

Outcome: Directors asked that the Executive Head review costs with a view to reducing costs going forward.

Outcome: 2017/18 intake will be discussed alongside finance at the next meeting.

Outcome: Directors approved the budget subject to the above.

8. POLICY APPROVAL

To discuss and approve Directors’ Board Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation

Outcome: Terms of reference to be approved via email.

Outcome: Directors reviewed the Scheme of delegation and approved it - Directors also commented on its quality.

To sign code of conduct

Outcome: Directors reviewed the draft code produced by the Clerk and approved it.

To discuss and approve the Whistle Blowing policy

Directors reviewed and suggested the addition of a line a pt 3 to reflect a pathway if a concern is about a Director.

Outcome: Policy approved subject to the addition of the above.

To discuss and approve the Complaints policy

Directors discussed this policy and noted that this was a policy for Parents and not staff / Directors.

Q: At stage 3, what happened if the complaint is about a Board Member?

R: Need to add in Board Members to highlight this complaint pathway.

Outcome: Directors approved the policy subject to the addition above.

To discuss and approve the Critical Incidents Policy

Outcome: This policy was deferred to the next meeting.

To discuss and approve the Educational Visits Policy

A discussion took place on the process and the Executive Head highlighted that staff are trained on the risk assessment and school processes and that Governors approve residential visits.

Outcome: The policy was approved by Directors.

To discuss and approve the Health and Safety Policy

Directors noted that titles needed to be changed to Directors throughout the report.

Outcome: Directors approved this policy subject to the changes outlined.

To Discuss and approve Pay Policy

Outcome: Policy approval for this policy was delegated to the Pay Committee - once approved this should be loaded on to the portal and will be ratified by all directors at the next Director's meetings.

To discuss and approve the Lone Working Policy

Directors discussed this policy and again noted that titles needed changing to Directors as above. It was also noted that there was a gap where a telephone number should be.

Outcome: Directors approved this policy subject to the changes highlighted above being made.

To approve any outstanding Terms of Reference

Outcome: Finance and Audit TOR - approved

Outcome: Pay TOR - approved.

Record approval of anonymised teacher targets 16-17

To approve the Charging Policy

Outcome: Directors approved this policy

To approve the Accessibility Policy

A discussion took place on this policy and how the Directors monitored access. It was noted that there is provision within the Director TOR for this but it could be added to SEN or Health and Safety TOR. It was noted that the old building does not comply, however new build does.

Outcome: This policy will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

9. EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

Admission Numbers

Directors had read the report in advance and mentioned the following items for discussion or further clarification:

The low numbers of pupils wishing to attend the schools from 2017 is concerning. One issue that a parent had mentioned was that there is nothing in the admissions policy that attendance at the nursery automatically guarantees a place in Reception. Directors commented on whether it was a low birth year.

Directors how to promote the school better and discussed moving to open days where they meet the Executive Head.

Outcome: Executive Head to add a guarantee clause to to the policy and this will form part of the consultation for future years.

Quality of Teaching

The Executive Head had reported on the quality of teaching during her termly formal lesson observations. Directors were concerned and asked:

Q. was the Executive Head confident that staff can pull this back and return to the usual standard of teaching?

R: Yes - work has already taken place to align objectives and the read across year groups. Teaching staff had met as clusters across the two schools to improve practice.

Pupil Premium

Directors welcomed the report on the accelerated reading programme and noted that this is helping children to meet their targets. Data will be presented at the Directors Day in December.

10. WEBSITE

The chair had been working through the NGA's website checklist to ensure that the board were compliant. The Directors page had been updated and now included most pen portraits.

Outcome: Thanks to FS for her work on the page.

Action: ND and NB to send missing photos and pen portraits to FS.

Action: Need to load TOR, Scheme of Delegation and final budget to the website.

11. PARKING

The chair reported that following the last Directors meeting, the EHT and Chair had received further information from the family who had requested disabled access to the car park. Further to the information provided the chair made the decision to allow access to the site in car for the parent on a Thursday and Friday.

Outcome: Directors noted the actions and fully supported the decision by the chair.

Directors discussed that whilst this perhaps secures a short term fix to the parking problems - longer term still requires consideration and action. Several suggestions were put forward by Directors.

Outcome: EHT to set up a project group to investigate and report to the next meeting.

This will include meeting with the farmer / owner of the last to the side of the school, con-

tacting the parish council, and considering whether tracking could be used on the playing field during winter.

12. GOVERNOR TRAINING

Directors were advised that a new skills audit will be carried out in the new year to look at gaps and use this to prompt appropriate future training.

13. AOB

A. Holiday dates - for information

Following the last meeting which approved the holiday dates for 2017/18, Directors were informed that these are now available on the website.

B. Newsletter

A Director queried whether the newsletter could be emailed to them - currently it is posted on the website.

Outcome: It was agreed that the newsletters would be placed on the portal to allow Directors access alongside Trust documents.

Outcome: A new Director Blog is being created so that Directors can share with parents what they do as a Director - these will be posted on the website.

C. Director details and terms of office

Final details were needed to the Directors details to make them complete:

Outcome: Directors discussed and approved a term of office for Directors of the trust. This will be set with a term being 4 years and that there is a maximum of 2 terms allowed (8 years in total per Director).

Outcome: Directors present confirmed that they were born in the UK