

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE FERMAIN
ACADEMY HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON 8TH MARCH 2016**

Governors Present:	Chris Hindley	Chair
	Nic Brindle	Principal
	Stephen Armstrong	(Via Skype)
	Emma Colley	
	Mervyn Harding	
	John Hughes	
	Crawford Prentice	
Also in attendance:	Joe Carter	Clerk to Governors
	Lee Cambray	Observer (Deputy Principal) – from Item 4
	Alastair Stoddart	Observer – until Item 6
	Chris Heptinstall	Observer

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting started at 4:10pm.

The Chair thanked all governors and observers for their help and support to date.

The Principal confirmed that Lee Cambray would join the meeting when training finished.

1. APOLOGIES AND ADDITIONAL AOB

The following apologies for absence were received and accepted:

- Martin Howlett

At the autumn term 2015 meeting the Governing Board had discussed whether they should publish the attendance of the Governors on the school web site. They decided that at this time they would not publish attendance data of Governors, however would discuss Governors absence if more than two meetings were missed consecutively.

The Clerk advised the governing board that as stated in the Academies Financial Handbook, September 2015, 2.5 Transparency - The trust must be transparent with its governance arrangements. In the interests of transparency, an academy trust must publish on its website up-to-date details of its governance arrangements in a readily accessible format. This must include:

- the structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, its committees and local governing bodies, and the full names of the chair of each (where applicable)
- for each member who has served at any point over the past 12 months, their full names, date of appointment, date they stepped down (where applicable), and relevant business and pecuniary interests including governance roles in other educational institutions
- for each trustee and local governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months, their full names, date of appointment, term of office, date they stepped down (where applicable), who appointed them (in accordance with the trust's

articles), and relevant business and pecuniary interests including governance roles in other educational institutions

- for each trustee their attendance records at board and committee meetings over the last academic year
- for each local governor their attendance records at local governing body meetings over the last academic year

The governing board agreed that the above information would be added to the school web site including all governing board meetings and committees' papers that have taken place since 1st September 2015.

Action: Ensure that all governor information as outlined in Part 1, Item 1 of the spring term 2016 governing board minutes are added to the school web site (SBM).

There was no AOB raised.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Governors were asked to declare any potential pecuniary interest or conflict of interests with the business to be discussed during the meeting. The following potential conflict was declared:

- Chris Hindley and Mervyn Harding confirmed that they are employed by Youth Federation Limited, however did not foresee any conflicts of interest with the business to be discussed at tonight's meetings.

3. MEMBERSHIP

There have been no changes in the membership of the Governing Board since the last meeting. The Principal provided an update on the two parent governor vacancies. The Parent Governor letter was issued following the autumn term 2015 governing board meeting; with no replies. The Principal confirmed that he will re-issue a letter to TFA parents, issue a letter to the parents of commissioning schools and place an ad in relevant local papers/magazines.

Action: Meet to confirm the letters, adverts and timelines for the perusal of two parent governors (Principal, SBM and Clerk).

The governing board agreed the term of office for any new Parent Governors should be between one and four years.

Question: Would it be possible to expand the governing board to minimise the risk of being non-quorate at Committee meetings; in particular there are currently only two non-staff governors on the Resource and Audit Committee?

Response: We (R&A Committee) discussed at Committee that if non-quorate due to an absence then a meeting could still take place with decisions ratified later.

The Clerk suggested that the Principal makes contact with some local primary school heads that provide resource base provision to understand if they or someone they know would be interested in joining TFA governing board.

Action: Provide contacts for Principal around possible Heads to approach who might be willing to support TFA governing board or suggest possible candidates (Clerk).

Action: Make contact with local Heads to determine the possibility of support to TFA governing board (Principal).

The Chair confirmed Kevin Bradburnes resignation as a Director from 7th March 2016.

4. PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The part one minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising.

Lee Cambray joined the meeting.

The action log was reviewed and updated; see the spring term 2016 Fermain Academy action log.

5. CHAIR'S ACTION

The Chair reported the following action that he had taken on behalf of the governing board since the last governing board meeting:-

On 23rd December 2015 Cheshire East contacted school and made an allegation against school that a child had been hurt. The Chair was informed and thanked those governors who were able to support him in gathering the information and providing feedback. The Chair has tried to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who raised the issue; however the calls have not been returned.

School confirmed that the issue was raised by a social worker who was new to the family.

The governing board discussed whether the Chair should continue to make contact with the LADO or whether the matter should be escalated to the safeguarding board as he felt that the matter had been dealt with out of context. The local authority HR consultants were involved and confirmed to the Chair that the matter was now closed, although school have not had confirmation of the matter been closed.

The governing board agreed that the first step would be for the Deputy Principal to get advice from the individual who had run a recent course on Safeguarding.

Action: Follow up on the safeguarding incident raised at the end of the autumn term 2015 with an aim to understand why the issue had been raised and ensure all the necessary actions have been completed (Deputy Principal and Chair).

6. PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee minutes were received in advance of the meeting and the following key points were highlighted:-

Resource and Audit Committee, 2nd March 2016

The Chair of Committee stated that TFA had received a clean audit and the financial scheme of delegation was checked and confirmed as working well.

The Chair of the Governing Board thanked the SBM and the Principal for their work around this.

The Committee Chair confirmed that Reserves need to be held as TFA is a Charity by Exemption and Protected by Charity Law. The audited accounts state an unrestricted funding reserve of £50k.

The SBM confirmed that guidance from the external auditors is to hold the equivalent of one to three months operational expenditure. This would cover losses of income or emergency expenditure. The SBM has reviewed two Alternative Provision free schools; one school holds reserves of £250k (80 students), the other holds the equivalent of one term operational expenditure.

The Committee Chair confirmed that due to the new accounting standards; going forward TFA must report a specific reserves figure. If the actual amount is under or over the figure then the matter is raised to the governing board.

The Principal confirmed that he has been in discussions with commissioning schools around SEN students funding. Generally schools receive around £17.5k funding support for students with SEN; although this funding has to date not been transferred to TFA. The Principal has agreement from one Commissioner that if their student is referred, the LA will fund £15k to TFA.

Question: Why £15k not £17.5k?

Response: TFA can manage with the £15k. The allocation of funding is a complex one where the mainstream school spends £6k up front on the assessment of a student; then the school can apply for an additional £10k (high needs funding) from the LA. In extreme circumstances the school can apply for additional funding.

The Principal confirmed that another alternative provision school (The PRU) receive £8.5K per student as they have no SEN students. Any students with SEN are moved to the Adelaide link school and that school receive funding of £17.5k.

The Risk Register has been drafted with the SLT accountable for different areas of the Register.

A checklist of DfE "Musts" will be reviewed termly by the R&A Committee.

The indemnity insurance provided by the EFA has unlimited cover provided for governors.

Standards Committee, 1st March 2016

Stephen Armstrong provided the following update:-

The SEN Policy has been reviewed and approved and will be discussed in Item 12 of today's meeting. At the data scrutiny sub-committee meeting we were presented with a large baseline of progress data for English and Maths. Stephen confirmed that there is a robust tracking system in place and that the expectation from the Principal is that each student will achieve one GCSE level or equivalent per school year. 58% of students are on track in English and 86% on track in Maths. The attendance level has had a significant impact on the % on track.

Attendance and Behaviour were stated as at least good, with some outstanding.

Looking ahead as a governing board we need to have a thorough understanding of progress. School have started some case studies to gain an evidence base for judging the progress of students. The sub-committee want to gain a handle on the progress data by the summer term and track individual students and particular groups to understand

what brings about rapid student progress? What brings about slow progress? The data will be recorded as a % and a number.

Stephen confirmed that the system of monitoring teaching is well embedded and that governors need to consider their role in learning walks in the future.

The feedback from the DfE visit, Jayne Lowe recorded a significant amount of outstanding teaching.

The SEN & Inclusion Policy is well embedded in the school; Emma Colley is the SEN Co-ordinator and undertaking the necessary course.

Alastair Stoddart left the meeting.

School can identify children with SEN and if a need for a student emerges whilst at school an action plan/intervention can be put in place.

The governing board agreed that going forward if there is a decision making process around students with SEN at TFA, Parents must be involved.

Question: Where are the reports on lesson observations?

Response: Covered in the Principal report.

The governing board agreed the updated Standards Committee and Monitoring Sub-Group Committee terms of reference.

The Safeguarding Governor and Look After/Cared for Children Governor confirmed that all procedures are up to date and there are no issues.

Curriculum plans - The Principal confirmed that school may bring a part time Science Teacher a year earlier than previously planned.

The Principal confirmed that the Admission arrangements autumn 2016 will be presented at the summer governing board meeting.

7. FINANCE

The SBM confirmed that the audited accounts are published on the trust's website and were filed with Companies House by 31st January 2016.

The actual spend against budget for the financial year 1st September 2015 to 31st August 2016 had been discussed at the R&A Committee; so the SBM presented a summary to the governing board. There is a projected outturn figure of £17,161 surplus for the year end which would increase the reserves. There is a projected £22k surplus on the 2016/2017 budget which does not include the potential additional SEN funding. Also, school are reviewing options to offer day placements which could increase funding by £45k which would be used for staffing (to increase the curriculum offered and the addition of qualified staff).

The Chair thanked the R&A Committee for the level of detail scrutinised.

Action: Refine staffing and budget for the 2016/17 academic year in time for review at the next Resource and Audit Committee and full board approval at the summer term 2016 meeting (SBM and Principal).

8. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

The Chair had asked for simplicity in the report from the Principal and thanked the Principal for taking on board his comments.

Part one of the Principal's report contained the following matters:

- Attainment and Progress
- Attendance
- Behaviour Progress
- Teaching (Staff, Learning Walks, Lesson Observations)
- Behaviour and Safety
- DfE Visit
- Further Development

The Principal confirmed that the report is structured under the four Ofsted areas.

Currently student numbers are below the Pupil Admission Number (PAN); four students were re-integrated this term, with sixteen new student referrals since January 2016. Some schools have increased placements, some reduced. Overall the PAN has dropped by 0.4 FTE.

Attendance

School has a current attendance of 86.6% which is a rise of 5.9% from last term. Each student counts for about 5% attendance. School have four students with medical needs with high authorised non-attendance. The greatest gain is the reduction in unauthorised absence to 8.2%. The national expectation in attendance is 92%.

The average increase in attendance is 34%; if a late code is applied to students this increases the attendance % further.

The attendance of free school meals students was 82.8% due to medical issues.

Question: Can we track the pre-arrival attendance of each student (attendance at the students' previous school)?

Response: Yes we already do, and I (Principal) intend to produce case studies to demonstrate the value that TFA add for each student (as discussed at the Standards Committee).

Question: Does the attendance have a future impact on the core grant calculations?

Response: There is no impact from the fluid nature of schools PAN on the core grant calculations for the next two years.

Behaviour Progress

By the summer term 2016 there will be further information provided on the progress within subject areas with a focus on English and Maths, using the RAISEonline categories to look at progress. There have been some dips in English versus Maths.

The Principal congratulated Emma Colley as ten out of eleven of her students passed their first exam.

Question: How did the students react to the results?

Response: They and their parents/carers were very pleased.

Teaching

The second round of teaching lessons observations have been completed for nine teaching staff; some joint, some independent.

The lesson observations for the core subject teachers (English and Maths) were outstanding.

The Learning Mentors have the same accountability as with Teachers, however due to inexperience the learning mentors can have a fear of dead time when asking questions of students in the classroom and can jump in too early. This was observed through the lesson observations and the DfE also identified a lack of structure in some learning mentor led lessons. The Principal has introduced formal monthly coaching with two Teachers and half termly reviews with either the Principal and/or the Deputy Principal. Masterclasses are also attended when questions such as “why do we have learning outcomes?” are discussed.

The Principal has extended the probation period of two learning mentors by two months pending an observation.

Question: What are your confidence levels in these individuals?

Response: My (Principal) expectation is there should be an improvement as the individuals responded positively to the feedback.

Question: Is attendance at coaching sessions mandatory?

Response: Yes for learning mentors, the twilight and master class sessions run after school; the following day a learning walk takes place to see if the learning is employed into a lesson.

Question: Why did a member of staff leave?

Response: The individual left for another job, they were under performing against student progress and had underestimated the challenge of the role.

Question: How do you recognise outstanding practice when you see it in the learning mentors?

Response: The aim is for learning mentors to consistently deliver good teaching first which is observed through lesson plans and marking. The long term plan is for school to link with good and outstanding practice in mainstream school and enrol learning mentors to teacher training.

The Governors wanted to thank the staff for doing a great job.

Behaviour and Safety

Generally behaviour has been good, with outstanding teaching in English and Maths in relationship to the behaviour of students. The problematic periods are during social times which the Principal attributes to the current building layout, which should improve once the building works are complete as there will be additional social spaces; break out rooms and one to one rooms.

There has been an influx of new students with Staff working hard on the dynamics of students and how to integrate into tutor groups.

The school has an excellent rapport with Parents in regards behaviour via telephone or Class dojo.

Overall there has been a 3% increase in positive behaviour across school which is evidenced in Class dojo.

Question: Can you explain the variability in behaviour expectations (as in Jayne Lowes comments) around allowing mobile phones in some lessons, but not others?

Response: Mobile phones are only to be used at the discretion of the classroom teacher, if they are aiding learning in the classroom. The staff and students are clear what is allowed. School allow coats in some classrooms if it makes the environment to work in more comfortable. However in food technology there are no coats for safety and hygiene reasons. Students are asked to wear overalls and boots in the construction area, and tunics in hair and beauty. These requirements are seeing steady engagement from students.

There was a rise in Safeguarding incidents in January, a minimum level in February with two incidents raised to the police. The Chair thanked school for keeping him informed of the incidents.

Build Programme

The key date is the 21st March 2016 when the new building arrives in modular form.

Question: Should governors attend school during the ten day snagging period?

Response: That would be a great idea; between 9th to the 13th May 2016.

Action: Invite governors to attend school during the snagging phase 9th to 13th May 2016 (Chair).

The Principal had received an email from a local resident enquiring about the road closure when the new building arrives. The local resident was positive and stated that anti-social behaviour had been non-existent since school had started. The resident had asked a couple of questions; pruning of trees and re-surfacing of the un-adopted road. The Principal confirmed that the road has been adopted and is owned by Cheshire East.

The Chair on behalf of Youth Federation Limited agreed that they would arrange for someone to cut down the ropes in the school grounds.

Action: Cut down ropes in the school grounds (Youth Federation Limited).

9. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (SDP)

The Principal and Chair had met on 7th March 2016 and agreed a process to allocate sections of the SDP to Committees.

Question: Are targets set for performance management referenced in the SDP?

Response: The SDP was produced in September 2015 and the Principals performance management took place in January 2016, staff followed this; therefore this year it is only partly referenced. Going forward the performance management targets will be better aligned to the SDP.

The advice from Jayne Lowe (DfE) was for school to set quantifiable targets in the SDP.

The Principal confirmed that once the report is broken down he will refine and add smart / quantifiable targets where appropriate.

10. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director's Report for the Spring Term 2016 and Clerks Precis had been issued in advance of the meeting and contained the following matters:

1. Governance and Liaison update
2. Annual HMI Report; Implications for Cheshire East
3. Education Welfare Service and Academy Charges
4. Newly Qualified Teachers
5. Cheshire East Information, Support and Advice Service (CEIAS)
6. Student Safeguarding Groups
7. Hate Crime
8. Domestic Abuse Developments
9. School Trips in light of Paris terrorist attacks
10. Fair Access Protocol
11. Pupil Premium for children adopted from care
12. Model Education HR policies for Schools and Academies

The Clerk confirmed that the report had been covered and actions agreed at the Standards Committee and the Resource and Audit Committee meetings.

11. GOVERNOR MONITORING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Governor Monitoring/Visits

Stephen Armstrong sent out a timetable last Friday with suggested dates of governor monitoring/visit plans with visits in pairs. The plan is for all governors and observers to know who is covering what area and the Principal receiving advanced notice to arrange staff to be available for the visits.

Stephen confirmed that it is important that governors have evidence from pupils and parents.

Action: Issue the suggested summer term 2016 timetable for governor visits to all governors for their input/confirmation (Chair).

Skills Audit

The skills aggregation matrix has been populated with all non-staff governor information and indicates a good coverage of skills. The skills that have limited coverage include knowing the local community, understanding the current education policy and safeguarding. The governing board feel that this will improve once the four staff governors/observers complete the skills questionnaire.

The governors concluded that they have a diverse board of governors with strong practical experience.

The Training Liaison Governor had received no specific requests for training from any governor.

The Chair asked that a governor training budget be produced which would cover any mandatory or best practice training requirements.

There was a discussion on training with a number of actions noted.

Action: Provide a mandatory/best practice list of training e.g. Safeguarding and Prevent, and courses that are the same regardless of counties to the Training and Liaison Governor (SLT and Clerk).

Action: Confirm any courses taken to date to the Training and Liaison Governor for consolidation (All Governors/Observers).

Action: Compare the mandatory/best practice list of training against courses taken to date, to plot the future governor training requirements (Training Liaison Governor).

Action: Inform SBM of the governor training requirements in order that a training budget can be forecast (Training Liaison Governor).

Action: Produce a governor training budget (SBM).

Action: Present the training options for governors and agree the training plan going forward (Training Liaison Governor).

12. SCHOOL POLICIES

The following policy as reviewed and agreed at the Standards Committee was approved by the governing board:

- SEND Policy

Question: The Policy mentions diversity; how is this embedded at school?

Response: School has three students from an ethnic background, a third of students are girls and five students have SEN.

The governors agreed that a focus on a learning walk could be to evidence that school is embracing diversity.

The governors discussed how best they could support the approval of school policies and they decided that school should utilize where possible the bought in services of HR, Audit and the EFA to validate policies prior to asking for governor sign off. The governors also agreed that governor learning walks could be used to test the policies.

Action: Issue the current policy list to all governors (Clerk).

Action: Work through the school policy list and plan for future approvals (SLT and Clerk).

13. PLANNED RESIDENTIAL VISITS

Question: Is there a policy that covers residential visits?

Response: Yes, there is a "learning outside the classroom" policy.

The Chair confirmed that the governing board would ultimately be held accountable if something goes wrong on a residential visit.

The governing board agreed that John Hughes would be the governor who would act as a critical friend for residentials and that trips would be brought to the board for information, highlighted a term in advance.

Emma Colley provided an update on the planned residential visit for 25th to 27th May 2016. She confirmed that she has very experienced Teaching in regards learning outside the classroom, with experience of writing risk assessments for residential visits.

The process starts with Emma writing the risk assessment which is then reviewed and approved by the Deputy Principal (the Safeguarding Officer). Emma confirmed that when a trip takes place every member of staff knows what to do in an emergency.

Emma highlighted the following options to take up to ten students for two supervised days:

- Kingswood at the cost of £2,600.
- PGL, out wood bounds activity centre (orienteering, etc.) at a cost of £2,300.
- Conway Centre was full and therefore not an option for the summer term 2016.

Emma expressed a risk as other schools would attend the centres and presented as alternative suggestion:

- Organise the residential ourselves staying in a Youth Hostel in Wales with activities organised by TFA staff such as in door trampolining in a cave, dry ski-slope, beach activity. The cost of this trip was estimated at £1,600 with ten students and four staff.

The Chair pointed out that Kingswood has been used successfully many times before. The Governors discussed issues in regards containing students and the distance of the residential from school. The Governors agreed that the SLT should think about which trip provides the best results for the outcomes for learning for the students.

The SBM advised that all options have been budgeted for. The governing board advised that the financial difference is not sufficient to bias either way.

The governing board agreed that Emma Colley can decide which residential is best suited to TFA students and consult with John Hughes for his guidance.

14. MEETINGS

It was confirmed that the next Governing Board meeting would be held at the School on Wednesday 6th July 2016 at 4:00pm.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following items raised by the School Business Manager on 26th January 2016 were discussed:

- Changing the registered address to the school – Agreed.
- Resigning Kevin Bradburne as a Director – letter received on 7th March 2016.
- Adding Nic Brindle as a Director – Agreed.
- Updating contact details on companies' house- Agreed.

The meeting finished at 7:10pm. There was no part two minutes.

----- Chair

----- Dated