



St Laurence Governors FGB

Minutes of the meeting to held on Wednesday 24 May 2023, 1700, at the school.

Governors present: K Kilgallen (chair), T Farrer (head), A Ensom, D Roberts, M Peters, P Robertson, M Smith, A Dixon Patterson, T Chatfield, S Cooper, M Dooley, P Lambert, L Wicks, A Craddock, J Abecassis, M Lee

Also, L Lumb, R Beesley (clerk)

Apologies: M Horan, L Ash

Declarations of interest: none in addition to current declarations

It was noted that the Chair & Vice-chair of Governors would need to be formally nominated and appointed at the first governors meeting in September.

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[Minutes](#) of previous meeting 29 03 23, actions and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed and signed off.

Actions –

All governors invited to join Standards for curriculum presentations, action by clerk, complete.

Sentence in the minutes of C&E to be clarified, action by clerk, complete.

Science extension suggestion, enquiry by clerk, complete.

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Head's [report](#)

TF reported a disrupted term with Bank Holidays and strike days but a key one for examination year-groups and for recruitment. Adjustments have been made and the SLT had covered very well in his recent absence.

[Examinations](#) have commenced and were running smoothly. There had been no repeat of the mobile device incidents of last summer.

It was a year since the introduction of the mobile device policy, informal student voice suggests that they would not change current arrangements.

[Summer activities](#), for the first year for some time, a full range were planned with Proms, sports events, transition activities, a musical (w/b 10 July), music concert and art exhibition.

[Staffing](#), decision on fixed term contracts had been postponed and would be concluded before the Strategy meeting on 12th June, therefore the school was not fully staffed for September.

The SENCO has resigned for a promoted job. There will implications on further recruitment.

Other changes in the SEN department were discussed.

Overall, there are fewer applicants for teaching positions, *a buyer's market*. An example was given.

(Governors should remove reference to a teacher of science vacancy but add teacher of RE – maternity cover in this section of the report).

Question, what options are there for finalizing recruitment?

R – the national context is 12k vacancies advertised in the TES plus others on bulletin boards.

There is the same pressure on recruitment for Associate Staff, this is largely to do with pay as they have term-time only contracts.

[Parental engagement work](#), there had been a noted loss of personal engagement opportunities since the return from the Pandemic arrangement and so there have been some changes to the school's approach. There has been a focus on how to engage with disadvantaged families.

[MAT discussions](#), TF had been giving significant time to the preparations for the MAT discussions.

[SDP](#), there will be two SLT away days to complete this.

CIF, governors had been notified of the successful bid for the fencing improvement works. It was noted that in the awards to other Wiltshire schools, there had been no themes through the allocation of funds.

Question, could there be a discussion on the fencing design?

R – the chair had received some representation from governors and it was suggested that this be discussed via FFE, this is because the school funded amount exceeded £50k.

Comment, OFSTED had commented informally on this issue, there had been involvement with the WMC to date and there had been significant time on this work to date. A decision had been made at FFE and ratified by the FGB, so that the bid could go forward. If unsuccessful the governors had agreed to fund the works. On that basis, tenders had been concluded and a schedule of works prepared.

Whilst the detailed design was submitted in the project need, there was an opportunity to discuss final issues with the design.

Decision, TF, LL and the chair of FFE (DR) would discuss any points of objection with the Wiltshire Music Centre and any governors who wished to make representations.

ML is a trustee at WMC, an interest was declared.

Strike action, the NEU (c60 staff members) are planning a strike in the period 4-6 July. This would affect year 11 Prom, Sixth Form induction day (this may run), year 6 transition and new staff induction. TF would be notified by 18th June.

For the year 11 Prom, the school is considering an increase in external security to add to the members of staff, to support this event. It would be best not to cancel it.

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Committee minutes & update from Chairs

Standards (SC) and SLT summary of external reports,

from the MFL presentation, G Gorton was aware of the challenge of uptake at GCSE, new activities are planned. Given the 2019 aspiration to have half the cohort studying at least one language, it was disappointing that there were only 40 students in current year 10. There was a need to capture interest at KS3.

Comment, strategic support for MFL was in the SDP.

From the Geography presentation, new KS3 fieldwork had been introduced, there was staffing is by some history teachers, which highlighted issues of recruitment, teachers were asked to have additional subjects, is there a question of overstretch?

Comment, the reason for this temporary arrangement was to retain a promising history teacher. Having a second subject is essential and it was a frequent consideration in recruitment.

EBI comments from the DSLT summary paper from recent external reports, it was suggested that the tracking of these themes form the basis of the work of the Standards committee for the year ahead, at least. Governors agreed with this.

Comment, this aspect of governor oversight will be added to the SEF report.

FFE (DR),

There was consideration of the initial preparations for the school budget for '23-24 which indicated an in-year deficit, this was a result of a local decline in pupil numbers, the ongoing uncertainty over the costs of utilities, the costs of recruitment and costs associated with the preparation for capital projects. The 3-5 year budgetary considerations were centred on lower income from lower pupil numbers and higher expenditure on unfunded pay awards that will affect the deficits. This is an early look at all these issues.

On capital projects, the CIF news was positive, solving an issue around safeguarding, a decarbonisation grant decision was expected at the end of June, work was progressing on the upgrade of toilet facilities and the MUGA plan was progressing, although in the planning and survey stages.

Comment, on student reception / house-base remodelling, an alternative solution had been found and this was being drawn up.

Risk management update, there was no operational surplus going forward, so a reliance on reserves. The financial outlook was therefore uncertain. The issues of cyber security and ransomware attacks had been discussed, being of high impact. Actions over defence, via training, the investigation of cloud-based storage and other mitigations had been discussed.

Insurance is in place, RPA is used.

Action – LL to check the amount and what was covered.

C&E (PL) this meeting was cancelled.

(note that [Strategy](#) minutes are also in the folder)

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Governing Body matters

Membership update, a number of nominations are to be brought to the Academy Trust Board at their next meeting.

Given KK's position as acting chair, a vice-chair was required.

Action – September meeting.

- a. [Training](#), note of options for governors.

The Finance module and Induction training for those new to governance were emphasised.

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MAT discussion and vote

Question, is there a need for a withdrawal clause?

R – it is not in the MoU as it is not contractual, but it is in the terms of reference. The ToR provides a safeguard, the schools, the Foundations and the Regional Director can reject the design.

Question, is there an indication of a schedule and timescale?

R – if all are in agreement and all positions and stakeholders agree, Sept '24 is the earliest. However, it will not be a rush, the timing is not legally guided. Certain times of year are better to commence the MAT. The design stage is typically 6-8 months.

Question, what is the cost commitment?

R – it is shared, a consultant to this point, continual costs were uncertain but thought to be less than £10k. There will be the cost of legal services.

Question, is there funding to cover costs?

R - The Trust Expansion Grant has been reintroduced to pay for preparatory costs, consultancy, etc.

Question, given staffing pressures, can it be supported?

R – TF is recommending the design phase as it will answer questions, there is capacity within the leadership team. The project board (12 participants) will take on actions plus there is the project's governor working party.

Question, what will be the cost of a *no* vote tonight? If St Laurence is not ready, could we join later?

R – costs are potential and hypothetical but the design phase would give an indication of what would be missed-out-on. St Laurence would be one of the only SATs in the West Wiltshire area, so at risk of being directed to join a MAT but not of its choice, later. There is the general risk of being a SAT, whether that be from a significant safeguarding failure or poor examination results. Being at the start of a MAT, in the design phase and shaping the Trust could be a good position to be in. Also, on the cost of saying *no*, the other schools could not continue, they would need to wait either for another school or St Laurence, there cannot be a two school MAT.

Question, what is the update on the potential fourth school?

R – The Corsham School (a MAT of two schools) approached TBEP, an informal discussion was held, and representatives then attended the meeting at St Laurence. They are not in a position to join the design stage.

Question, how do the other schools feel about timing?

R – all see Sept '24 as the earliest date but are realists. If it takes longer, they are content with this.

Comment, there is a lot of bad press about MATs but also about schools. Things can change at any Trust, being in the design stage with built in protection can be beneficial. It is a risk though.

Question, what do staff think?

R – all stakeholders will be engaged with, staff included. As a staff, they know the progression from this meeting and will be informed. All stakeholders are engaged once the design process is complete.

Governors then had a full opportunity to share their concerns and point of view.

The FGB moved to a vote (L Ash had submitted a vote prior to the meeting and this was included, M Horan did not submit a vote)

11 votes to proceed and 6 votes not to proceed. No votes to abstain.

KK said to the meeting that a new chair of governors was required as he was not the person to take the FGB forward through the design phase. Governors should consider whether they could chair the FGB and / or join the design phase team, as described.

There would be preparatory work in term 6 and meetings have been scheduled. Governors were invited to self-nominate to the positions on the planning boards, details will be circulated.

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AOB. Was there a Christian Union for students?

R - in the past there was, and TF had developed a proposal for a Chaplaincy with Sarum St Michael Education Charity funding. A person from Wiltshire Youth for Christ helps with mentoring. A person who worked with the school, towards a Christian Union, in the past, was willing to contribute.

Action – TF and PR to link up over this matter.

The meeting closed at 1915.