

THE FEDERATED GOVERNING BODY OF SAVILE TOWN CE (VC) INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL AND THORNHILL LEES CE (VC) INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Minutes of the meeting of the full Governing Body held at 5.30 pm at Savile Town CE (VC) I & N School on Tuesday 23rd January 2024.

PRESENT

Mrs K Allen (Chair), Mrs K Asquith-Dolan, Mr H Bismillah, Mrs D Douglas (Head Teacher), Mrs S Hussain, Mrs F Lee, and Mrs A Nyhan.

In Attendance

Mrs J Lord (SBM)
Mrs T Maguire (Minute Clerk)
Mrs L Booth (Deputy Headteacher Thornhill Lees)
Mrs E Watson (Chief Executive Officer, Learning Accord)
Mrs G Falconer (Chief Finance Officer, Learning Accord)

The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, CONSENT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Mrs K Iqbal and Mrs T Patel & Mrs Sharif (with consent).

There were no Declarations of Interest.

44. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS TO BE RAISED UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following item to be raised under Any Other Business:

Learning Accord Visit.

The Head Teacher introduced Mrs Watson and Mrs Falconer to the meeting who gave the following presentation to governors.

There would be opportunities for questions following the presentation.

Learning Accord is a growing Trust, with a diverse range of schools across Kirklees and Calderdale. They were currently working with Oak Primary, who had not yet converted, Earlsheaton had an Academy Order, Hebden Royd from Calderdale and St Johns, Dewsbury were associate members. Schools entering the Trust must be geographically accessible. Schools in Wakefield and Barnsley would be considered.

Within the Trust, there were varied Schools and Academies:

- Mixed Demographics
- Small Schools / Larger Schools
- Nursery, First, Infant, Junior and Primary Schools
- Some Semi Rural
- Some SEND / PP / EAL above national
- Large Associate Member School.

Reasons why schools might be thinking about joining Learning Accord:

The educational landscape was changing. The DfE published the white paper, however there was still no benchmark as to when schools need to convert. Currently 85% of Secondaries and around 48% of Primaries had converted. There was a question mark over whether things might change with a change in government, however this was unlikely considering the number of Schools that had already converted.

- Learning Accord offers a clear Diocesan Academy Strategy.
- Schools can retain their own distinctive character and ethos.
- The Trust had an open culture and promoted partnership and collaboration; no school was more important than the other.

The Trust had a successful track record demonstrated through Ofsted Inspection:

- Skelmanthorpe – Triple Satisfactory / RI was on the DfE Stuck Schools List – Judged good in all areas (Ofsted Jan 2020)
- St Aidans – Judged good in all areas (Ofsted Feb 2020)
- Helme – Inadequate prior to conversion. Judged good in all areas (Ofsted April 2022)
- New Mill Infants / New Mill Juniors – Judged inadequate prior to conversion. Awaiting inspection, on target for judgement of 'good'.

Vision and Values of the Trust had not changed from the outset and were promoted by Trustees on a daily basis:

- High Standards
- Nurture and Achievement for all
- Professional Development
- Outstanding Progress and Attainment
- High Aspirations.

What were the benefits of joining the Trust:

- MAT Heads group – opportunity for leaders to engage, these meeting start with a lunch together during which time Heads can talk about what was happening in their school
- Teacher networks, Subject networks
- MAT training days, this year linked to DfE reading framework
- MAT learning walks – opportunity to work with leaders. Schools write their own improvement plans but can work collaboratively with the Trust on different matters
- Crisis management – MAT Head Teacher WhatsApp group
- Liaison with LA / Diocese – working in partnership
- Opportunities for pupils – developing these opportunities for children.

Bespoke school improvement:

- Schools rated 'good' would receive 4 sessions of support
- Access to System Leaders and expert subject leaders across the Trust
- Knowledge of inspection practice for Ofsted
- Knowledge of Assessment

- Behaviour and Wellbeing
- Networking and Research Focus.

Learning Accord and Joining School:

When a school converts, it was business as usual. The Trust would look in detail at how school was doing, but local governing body remains in place to deal with day to day. Additional layers of governance were gained and Members meet once year.

Day to day Teaching and Learning continues and staff transfer on the same terms and conditions, working to national agreements. Policies were led through an external company Educate HR. Links with Kirklees HR and payroll were maintained.

- School can change the name; however, 'VA' or 'CE' would no longer apply.
- Curriculum policies were determined as before
- School uniform does not need to change and the School day remains the same
- Relationships with the LA and Diocese were maintained and we buy into the enhanced service plan through the Diocese.

CEO and Central Team:

Balance of time was spent between central activity and work on the ground with schools.

On the ground, we can carry out lesson observations and support fully during inspection, prioritising and targeting support for individual academies. Job was to build capacity and prioritise school improvement. An Estates Manager had responsibility for checking risk, H&S and safeguarding.

Key Meetings include the MAT Heads Group and Board of Trustees. All Academies work collaboratively and in partnership.

Mrs Falconer was the Chief Finance Officer and explained how finance within the Trust works.

Funding was based on October Census and was a lot more transparent. DfE provide a funding statement and the Trust take a top slice from that figure, all other monies stay within school for your children. Balances brought forward from LA also remains with school. The Trust do not 'gagpool' as we do not believe that this was morally or ethically the correct thing to do. We give your school its own money which comes in monthly and you had your own bank account under the Trust umbrella.

The Trust does not take from EY grant, FSM grant, SEND, Sports or Pupil Premium.

As more schools join the Trust, we were looking at moving procurement more centrally as this can offer significant savings. There was a central IT Team and this would be brought in when all contracts with previous providers had expired.

The Trust had worked with schools in deficit and we were good at identifying where savings can be made. The last two schools which converted had large amounts of money handed over, which had been held back by the LA until conversion.

Associate membership can be offered to those with a barrier to conversion, which was often a financial barrier. This provides an opportunity for schools to work alongside

the Trust before they join. All schools who had had this 'try before you buy' opportunity had joined the Trust.

Church schools must receive permission from the Diocese.

Due diligence, including finances was carried out and if the financial risk was too great, the Trust would help to reduce this risk until the school was in a position to join.

The Trust promotes sharing of best practice, CPD/Staff development opportunities and a focus on pupils so that they achieve the best they can.

Growth strategies:

Current pipeline would take the Trust to about 2,100 pupils and they were looking to reach roughly 4,000 pupils. There was no desire to be a huge MAT which becomes depersonalised. We want to remain in a position where we know all schools inside out.

Mrs Watson invited questions at this point.

Q: Is this a one-way decision? once you go down that road, there is no coming back?

A: It is a legal process and once conversion has taken place, there is no going back. The decision lies with the governing body, not the Head Teacher. On one occasion the Chair went against the decision and school pulled back prior to conversion. This school has since converted.

Q: How does communication work between Trustees and the local governing body

A: The Trust have their own governance service and have pulled away from Kirklees governance due to unreliability around Kirklees clerks and minutes not up to standard. There is a governance professional, and second minute clerk who will minute and clerk the meetings. The Head Teacher will have sight of all arrangements.

Joint training for local governing bodies takes place. Governors and Trustees also go on 'vision and values' visits where trustees accompanied by Mrs Watson, MAT SIAMS lead and Academy Improvement officers who were working on the ground, would talk to children and leaders in school. Trustees had responsibility if school inspected just as local governing bodies do. This was a good example of joint working.

Q: SBM's have network meetings currently, is there something similar within the Trust?

A: Yes, there is an SBM network where a range of topics important to the schools can be discussed. We have a situation with two new schools to the Trust who have new SBM's and support from more experienced SBM's is organised. Also there are new systems to learn. These networks meetings are held about 5 times a year and there is an annual audit in October. Mrs Falconer is also there to help SBM's and business support officers in school. This supports succession planning, trying to develop staff, movement with teachers and support staff who may be business managers of the future.

Arbor was used for data management; we did look at Integris but it was not suitable. Arbor was good for us, we can access all schools, see if there are any exclusions and

can drill down to individual students to identify where support may be required. For the first time in December, we had access to all data across schools.

Mrs Falconer added going back to the SBM question, all business managers remain in school. They often form part of SLT and it was recognised what an import role they play, we do not want to destabilise. Additionally, we do not move staff around, your staff belong to your school. Contracts would state where they work. If there are opportunities elsewhere, staff can apply in the usual manner. There had been some natural progression within the Trust and last minute recruitment requirements can sometimes be supported.

Q: The Apprenticeship Levy has been used to upskill members, how does that happen in the Trust?

A: It works on the same basis in the Trust, we have also had Kickstart Trainees.

Q: CPD for Teachers, is this just within the Trust?

A: No, it is not all in house. We encourage people to apply for NPQ qualifications through Teaching School Hub, we have bought into the National College package, there is a lot for staff to access. A lot of our schools have accessed subject leader training, depending on budgets, schools still have options to do that. There are opportunities to pair up teachers in different schools across the Trust, promoting excellence within the trust.

Q: Regarding staffing, is recruitment done centrally?

A: No if replacing like for like, schools do their own recruitment, we may have a request to be on the interview panel but we are not usually involved in those processes. Trustees, however, would be involved in Senior Leadership recruitment. For Head Teachers, we would work with local governing bodies and Trustees will ratify any decision. Expertise of local governing bodies is essential; we need their expertise of the school community.

Q: At the moment SLT is very visible, with just a few layers to get to them, how visible are the Trust to get to?

A: We have a MAT complaints policy, the first step is to resolve in school if possible, if this cannot be achieved Mrs Watson would become involved. We expect parents to work with school initially to resolve any issues. There have been a few occasions when despite schools' best efforts, we have been asked to send someone to speak to the parents. Occasionally, a call might come thorough but we would have to explain tactfully that they would need to go back to school and go through normal channels.

Q: It would be interesting to see parent feedback and numbers on staff turnover?

A: It is really stable in most schools, there will always be natural progression. Parent feedback, we don't have a survey, individually school do their own. Staff feedback is carried out annually and we really analyse and listen to the surveys that come in, this is a most valuable resource.

Q: Under the LA there are capital projects funded by the LA, how does this work in the Trust?

A: It works in the same way; bids are collated and we have had real success receiving CIF funding. There is an expectation that schools make some contribution from the DFC funding.

Q: How do you prioritise?

A: We bid for individual projects and the DfE makes the decision based on one of the schools. Estates Manager will work with stratus9 who will collate the bid. They will consider what is right thing to do, the DfE look at all applications, score them, and if over threshold, funding is granted. Bids are completed annually by the end of November to start by following spring.

Q: Do you support schools with bidding for certain charities, eg music grant?

A: Absolutely, whatever will benefit school. As we are a MAT, we have benefited from MDIF. Applying for a growth fund grant, has enabled us to enlarge our central team to support schools. We have a good track record with bids and can apply for schools requiring rapid improvement support. A recent success was an award of £110K for a school after receiving an 'inadequate' rating, enabling school to make rapid progress.

Q: You are obviously Primary focused at the moment, are there plans to look at Secondary Schools?

A: There are no plans to look at Secondary Schools, we are a Primary focused Trust. We would need the correct staff to support Secondary provision and would not be the right Trust to take a secondary school.

Q: There is a lot of talk currently about SEN and this is something we are looking at really closely. How involved have you been with working with SEN and how might this affect schools moving forward?

A: As CEO, I was asked to write a letter of concern to both Kirklees and Calderdale Councils. I have met with both councils, made a number of recommendations which are being taken into consideration. EHCP is taking far too long. One example was given where there was no place for a child but funding was promised to support the child in school until a place became available. We are having discussions within the Trust and have specialists who work with our schools. We have talked about satellite provision in one of our schools and SEN has huge focus within the Trust. This year the Trust have brokered into Educational Psychologist (EP) and this has given huge value to our schools, who are full of praise. It is really difficulty accessing EP support, and this has been a good strategy.

Q: We have two schools in this federation and the majority of children, have a certain makeup. Do you have similarities in some of your schools?

A: We have a very diverse range of students. In some schools, there can be tension between parents, but things are harmonious in school. We are currently working with St Johns in Dewsbury and Lowerhouses School who also have diverse school communities.

Q: Does the Trust have their own legal team?

A: The Trust has blocks of legal support, which has been used in tricky situations. This gives peace of mind and has been a really good move. One newly converted school has accessed support within a week of conversion. There is also a data protection officer who visits schools to look at information required, eg subject access requests.

Q: Do you use Traded Services through the LA?

A: We do not specify to schools what they can buy back from the LA. Some schools have recently pulled out of asset management. Most schools keep the majority of buy backs they had previously, it is up to the school.

Q: So, do you have other providers you can go to?

A: We are starting to build up a database of other providers as services within the LA diminish.

Mrs Watson and Mrs Falconer were thanked for their time and very informative presentation.

Mrs Watson confirmed that any further questions could be answered and a visit organised with staff if required. There were a lot of myths around Trusts and a fact-finding mission is the correct way to go. A lot of schools had been in touch with Learning Accord and it is important to get the right match for schools.

Q: Would there be opportunities for our staff to talk to staff within Trust?

A: Yes, in fact, one is organised for next week. This could be accommodated in future if required, also a school visit could be requested.

45. REPRESENTATION

(a) The following matters of representation were noted:

<u>Appointment Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>With Effect From</u>
Ms Mariyam Sharif	Co-opted	17/11/2023

(b) Appointment of two Co-opted Governors (Quorum ½ (rounded-up) of the total number of governors in office).
This item was not discussed.

Contact details for new governors to be submitted to School Governor Clerking Service at this email: kirklees.governors@kirklees.gov.uk or on the following link [Please provide us with your co-opted governors' details](#)

(c) Appointment of Foundation - Ex-Officio Governor to fill one vacant seat.
If a school had a suitable nomination to fill a foundation seat, please complete PART 2 of the Diocesan Foundation Governor Application form and submit to the Diocese for approval.

This item was not discussed.

46. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Nominations were sought. There were no nominations.

The Head Teacher and Chair informed Governors that a Vice Chair does need to be elected before the end of the meeting and agreed that this would be discussed again under Any Other Business.

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 had been distributed to Governors in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Mrs M Sharif was in attendance on 28th November 2023

Minute 30 (P18) – typing errors to amend:

The price was already being subsidised, but it was going to “**have**” to be subsidised more due to some children not going and some not paying in full. There were five who had not paid in full at Saville Town and there were approximately sixty who had not paid in full. A message had gone out to parents today. A decision would “**have**” to be made as to whether this was viable or not.

Minute 33 – SCR - Mrs Patel had not yet met with the Head Teacher to review the SCR.

48. MATTERS ARISING

Please refer to the action log in the minutes:

1. As there were so many local businesses in the area, the Head Teacher placed an advert on 'linked in', however there had been no response to date so may revert back to sending letters to businesses.
2. Letters had been sent out for spirituality training
3. Annual review checked by governors.
4. Mrs Patel to complete Safeguarding Training. The Head Teacher confirmed that the SCR was ok in the short term as she checks on a monthly basis.

49. HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT / DATA REPORT AND GOVERNORS' QUESTIONS

The Head Teacher had prepared a written report which was circulated prior to the meeting.

Q: Has everyone got a copy of the report and did everyone have chance to read it?

A: Yes.

The Head Teacher suggested rather than going through the report, she would answer any questions from governors as the presentation by the Trust had taken a good deal of time.

Mrs Hussain had completed SEN training last week which she had enjoyed and had found very useful and informative.

Q: Does data reflect accurately what happens on a day to day level? how do teachers feel?

A: As we have 2 sets of data, questions have been raised over EY, which is leading to moderation work being put into place. Yes, it fits in with learning walks and book scrutinises.

Mrs Booth confirmed 3 Year old Nursery data was now in for Thornhill Lees, this was not available at the time.

Q: At a future meeting, could we complete book looks to see what the children are doing?

A: Yes, governors think that would be helpful.

50. SAFEGUARDING UPDATES

Safeguarding update was included in the Head Teacher Report. School works closely with shared settings when siblings were in other schools.

The Head Teacher and SBM completed a Health & Safety Walk today at Thornhill Lees. This was carried out annually at both schools. Savile Town would be completed next week.

51. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

(a) Complete / Approve SFVS (guidance document 2)

Governors had received a copy of the SFVS, for both schools. The SBM confirmed similarities as to what was in place and asked if there were any questions prior to approval.

RESOLVED: Governors approve the SFVS for both schools.

The SBM had circulated finance reports prior to the meeting.

Thornhill Lees - It was reported that the revised budget figures had been added to the Money Manager. Spend to date was confirmed by governors to balance with the LA report.

Savile Town - It was reported that the revised budget figures had been added to the Money Manager. Spend to date was confirmed by governors to balance with the LA report.

Staffing pay rises had gone through. Support staff show on P9 reports, Teachers would show on P10.

At Savile Town, back pay for staff in situ up until August had been overlooked, this was taken out of budget. This does not make a huge difference but was something to learn from for the future.

An update on gas and electricity would be given at the next meeting.

Benchmarking reports 2022/2023 had been distributed prior to the meeting and the Head Teacher gave the following summary:

(b) Thornhill Lees:

- Admin/clerical – expenditure was much lower due to losing a member of staff and there was a gap prior to recruitment of a replacement.
- Pupil/Teacher ratio – Cover of Deputy Head Teacher required.
- Support staff – High number of SEN children requiring 1-1 support
- Supply staff – Currently looks high due to a teacher on supply covering a member of staff who had left.

(c) Savile Town:

- Pupil/Teacher ratio - much higher due to smaller class sizes in school
- Support staff – high number of SEN children and also 2 and 3 year olds in nursery requiring additional staff members
- Catering expenses look high, this was because we were Infants.

52. WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Please refer to the Spring term Information Sheet.

- This agenda item was used by the school to ensure they were supporting the wellbeing of the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, and pupils.
- There was less staff absence at Thornhill Lees this year, indicating well-being was much higher.
- Mrs Lee added that whilst much was outside the control of the Head Teacher, there was a lot more to do. More pressure whilst maintaining high expectations. Staff were coping well and want to maintain the quality of work for children, but they were feeling the pressure of workloads.

Q: Do you anticipate workload to ease?

A: There are new initiatives this year, once a full run has been completed, things should become easier to plan going forward. Resourced provision is one area and it is important that we get this right. A lot of the initiatives are really good and have a positive impact on the children, there just aren't enough hours in a day.

At Thornhill Lees, Mrs Booth had found that sometimes staff may be completing work that is unnecessary. It can be difficult for staff to step away from doing things in the same way. There was an awareness in school that the level of need was much higher and it was harder to access the support needed. Whilst there was a lot in place, it was difficult to speak to language support for those who need it, and together, this had an impact on wellbeing.

Q: So, is it a case of working smarter with what is available?

A: Yes.

Anyone who works in a school if you do CPD, there always seems to be another thing to do to build up knowledge and understanding of key areas. It may be an idea to link training to key things that we are working on.

Ultimately this was a worry, if staff feel there was too much work and not enough time, this can lead to pressure.

Governors discussed pressures associated with the curriculum. The amount to get through with the children, having to add more to the timetable whilst maintaining quality. A lot was national pressure, and a lot of the new curriculum does not take into account the more complex needs of some of the children. This had a knock on effect when access to other support areas was limited. Now as more complex children move into the unit together, staff appreciate having each other to lean on, this relieves pressure.

The Head Teacher was also mindful of Little Wandle and the expectations that support staff take on interventions.

New guidance around teachers not being required to set up classrooms raises another question around who would take on this responsibility.

53. REVIEW OF POLICIES

RESOLVED: The following policies were approved by governors.

- Collective Worship
- Bereavement
- Anti Bullying
- Individual Information Rights Policy.

54. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND GOVERNOR VISITS

- SEN Training – Mrs Hussain
- Thornhill Lees – Chair to arrange visit to school.

55. SAFEGUARDING UPDATES

This item was covered in the Head Teacher Report.

56. SCHOOL WEBSITES

Mr Bismillah had completed the check at Thornhill Lees and sent the report with suggestions to the Head Teacher.

Alternative arrangements were being made at Thornhill Lees as the platform was coming to an end.

Mr Bismillah had knowledge in this area and would arrange to visit school and discuss with the Head Teacher. He expressed a concern around a possible conflict of interest.

57. DEDICATED HEADSHIP TIME

The Head Teacher confirmed that she had taken time out to prepare her report.

58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACTION: Defer Election Of Vice Chair (Minute 46 refers) to the next meeting.

- Letter of correspondence from staff member.

59. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS AND POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the governing body confirmed the following meeting dates for 2023/2024 which would be held at 5.30 pm at the school on:

- (i) Tuesday 19 March 2024
- (ii) Tuesday 14 May 2024.
- (iii) Tuesday 25 June 2024 (if required).

Resources committee date to be arranged when budget figures received.

60. **DELETION (See Minute 61).**61. AGENDA, MINUTES AND RELATED PAPERS – SCHOOL COPY

RESOLVED: That Minute 60 be fully excluded from the copy to be made available at the school (in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act).

Meeting closed at 20.00 pm

ACTION LOG:

No.	Min Ref	Action	By Whom
1	54	Arrange visit to Thornhill	Chair
2	56	School Websites, visit to arrange	Mr Bismillah
3	58	Election Of Vice Chair (Minute 46 refers) to the next meeting.	GCS