



Full Board Meeting

Hybrid Meeting held from SCA and via Microsoft Teams

29/03/2023 – 6pm

MINUTES

Present remotely: Sue Bailey (chair), Mark Williams, Julie Perry, Rebecca Berton, Anthony Upshall, Kim Taylor (executive head), Stephanie Ward (minutes)

Apologies:

No.	Minutes	Actions
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests No additional interests	
3.	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS REDACTED	
4.	Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting Nothing was raised and the minutes were approved.	
5.	Matters arising and actions update OFSTED inspection at Riverside Meadows Academy is in progress. We have been doing a lot to try and recruit trustees from a range of sources, from Cambridgeshire CVS, Reach Volunteering, and networking. SW (Stephanie Ward)	

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	<p>added that she is meeting someone at a local organisation and will ask them whether they want to put someone forward. SB thanked SW and Jon Panther for proactively supporting this.</p>	
6.	<p>Updates from Subcommittees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TLW Committee <p>RMA – Wisbech, Chris, the new head, has been working hard to manage behaviours and reduce harm to staff. Chris noted that there are several students incompatible with the provision, and that while he wants to increase numbers, it is essential new students are compatible with the school. Trustees asked questions about the admission policy, and it was thought that the requests being sent to the school were inappropriate, rather than our procedures being inadequate. MW asked, what was the normal intake and what are the incompatible behaviours? RB said that RMA is SEMH and takes children with those needs that can't be met in mainstream. SEMH should be their main needs, but it may be that they have other needs such as behavioural needs arising from other circumstances, which can make it very challenging for the school to meet their other needs. SB said that some of these pupils don't feel like they fit due to not having therapeutic or health needs. As a result, they disrupt the learning of others who respond well to the support within the school. RB noted that it is important that this is adequately communicated in their EHCP, and many are not. MW asked, what would their need be? RB said they may be disengaged with learning due to severe dyslexia, very poor cognitive ability. Their 'core needs' aren't social or emotional, but rather a cognitive challenge. AU added, one child just wanted to be excluded because he doesn't feel like he belongs. JP said she also found this confusing, and found that it was helpful to look at this as a spectrum, and that the needs of the children in SCA vs RMA have completely different core needs which will determine the setting that directs the child to a provision that supports learning and allows them to thrive with the right types of interventions.</p> <p>RB continued that Chris has been working hard on developing relationships with staff and students.</p>	

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RMA – St Neots – Andrew has been doing analysis of the behavioural incidences, notably in September and January. Questions were asked around students on part time timetables, and how they are being supported. When attendance figures for children on part-time timetables are removed from the statistics, the figures are almost in line with national expectations.

SCA – staffing had been an issue due to seasonal illness and that some behaviours had been difficult with children not having their trusted adults. Trustees asked for case study examples to show how this was managed. Attendance has increased, and persistent absence was discussed, and how the family support workers are contacting and visiting families.

Strike action – partial closures took place in both schools. Parents had not been supportive although they had been accepting of the strike action.

Regarding safeguarding, the new MyConcern system is embedding well, and trends in concerns have been noted. Where extreme behaviours had been noted, exclusions and follow up support had taken place.

Consultations around the school day are taking place to extend to 31 hours per week to extend core learning and shorten the afternoon. The curriculum is still being developed with questions surrounding how this fits with particular programmes of study such as GCSE's and the expected 32.5 hours of study – it is noted that this is not compulsory in alternative provision.

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Curriculum – plan to have all curriculum overviews on the school websites. RSM looking at work experience opportunities to prepare for workplace settings. Trustees requested an update on college services offered at SCA and an update is expected at the next meeting.

SB added that it was asked for common categories to be put in place to make it easier to compare data. KT said that a template for this had been made for both schools and this will be used from next term, so the summary can be provided to trustees. KT will send this template to RB for approval.

- FPP (Finance People and Premises) Committee

SB gave the update as MW was not there.

SB shared an update on the internal audit tender. During FPP it was confirmed that the previous internal auditor had disengaged, and it was approved for Genevieve Cowcher to proceed with circulating the new tender which trustees had fed into. GC (Genevieve Cowcher) had noted that a new auditor may cost more highly for a first audit, as the new auditor might want to do a very in-depth audit for the first one, to give trustees assurance that we were compliant. MW commented that it was good that we were proceeding, and that we should see what comes back with to allow us to make a decision. Given the contention around the situation, he felt the whole committee should be involved in the approval, rather than a subgroup. SB added that she was pleased there were several companies interested.

SB talked about finances and noted that one local authority from whom we had out-of-area placements had been raising concerns about the amount of money we were receiving, and that it is possible funding will be reduced in future.

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It was also discussed that there had been concerns relating to staffing and that redundancies had been explored, however we were reassured that the costs of agency staff were creating the cost challenges at SCA, but that work is taking place to work out whether restructuring is sufficient. Given that the trust will soon be advertising roles at Prestley Wood school, it is possible that some staff will apply for roles there and will transfer out of SCA. Releasing funding to begin to advertise for the Head at Prestley Wood and for the Deputy Head role at Riverside Meadows was discussed and approved.

The procurement policy was reviewed. The cleaning and catering contracts had been retendered and this was approved.

SB had asked Genevieve to prepare information about the central funds and how this could be managed, so that trustees could discuss, scrutinise, and make an informed decision on this. SB said that while this was due to be discussed with FPP, it may be that other trustees want to feed in. There are discussions in place as to whether we have a separate meeting, or whether we extend the next FPP meeting to accommodate this. MW said that, given the challenges we have with trustee attendance, an additional meeting or an extended meeting is not the best way to go. MW recommended that we prioritise this at the next FPP meeting, and only discuss other points if absolutely necessary. SB noted that RB and JP might have ideas around top slicing vs gag pooling. JP said that she would be happy for the FPP committee to review this, and that the full board she makes the decision. MW said that he felt we should pick this up at the next FPP, and feedback to the board at the next meeting. SB asked KT to pass this information to GC, and KT said that the papers had been drawn up by GC already, and that the decision just needed to be confirmed.

7.

Executive Head Report

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For approval:

Assistant Head Teacher recruitment

RMA Cleaning tender – recommendation from KT is to use Avocet, as they already provide services within the trust. **All voted in favour.**

RMA WG Catering tender – recommendation from KT is Edwards and Blake and that they already provide services within the trust. **All voted in favour.**

Furniture from Wisbech Green – loose furniture, we have quotes from ESPO and Attic. KT recommended Attic due to quality.

AU asked, had these all been to FPP? SB said that the catering and cleaning were detailed at FPP, but the furniture tender was not. More information can be provided, and KT will add this to Teams or emailed out. KT said that this does need to be ordered soon to prevent delay. AU said he was happy to agree if procurement rules were followed. KT said that the advantage of having the furniture from the same company as the fixed furniture, is that it will match. SB also said, with the needs of students, it is important to have hardy, durable furniture. RB added that if students with ASD attended the school, mismatched furniture could be triggering for them.

Regarding the Operations Manager, KT felt that part of the role was part of her current role, and the trustees should consider this. The central team do need the Operations Manager, but KT noted it was not her place to recommend that her job role is diminished. AU said that a role cannot be advertised to take away part of KT's role until a decision is made regarding the confidential section of the meeting. SB said she would meet with Abbie and make sure everything marries up. KT will put the JD into Teams for trustees to review in the meantime.

KT said that it was important to refine the scheme of delegation and where the roles fit.

Regarding the 3-year financial plan, the orange sections were noted as the most important parts. Staffing structures are being evaluated. Safeguarding at RMA has

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been deemed compliant. A School Improvement Partner for either school, Kim Pigram, has been found and she is highly knowledgeable and will be an asset.

For the deputy head role, there were 12 applications, 5 candidates, 2 withdrew, one candidate would have been good in a slightly different role. It may be that we could find another manager as the numbers increase, in the case that there is no suitable applicant for the Deputy Head role. Chris is aiming for 40 students in September. There is a possibility that we can still take the assistant head and adjust the staffing plan, but KT recommended against this. The role needed to be appointed by May to ensure a September start, but by not appointing yet, it means there is a small financial saving. We will now advertise for an assistant head, put to vote, **All approved recruiting.**

St Neots Health and Safety,

KT explained that there is an upcoming visit planned to the Ambicentre for ten pupils, they will make the visit with Alex and report back. KT explained that we will not compromise quality of provision. There are concerns about spot-purchasing for Spring Common. This is due to difficulty in getting the place value money and there is a lag. These payments often need to be chased up.

KT had been in conversations around the new building and the desire to deamalgamate. Susan Thorpe from the DfE (Department for Education) has been in touch and the opening information will be discussed. KT will also be going to the first Prestley Wood progress meeting, and a meeting at Wisbech during the Easter holidays.

Grounds maintenance will not need to be tendered until Spring 2024 as the builders will do this for a short time. At the moment the priority is to notify the successful tenders, ordering the furniture and ensuring that the signage is all done. Chris Carey has been working hard on admissions.

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	<p>Risk Log: no changes, the asbestos is being chased up, and the fire risk assessments are being done.</p> <p>Seeking quotes for modifications to RMA office area. Shouldn't be expensive but the option we are pursuing is the cheapest option when various scenarios were explored.</p> <p>Report from Carol McCarthy's work with the DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Lead) is in Teams for trustees to review. Coaching and mentoring is in place.</p> <p>JP asked about the comms strategy for the new school, press release etc. KT said that the LA are keen to do comms, and that a proper strategy needs to be in place for after Easter.</p> <p>Extension of planning permission for mobiles at SCA. Local authority has informed us that we are not required to have modifications for drop curb on California road. Expiry date for this is planning permission is August 2027. We are looking at a space for Key Documents for trustees. <i>Steph to talk to Jon about this.</i></p> <p>SB asked if there were questions, there were none.</p>	
8.	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>Treasury Management Policy – GC has shared that this is not contentious, and that the policy covers cash flow.</p> <p>Scheme of Delegation - the one that we currently have is included</p> <p>Purchasing Procedure – it happens that we currently have consolidated a number of our suppliers because their quotes were the most competitive, but the policy amendment allows us to do this more easily.</p> <p>JP said that in future it would be helpful to see the tracked changes, and understand the materiality of changes, and more visibility so that there is an understanding that we are adopting the model policy and adapting it for our purposes. KT replied that we have a page after the cover that notes changes and when they happened, which is</p>	

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	also on the website. This means that it's easier to note changes, but that staff can review the full policy if they choose to. Many policies do come from models. JP noted a dilemma between too much detail and not enough, and this is key to clarity of key objectives that the policy needs to address, principles and procedures.	
9.	Confidential Items	
10.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee ID Badges <p>Photographs are needed for the ID badges to enable trustees to move around the buildings when they visit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee Information Update <p>Done earlier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee Teams Access <p>Computer thingies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OFSTED at RMA 	
11	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS DISCUSSED AND REDACTED	
12.	Date of next meeting 24 th May 2023 6pm	

Meeting ended at 20:46

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