

The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust
PART I - Minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on
Thursday, 15th October 2020 at 8.00 am

***** This meeting was held remotely using Microsoft Teams *****

Present: Helen Stevenson (Chair), Karl Smith, Morag Davies, Alison Duckworth, Kate Whittlesey, David Donnelly, Sharon Black, Craig Parkinson, Judith McConville		Apologies: Edward Vitalis Non attenders: Anantha Subramanayam			
		Clerk: Trish Roberts			
Items	Discussion	Action	Who	When	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions & apologies	Ms Stevenson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were accepted from Mr Edward Vitalis. It was also noted that there had been no communication from Mr Anantha Subramanayam.				
2. Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests	<p>Mrs Roberts confirmed that all Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interest forms completed and returned; and therefore an updated copy of the Register of Business Interests had been included with the board papers. Mrs Roberts requested that Trustees review the details and confirm the document's accuracy. All Trustees confirmed the details were correct, and therefore</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the Register of Business Interests be published on the Trust's website.</p> <p>Trustees also confirmed that there were no further interests to be declared in relation to this meeting:</p> <p>Helen Stevenson – Partner/Sole Proprietor of Satis Education, Contract with another Trust in the area (Frank Field Education Trust), Related to a Local Governor at one of THF schools (Sister).</p> <p>Karl Smith – Vice Principal of Carmel College</p> <p>Morag Davies – Director of M & P Business Solutions Ltd</p> <p>Alison Duckworth – Director of Epona Marketing</p> <p>Kate Whittlesey – Director of The SEND Advisory Team</p>	Agreed Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests to be published on the Trust's website.	P Roberts	Immediately	

<p>3. To receive/ ratify PART I Minutes from THF Board meeting held on 04.09.20</p>	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of PART I minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on 04.09.20. There were no amendments to be made and therefore the minutes were accepted as a true record and ratified.</p> <p>RESOLVE: That PART I minutes of the MAT Board meeting held on 04.09.20 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>Chair of the Board to sign agreed MAT Board Minutes from 04.09.20</p>	<p>HS</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	
<p>4. To review Matters Arising not included on the Agenda (to include Action Tracker)</p>	<p>Matters Arising from Minutes of 04.09.20 – it was agreed that there were no matters arising to be discussed.</p> <p>Trustees also received an electronic copy of THF Action Log dated 15.10.20 prior to the meeting - the Executive Team reported that they were on course for all of the outstanding actions. Trustees also agreed that the item regarding non-attendance protocol would be picked up outside of this meeting.</p>				
<p>5. Chair’s Action Report (to receive)</p>	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Chair’s Action & Governor Membership Update 15.10.20 report prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Ms Stevenson explained that the report provided information in relation to the actions she had completed on behalf of the board, since the last meeting. Ms Stevenson also asked Trustees if they were happy for her to continue to approve Trust Appointed Governor appointments as and when required during the coming year. Trustees</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the Chair of Board could continue to approve Governor appointments on behalf of the board, and report on them at the following Board meeting. It was also agreed that this would only happen in the instances when an appointment would be significantly delayed, ie if the next MAT Board meeting date was too far off.</p> <p>Ms Stevenson and Mr Donnelly also updated Trustees in relation to the number of applications that had been received for the Trustee vacancies. It was also noted that the responsibility for appointing Trustees rests with the Members, and as such the Trust Governance Manager (TGM) will support them through this process.</p> <p>Mrs Roberts was then asked to provide any updates in relation to the content of the report. Mrs Roberts confirmed that there was currently a Trust Appointed Governor application in process for HPS, and that a staff governor at HPS had indicated that they wished to step down, however they were happy to stay on to support the LGB until such time a replacement had been elected.</p>				

<p>6. Coronavirus Response</p>	<p>Mr Donnelly reported that Liverpool and St Helens schools are looking to close for a further week at October half term as circuit break to the spread of coronavirus. Halton schools are meeting to discuss a similar course of action. Mr Donnelly added that the additional week of closure was being classed as a home-working week. However, Mr Donnelly and the Principals of THF schools, do not agree that this is the right action to take; in fact, the Exec Group feel that keeping children in school is much more important. Mr Donnelly added that THF have consistently followed Public Health England’s advice and have not joined local structures. Also a letter was received from Knowsley Council last week stating that all staff were expected to wear face masks; the Exec Team have checked this out both from a H&S and Legal stance and this advice is not in line with national guidance. A decision was therefore taken that the letter would not be acted on within Trust schools and that the Trust’s stance would be to continue to follow national guidance.</p> <p><i>Q: How will local unions act, with regards the line we are taking?</i> <i>A: We have received nothing so far; it should also be noted that we do not stop staff from wearing face masks if they wish to and it makes them feel safe to work, we are just not directing staff to wear them. Also look at how the virus is transmitted in our schools, the patterns are that it is passed from child to child or staff to staff, not between the two.</i></p> <p>Discussion followed regarding the Test and Trace app alerts; and it was agreed that the situation being reported was a national picture, and not just something THF were experiencing.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly explained that everything that can be done is being done in relation to enforcing the wearing of masks in communal areas of secondary schools; adding that guidance/advice is ever-evolving and as such the Exec Team will continue to move with it. Mr Donnelly added that guidance/advice is not always clear and therefore there is an element of interpretation. Mr Donnelly also noted that the amount of updates/changes to advice is vast and thanked Mr Parkinson for everything he has done and continues to do in relation to keeping on track with it.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also updated Trustees in relation to the decision to send some of the year groups home at TPS; the number of positive cases in the classes had reached two, and as per government guidance, the Principal had taken the decision to send the classes home.</p>				
---------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

The local authority review all reported cases and liaise with the school and share potential learning from each situation. Mr Donnelly confirmed that the Trust continues to follow PHE/Government guidance and is therefore satisfied that the actions taken were completely appropriate; Mr Donnelly also advised that by the time the classes were going home the number of positive cases had risen and therefore the action taken was correct. Trustees agreed that the actions taken by the school were completely in line with what they would have expected.

Q: Trustees asked Mr Parkinson directly, whether he was coping with the additional workload caused by Covid-19 / restrictions / ever-evolving guidance/advice.

A: Yes, luckily the work is not physically demanding, and I am able to find time for myself when not in work. Email inbox management is also key, I do check emails periodically through my downtime, and if responses can be completed within seconds I will address them there and then, this enables a much easier start to the week as I'm not coming into a huge backlog of emails. I am now also able to occasionally work from home and this will also help. Mr Donnelly also reported that the Principals have indicated that they have felt very well supported throughout.

Mr Donnelly also reported that surveys have been conducted in relation to home learning; and advised that schools are now working very effectively when there is a need for them to move to remote learning. Mr Donnelly stated that the whole team have done a 'cracking' job.

Q: Have you heard anything within your networks in relation to exams?

A: We've heard that exams may be pushed back by 3 weeks, but a rumour is circulating that there may be no exams next year. Mr Donnelly added that he feels there will be a requirement for formal mock exams to take place in early Spring, that way if exams had to be cancelled, there would be an official set of monitoring data available to base results on.

Mr Donnelly went on to explain that he does not feel that exams will be cancelled, as children are socially distanced when they sit exams, i.e. there is at least 1 metre between each desk.

Discussion followed regarding how unions have asked government to ensure there is a Plan B in place; Trustees also noted the significant challenges schools/children are facing with regards social distancing and remote learning; and the impact it is having on

	<p>disadvantaged families. Mr Donnelly also noted that there is a possibility that this may lead to a significant number of legal challenges.</p> <p>Ms Duckworth stated that she would like to thank the Executive Team for everything they have done, adding that the update received on Friday's was very much appreciated. Trustees agreed with this and asked that Executive Team members speak out if anything gets too much.</p>				
<p>7. CEO Report</p>	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the CEO report (dated October 2020) prior to the meeting. Mr Donnelly reported:</p> <p>Overall – Given the Trust's financial situation and overall performance of Trust schools the status remains at red.</p> <p>Governance – Mr Donnelly advised that the RAG-rating for governance had been moved back to green, now that suspension of delegated powers has been removed and LGBs are back up and running. Mr Donnelly also reported that LGBs are required to meet remotely until further notice.</p> <p>Safeguarding – Mr Donnelly advised that the feared increase in safeguarding issues due to lockdown had not materialised; and that he was very heartened by this.</p> <p>Attendance – Mr Donnelly advised that schools were reporting the highest attendance figures that he had seen since being appointed, noting that the children who were self-isolating were not included in the figures. Mr Donnelly also reported that staff absence figures are looking good.</p> <p>Q: How does this pupil attendance figure compare to normal? A: Attendance figures are normally a couple of points lower than where we are now. We have even had days where schools are reaching 98-100% attendance</p> <p>Q: Do the children seem to be welcoming the opportunity to come to school? A: Bizarrely, they seem to be enjoying the new environments, i.e. lunch in home bases in secondary schools. The atmosphere within all our schools is very positive.</p> <p>Ms Whittlesey noted that the Trust must be on the right tracks if the children are enjoying the new way of working, i.e. class bubbles. Mr Donnelly advised that it had gone better than had been feared.</p>				

	<p>Q: In terms of meetings with external bodies, are we keeping face to face visiting at schools to a minimum?</p> <p>A: Yes, they are. The only meetings being offered face to face are the Principals' Performance Management Reviews, but even with these, if the Principals are not comfortable with them being held at the school, remote meetings are being arranged. The Central Team are also not visiting schools as a matter of course, 95% of our work can be carried out remotely, and even when they do have to visit in person, arrangements are made to ensure they purely meet with the staff member and do not come into contact with the children.</p> <p>Q: Have recruitment processes been carried out remotely, and if so, how has it gone?</p> <p>A: Yes, they have. It has been working really well, in fact Principals have stated that they feel they have got to know the candidate much better, due to the nature of the remote process. It must be noted that one problem we have with the remote process is that we haven't been able to see the candidate teach; but saying this BWP recruited a number of new staff during the summer and they have settled into the school really well. Mr Donnelly also noted that the number of applications received for the vacancies were up compared with previous recruitment processes.</p> <p>Q: Will teaching observations be carried out within the first term of any new appointments?</p> <p>A: Yes, teaching observations will take place in line with Trust protocol. CPD will be offered and full QA will take place. There is no reason why we can't do this, even book scrutiny can be completed. We just need more planning to be done in order that everything is Covid secure.</p> <p><i>* At this point Ms Davies explained that she would need to leave the meeting due to prior work commitments.</i></p>				
<p>8. Trust Strategic Plan 2020-21</p>	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the Trust Strategy Sep 2020 update document and the Trust Delivery Plan 2020-21 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly explained the background to the documents and the work that had taken place to reach this point. Mr Donnelly advised the Trustees of the key areas that had been updated:</p> <p>The section entitled "A Trust-wide approach to accelerate catch-up and implement an effective digital strategy to support remote learning" (Section B, Trust Delivery Plan) has been written in response to the Covid situation; Mr Donnelly went on to explain that a</p>				

lot has been learnt over the last months, and as a result we will not roll back from it, once everything returns to normality. Mr Donnelly noted the importance of students having the ability to access learning through all different formats, including remote learning.

Mr Parkinson was then asked to update Trustees with regards the DfE’s programme of providing additional IT devices for students who are experiencing barriers to remote learning. Mr Parkinson advised that the Trust was initially allocated a number of devices to be distributed to schools during the summer term, but that the 2nd allocation is assigned against the individual schools themselves. Also, the difference this time around is that each individual school has to meet the restriction intervention level before the school can access their allocation; so far 3 schools have had this triggered and therefore their ordering system has become live. As a result, 350+ devices have been received for the 3 schools. There are still another 300 devices in the allocation for the other 5 schools, but these will not be released by the DfE until the restriction intervention is needed.

Mr Parkinson also explained that students are experiencing problems with connectivity, i.e. some households have no access/limited access to the internet and therefore even if the children have devices, they cannot access their learning resources. Mr Parkinson advised that the DfE are currently running two pilots in relation to this issue; but that the Trust is also looking into what it can do from a local level. It was however noted that if the Trust agreed its own way forward with this problem, it would impact on the budget as it would not be likely to be funded by government. Mr Donnelly also explained remote learning has highlighted issues in relation to children’s/staff’s ability to use IT software/platforms; and as such these barriers are being addressed as a matter of urgency.

Mr Donnelly then went on to explain that the focus this year is on improving the quality of teaching, and as such the strategy and delivery plan have been updated to reflect the work of Mrs Black (DoTL) and her team. Mr Donnelly then went on to explain how over the last couple of the year’s the Trust’s focus was solely on achieving stability on all levels, particularly a financial level, and as a result of the work/efforts that have been made, the focus could now switch to School Improvement. Mr Donnelly also advised that QA is more prominent within the school improvement section, and that all other sections were similar to what had been reported previously.

Q: In relation to the laptops that have been given to students, what checks have been put in place to ensure they are being used for the purpose for which they have been given?

--	--	--	--	--

A: Ultimately they are devices that have been provided by the DfE, and as such they have been locked down as much as possible. Downloading of programmes is also not available at user-level. Other than this, there is a limited amount we can do when the devices are being used at home; once machines are used at home parents will need to play a role in monitoring/ensuring their child 's online safety. At school, it is different, as we can block access down to website level; at that point of usage we can ensure that guidance is followed and that acceptable-use policies are in place and being adhered to. Whilst we can instigate an element of control up until a certain point, we do not have the ability to fully lock down when non-school connectivity is used.

Discussion followed regarding how the online safety message is delivered to children, i.e. through PSHE; but it was also noted that children and young people are curious in nature and can be determined in finding ways to access what they want and such parents cannot remove themselves from the collective responsibility.

Q: Do we ask parents to sign a disclosure when we provide the IT device to the child?

A: Yes, parents are asked to sign a release clause. At this point we also remind them of the school's Acceptable Use and Online Safety policies.

Discussion followed regarding the Trust Delivery Plan, and Mr Donnelly explained that the document is designed to reflect how as a team the strategy is rolled out. Mr Donnelly also advised that this implementation plan is operational and as such was attached for information and progress against it would not be reported at Board level.

Q: Do you use the Delivery Plan at Team meetings?

A: Yes, the document is reviewed every two weeks; Exec Leaders update the group on where everything is up to within the strands they are responsible for.

Mr Donnelly went on to explain that although each Exec Leader had overall responsibility for their particular Strand/s, tasks could be delegated to other members within their team.

There being no further questions, Trustees

RESOLVED: that the Trust Strategy 2020-22 (September 2020 update) be approved.

<p>9. Trust Committee Updates</p>	<p>Education & Standards Committee Update - Trustees received an electronic copy of the E&S Committee board report dated 15.10.20 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Smith (Chair of E&S Committee) provided a brief summary of the meeting; noting that it had been really successful. Mr Smith updated Trustees in relation to the school improvement team's catch-up proposals; stating that he was impressed with the amount of rigour that has been built in to the process. Mr Donnelly then provided a further update in relation to the work that the Asst DoTL (PP) had undertaken since the E&S committee meeting; stating that most of the school catch-up plans had been received/reviewed and were now at the point where they could be shared with LGBs.</p> <p>Q: Trustees asked Mr Donnelly to confirm which school catch-up plans were still outstanding.</p> <p>A: Mr Donnelly provided the details and assured Trustees that he will be following this up with the respective Principal.</p> <p>Mr Smith concluded the update by acknowledging that the committee were extremely impressed with the standard of documentation that had been produced for the meeting.</p> <p>Trustees thanked Mr Smith and Mr Donnelly for their reports.</p>				
	<p>Business, Finance & Audit Committee Update - Trustees received an electronic copy of the draft BF&A Committee board report dated 15.10.20 prior to the meeting. Mrs Roberts advised that the draft report had been agreed by the Chair of the committee (Mr Vitalis) prior to this meeting.</p> <p>Ms Duckworth and Mr Smith confirmed that the committee meeting held on 05.10.20 was a really solid meeting and that there were no concerns to be raised in relation to it. However, there was a recommendation that needed to be brought to the trust board in relation to the Trust Pay Policies.</p> <p>Ms Duckworth then asked Mr Parkinson to provide a brief summary in relation to the changes that had been made to the policies. Mr Parkinson explained that the only changes that had been made were in relation to scale points; i.e. all 3 policies had been updated to reflect the latest nationally agreed salary scales. Mr Parkinson also advised that these uplifts had been costed for within the budget setting process.</p> <p>Trustees thanked Ms Duckworth and Mr Parkinson for their reports and there being no further questions Trustees:</p>				

	<p>RESOLVED: that the Teachers Pay Policy 2020-21, Support Staff Pay Policy 2020-21 and Central Staff Pay Policy 2020-21 be approved as of 15.10.20.</p>				
<p>10. Governance</p>	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Governance Update Report Oct 2020 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Link Trustees: Mr Donnelly reported that he had reviewed the documentation that had been provided originally for Trustees and on reflection the expectation of termly meetings had been identified as a possible issue in terms of Trustee workload; as such the proposal has been changed to Trustees visiting/meeting with their link school at least once per year. Mr Donnelly advised that the rest of the visit framework was what you would expect to be in place for these type of meetings. Following discussion Trustees agreed the changes.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly then advised that the next step would be to agree the Link Trustees for each schools. Discussion ensued and the following Link Trustees were agreed:</p> <p>Helen Stevenson: Litherland High School / Litherland Moss Primary School Edward Vitalis: The Heath School Karl Smith: The Prescot School Morag Davies: Bridgewater Primary School Alison Duckworth: Halsnead Primary School Kate Whittlesey: Palace Fields Primary School / Daresbury Primary School</p> <p>Trustees also agreed that once the Trust Board are back up to full capacity, the allocation of Link Trustees will be revisited.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding setting up introductions between Link Trustees and schools/LGBs. Mr Donnelly advised that he will arrange for initial email contact to be made.</p> <p>Committee Terms of Reference <i>Business, Finance & Audit Committee:</i> Trustees received a copy of the updated Draft B, F & A Committee Terms of Reference electronically prior to the meeting. Mrs Roberts reported that the document has now been updated to reflect the delegated powers within point 7.3 of the Central Pay policy and that the document was agreed by BF&A on 05.10.20. As such Trustees had received a copy within their pack of papers for information purposes only.</p>	<p>Initial email contact to be made with schools/LGBs re Link Trustees</p>	<p>DD/PAR</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	

11. Risk Register	Trustees received electronic copies of the Trust’s Risk Register prior to the meeting; <i>Risk Item 12 – Litigation against the Trust:</i> Mr Parkinson reported that the mitigation section linked to this item will need to be updated to reflect the current position, in that schools have now reopened. Mr Parkinson then provided further details in terms of where the Covid risk assessment review process was up to. Mr Parkinson clarified that the amendment is only related to the mitigation wording and not the risk itself. There being no further changes requested the Risk Register document was approved.				
12. Policies for Approval	Trust Pay Policies 2020-21: see Agenda Item 9b (BF&A Committee Update)				
13. AoB	CEO Performance Management Ms Stevenson updated Trustees in relation to this item. Ms Stevenson advised that following discussions at the last board meeting, the trust board have been successful in identifying and commissioning an external advisor to support them with this process. Ms Stevenson then went on to provide a brief summary of the external advisor’s background, and also explained that the Trustee panel who will carry out the process will include herself, and the two committee Chairs. Ms Stevenson also explained that even though other Trustee members are not on the panel they can however feed anything into the process (See PART II for full details of discussion).				
14. Date of Next Meeting	The date of the next MAT Board meeting is Thursday 10 th December 2020.				

Meeting closed at 9.18 am

These minutes are approved as a true record of the meeting

Signed:

[Helen Stevenson]

Date: 10th December 2020

Chair’s initials to record approval of minutes:

Date: 10.12.20