

The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust
PART I - Minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on
Thursday, 22nd April 2021 at 8.00 am

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

<u>Present:</u> Edward Vitalis (Vice Chair), Karl Smith, Tony Gundersen, Janine Inglis, Mark Stanton, Annette Williams, David Donnelly, Sharon Black, Craig Parkinson, Judith McConville		<u>Apologies:</u> Helen Stevenson, Kate Whittlesey, Christopher Davis, Morag Davies, Alison Duckworth Non attenders:			
		Clerk: Trish Roberts			
Items	Discussion	Action	Who	When	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions & apologies	Mr Vitalis welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that in the Chair's absence, he would be chairing the meeting in his capacity as Vice Chair. Apologies were accepted from Mrs H Stevenson, Ms K Whittlesey, Mr C Davis, Ms M Davies and Ms A Duckworth.				
2. Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests	Trustees confirmed that there were no interests to be declared in relation to this meeting: Edward Vitalis - Chief Operating Officer at Bright Futures Educational Trust, Trustee at NHS Salford Clinical Commissioning Group, Trustee at Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust Karl Smith – Vice Principal of Carmel College Tony Gundersen – Director of TG Business Services Ltd, Governor at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School Mark Stanton – Trustee at Pestalozzi International Foundation Annette Williams – CEO at Weaver Trust, Governor at Pattishall CofE Primary School				
3. To receive/ ratify PART I Minutes from THF Board meeting held on 25.02.21	Trustees received an electronic copy of PART I minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on 25.02.21. There were no amendments to be made and therefore the minutes were accepted as a true record and ratified. RESOLVE: That PART I minutes of the MAT Board meeting held on 25.02.21 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	Chair of the Board to sign agreed MAT Board Minutes from 25.02.21	HS	ASAP	

<p>4. To review Matters Arising not included on the Agenda (to include Action Tracker)</p>	<p>Matters Arising from Minutes of 25.02.21</p> <p>Register of Business Interests: Mrs Roberts confirmed that a copy of the Trust’s Register of Business Interests has been uploaded onto the Trust website.</p> <p>Signing of Trust Board Minutes: It was agreed that as meetings continue to be held remotely, copies of minutes will be posted out to the relevant Chairs so that they can be formally signed off.</p> <p>Guidance on how the Trust is operating between now and Sept (incl. schools visits): Mr Donnelly confirmed that he has met with/notified the Principals with regards guidance and expectations around school visits.</p> <p>Trustees also received an electronic copy of THF Action Log dated 22.04.21 prior to the meeting – Trustees reviewed progress, and Executive Team members confirmed that they were on course for all of the outstanding actions.</p>				
<p>5. Chair’s Action Report (to receive)</p>	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Chair’s Action & Governor Membership Update 22.04.21 report prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis asked Mrs Roberts (TGM) to provide a brief summary of the actions the Chair had completed on behalf of the board, since the last meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Roberts then provided an update in relation to Governor recruitment/election processes currently taking place.</p> <p>Trustees noted that they were happy to see a positive position with regards Governor vacancies.</p>				
<p>6. Coronavirus Update</p>	<p>Mr Donnelly provided an update to Trustees.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly explained that the weekly updates that are sent to Trustees continue to report a significant decrease in terms of pupils absent with Covid. Mr Donnelly then went on to provide school-level data. Mr Donnelly added that the improving position re attendance is evidence that systems and processes are working well. Mr Donnelly also advised that discussions have taken place with unions and no major issues have been raised; and that no significant changes were made to policy and/or procedures over the Easter break; however, the next raft of changes are likely to take place following the government’s next review date for their journey out of Covid (17.05.21).</p>				

Mr Donnelly then spoke about the Trust’s policy with regards the wearing of face coverings in the classroom, referencing discussions that had taken place during the previous MAT Board meeting (25.02.21). Mr Donnelly advised Trustees that most children are adhering to this rule, although across the Trust there are around 8-10 refusals. Those children refusing to wear face coverings, continue to be educated at home – this decision is based on DfE guidance around ensuring the safety of all Trust communities and also on legal advice from Hill Dickinson. Mr Donnelly also advised that he had met with the secondary school leaders yesterday, and an item of discussion was with regards ensuring the continuation of good remote learning provision for those children not attending school. Mr Donnelly added that if DfE guidance doesn’t change in May 21, the Trust will need to look at interim systems which balance the safety of school communities against the importance of getting students who are disengaged with their learning, back into school.

Q: With the difficulties in relation to guidance being open to interpretation, and looking at the Government’s approach to their journey out of Covid, are we in a position to prepare for June 21st, eg everyone is on board with what is being asked of them now, and then (if things do not change) as of June 21st all restrictions are removed?

A: It is our intention to carry on with the class bubbles until the end of this academic year; with regards face coverings, Trust policy will not be reviewed until DfE guidance changes from ‘they must be worn’ to ‘its personal choice to wear them’. Mr Donnelly then spoke about the difficulties/encumbrance around wearing face coverings whilst teaching, ie voice is not clear, and also a lot of classroom control is based around facial expressions. Mr Donnelly added that if everything reverses in June, the Exec Officers/School Leaders will need to review policy/procedures, however it may be beneficial for some restrictions to remain in place until the end of term, ie children have been through enough changes to their routines over the past 15 months and as such the natural Summer holiday break may be a more appropriate time to reset/realign in readiness for the new academic year.

Trustees noted that Exec Officers will keep a watching brief over the next weeks, and also requested whether the Trustee weekly update could have a paragraph within the Coronavirus Update section which provides the CEO view/perspective on what is happening, thereby enabling Trustees to understand the position as the Trust moves towards the 21st June.

Future weekly Trustee Coronavirus updates to include a paragraph which provides CEO

CEO

From 26.04.21 onwards

	Trustees thanked Mr Donnelly for the update.	perspective/view on how things are moving in relation to the Governments Roadmap			
7. CEO Report (incl. Safeguarding Assurance Report)	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the CEO report (dated April 2021) and Safeguarding Update report (22.04.21) prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly reported:</p> <p>School Improvement – this item remains graded as ‘red’ due to TPS still being in Special Measures, however internal judgements indicate the school should be removed from measures at the next full inspection. The issue with this however is that taking into account the lack of performance data for this and last academic year, it is difficult to see how Ofsted will evaluate the school’s performance and reach their decision. It is hoped that TPS will be inspected early next term using the new framework.</p> <p>Ofsted – Mr Donnelly advised that full Ofsted inspections will not resume until September 2021 at the earliest; and that Exec Officers expect that TPS and DPS will be within the list of the next schools to be inspected. TPS due to their Ofsted grading, and DPS due to them not being inspected since 2009. Mr Donnelly explained that the Ofsted Framework has changed a number of times since DPS’ last inspection, and due to these changes and based on current performance, the Ofsted grading may be revised to Good rather than Outstanding.</p> <p>Q: Are we Ofsted-ready at these schools? How are we preparing them, and in particular how are we preparing our Governors?</p> <p>A: Preparation for Ofsted is ongoing with Exec Officers providing support to schools on key metrics. Mr Donnelly went on to provide details of support that has been given to schools, including LHS. Mr Donnelly advised that preparation of Governors in terms of Ofsted-readiness is weaker and as such a Governor workshop will be arranged during Summer/Autumn term 2021.</p> <p>Ms Inglis noted that the CEO Report does not show the rationale as to why items are graded Amber/Red, nor does it show the trajectory for them moving to Green. Mr Donnelly agreed that this was a valid point to raise and also spoke about how the CEO report should link to the Trust’s Risk Assessment/Register.</p>	Governor Ofsted Preparation Workshop to be arranged	CEO/DoTL	Summer / Autumn Term 2021	

Discussion followed regarding how Ms Inglis' expertise within the Risk Management sector could be used as resource to support the Trustees/Exec Officers. It was also noted that these reports/discussions also cross into the Trust Board Self Evaluation processes/report. It was agreed by everyone all 3 documents need to be consistent in their grading structures and as such a review was required.

Q: With regards the Ofsted discussion - what are Ofsted wanting from the Governors perspective – this is something we need to be mindful of?

A: In the past Ofsted inspectors have asked to speak to the CEO and CoG; and we have offered the option for them to speak to Trustees, some inspectors have taken up the offer, others have declined. The involvement of CoGs is really to speak about their knowledge of their school and their understanding of the Trust Scheme of Delegation. It is expected that Ofsted expectations will become clearer once they return to full inspections.

Mr Vitalis spoke about his experiences of Ofsted inspections and also added that **there was a need to ensure that Link Trustees have sound knowledge of their school and as such be in a position to support their CoG.**

Mr Smith noted that every inspection team will interpret data/information in their own way, and as such it is imperative that the Trust has a team of Governors who are ready to talk to inspectors. **Mr Smith suggested that in order to support this process, the SLT of each school should have an update sheet which provides an honest status of the school, ready to share with their Link Trustee/Governors when they get the call that an inspection is due to take place, this will be linked to the preparation workshop suggested previously.**

Q: Is there an Ofsted plan in place for DPS, which looks at how it can maintain its current grading?

A: This has been discussed at E&S and they are aware of DPS' position; there is also a School Development Plan in place and it is reviewed at regular intervals by the CEO. Mr Donnelly added that an executive summary could be shared with key people when notice of Ofsted inspection is received; he then went on to explain the reasoning behind the Exec Officers assessment of DPS ie current outcomes and significant changes to Inspection Framework. Mr Donnelly also noted that the School Development Plan is the document that drives school improvement.

Ms Black then provided details of preparation that schools have received, ie primary and secondary schools have an external evaluation partner who has met with leadership and middle leadership; and continue to work with schools to address issues that have been raised.

Attendance – Attendance is currently higher than national averages, although it was noted that this should be treated with caution due to the uneven collection of national data. Mr Donnelly then provided details, ie students have been in school for less time this year, and as a result small amounts of absence will significantly skew their attendance data. It was also noted that Self-Isolation is counted as non-attendance, and as such further skews attendance figures. Exec Officers are continuing to keep an eye on statistical releases with regard how anomalies will be treated.

Exclusions – Fixed-Term exclusions (FTEs) continue to be of concern; and relate to behaviour issues that have arisen from schools reopening and the difficulties some children have experienced when trying to settle back in to school routines.

Trustees thanked Mr Donnelly for both his report, and for the Attendance/Exclusions comparison data that had been appended to it.

Safeguarding Report

Mr Donnelly explained that the report had been produced by Liz Scott (nee Rowlands), the Trust’s Safeguarding Lead; and provided details in relation to the report RAG-rating.

Discussion followed regarding the social media campaign #everyonesinvited; and the importance of ensuring children feel safe and secure to report issues, and feel that they will be addressed. Mr Donnelly advised that this will be discussed at his meeting with the Principals w/c 26.04.21. Further discussion followed regarding the usage of websites such as Whisper, with it being noted that anonymous disclosure can cause significant problems when trying to address any issues that have been raised. Mr Donnelly assured Trustees that he believes children within Trust schools feel safe; Exec Officers ask children for their view, when they visit schools.

Q: What happens after the Everyonesinvited event, does the school review curriculum in light of this, eg respect, healthy/safe relationships?

	<p>A: All of our schools have designed a relationship curriculum which has been approved by Governors, and has gone out to consultation with parents. However, although it is in place, we need to ensure it is understood by all children. We have a duty to address issues that are raised, but we also need to speak to children so that they build up resilience; thereby enabling them to identify/avoid unsafe situations/relationships.</p> <p>Trustees thanked Mr Donnelly and agreed that it was good to see that this piece of work was being undertaken at all schools within the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees also spoke about their duty to check progress on the Safeguarding Report target dates; and as such it was agreed that an update report will be brought to MAT Board in September 2021.</p> <p>Trustees also voiced concern that the Safeguarding Report noted that Governance Safeguarding training is offered to all Governors; and advised that the undertaking of this training is an insistence rather than a choice. Following discussion it was agreed that an audit of governance safeguarding training will take place in order to identify how many governors/trustees require training.</p> <p>Q: With regards serious incidents/near misses, what is the process? A: Essentially discussions take place with the LADO at the respective LA. We don't keep data on these incidents centrally, but we can start logging numbers of issues taken to LADO and details of outcomes</p> <p>Q: When incidents occur, ie the incident in Huyton, do we conduct a Trust review and look at what we could have done, had the individual been identified sooner? A: Our schools present very well at multi-agency meetings etc, and keep effective records. We have not had any issues raised and we believe our schools are very effective in identifying possible safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis thanked Mr Donnelly for his presentation, and also thanked everyone for their contributions.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Update on Progress Report to be produced and brought to Trust Board</p> <p>Audit of Governance Safeguarding Training to be undertaken</p>	<p>CEO / Trust Safeguarding Lead</p> <p>TGM</p>	<p>Sep 2021</p> <p>ASAP</p>	
	<p>Education & Standards Committee Update - Trustees received an electronic copy of the E&S Committee board report dated 24.03.21 prior to the meeting.</p>				

<p>8. Trust Committee Updates</p>	<p>Mr Smith (Chair of E&S Committee) confirmed that the report was a true reflection of the meeting. He then provided a brief summary of the meeting and offered to field any questions from Trustees.</p> <p>There being no questions, Trustees thanked Mr Smith for his report.</p>				
	<p>Business, Finance & Audit Committee Update – Trustees received an electronic copy of the BF&A Committee board report dated 25.03.21 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis (Chair of BF&A Committee) confirmed that the report was a true reflection of the meeting. He then provided a brief summary; making particular reference to the SRMA Report that had been received/discussed. Mr Vitalis noted that report was an interesting read and that although it focusses prominently on Trust finance, it also impacts education & standards. Mr Vitalis added that it was a good appraisal of where everything is at, and also highlighted areas for progress (although there was nothing in the report, that the Exec Officers were not already aware of). The next step will be for the Exec Officers to produce an action plan, and recommended implementation; this will be reviewed by the BF&A Committee.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis also reported that discussions have commenced with regards Budget 2021-22; and that he is due to have a pre-meeting with Mrs McConville (Trust Financial Controller) to agree the budget format.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis then offered to field any questions from Trustees; and there being no questions, Trustees thanked Mr Vitalis for his report.</p>	<p>SRMA Report to be circulated to all Trustees for information</p>	<p>TGM</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	
<p>9. Trust Board Self Evaluation Update</p>	<p>Mr Stanton informed the Board that he had reviewed the draft Trust Board Self Evaluation document and had noted a number of issues/suggestions within it. The updated document had been emailed to Mrs Roberts.</p> <p>Mrs Roberts explained that the document had been received, and that in discussion with Ms Stevenson, this was added to the agenda so that a way forward could be agreed by the Trust Board.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was agreed that an Extra-Ordinary Trust Board session should be arranged so that the document, and the issues/suggestions raised, could be discussed in detail, and a final draft produced for circulation. It was agreed that the working group would initially include HS, EV, KS (Chairs - Board & Committees), MI & MS (Trustees who</p>				

	are experienced in this field), and the Exec Team; and following discussion re Risk Register it was agreed that the Extra-Ordinary session will be linked to the Risk and Reporting Workshop.				
10. Link Trustee Update	<p>Mr Donnelly provided a brief Link Trustee update in order to bring the newly appointed Trustees up-to-date.</p> <p>Link Trustee allocations were then discussed; and Mr Gundersen, Mrs Williams and Mr Stanton confirmed that they would be happy to take on a Link Trustee role.</p> <p>Link Trustee allocations will be reviewed as a result.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis and Mr Smith also provided a brief summary of the initial contact they have made with their allocated schools.</p>	Link Trustee allocation to be reviewed/agreed	COO/TGM/CoB/CEO	ASAP	
11. Governance Update (incl Trustee Recruitment)	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Governance Update Report Feb 2021 prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Roberts provided further details in relation to the items listed within the report.</p>				
12. Litherland Project Update	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Litherland Education Hub Listening Period Report prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly reported that overall the tenor of response was very positive; and then went on to provide specific details in relation to responses received from parents at each of the schools. Mr Donnelly explained that based on the responses received, the Board can be assured that, should they approve to move to the next stages of the project, the Trust has support from the school communities.</p> <p>Mr Parkinson also provided an update with regards the Project Board; at the Dec 2020 meeting Trustees approved up to RIBA Stage 4 (Market Testing). Since then, Kier Construction have been working towards their submission of the RIBA Stage 4 outcome, which will be validated by Faithful & Gould (Trust Capital Partners). Once validated, it will be circulated to Trustees/Project Board. Mr Parkinson also explained that the next stage will be to commit to the actual Build; and as such the Project Board will need to meet in order to review/discuss the report and they would then report back to the Trust Board. The Trust Board will then make their determinations as to whether to move forward to the Build stage.</p>				

	<p>Mr Parkinson also explained that should the project move forwards, discussions will take place with the ESFA and LA regarding the disposal of the vacated site.</p> <p>Q: Is there any adverse feedback that has not be mitigated? A: Once we met with parents, viewpoints began to change; ie Primary parents were concerned about their children mixing with secondary aged children, but we were able to explain that the schools will be separate and there will be no crossover between primary and secondary children; Secondary parents had heard a rumour that class sizes at LHS will need to be increased in order to make room for the Primary children, again we were able to explain that this would not happen. Mr Donnelly added that there are some minor issues regarding students' language use when they are outside, but assured Trustees that this will be mitigated against. Mr Donnelly also explained that CEO Zoom 'drop in' sessions have been arranged so that parents can raise with him any concerns they may have.</p> <p>Q: Approval Process – when will this come to Full Board? A: The Project Board will have oversight and it will need to go to BF&A and then the Full Board for approval; we will need to align with meetings, without causing delays to the process.</p>				
13. Risk Register	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the Trust's Risk Register prior to the meeting;</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the Risk Register in its current format and agreed that there were no changes to be made.</p> <p>Discussion then followed with regards the format of the document and Trustees agreed that it was not fit for purpose going forwards, and as such a review was required. Following discussion, it was agreed that the workshop should link both Risk and Reporting (see discussions in agenda Item 7 & Item 9); and as Ms Inglis is experienced in this field, she would facilitate the session. Mr Stanton also offered to be involved.</p>	Risk & Reporting Workshop to be arranged	J Inglis / Exec Officers / TGM	ASAP	
14. Policies for Approval	Trustees received an electronic copy of the draft 'Delegation of Financial Authority 2021' prior to the meeting.	Trust Delegation of Financial Authority 2021 to be circulated to schools	TFC/TGM	ASAP	

	<p>Mrs McConville provided a brief summary on how the document had been produced, including how it had been evaluated by the Trust’s internal auditors (Beever & Struthers) to ensure it was fit for purpose.</p> <p>Trustees noted that it was key to have auditors’ involvement in this process, and following discussion:</p> <p>RESOLVED: that the Trust Delegation of Financial Authority 2021 is approved</p>				
<p>15. AoB</p>	<p>There were no AoB to be discussed.</p>				
<p>16. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>The date of the next MAT Board meeting is Thursday 27th May 2021</p> <p>Mr Vitalis closed the meeting by giving formal thanks to the Exec Officers; noting that Trustees had received a good set of papers for this meeting, and were assured by the discussions that had taken place. Mr Vitalis also thanks Trustee colleagues for their attendance and contributions.</p>				

Meeting closed at 9.40 am

These minutes are approved as a true record of the meeting

Signed:

[E Vitalis – Vice Chair]

Date: 27th May 2021