

The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust
PART I - Minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on
Thursday, 25th February 2021 at 8.00 am

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

<u>Present:</u> Helen Stevenson (Chair), Edward Vitalis, Karl Smith, Alison Duckworth, Christopher Davis, Tony Gundersen, Janine Inglis, Mark Stanton, Annette Williams, David Donnelly, Sharon Black, Craig Parkinson, Judith McConville		<u>Apologies:</u> Morag Davies, Kate Whittlesey Non attenders:			
		Clerk: Trish Roberts			
Items	Discussion	Action	Who	When	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions & apologies	Ms Stevenson welcomed everyone to the meeting and also thanked the new Trustees for joining the Trust Board. Introductions followed. Apologies were accepted from Ms M Davies and Ms K Whittlesey.				
2. Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests	Trustees confirmed that there were no interests to be declared in relation to this meeting: Helen Stevenson – Partner/Sole Proprietor of Satis Education, Director of Optimum Education Resourcing Ltd, Contract with another Trust in the area (Frank Field Education Trust), Related to a Local Governor at one of THF schools (Sister). 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 Alison Duckworth – Director of Epona Marketing Christopher Davis – Headteacher at Moorside High School (part of Consilium Academies MAT). 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	Updated Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests to be published on the Trust’s website.	P Roberts	ASAP	

<p>3. To receive/ ratify PART I Minutes from THF Board meeting held on 10.12.20</p>	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of PART I minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on 10.12.20. 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 10.12.20 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>Chair of the Board to sign agreed MAT Board Minutes from 10.12.20</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 10.12.20</p> <p>Headteacher's Pay: Mr Donnelly advised Trustees that following their decision not to uphold the request from one of our LGBs, he had been asked to attend a LGB meeting to explore the issue further. This meeting has now taken place, and although the LGB are unhappy with the outcome, they have accepted that this is the decision and as such the matter is now closed.</p> <p>Trustees also received an electronic copy of THF Action Log dated 25.02.21 prior to the meeting - the Executive Team reported 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 25.02.21 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.</p> <p>Ms Stevenson then updated Trustees in relation the Leave of Absence request received from Ms Whittlesey. Following discussion Trustees agreed the action that had been taken.</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 an improving position with regards Governor vacancies.</p>				
<p>6. Coronavirus Update</p>	<p>Mr Donnelly provided an update to Trustees with regards the full reopening of schools w/c 08.03.21; which included details regarding the logistics in arranging testing of all students on their return to school.</p>				

Mr Donnelly explained that testing is not mandatory, and as such sign up is varied across Trust schools. Discussion also took place regarding the regulations re wearing of face coverings in classrooms (both students & staff). Mr Donnelly also spoke about how the regulations state that 'no child will be refused education if they refuse to test or wear a mask'.

Q: If a child refuses to test or wear a mask, can we provide remote learning in place of face-to-face learning?

Mr Donnelly explained that the current message to students and staff, is that we are asking them to wear masks in order to keep their friends/colleagues safe. Mr Donnelly then went on to provide details in respect of the initial verbal communication that had taken place with the Trust's legal advisers (Hill Dickinson) regarding this issue. Discussion ensued regarding the issues that arise when sending children home at short notice (ie parents at work) and how guidance can be open to interpretation.

Discussion moved on to the logistics in terms of lateral flow-testing all secondary school students. Mr Parkinson explained the plan that has been put in place.

Q: If a student tests positive with the first test, what is the plan/protocol for them? Are they going to be sent home?

A: There has been a similar issue experienced at one of our schools recently; the school has designated isolation spaces which are ventilated. The child was kept there until contact could be made with their parent/carer to agree a course of action.

Q: Are there concerns re safeguarding/welfare if there is no one at home for the child?

A: All schools have these isolation spaces and the child would remain there until contact is made with their parents and they can go home.

Q: What about the other children within their bubble?

A: When students come in for their 1st test, they will be in socially distanced queues until their first test comes back clear. However, the 2nd test and beyond will be challenge as students will have returned to classroom activity, and therefore if there is a positive test at this point we would be looking at 48 hours prior to the lateral flow test. We are currently exploring options as to whether it is best to keep students in

pastoral support bubbles rather than in year groups. It was also noted that even if masks/face coverings are worn, the person will still be classed as a contact.

** At this point (8.30 am) Mr Vitalis advised that he would need to leave the meeting, but would re-join as soon as he was able to.*

Q: DfE recommendations state teachers should wear masks not visors; will wearing masks cause any barriers when teaching?

A: As long as staff are socially distanced, visors can be worn in the classroom; however, if the teacher needs to move around the classroom, or if the classroom space does not allow for social distancing the teacher will need to wear a mask.

Q: Given that all secondary students require lateral flow tests; if there is a community testing station available in their area, could they access their tests at these sites?

A: Mr Parkinson has had discussions with Local Authorities about this; Knowsley were very early adaptors and there is a combined approach to testing, as such there are various ways for students to access tests within this LA. Halton and Sefton have a slightly different take on this; staff can access community testing centres (fast lane systems are in place). Mr Parkinson also noted that secondary school testing will move to a similar system as primaries, ie home testing will be brought in. Home testing kits are due to be delivered to THS today, and LHS/TPS on 01.03.21. This first stage is to embed testing for students, allowing comfort and familiarisation with regards self-testing; the Government feel that schools are best placed to support/nurture the students during this stage.

Q: If after the second week, a child tests positive and they need to be isolated, this will lead to a range of differentiation within the classroom, has this been discussed?

A: Yes, arrangements are in place. Mr Parkinson then provided details.

Discussion followed regarding the nature of how Covid can be asymptomatic within young people and as such continual mixing is always going to be an issue; and Trustees also asked whether legal bodies such as the DfE could take action against schools/Trusts.

Updated guidance states that positivity rates will be monitored in schools; as such 2 cases in 14 days will be treated as an outbreak. Schools will work with healthcare teams to assess this; and if there is a suggestion that it is a wider issue, it will rest with the healthcare protection team (along with the school).

	<p>Discussion followed regarding the reasons why some families may not have signed up for testing as of yet.</p> <p>Ms Stevenson spoke about visits to schools and requested that there is clear guidance produced on how the Trust is operating between now and September, with a review taking place during the summer term. Discussion followed regarding the communications Ms Stevenson has been involved in re. Health & Safety/Recruitment procedures.</p> <p>Trustees also agreed that all levels of governance (Board & LGBs) should continue to meet remotely until Covid restrictions are lifted. Mr Donnelly advised that he will notify schools/LGBs of this decision; and also explained that one site visit will need to take place.</p>	<p>Guidance on how the Trust is operating between now and September (including school visits) to be produced and circulated to all schools/LGBs</p>	<p>Exec Officers</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	
<p>7. CEO Report (incl. paper on pupil numbers/projections)</p>	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the CEO report (dated February 2021) 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 – Due to the minimal number of vacancies across the Trust, it was agreed that the status should remain green.</p> <p>Ofsted – A copy of the draft Monitoring Visit letter in respect of TPS was circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. Mr Donnelly advised that 1 slight change has been requested. Mr Donnelly then provided a brief summary for the new Trustees in terms of TPS’ Ofsted judgement, how monitoring visits are conducted during Covid restrictions and what judgements can be made following them. Mr Donnelly then went on to explain to all Trustees that the SEND issue mentioned in the letter was a known issue and had been flagged up to the inspectors by the school/Trust; Mr Donnelly also advised that Palmerston are supporting the school with this. Mr Donnelly also explained that it was expected that the school would have come out of measures last Autumn, but due to Covid this couldn’t happen. Mr Donnelly also advised that due to the continuing Covid situation an updated timescale for moving out of measures could not be provided.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding changes to the Ofsted framework that have taken place and it was noted that a possible judgement could be made before 2022.</p>				

Q: In terms of absenteeism, what sort of plan is in place going forwards, to mitigate absenteeism and to improve the situation?

A: Attendance has been a problem for a significant amount of time and is an endemic problem in Knowsley. Attendance procedures are very good, and the next step is to ensure the quality of teaching is the same; ie if children are engaged with their learning they will want to attend school. The status of Attendance within the CEO report has been moved back to Amber; this is due to there being a lack of national comparators. 40-50% of our primary children are attending and this is increasing each week; however, the judgement will come when children return on 08.03.21.

Q: What about online engagement?

A: Online engagement/remote learning has been reported into Education & Standards. All children have now got access to ICT equipment (864 devices have been given out) and as such this is no longer a significant barrier to learning. Online teaching has also improved significantly. However, this is difficult to measure as figures are based on plug ins; Mr Donnelly/Ms Black then provided access figures for each school.

Discussion followed regarding standards of teaching, and Exec Officers explained that additional approaches have been introduced at some schools (ie Teacher Educators; leading development of all staff and coaching), work with the Shaw Trust has also been commissioned and a robust plan is in place.

Ms Black also spoke about the Trust's Strategy on Metacognition, sharing good practice and the co-ordinated approach that is now in place. Mr Donnelly also added that when looking at quality of teaching, it is not that teaching is inadequate across the Trust, it is that it is that we want to move it from an okay standard to good or outstanding.

Safeguarding – Mr Donnelly advised that regular contact has been with all children throughout the lockdown, and that vulnerable children who are absent from school have been contacted at least twice weekly during this period. Mr Donnelly then explained what happens when contact cannot be made with a child, ie home visits, and contact with LA if necessary. Mr Donnelly went on to explained that without the day-to-day contact with children, there are increased vulnerabilities, and due to these unknowns the status of this section has remained Amber.

Mr Donnelly advised that Exec Officers will be looking to produce the annual safeguarding report this half term; and as such would like to discuss the Board's expectations in relation to this. Trustees agreed that a termly report across all schools

should be taken to E&S, and reported up to MAT Board. Trustees also spoke about the likelihood of increased vulnerability as a result of lockdown and as such the critical point will be when children return to school; and therefore it would enable them to gain a better understanding if the next safeguarding report could include any issues that have arisen during this period.

Q: Have all schools got access to bereavement support/counselling?

A: Yes

Mr Donnelly went on to explain that there may be an increase in activity from the unions as schools get closer to reopening fully (08.03.21 onwards); it is expected that concern will be raised formally from the unions themselves rather than staff members.

Q: Would it be best therefore to have a meeting with the unions prior to the return, so that the plan can be explained and any concerns addressed?

A: Exec Officers meet with JCNC on a regular basis, they are copied into any relevant communications (ie updated risk assessments) and no concerns have been raised, other than the nationwide issues. Unions sent model letters to their members in December, but it is not known if this will happen this time round.

Mr Parkinson then updated Trustees with regards the regular communications/information that has been shared with unions over the past months (updated risk assessments, digest reports etc).

Q: Have the Trust's legal/HR advisers (Hill Dickinson) sent regular updates to school leaders?

A: Hill Dickinson have supported the Trust throughout including ensuring we are updated in relation to current national/regional guidance; this can be seen with the work that has taken place at schools this week whilst updating risk assessments.

Exclusions – Mr Donnelly explained that some children may find it difficult when they return to full time face-to-face education. Any exclusion is not good, but leaders will need to balance this against keeping everyone safe.

Complaints – Mr Donnelly advised the CEO report states that there have been no complaints received at Trust level. In terms of school level, Exec Officers, are looking into the concept of a Parent Advocate who will act on behalf of parents. On speaking with Principals this idea has been largely met with positive views. Further work is due to

take place regarding this; and if agreed to move forwards Mr Donnelly will bring a proposal to Board for approval.

Buildings – Mr Donnelly brought new Trustees up-to-date with regards the Litherland Integration Project (LHS/LMP). Mr Donnelly/Mr Parkinson then provided a summary with regards what has happened since, ie leaked story in the press, website launch, feedback from parents/staff. Mr Donnelly advised that by and large, at this point in time, the mood is very positive.

** Mr Vitalis re-joined the meeting during the Buildings discussion (9.15 am).*

Trustees received electronic copies of a report on Pupil Numbers and Projections prior to the meeting.

Mr Donnelly explained that for 2020-21 the figures at primary are based on actual numbers, but that for the rest of the projection they are based on numbers in Years 1-6 moving through. For secondary schools, figures for 2020-21 are based on actual applications, and then similarly with primary figures the rest of the figures of based on numbers in Years 7-11 moving through.

Mr Donnelly then went on to speak about projections in primary schools. Mr Donnelly also explained that work is being undertaken with all LAs in order to clarify future live data re births and trends over the next 4 years, so that a longer term view on viability, future strategy and PAN can be established. Mr Donnelly also advised that following on from this, a further piece work will need to be undertaken so as to ascertain the reasons why our schools are not full, ie birth rates are low, or the schools are not popular and therefore marketing strategies may be needed in order to make them attractive to new families. Faithful & Gould will be commissioned to carry out this review, both for primary and secondary schools, which will initially be shared with the Exec Team.

Mr Donnelly also spoke about LHS, noting that the school seems to be seeing an increase in popularity, ie applications have increased again this year and the school has agreed to take up to 150 pupils in Sep 2021. It was noted that the capacity at LHS would then be 750 (this figure will include the primary move).

Q: Is there an opportunity for creative leadership across schools within the Trust?

A: Various scenarios are always under consideration and would be considered were appropriate.

Discussion followed regarding leadership across the Trust.

	<p>Discussion then moved on to the PAN at all the primaries within the Trust. Mr Donnelly advised that all except HPS are single form entry schools.</p> <p>Q: Are any of our primary schools full? A: Yes, DPS is full – there is very large demand to get into DPS, but unfortunately this is not the case at all of our schools and as such we need to look into the reasons why.</p> <p>Mr Vitalis thanked Mr Donnelly for the update; and then went onto ask about the proposed timeframe, making reference to discussions that had taken place at BF&A regarding the two form entry at HPS, and the possibility of increased numbers as a result of families moving into the Knowsley Garden Housing Project. Mr Vitalis noted that it would be better to have a viable 1 form entry school, rather than keeping with 2 form entry in hopes pupil numbers will increase. Mr Donnelly stated that he fully agrees with this.</p>				
<p>8. Trust Committee Updates</p>	<p>Education & Standards Committee Update - Trustees received an electronic copy of the E&S Committee board report dated 11.02.21 prior to the meeting.</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; making particular reference to the summary re. Ofqual consultation, SEND review, increased collaboration across schools, CPD, Matrix of Vulnerability and strategy on Metacognition. Mr Smith thanked the school improvement team for their reports/presentation at E&S, and then 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 08.02.21 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 discussions re pupil numbers, the financial position of schools, reporting changes to support new Trustees re. including in- year surplus, catch up funding, 3-year plan (including report expectations going forwards). Mr Vitalis also updated Trustees in relation to the departure of the Trust HR Manager and the discussions that have taken place at BF&A. Mr Parkinson also updated Trustees re. the positive position the outgoing HR Manager had left the Trust in; and plans for HR going forwards. Once plans are finalised they will be brought to the Board.</p>	<p>Chair of BF&A to sign agreed BF&A Minutes from 17.12.20</p>	<p>EV</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	

	<p>Mr Vitalis also explained that at the last BF&A meeting, the committee was not quorate, and therefore the BF&A Minutes from the December 2020 meeting could not be approved. A copy of the minutes had therefore been circulated with the MAT Board papers so that this could be actioned. Mr Smith advised that the minutes were a true reflection and as such the minutes of 17.12.20 were duly approved.</p> <p>RESOLVE: That PART I minutes of the BF&A Committee meeting held on 17.12.20 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the committee.</p>				
9. Trust Board Self Evaluation Update	<p>It was noted that the Trust Board Self-Evaluation session had taken place yesterday, and that once the self-evaluation document was complete a copy would be circulated to Trustees.</p>	<p>Copy of completed Self-Evaluation doc. to be circulated to Trustees</p>	TGM	ASAP	
10. Link Trustee Update	<p>Trustees noted that this item would need to be revisited in terms of Link Trustee allocations and once school visits can take place.</p> <p>During AoB it was also agreed that in the interim period, for those Trustees already linked to schools, an initial welfare call/contact is made with their school.</p>	<p>Link Trustees to make an initial welfare call/contact to their allocated school/s.</p>	Trustees	ASAP	
11. Governance Update (incl Trustee Recruitment)	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Governance Update Report Feb 2021 (and associated documents) prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Roberts provided further details in relation to the items listed within the report.</p>				
12. Risk Register	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the Trust's Risk Register prior to the meeting;</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the areas of risk assigned to the MAT Board, and there being no changes requested the Risk Register document was approved.</p>				
13. Policies for Approval	<p>There were no policies to be reviewed at this meeting.</p>				
14. AoB	<p>Buddy System: Ms Stevenson explained that a meeting has now taken place to discuss 'Buddy' allocation. Ms Stevenson then provided details of the proposed allocations:</p> <p>Mr Vitalis buddied with Mr Gundersen & Mrs Inglis Mr Smith buddied with Mr Davis & Mr Stanton Ms Stevenson buddied with Mrs Williams</p>				

	<p>There being no changes requested, Ms Stevenson went on to advise new Trustees that whilst they are settling into their roles, their 'Buddy' would act as their main point of contact, and this would continue up until the end of this academic year.</p> <p>Improving Position: Ms Duckworth congratulated Exec Officers for the work they have completed over the past 12 months; noting that it was good to see the improving position with regards RAG-ratings within reports.</p> <p>HR Update: Mr Parkinson advised that tribunal paperwork has just been received by the Trust. Mr Parkinson then provided details in relation to it and advised that Hill Dickinson are aware and would be supporting the Trust as and when required.</p> <p>Ms Stevenson concluded the meeting, by reiterating what had been said by Ms Duckworth, adding that congratulations needed to also be passed on to Trust/School teams.</p>				
<p>15. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>The date of the next MAT Board meeting is Thursday 22nd April 2021</p>				

Meeting closed at 9.50 am

These minutes are approved as a true record of the meeting

Signed:

[Helen Stevenson]

Date: 22nd April 2021