



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BoD) OF THE RURAL CHURCH
SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST (RCSAT) HELD AT WARMINGHAM VILLAGE HALL
ON 28th JUNE 2022
(Commenced 4pm)**

Directors in Attendance:

P Bostock	(PB)	Chair of Board of Directors
N Badger	(NB)	Executive Headteacher
S Loughlin	(SL)	
A Denton	(SD)	Joined remotely

Also in Attendance:

B Brockbank	(BB)	Chair St Oswald's LGC, arrived 5pm
M Gate	(MG)	Chair Warmingham LGC
J Jones	(JJ)	Trust Business Manager
H Cummings	(Clerk)	

PART ONE

The meeting opened with a prayer.

1. APOLOGIES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) ITEMS

There were no apologies for absence as all Directors were present.

The following items of additional business were agreed:

- a. Authorised holidays in term time.
- b. Outsourcing Admissions Appeals.
- c. Inset Day Thursday 1st September 2022

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The following conflict of interest was declared in relation to the business to be discussed at the meeting:

- S Loughlin is related to the School Improvement Partner/ External Adviser

General declarations of interest were recorded in full on GovernorHub and the clerk confirmed that all Directors' declarations had been updated since September 2021.

3. MEMBERSHIP

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Chair.....Date.....

a) Directors

There were no changes to the membership of the Board of Directors.

b) Local Governors

Directors noted the following changes to the membership of the Local Governing Committees (LGCs):

- Resignation of Sue Simcock as an appointed governor at St Oswalds – 5/5/22
- Election of Jennifer Yates as a parent governor at Bunbury – 19/4/22

c) Directors acknowledged the need to expand the Trust Board and agreed that a letter should be placed in the Parish magazine.

ACTION: NB and PB to draft letter seeking new Trustees.

d) There were no terms of office due to expire before the next meeting.

No changes were required to GIAS, and all checks had been completed although confirmation was still awaited from Lesley Davies.

4. PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The part one minutes of the previous meeting on 8th March 2022 were **agreed** as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

All actions had been completed.

5. CHAIR’S POWER TO ACT

No actions had been taken on behalf of the Trust Board since the previous meeting.

6. PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors had reviewed the minutes from each of the LGC meetings, and the following areas were highlighted:

Warmingham

Governors had discussed the school review conducted by SL, NB, MG and AG on 24th May. The report on GovernorHub highlighted the strengths of the school and improvements since the last Ofsted inspection, and concluded that Warmingham was a good school.

Governors had considered whether to recommend an increase in the PAN (Planned Admission Number) from 11 to 12. The financial benefits were recognised, but the pressure on space was a negative factor, alongside the high proportion of SEND pupils. An increase in the PAN had not been recommended, but governors had agreed to keep the matter under review.

The new local governors were felt to be engaging well, and there was just one vacancy, to replace PB who was due to step down from the LGC after the first year of operation.

St Oswald’s

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Governors had received a presentation on SEND and discussed the need to monitor levels of SEND in the school given the potential impact on learning. The school budget had been examined and an update provided on the CIF bid.

Directors heard that a school review had been conducted on 20th June and the report was available on GovernorHub. The review had raised some concerns, but plans had been put in place to

Bunbury

Governors had received presentations from Pupil Eco Committee and the Science Lead. There had been discussion around the year 4 cohort.

Directors heard that there had been 26 in-year admissions since September 2021, and the school expected to receive additional funding for 2023/24 due to the growth in pupil numbers. The admissions included 3 Ukrainian refugees.

Question: Has there been any additional funding for the refugees?

Response: They will be eligible for Pupil Premium funding next year, but nothing beyond that. However, the PTA stepped in to help with uniform and school shoes.

The LGC recommended Directors approve **£31K for the resurfacing of the quite area**. It was noted that the area currently represented a health & safety risk, and the expenditure was included in the budget. **Directors approved the expenditure.**

SEND

SL noted that she had been involved in the reviews of both Warmingham and St Oswald's, which had included provision for SEND pupils. Provision was felt to be very good, but there were concerns around the sustainability of the provision as numbers of SEND pupils increased.

Safeguarding

SL had met with the Pastoral Manager on 17th May and a full report was available on GovernorHub. The school review of St Oswald's had highlighted that while all checks were completed, there was a lack of confidence among staff dealing with DBS checks and the Single Central Record. This would be addressed through training for school and RCSAT admin staff.

7. FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

Directors confirmed the following:

- a) The School Resource Management Self-Assessment had been submitted by the deadline of 15th March 2022.
- b) The Audited financial statements had been submitted to Companies House by 31st May 2022
- c) The combined Budget Forecast and 3Yr Budget Forecast was in process and would be submitted by 26th July 2022.
- d) The S175 Safeguarding audits for each school had been agreed with the Safeguarding Director and submitted. It was agreed that these should be shared with the LGC Chairs and the Safeguarding governors for each school.

ACTION: KC to send S175 audits to respective Chairs and Safeguarding Governors.

Approvals:

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- e) Directors reviewed the draft budgets which had been presented to the LGCs, and the accompanying notes in the EHT's report. The LGCs had recommended their respective budgets for approval. The following points were noted:
- Concern around predictions of falling pupil numbers at St Oswald's due to large cohorts in Years 5 & 6. There were currently 18 children in the nursery, and Directors may need to consider allowing the school to go over PAN to ensure they could all be admitted.
 - Warrington should receive the Sparsity grant next year, but this had not been included in the budget as it was not yet confirmed.

Directors approved the draft budget for each school.

- f) Directors noted the following in relation to the **staffing structures** of the schools:
- The Trust Pastoral Manager would no longer have a teaching role at Bunbury. The lack of external support for pupils meant that the Pastoral Manager was required to provide additional support and this had been disruptive for her class. Additional staffing had been approved at the previous meeting and this would be used to pick up the teaching responsibility.

Question: Is the Pastoral Manager happy with this arrangement?

Response: There was a great deal of discussion, but the change has been agreed.

- From September, the Early Years teacher at St Oswald's would be joined by a 0.4FTE teacher, which would allow her 2 days per week to focus on SEND and admin responsibilities.
- A number of adverts had been placed to recruit replacement TAs and additional TAs to support children with EHCPs.

Directors approved the staffing structures.

- g) Directors noted the renewal of the following contracts:
- Photocopiers
 - Payroll and HR
 - Hygiene & water coolers

The list of Cheshire East services purchased was available on GovernorHub, and Directors agreed the additional purchase of the Admissions and Appeals Support Service.

- h) **Directors approved the appointment of the Cheshire East Clerking Service** for each of the LGCs and the Board of Directors for the following year.

To review:

- a) Monthly Management Accounts up to and including May 2022 had been circulated on GovernorHub for Directors to review.
- b) Directors reviewed the budget outturn forecast for each school, noting the following approximate predicted carry-forward figures:

School	In-year surplus/deficit	Cumulative carry-forward
Bunbury	-£41K	£93.5K
St Oswald's	£7.5K	£340.5K

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Warmingham	£8K	£54.5K
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Question: The cumulative carry forward for St Oswald's is very high, is there a limit to what can be carried forward?

Response: Anything over 20% of the budget is likely to be queried, but much of the carry-forward can be clearly identified as the school's contribution to the CIF bid. If both the appeal and a further bid are unsuccessful, then we will look at how best we can use the funds to relieve the overcrowding without the full build.

Directors also noted the overall financial position for the Trust, acknowledging that the surplus included funds for the CIF bid.

- c) The Sports Grant strategy documents had been shared on GovernorHub. These would be updated over the next few weeks and shared with Directors before publication on the schools' websites.
- d) The Pupil Premium documents would be updated and presented to the LGCs and the BoD in the autumn term, prior to publication.

8. PART ONE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING

The EHT's report had been circulated on GH in advance of the meeting. NB noted that the two school reviews had been very valuable and both the Principals and the EHT were familiar with the data and with specific year group profiles.

Question: The narrative in the report suggests concerns over Early Years at St Oswald's, is this reflected in the data?

Response: Yes. Only 50% of Reception children are expected to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) compared with 76% at Bunbury and 73% at Warmingham.

Question: Why is that? Is it due to the environment, or the cohort?

Response: There are a number of contributing factors, including both the environment and the cohort. We have changed the location of the EY class for next year, and arranged additional staffing. We will also look at reducing the flexibility of nursery sessions, to provide greater consistency and continuity.

9. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021/22

Directors had reviewed progress through the RAG-rated school development plans which had been discussed at the LGC meetings earlier in the term. The SEF had also been updated and all documents would be reviewed again at the end of the year.

10. LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Following publication of the Education White Paper, Directors noted the need to extend the school day by 15 minutes to comply with the minimum time of 32.5 hours per week. It was proposed that the time be added to the end of the school day to give a finishing time of 3.30pm.

The proposal would be sent to parents for full consultation to enable the required changes to be implemented in September 2023.

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11. HOLIDAY/TERM DATES FOR 2023/24

Directors heard that Cheshire East had amended their term dates around Christmas 2023, and were no longer aligned with Cheshire West. This was primarily an issue for Bunbury, where many siblings attended Tarporley High School in Cheshire West. It was feared that it would lead to increased absence if parents planned holidays during the week before Christmas when the CW term had ended, but CE schools were still open. Directors also noted possible childcare difficulties for staff if their children attended school in CW.

If term dates were changed across the Trust, to align with Cheshire West, this would then cause difficulties for the other two school. Reluctantly, Directors agreed that there may be a need for the schools to have different holiday dates. It was agreed that each school should confirm the holiday dates of its local secondary schools, after which a firm decision could be made.

Directors felt strongly that NB and JJ should not have to reduce their holiday time in order to be available for all schools, but both NB and JJ suggested that they could be 'on call'.

12. REVIEW OF SCHEME OF DELEGATION AND LGC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Directors agreed to review the Scheme of Delegation and the Terms of Reference for the LGCs. Any comments should be sent to PB, and the documents could then go to the LGCs in the autumn term for further review.

ACTION: Directors to review Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference and feedback to PB.

13. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNER/EXTERNAL ADVISER

The School Improvement Partner had visited Warmingham on 15th March, with NB and MG, to look at the impact of the triangulation meeting held earlier in the year. The full report was available on GovernorHub.

A visit to St Oswald's was planned for the following week, and Bunbury in the autumn term.

14. DIRECTOR'S REPORT SUMMER 2021

The Director's Report had been circulated on GovernorHub earlier in the term and items raised as appropriate.

15. GOVERNOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

SL had sent a reminder to all governors to complete the online GDPR and cyber security training. Governors were asked to inform Morven Jones and add the training to GovernorHub once they had completed it.

The governor training day on 9th June had been well attended and well received. Directors wished to thank staff who had presented to governors and those involved in organising the day.

16. SCHOOL POLICIES

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There were no policies requiring Directors' approval.

17. PLANNED RESIDENTIAL VISITS

There were no new residential visits requiring Directors' approval.

18. MEETINGS

The date of the next Board of Directors' meeting was agreed as Monday 21st November at 4pm, at Warmingham Village Hall.

ACTION: Clerk to book meeting room.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Authorised holidays in term time

AD asked whether, in the current economic crisis, the schools could have a more lenient approach to holidays in term time. NB responded that it would set a precedent and that staff could not take time off in term time. The meeting decided not to change the approach.

Admissions appeal

An appeal had been received for Warmingham. It had been agreed that the Trust would employ the services of Cheshire East Democratic Services who would arrange the panel hearing.

ACTION: JJ to liaise with CE.

ACTION: Clerk to respond to parent to acknowledge receipt of appeal.

INSET Day

NB informed governors that the morning of 1st September would be INSET for all Trust Staff, to be held at Bunbury. Governors and Directors were invited to attend, and Directors approved the purchase of lunch for all staff from Susi Waddington.

BB, MG and AD left and the meeting moved to Part 2.

Meeting closed at 7pm.

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Chair.....Date.....