



BIRCHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL
 Parsonage Lane Bishop's Stortford CM23 5BD
 Company No: 07791971

**Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting of the Academy Trust held in School on
 Wednesday 8th December 2021 at 18.00**

	Name	Category	End of Term
	Ruth Crowland	Member Appointed	06.03.25
	Vacancy	Member Appointed	
	Leigh Lloyd-Warren	Member Appointed	22.01.24
	Jane Mansfield	Member Appointed	22.01.24
	Vacancy	Member Appointed	
*	Jim Winter	Member Appointed	06.07.24
*	Ruth Bamlett	Member Appointed	14.03.23
	Catherine Gater – Chair	Member Appointed	13.07.24
*	Charlotte Sear	Member Appointed	22.01.24
	Richard Townsend	Member Appointed	03.03.24
	John Oglesby	Parent Appointed	07.09.25
*	Jane Wach	Parent Appointed	09.09.24
	Gill Turner – Vice Chair	Parent Appointed	04.12.22
	Chris Emery	Parent Appointed	07.09.25
*	Lisa Watkins	Parent Appointed	30.06.22
	Matthew Free	Parent Appointed	07.09.25
	Chris Ingate – Principal	Principal	Ex-Officio
	Ross Noblett	Staff Appointed	01.04.23
*	Claire Pressland	Staff Appointed	02.11.24
	Vacancy	Staff Appointed	
	Vacancy	Co-opted	
*	Deryk Bull – Finance Director	Advisory	

* Denotes absence

Also Present

Ivan Shepherd – Clerk

Kate Byers – Prospective Staff Appointed Trustee

Item		Action
1.	Welcome and receive apologies for absence Apologies were received from JWi, RB, LW, CS and DB. CP and JWc did not attend the meeting.	
2.	Declarations / pecuniary interests There were no declarations of any new pecuniary interests, gifts or hospitality. RT told the meeting that as the local ward councillor and member of the planning committee, he will not be able to join in discussions relating to the detached playing field or vote on its use.	

3.	<p>Notification of any urgent business that is not covered in this agenda There was no AOB.</p>	
4.	<p>MLM and action points Trustees AGREED that the minutes of the last FGB meeting held on 08.09.21 are a fair reflection of that meeting.</p> <p>Action points from previous meetings AP1 – Trustees who would like to know more about the position of vice chair were asked to contact either the CoG or the Principal Completed – JM told the meeting that she is willing to become the second Vice Chair. Trustees AGREED and JM was elected Vice Chair unanimously.</p> <p>AP2 – Trustees who have not already done so, to complete and return the business interests form to the Finance Director and the HR Manager. Partially completed – two forms remain outstanding. Trustees were reminded to consider the position of family members when declaring potential interests.</p> <p>AP3 - Trustees who would like to know more about being the chair of the audit committee were asked to contact either the CoG or the Principal. Completed</p> <p>AP4 – Clerk to circulate the governing board and committee membership. Completed</p> <p>AP5 All trustees to complete a short bio and return to the chair; these bios will be posted on the school website Completed – Trustees were reminded that they can submit their own bio where one has been drafted for them.</p> <p>AP6 – A link asking for feedback on the SEF/SIP will be added to the KCSIE questionnaire and circulated to trustees. Trustees have been asked to complete and return the questionnaire. Completed</p> <p>AP7 – FD / trustees to update the next FGB regarding school uniform suppliers Completed</p>	
5.	<p>Principal’s report + Financial Update The Principal’s report was circulated prior to the meeting for trustees to read and attend the meeting with questions. The key areas discussed were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the start of the 2021/22 academic year the influence of covid was slight, however as term has progressed into winter the impact is beginning to grow. • Members of staff are regularly doing LFT, currently absence / sickness is low. • Masks are now being worn and protocols are in place to mitigate risk. • The DfE guidance that schools should carry out onsite testing before the return to school in January was discussed. Two options were presented, the school’s currently preferred option would be to ask pupils to test at home and report results. The alternative would be to operate a ‘drive through’ testing day that would delay the return to school. 	

The SLT and trustees acknowledge that an element of trust is associated with any testing arrangements, however they **AGREE** that using teaching time to teach is the most important factor in this process.

The risks surrounding bringing students onsite to test were discussed.

Arrangements where year 11 and year 13 could be prioritised were discussed.

It was noted that ASCL had suggested that evidenced home testing should meet the expected requirements.

It was noted that at the beginning of the summer term parents were only asked to report positive tests to the school. By asking for confirmation of a negative test as well the school will be able to gauge compliance.

Trustees **AGREED** that unless the situation changes it would be appropriate to ask students to test at home and report results to the school. The situation will be kept under review.

- A trustee noted that communication between the school and the parent body on covid testing is very good.

- The Principal praised parents, telling the meeting that they have engaged with the testing process in a very positive way.

- The Principal told trustees that, as per DfE guidance, classes are being taught with the heating on and all windows open.

This has a negative impact the heating cost and to the wider environment.

The school has enough CO2 monitors to cover one third of the classrooms in the school. The Principal said that having one monitor per room may enable the monitoring of air quality and allow windows to be closed. The situation will be investigated further.

- The School Improvement Partner visit was discussed. The SIP has been booked for a Curriculum deep dive during the spring term.

- A Safeguarding audit has been completed, the results of which have been integrated into the risk plan. RBT's visit report is on the Teams Channel.

- The school have appointed an experienced HR manager who will start in January 2022.

- All members of the SLT have now completed Safer Recruitment training.

- The SEF/SIP, which trustees contributed to, is being used to drive SLT agendas. The Gant chart on Teams was referred to and using the SIP as a base for Trustee consideration of vision / strategy in the new year was discussed.

- The Principal told the meeting that attendance remains a top priority and that attendance at Birchwood is currently 4% higher than the national average.

Attendance, behaviour and educational attainment are all linked. Low attendance can lead to poor behaviour and low attainment.

- The Principal told trustees that some parents are opting for home education for a variety of reasons.

A trustee asked the school if they have any pupils who have been described by the media as "ghost children".

This is a term being used for those children who have moved away from the area and have not re-appeared at another school.

The Principal told the meeting that the school does not have any "ghost children" but there are school refusers.

The Principal added that the school are widening the scope and size of their DA/SEND provision which includes school refusers. Pupils are not "off rolled" they are contacted regularly ensuring that safeguarding protocols are followed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal told the meeting that overall behaviour is good although there are some issues. On calls have increased since the last FGB and there have been some fixed term exclusions. The Principal added that 2.8% of the school population repeatedly misbehave, a small number, however they take up a great deal of staff time. A behaviour lead has been appointed who is looking at the reasons behind disruptive behaviour, dealing with that is having a positive impact. A trustee asked if there was any positive outcomes from this approach. The meeting were told that some pupils in year 10/11 who want to learn a trade have been attending a CTP in Harlow 3 days a week and coming to Birchwood 2 days. They are learning a trade and enjoying doing so, as a result their behaviour at Birchwood has improved. • A trustee asked about same day detentions and if they are causing problems. The Principal told the meeting that a few parents are unhappy about them but they are in the minority. Most parents support them and there is flexibility for those who genuinely are not able to stay. • The QA system is very important and it drives Teaching and Learning. The 5 step plan / QA is in place and is being used very effectively by middle leaders. Literacy is going well, the QA process means that all subject teachers teach using a much wider vocabulary. • There is some fantastic work going on with equalities. Anonymous support is available to help those being subjected to harassment. There is an underlying assumption that “this does happen here”. Bold Voices is being used very effectively. • Curriculum – KS3 and 4 The school currently offers a 2 year KS3 and a 3 year KS4. The school are reviewing this, looking at the value in offering a blended model, which may offer a broader more balanced curriculum. • As mentioned earlier in the Principal’s report, the DA/SEND/PLC structure / offering is being expanded. Staffing and leadership levels are being increased and will offer much more effective and engaging support for pupils. The new structure places pupils in tiers. Those in tier 1 require little intervention whilst those in tier 4 require lots of intervention. A suitable action plan is put in place for each student. The proposed new model has been costed and is sustainable. Trustees welcomed the new structure but raised some concerns that it needed to be led by the SENCO. Trustees noted that the split in hours between the SENCO lead’s teaching and SENCO responsibilities needs to be balanced and that there has to be transparency in who is dealing with what. • Current finance situation at the school is healthy. The contingency forecast to August 2023 is good. The Finance Director is working on a reconsideration of the budget. 	
--	---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Finance and Estates committee have created a Detached Playing Field Sub-committee. The Sub-committee will meet early in 2022. 	
6.	<p>Covid update / contingency planning This was covered in the Principals report</p>	
7.	<p>Pupil premium report The pupil premium report will be in two formats, the DfE template which is mandatory and a condition of receiving the Pupil Premium money. And the school format which looks at PP and catch up funding together and gives more detail. The School document was circulated to trustees prior to the meeting. The DfE template will be populated using this.</p> <p>Trustees AGREED with the expenditure plans in the school document (subject to the points below) and that both formats can be published on the school website</p> <p>A trustee noted that the Assistant SENCO should not be funded from PP funding and requested that this section be updated. A trustee asked if the school can offer the music lesson subsidy to pupils from Yr7. The Principal thought that this should be possible.</p>	
8.	<p>Committee updates</p> <p>Curriculum RC told the meeting that at the last curriculum meeting the committee had received a very comprehensive presentation of the DA/SEND/PLC re-structure The committee will receive a literacy strategy update at the next meeting</p> <p>Finance and Estates GT told the meeting that Finances had been well covered in the Principals report. The phone contract which had been agreed at the committee meeting has been withdrawn and now needs to go back to the drawing board. Future work of the committee will include consideration of the use of reserves.</p> <p>LLW said that the Detached Playing Field update had been covered in the Principal's report. Correspondence had been responded to. The school are advertising for a member of the site team</p> <p>Personnel JM told the meeting that membership of trustees on the personnel committee is very low. The committee struggles to be quorate when trustees do not attend. The committee received an update on the Women's Leadership Network. The committee will agree the CPD and Staff Wellbeing policies at the next meeting.</p>	
9.	<p>Link governor update</p> <p>Safeguarding RB was unable to attend this meeting because of illness, however a safeguarding audit has been completed and the report is available on the Teams Channel.</p> <p>SEND & DA RC noted that this had been covered earlier in the meeting</p>	

	<p>Health & Safety RT told the meeting that a report of his most recent visit will be placed on Teams.</p> <p>Other link updates The CoG had carried out a learning walk and a report will be placed on Teams.</p>	
10.	<p>Membership of the governing body There are two member appointed vacancies and a staff vacancy. Kate Byers has been nominated to fill the staff vacancy. Recruitment of member appointed Trustees was discussed, in particular the need for Trustees for certain committees. It was suggested that a letter will be sent to the parent body explaining that there are two members appointed vacancies and asking for any interest from the parent body or their wider contacts.</p>	
11.	<p>GDPR There is one SAR request currently being processed.</p>	
12.	<p>Policy management SEND report A trustee noted that the report does not show outcomes. The Principal explained that the report is a template / pro-forma which meets DfE requirements. Trustees APPROVED the report</p> <p>AP1 – clerk to add the Grievance policy to the agenda of the next FGB meeting due to be held on 26.01.21.</p>	Clerk
13.	<p>Chair's Report The CoG told the meeting that she had received one piece of correspondence and that she had replied. The school have decided to work with two school uniform suppliers. Sample blazers were available for Trustees to consider.</p>	
14.	<p>Dates of future FGB meetings. All start at 19.00 26.01.22 09.03.22 11.05.22 13.07.22</p>	
15.	<p>Approval of the annual accounts</p> <p>This part of the meeting took place in combination with the AGM</p> <p>A copy of the audited annual accounts for the year ending 31st August 2021 and the Auditor Management Letter was circulated to Trustees before the meeting.</p> <p>GM from Price Bailey presented the financial statements and auditors management letter to members and trustees.</p> <p>GM told the meeting that the accounts are in the ESFA required format. GM presented the accounts the key points of discussion were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM noted that he had not as yet reviewed the Trustees Report or Governance Statement. He confirmed that the Management Letter could be considered final and further adjustments were not expected. • The listing and explanation around restricted and unrestricted funds. The audited accounts showed a restricted surplus of £66,622 for the year and an unrestricted surplus of £273,682. 	

- GM considered this reserves position to be “on the higher end of average” .
- Some minor points were picked up during the audit. GM told the meeting that minor points are always picked up, these generally point to a reminder about processes.
- The priority 4 matter with regard to related parties was discussed. The Charities Commission / ESFA have introduced stricter guidelines on the declaration of Related Party Transactions. Trustees now have to declare their family / close friends on business interests forms. This enables the school to check during related parties checks that contracts are not being given to close relatives thus preventing possible fraud. GM told the meeting that Price Bailey will run a training course on this in early 2022.
- A Trustee asked for confirmation that all close family members needed to be listed, not just those who the Trustee considered might contract with the School. GM confirmed that this was the case and that the current form will need to be amended.
- A member asked about the fact that last year certain amounts of income were deferred. This year an adjustment has been made meaning that similar income has been recognised in year, even though the related expenditure will fall in the next year. The member asked whether disclosure should be made of the restated figure to allow for year on year comparability. GM told the meeting that in his opinion this did not need to be done. This led to a useful discussion on the treatment of the income

With the accounts presented and all questions answered GM left the meeting at 20.42

The Trustees considered the accounts for approval

GT told the meeting that the Trustees Report and the Governance Statement which form part of the accounts had been put on the Teams channel shortly before the meeting. It was however appreciated that the Trustees will have had limited time to consider these. GT considered that the financial statements as presented by GM should not now be subject to significant change, however there may be some amendments to some points of disclosure. There may also be further finalising amendments to the Trustees Report and Governance Statement. The CoG and GT confirmed that they had had the opportunity to review the Trustees Report and Governance Statement

The Trustees were asked to consider approving the accounts subject to further non-substantive amendments. This would allow non-substantial amendments identified by Trustees on further review to be incorporated. The final version of the accounts will be circulated to all Trustees.

If material adjustments were required Trustees will be notified and another meeting would be needed.

A trustee asked how approving the accounts subject to final amendments differed from not approving the accounts and confirming approval by email. It was confirmed that approving the accounts by email would require a response from every Trustee.

	<p>Trustees AGREED to vote on approving the accounts knowing that the Trustees Report and The Governance Statement may be subject to non material amendment. Ten trustees voted in FAVOUR of APPROVING the accounts for year ending August 31st 2021 and one trustee ABSTAINED. The accounts for year ending August 31st 2021 were APPROVED by the trustees.</p>	
--	---	--

Meeting closed at 19.47

Signed:

Date:

Catherine Gater – Chair of Governors Birchwood High School

Summary of action points

AP1 – clerk to add the Grievance policy to the agenda of the next FGB meeting due to be held on 26.01.21