

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL CLERKING SERVICES

**Leading Learners Multi-Academy Trust
Worth Valley Primary School Local Governing Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Local Governing Board
held at the School on Thursday 2 February 2023 at 1.00pm

PRESENT: Mr R Laughlin (in the chair)
Miss C Hicks; Mrs V Townson

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss C Lodge (Headteacher)

GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL: Tony Hammond, Independent Professional Clerking Services

57 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR. It was noted that the Board of Trustees had confirmed the appointment of Mr Laughlin as chair.

58 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. No interests were declared.

59 APOLOGIES. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs McNally and Miss Page (Deputy Headteacher).

60 ANY OTHER BUSINESS. No additional items were requested.

61 MEMBERSHIP. It was noted that there were currently two vacancies for community governors.

It was noted that Mr Storton was unable to attend meetings and Miss Lodge confirmed that she would ask him to consider resigning.

Governors were asked to suggest potential new governors.

62 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

63 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES. There were no matters arising.

64 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT. A report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Miss Lodge drew attention to the following:-

Premises

- The replacement of the entire heating infrastructure had been completed ahead of schedule, with all areas of the school having heating before Christmas. The contractors had planned well, engaged with the School effectively and been respectful of the

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children. Quotes for associated patching-up and redecoration had been obtained, and it was hoped work would start from February half-term.

- The annual Health and Safety audit had been conducted in November 2022 by Gary Laird (independent consultant). The outcome had been very positive and the School had been complimented for consistently high standards. The points that required action had been as follows:-
 - Weekly testing of the alarm system (this had been addressed following training undertaken by the new site manager).
 - Updating the asbestos management survey (this had been completed following completion of the heating works).
 - Housekeeping in the boiler area (the heating contractors had used the area to store equipment, which would be moved at half-term).

School Improvement Plan Update

- The Phonics Lead had been taken off timetable to focus on the implementation of the new whole-school phonics scheme, Little Wandle. The scheme was having a significant impact on the quality of phonics teaching in Early Years and Key Stage 1, which in turn was improving pupil progress and attainment in phonics. External visits by Emma Allen from the Burley English Hub and Elizabeth Stevens (School Improvement Partner) had acknowledged the positive impact of Little Wandle.
- Writing training led by Philip Webb was having a clear and sustainable impact on the quality of writing across the School. Feedback from all teaching staff had been extremely positive and the training had empowered teachers, who had many ideas on engaging pupils and refining technical aspects of sentence composition. There was a focus on quality, not quantity.
- Spelling was emerging as an area in need of improvement across the School. In recent years the School had subscribed to the Rising Stars spelling programme, but lesson plans were lengthy and were not having the desired outcomes. This had been identified as a Trust issue and the English leads had agreed a timescale for exploring different programmes/schemes, with a decision to be made before February half-term. This would allow schools to implement a new spelling programme after half-term, following staff training.
- Subject leaders had begun to spend the £5,500 Foyles Library Grant, which had been allocated solely to the purchase of library books. Approximately half of the money had been spent to date.
- In recent years, and particularly this academic year, there had been a significant increase in the number of pupils with additional physical, emotional and medical needs, particularly in Early Years. Nasrat Raqib, SEND specialist from Bradford Local Authority's SCIL team, was providing support and coaching for the Early Years team, so the School could continue to meet the needs of every pupil. There were children with EHCPs and some with highly complex needs.
- All Key Stage 2 classes had completed a pupil survey in December. The results had been overwhelmingly positive, particularly in terms of clear lesson structure, teachers' subject knowledge, high expectations, staff and pupil relationships, and clarity of explanations. Identified areas of development, including low-level disruption in some classes, would be addressed during staff directed time next half-term.

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Staffing

- The six vacant posts reported at the last meeting had been filled, largely internally.
- The teaching assistants promoted to level 3 were now able to provide cover.
- The new level 2 teaching assistant was a good addition to the Early Years team.

In response to a question, Miss Lodge confirmed that there were currently no vacancies.

Training

- CPD was a real strength. The comprehensive and wide-ranging training programme demonstrated the School's commitment to staff development.

Community Engagement

- Community engagement was a strength. There had been an extensive programme of visits and activities.

65 STRATEGY. The 2022-2023 Improvement Plan had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Miss Lodge commented on December milestones as follows:-

Reading

- Reading Championship outcomes were above target.
- The percentage of pupils on target to meet the required standard in phonics was below target, but this reflected the rigour of Little Wandle assessments (in comparison with practice phonics screening tests). Pupils were making progress.
- School-led tutoring would focus on Years 3, 4 and 5 in the Summer term.

Governors asked for an update on the intention to establish a lunchtime story-time club in the library and Miss Lodge confirmed that the library was open at lunchtimes for targeted, and other, pupils. She confirmed that Year 6 pupils were supporting.

Parental Engagement and Attendance

- Attendance was below target.
- Persistent absence was above target.
- The School had always been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally.
- There had been a significant amount of work with particular families and in some cases the School was pursuing prosecution.

In response to a question, Miss Lodge confirmed that prosecution was being sought in relation to 15 children from 5 families. She informed governors that persistent absence tended to be a family issue.

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Writing

- Targets had been met in relation to age-related expectations, CPD and formal assessments.

Governors noted that the April milestone for the percentage of pupils on track to reach age-related expectations in writing was 60% and asked whether Miss Lodge expected this to be met. She confirmed that 40% were currently on track, so she believed the target was achievable. This was supported by work scrutiny.

- 66 SAFEGUARDING. A report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Miss Lodge informed governors that there had recently been some very serious concerns, which took up significant time and were saddening.

Data

Data was noted as follows:-

- There had been 5 new Early Help referrals (4 families).
- There had been 9 new Social Care referrals (3 families).
- 5 children were subject to child protection plans (3 families).
- 10 children were subject to child in need plans (7 families).
- There were 6 looked after children (4 families). 2 of the pupils were in Key Stage 2.
- 6 children were privately fostered, adopted or subject to special guardianship orders (6 families).
- No children were home-educated.
- No children were educated offsite.
- 3 children had been reported as missing from education (1 family).
- There had been no Prevent referrals.

CME

Miss Lodge confirmed that following up on the 3 children reported as missing from education was time-consuming and involved working with the Local Authority, Children's Social Care and the police. Eventually, the Police had found an alternative contact number and the family had been located. The children had returned to school for a short time, but had subsequently been missing from education again. Miss Lodge informed governors that the Academy had done all it could and would be meeting with the Local Authority the following day to discuss the case.

Governors asked if the pupils remained on roll and Miss Lodge confirmed that they could not be taken off roll until they enrolled at another school, and there was no indication that the family intended to transfer them to another school.

Miss Lodge informed governors that three siblings from a different family had not attended for more than two weeks after enrolling. The School had tried to work with the family, but they had not engaged until they had wanted to participate in a school trip. The children had now been enrolled at a different school.

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Safeguarding

Governors were informed that the School had recently dealt with, and reported, several serious safeguarding concerns, which had been highlighted because of the strong safeguarding culture and vigilance of staff. Safeguarding policies and procedures had been highly effective in ensuring children's voices were heard, and concerns were taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Staff were due thanks for their efficiency and robust adherence to procedure.

Miss Lodge informed governors that staff had seen an improvement in communication with Social Care, whose staff appeared to be taking concerns more seriously.

Mental Health Support

Miss Lodge confirmed that mental health support was a strength. Staff were currently supporting two pupils who had sadly lost their mother in early December due to a terminal illness.

Attendance

Miss Lodge drew attention to the following:-

- Tonya Barnes had attended attendance lead training.
- Zoe Summers had attended attendance officer training.
- Office staff challenged parents about non-attendance and assertively encouraged them to send children to school in the case of minor ailments.
- Attendance letters were staged and some families were now at letter 3.
- Where attendance had improved, this was recognised.

Children with Complex Health and Medical Needs

Miss Lodge confirmed that the School continued to be supported by professionals from a range of external agencies, to help ensure the needs of all pupils were met.

It was noted that the level of need was significant.

67 COMMUNITY. This item had been considered as part of the Headteacher's Report.

68 POLICIES. The following policies had been circulated in advance of the meeting:-

- Attendance
- Snow and Adverse Weather
- Uniform

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Miss Lodge commented on the policies as follows:-

Snow and Adverse Weather

The Policy now stated that the School would consider delayed opening.

Uniform

The Policy now referred to the arrangements for parents to acquire second-hand uniform items, which were stored in the Community Room with items purchased from the Household Support Fund.

Attendance

This was a Trust policy and was deliberately brief because Trust schools followed the Local Authority's staged approach.

RESOLVED: that the above policies be noted/approved as appropriate.

69 GOVERNOR VISITS. Engagement was noted as follows:-

- 19/10/22: Mr Laughlin had joined a directed time session focused on parental engagement.
- 7/11/22: Mr Laughlin had undertaken a visit as safeguarding governor.
- 13/12/22: Mr Quigley (Chair of Trustees) had visited to discuss what was going well, governance and the impact governors had already had/their contributions to the school community.
- 18/1/23: Governors had joined the visit to Chester Zoo.

Mr Laughlin confirmed that he would undertake a visit in relation to safeguarding.

Miss Lodge then summarised issues that had been identified during visits, as follows:-

- Enable governors to access Smartlog and undertake safeguarding and/or child protection training modules.
- Set up school-based email addresses.
- Include actions from governor visits on Headteacher reports for LGB meetings.
- Include updated photo of Tonya Barnes on the website.
- Produce child-friendly safeguarding policies.
- Circulate Whistleblowing Policy once reviewed.
- Add photos of governors to the staff photo board.
- Further explore Parent Pay.

It was noted that it would be useful to have a community link governor and Mrs Townson agreed to undertake this role.

Governors were informed that Mrs McNally would be undertaking a SEND visit.

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It was suggested that governors who had undertaken visits could in future be invited to provide a brief verbal summary.

- 70 GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND SELF-REVIEW. It was noted that governors were required to undertake safeguarding training. Miss Lodge confirmed that she or Miss Page could lead this and she would email governors about the arrangements.

It was suggested that Miss Hicks be given training in relation to curriculum design.

Miss Lodge confirmed that access to Smartlog would be arranged.

The Governance Professional had completed and circulated the summary skills matrix. It was noted that the majority of amber rated areas were not directly relevant to the role of governors within Leading Learners. An exception was understanding performance measures used to monitor school performance and Miss Lodge suggested that a session be held at Easter-time, when two sets of data would be available.

- 71 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS. Meeting arrangements were noted as follows:-

Thursday 18 May 2023 at 1.00pm

Thursday 20 July 2023 at 1.00pm

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signature of Chair