

ST MARTIN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

Local Governing Body – Minutes of Meeting held on 27th June 2024 at 5.00 pm on Microsoft Teams

Governors present:

Mrs M Down (MD) to 7.00 pm
Mrs A Keith (AK)
Revd N Parish (NP)
Ms E Smit (ES)
Ms R Squizzoni (RS) to 5.50 pm
Mrs J Taylor (JT)
Mrs A Todd (AT)

In attendance:

Mrs T Jones (TJ) Clerk to the Governors
Mr H Betterton (HB) Trustee
Mr M Boddington (MB) ELT CEO (online to 5.27 pm to 6.00 pm)
Ms Z Lever (ZL) ELT Chief Finance Officer ELT (online; from 5.29 pm to)

* The Co-Headteachers (Mrs M Down and Mrs K Marchesi) share the role of Headteacher governor but count once towards a quorum and have a single vote where the Local Governing Body needs to vote on a matter.

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence from this meeting had been received from Mr A Holliman and Dr L Wang. Ms R Squizzoni had sent an apology for early departure to attend another school meeting. LGB. The meeting was in quorum.

Declarations of Interest and confidentiality

2. The LGB noted the confidentiality reminder and St Martin's Vision which which was central to all that was done at the School. No governors declared interests in the agenda items for this meeting.

Update from Trust CEEO- Governance restructure

3. MB presented from the working party consisting of a representative trustee, local governor and members of the central ELT team, which had considered the ELT governance structure in response to the development of ELT and proposed revisions taking account of trends at other Trusts and the direction that the NGA was moving in. Following review by the working party, the proposal had been sense-checked by JT and HB.
4. Key elements of the revised governance structure proposed to be introduced from September 2024 were for a flat structure, that the LGBs would not have LGB committees but the full LGB would instead meet twice a term and all governors would have oversight of all delegated items. To support detailed assurance, each governor would have a portfolio of responsibilities to monitor and seek assurance on. Governors would report back to colleagues on the Local Governing Body and there would be flexibility within the year planner to enable feedback to be scheduled to meetings over the year which made sense. There was provision for a safeguarding update to be made to each meeting as needed, with a more in depth termly report.
5. Table 2 showed the draft agenda-setting framework which Head teachers had been asked to review. Head teachers had been assured that they would not be restricted by the meeting schedule and encouraged to share items between meetings for information and comment as necessary.
6. Table 1 identified 12 roles, some of which could be grouped together within lead governor portfolios and LGBs were free to suggest additional areas where they felt more detailed governor oversight was needed for their school. Governors were invited to make suggestions of additional areas relevant to St Martin's.
Action: LGB members
7. Link governors networks would be set up with relevant representatives from each of the LGBs and trustees as appropriate to enable networking and sharing of information and good practice.
8. MB invited initial comments at the meeting and would provide the draft document to the LGB after the meeting for them to provide their feedback via a google form.
Action: MB/LGB members
9. JT reported that St Martin's had operated a flat structure prior to joining ELT and governors who were present at the summer Finance and Resources Committee meeting had been asked for their feedback

on the operation of committees this year. A majority said they had preferred working within a flat structure because finances and resourcing, staffing etc were so closely linked with education and wellbeing. In practice, many of St Martin's governors had this year chosen to attend meetings of both committees to support their oversight.

10. ES welcomed the opportunity for Trust-wide meetings of link governors, which would be particularly useful for newer governor links. MB said that in terms of workload, this would add one Teams meeting per term, but it was felt that this would be helpful to many. HB assured the meeting that discussions would be driven by the governors and key issues raised from their schools and the aim was to provide a network of support.
11. JT asked governors to feedback on suggested combinations of key areas within portfolios, such as Health and safety/Estates, Wellbeing/attendance, Teaching and learning/vulnerable pupils. It would be useful to learn from other schools about the Marketing/sustainability focus, which was a new area for St Martin's. MB said that this was an area that the Trust also needed to consider and a sustainability strategy was anticipated by 2025.
MB left the meeting at this point and ZL joined the meeting.

Finance

12. ZL highlighted the significant improvement shown in the period 9 Financial Management Report as at the end of May compared with the April FMR. The May FMR had been shared with governors for this meeting and showed a deficit of £21k (£41k in April 2024), which representative a huge achievement by the Co-Head teachers, the SLT and the staff and was a real credit to the SLT
13. AK said that although it had been challenging to make the changes needed to support the budget, the School was now in a more sustainable position. MD assured governors that the budget met all the strategy requirements and she felt positive going forward. MD recorded thanks to ZL and Elize Philpott (ELT Finance team). JT reported that the school community appreciated the communication of the wider financial context by and opportunity for dialogue with members of the central team at the budget meeting held for staff and ELT members in May 2024.
14. Governors asked what were the key drivers for the most recent improvement; the improvement was driven by reiew and revision to licenses and professional services (£14k postiive), release of the £10k inflation contingency for gas and electricity; some reallocation of staffing costs to pupil premium; review and adjustment of FSM and USFM costs (universal/free school meals); further review of curriculum budgets and the release of £4k which would not be spent this year.
15. AT asked whether all the ISPSB funding had now been received from Surrey for SEND pupils; it was noted that £17, 500 had been received but ZL would confirm that all the expected ISPSB funding had now come through.
Action: ZL
16. ZL highlighted the small budget surplus of £22,500 shown in the draft budget for 2024-25 and the significant change since the first draft budget figures were seen in the autumn term 2023 (deficit of £175k) and noted that GAG funding had only been increased by £33k and the small reduction in lettings, which had been over forecast in 2023-24.
17. AT reminded governors of discussion at the Finance and Resources Committee about further opportunities to drive revenue improvement. ZL reported that the Trust Head of Operations was meeting with a company whose role was to drive lettings to explore opportunities further. MD said that regardless of the whether the application for a grant to support development of a MUGA was successful, it hoped to be able to convert the toilet to provide facilities which would enhance outside lettings opportunities.
18. ZL explained the drivers for the increase in staffing costs of £112k, which included 3.5% uplift of teacher pay, expected increments, and that premises costs included a small contingency for remedials and a reduction of £18k on utilities based on reduction in prices anticipated with the fixing of costs at the end of March.
19. Members noted the proposal, subject to trustee approval, for the reduction in the partnership fee, from 8.2% to 6% next year to be offset by a 0.1% contribution (£2800) to support smaller schools with the the partnership fee. Governors asked why St Andrew's was struggling financially at present; this was driven by the opening of Cobham Free School locally which was affecting numbers on roll at St Andrews and Esher High School.
RS left the meeting at this point.
20. Governors felt that this support to other Trust schools was appropriate but asked if there was an expectation for increased contributions in future should the financial position at St Andrews continue to deteriorate and noted that following the reductions made this year, there was no room within the St Martin's budget to do so; ZL said that three schools were in the pipeline to join ELT by the end of the year but the landscape was challenging, with only six Surrey secondary schools remaining to convert. HB said that the Trustees were looking at all possibilities as part of their short, medium and longer term

planning. Growth was expected to be impacted by changes in education, such as the requirement for academisation, such as for schools wishing to benefit from the £25k funding for academisation to have to join in groups of three, changes in the Good Shepherd Trust and there was a lack of clarity from the DfE about the direction of travel.

21. ZL updated the current number on roll figures to note that 74 acceptances had been received for entry to Reception in September 2024, and the budget was based on an intake of 80. The Trustees had agreed to retain the figure of 80 for future planning. The budgeted surplus could be at risk if the number on roll fell.
22. No further questions were raised and the LGB agreed to recommend the final three year budget to the Trustees for approval. ZL left the meeting at this point.

Chair's Actions and other Urgent Business

23. The Chair of Governors reported that she had received the business case and approved a redundancy as a Chair's Action on behalf of the Governing Body. No other urgent actions had been taken since the last LGB meeting. JT had written a supporting statement for the MUGA grant application.

Leadership report from the Co-Head teachers

24. MD highlighted the summer 2024 items to celebrate and current challenges in the Leadership Report. MD recorded thanks to parents for their support with the MUGA application.
25. AT asked about the response from teachers to the reduced number of SLT class visits on account of restricted capacity of the leadership team; MD reported that that the robust cycle of visits was missed although staff understood the reasons for the reduction. The ELT survey confirmed also that staff valued the feedback which was usually delivered as a result of the SLT visit. MD assured governors that there had been no negative impact on teaching and learning however.
26. As a follow up question, AT asked if there was any support available from the Trust; MD said that changes at the Trust would limit central support in this respect, although visits to class were better conducted by people from the school. The SIP had been deliberately structured to schedule some items to begin in January 2025 and return of the other Co-Head teacher would be welcome. JT said that it would be helpful for staff to be aware of this, so expectations about fulfilling improvement priorities were managed.
27. ES asked about the coaching approach. 1:1 coaching was needed less now. Governors discussed the impact of the approach as a catalyst for very focused discussion as it became embedded within the culture, which would support feedback to teachers next year.
28. AK welcomed the teaching and learning assemblies and their value in showcasing to parents the different strategies being used at the school. MD confirmed plans to continue to use this tool to show parents teaching and learning approaches from the perspective of the pupils. AK said that the pupils also welcomed the opportunity to recall what they had done in earlier year groups and noted that it could also support assurance to subject leaders.
29. AK welcomed the decision to buy into an SLA for the provision of education psychologist support for the next academic year, to support in particular, EHCP applications, and noted that the service was also bought into by another local Trust and school. The service would also deliver CPD to the school team.
30. Governors asked how the Uniform Policy had been adjusted to make it more inclusive; the policy provided for uniform to be seamless and label-less as far as possible so that pupils could learn in comfortable clothing, and for affordability reasons, iron-on emblems were available so that parents did not have to buy items with school logos on them.
31. AT asked about the timeline for the Meerkat business case; the timing for the meeting was not yet confirmed but it was clear that the 2024-25 Meerkat cohort would be the biggest to date. JT volunteered to read through the business case and provide comments to the school. **Action: JT**
32. AK sought clarification regarding whether the plan was to also admit external pupils to Meerkat; the business case was being made for funding for St Martin's pupils who need this facility in order that St Martin's can meet their needs and there was no plan to become a unit.
33. Governors discussed the trends related to EHCP application and parental drive, including through tribunals. NP asked how the school managed where there was evidence of need but parents wanted their children to be in a mainstream school; AK said that all pupils had the right to a mainstream education and if there was a space this had to be allocated according to the Admissions Policy. MD said that this was where the Meerkat provision enabled a child to remain at St Martin's, until they were able to transition back to mainstream, or move to specialist provision if appropriate.
34. Governors welcomed the self-evaluation information provided. JT said that it was good that staff felt they could evaluate themselves as on track against priorities and passed on the thanks of Governors to staff for all their work to achieve the improvement priorities.

35. AT asked how numbers at St Martin's compared with other local schools; it was understood that Wallace Fields Junior School and Stamford Green Primary School were full, but other local schools had been hit by the falling number of reception aged pupils. MD reported feedback from parents who had attended tours and visits to the Schools prior to applying for reception places; it appeared that promotion of before and after school and other clubs was a particular driver and MD had commissioned two days work from previous Assistant Head teacher, Larissa Cannon, on promotional material, including mini-films, photos and prospectus. Governors noted that wrap-around care provided at St Martin's by Club Vale was very flexible, and the opportunity to regularly drop their children at 8.30 am was very beneficial both to working parents and for pupils who suffered from anxiety. There were also opportunities to market the many sporting, music and other achievements of the school. In other year groups, one pupil was leaving the school on account of the school but other changes were driven by relocation of the family home.
36. MD said she would develop a draft prospectus, which could also include a question and answer document. HB suggested that the inclusion of pupil voice would be powerful in the marketing materials.
37. NP asked about the anticipated overall context of the 2024-25 cohort; the incoming cohort was more needy, perhaps as a result of St Martin's reputation for inclusivity and that supporting needy pupils was something it did well. MD underlined that St Martin's put inclusion at the heart of its leadership as evidenced through the appointment of an Inclusion Leader
38. ES highlighted the importance of promoting that the School was also very stretching in its aspirations for all children. ES asked whether the School could promote itself via feeder nurseries; this was confirmed,
39. JT thanked MD for her full report and responses to questions. No further questions were raised.

Safeguarding

40. The Local Governing Body noted the data on safety and safeguarding given in Section F of the report.
41. ES reported from her visit to monitor safeguarding on 24 May 2024 that it was very clear that safeguarding was central to everything at St Martin's. ES highlighted from her report checking of filtering processes in place. Strengths included use of CPOMs and it was noted that staff were trained in using the system and monitored the duration of open cases, which were only left open for appropriate reasons. Use of the system had improved the quality of reporting of safeguarding and management oversight of safeguarding issues, enabling the identification of themes and tracking of cases.
42. ES reported that she had discussed with staff use of social media, which had been identified at the last meeting as an area of concern. MD updated governors that she had shared this concern with the Head Teacher Board and one suggestion was for older, technology-aware students to put together videos to support parents with implementing security controls.
43. Governors asked about the comment on the reduction in behavioural incidents recorded and whether this was a true reflection of the behaviour observed. AT commented that she had asked her children about social media issues and they were very aware of the matter. MD said that young adults from Rosebery School would lead an assembly about mobile phone usage which would also support pupils' awareness of risks. ES welcomed the approach to drip feeding safeguarding messages to the school community.
44. ES asked about the impact of the departure of the Trust Safeguarding lead; MD said that it was felt that it was not necessary for a senior member of staff to undertake administrative aspects of this role and planned to train the PA to the SLT to undertake this and allocate three hours a week to follow up open cases and flag them for SLT follow up.
45. ES had also discussed with the ELT safeguarding lead the use of safeguarding toolkits and suggested that this would be a useful tool for St Martin's. ES also suggested that it would be useful for Governors to receive a presentation of CPOMs.

Action: MD/TJ (agenda)

Governor monitoring

46. AK and NP would meet with the School of Faith Lead, Mrs Woolvet, in the autumn term to monitor Christian Distinctiveness and report back to the LGB.
47. Governors were referred to the reports on Teams from monitoring visits on Pupil Premium and Looked After Children and Health and Safety.
48. Governors were asked to consider the lead roles (Link Governor) suggested under the discussion about the Governance Restructure and provide any feedback for use in planning of monitoring in the autumn term.

SIAMS SEF

49. The SIAMS SEF and overview training would be provided in the autumn term. The Governors had also discussed developing a SIAMS one-pager document.

Governance Update

50. Governors noted the status report in the agenda (two vacancies for PCC appointed Foundation Governors, one vacancy for Diocese appointed Foundation Governor and a vacancy for for a Parent Governor would arise after 31 July 2024. A further vacancy for a parent governor would arise in October. The LGB recorded thanks to two governors who had advised their resignations at the end of the summer term and in particular to AT for her long-term service, both as a parent and Foundation Governor, Vice chair and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.
51. TJ reported that one parent nomination had been received by the deadline and this candidate was therefore the elected parent governor.
52. No interest had been received in the vacancies for Foundation Governors, which had been advertised locally and NP agreed that recruiting volunteers was a widespread challenge, Recognising that AK had already highlighted the governor vacancies to the congregations of recent church services, NP suggested that it could be useful for someone else to talk to St Martin's and Christ Church parishes about the structure to encourage a sense of ownership in their local church school, JT volunteered to do this.
Action: JT
53. Governors discussed the national picture and thanked AT for her useful observations on the value of undertaking a governor role and asked AT to write a short article on her experience for use in the School newsletter and other promotional material.
Action: AT
54. The Local Governing Body supported the re-appointment of Adam Holliman as a Diocese appointed Foundation Governor and the appointment of Elzanne Smit as a Diocesan or PCC appointed Foundation Governor and of the re-appointment of Jaynn Taylor as Trust appointed Governor when their terms of office ended in September/October 2024. The application processes would be commenced.
Action: TJ
55. HB said that recruitment to Foundation governor vacancies was understood by the Diocese and he would raise the matter with the Trust, who may have suggestions for candidates. **Action: HB**
56. Election of officers and appointments for the academic year 2024-25 would be made at the autumn 1 meeting and JT remained in office until then as current chair of the Local Governing Body. JT and NP confirmed that they were willing to be considered for appointment as chair and vice chair respectively. MD left at this point.
57. The suggestions for governor training included in the agenda were noted, and further planning for training would take place in the autumn term (Complaints handling; Admissions Appeals – briefing). TJ asked Governors to complete Complaints Training to be able to support the formal processes at other schools and noted that two governors from other ELT schools had volunteered to support the Stage 3 Complaint brought by a parent this term. TJ recorded thanks to HB, NP and LW for volunteering to support on behalf of St Martin's. The new Governor would be sent details of Induction training through NGA.
Action: TJ

Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

58. Approval of the draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Local Governing Body held 20 March 2024 and 13 May 2024 was taken as read. Governors are asked to confirm by email their approval of the minutes of the previous meetings as accurate records for signature by the Chair. The report on actions arising from the previous minutes was taken as read.
Action: All

Governors' Annual self-evaluation of governance

59. The LGB discussed points the governors' self-evaluation questions and highlighted as things that had gone well this year
- WalkThrus - including LGB monitoring through learning walks
 - Playground equipment, and arrangements for lunch time; evidence in behaviour monitoring
 - Learning assemblies - a real strength
 - SEN and Meerkat, including appt of new SENCO; plus gov role in support and monitoring, assurance that right for STM
 - Governors challenge to ensure what is valued by STM is preserved (Meerkat, music, forest school etc) despite the need to make changes on account of finances
 - Level of change at the school - the leadership team has managed this and supported staff through this, with support from governors.
 - Strong links with the church; religious celebrations
 - Challenge and holding to account, re online safety, how dealt with safeguarding in respect of social media usage
 - The leadership team model the Christian ethos very strongly; this permeates through to the staff.
 - the school took time to ensure that the vision was right and we believe it is.
 - Reaching out to ask about the wellbeing of staff and leaders

- When the governance structure moved to two committees, governors showed the importance of having overview of education and wellbeing **and** finances and resources; many governors attended meetings of both committees, ensuring for example that the education of the pupils remained paramount through discussions on finances.

60. As points for improvement, the LGB highlighted

- Links with parents could be stronger; although this is delivered anecdotally, parents on the LGB have raised matters and stakeholder feedback to school is monitored.
- The need for governors who are trained in complaints, so STM can support other schools in Enlighten Learning Trust with panels

61. JT would submit the LGB response to ELT by 1 July 2024.

Action: JT

Date of next meeting

62. The dates for meetings of the Local Governing Body in 2024-25 would be communicated separately following publication of the ELT schedule.

Action: TJ

63. The Governing Body recorded good wishes to AT with her new position.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

Signed.....Chair Date.....