

ST MARTIN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

Local Governing Body – Minutes of Meeting held on 4th December 2024 at 5.00 pm

Governors present:

Mrs M Down (MD)
Mrs R Duff (RD)
Mr A Holliman (AH)
Mrs A Keith (AK)
Mrs K Marches (MK) (from
Mrs C McNab (CM)
Mrs J Taylor (JT)

In attendance:

Mrs T Jones (TJ) Clerk to the Governors
Mrs Z Lever (ZL) Enllighten Learning Trust (online to 5.30 pm)
Mrs P Roy Prospective Foundation Governor (appointment as Foundation Governor to be proposed to the Trust 17 December 2024)

* 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 and were accepted from Revd N Parish (NP) and Ms E Smit (ES). ZL joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams from an office where the Trust Finance Officer, who also supported with preparation of St Martin's financial reports, was present. This was not considered to be a breach of confidentiality.
2. Governors welcomed Mrs P Roy, prospective Foundation governor, who was in attendance at this meeting pending confirmation of her appointment by the Trust Board. The meeting was in quorum.

Declarations of Interest and confidentiality

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

Finance

4. ZL reported the final position for the 2023-4 financial year was a small surplus of £8.8k and highlighted that credit was due to MD and the team for the significant change from the previously predicted year end deficit of £189k. Capital carried forward was £72k (£70k brought forward) and the ringfenced energy grant had not been used. Consideration could be given to using this for expenditure related to items raised in the Conditions Survey.
5. CM asked how the School had managed to make such savings; ZL reported key drivers for the change and MD outlined review and creative solutions to enable required items to be resourced differently. It had been useful to have the information and support from the central team when making decisions. ZL said that savings had been made on utilities as costs had come down and the rationalisation of staffing had been decided by school leaders.
6. CM asked if St Martin's reserves were pooled at Trust level; reserves were not pooled.
7. AK commented that St Martin's was lucky that part time staff had agreed to increase their hours to cover absences and ZL said that staff had been very responsive and supportive of the changes needed this year to meet the challenging financial situation, including supporting the change to ELSA support.
8. The LGB noted the much improved 23/24 year end position and governors commended the team at St Martin's on responding to concerns raised earlier in the year and reducing the projected deficit.
9. ZL reported that September management accounts were showing a full year surplus of £42k, which was an improvement of £19k on the budgeted position agreed by the Trust Board. The improvement related largely to staffing, including long term sick. £10k had been earmarked as a contribution to the cost of roof repairs.

10. ZL reported that the Core Schools Budget Grant had been received to cover the increase to teachers' pay of 5.5% and noted that St Martin's had budgeted for a 3.5% increase. ZL suggested that governors consider asking the Trustees to agree for the additional £68k Core Schools Budget Grant to be ringfenced for the 10% contribution towards a CIF bid for roof and fire doors work. JT asked if there was more chance of success where schools committed to contribute 10% towards their CIF bid and this was confirmed. The LGB agreed that this appeared to be a useful approach and to request the ELT Trustees to agree the proposal.
 11. CM asked about the costs related to cover for staff absence; ZL said that the Trust did not purchase insurance cover for staff absences because it was costly and there were high absence thresholds before any financial return was made to schools. MD said that St Martins had not bought into absence cover for many years for the same reasons.
 12. The LGB noted that the draft budget expected to be received in November was not available as there had been no funding information published by the DfE to enable allocation to schools and preparation of budget drafts. The budget would be refined in January to take into account assumptions known at that point and the reduction in number on roll in reception, to 72 from the previously budgeted 80 (£40k reduction). The Local Governing Body noted ongoing financial challenges ahead.
- ZL left the meeting at this point.

Chair's Actions and other Urgent Business

13. The Chair of Governors reported that no emergency actions or decisions had been taken as Chair's Actions on behalf of the Governing Body since the last LGB meeting.

Leadership report autumn term 2024

14. Governors received the autumn 2 Leadership report which was provided as two reports, one for data and one narrative. MD reported headlines and invited questions from governors.
15. Autumn term data would be updated at the end of the term. AK asked if MD led the open days for prospective parents; these were led by MD and the Deputy Head teacher and included representation from the children. Follow up included an email, reference to the school video and the school had increased its social media presence.
16. MD highlighted the rising number of pupils with EHCP, which could rise to 10 or 11 in the current Year 3. AK asked whether the quality of the EHCPs was a concern; RD said that there were sometimes errors, but staff members' concern was to ensure that the end result reflected the provision needed by the pupil. CM asked about improvement since the tiers had been introduced; RD confirmed that this was the case, and that if an application was unsuccessful, the school kept on trying and seeking more evidence. JT thanked RD for her efforts and welcomed the increased visibility of needs now evident. Ak said that it was important to note that pupils with special educational needs could have better outcomes if they had the right funding.
17. The LGB received the data on behaviour, attendance and complaints raised. MD said that St Martin's attendance compared well with figures for local and national comparator schools but highlighted that the attendance of pupils eligible for pupil premium was below. PR asked whether the school followed up low attendance rates and MD confirmed that the approach was to try to understand the barriers and how pupils could be supported and initiatives designed to be welcoming and encourage pupils to attend school. The Trust was hosting training to enable information about good practice initiatives to be exchanged. No St Martin's children were deemed to be seriously absent (less than 50% attendance).
18. AH noted that the figures were shown separately for pupils in the infant and junior schools and asked why they were at consistent levels; MD said that while younger pupils' attendance was often affected by bugs and colds, pupils tended to be more vulnerable to mental health and emotional issues as they progressed through the school and older children with high special needs could have reduced time tables to support their SEMH needs which would also affect the attendance statistics. 10 pupils were on reduced timetables.
19. AK asked if these changes to their timetables was helpful and MD confirmed that the approach was having a positive effect. MD gave anecdotal evidence of a child who had come to St Martin's in year 3 after being out of school since reception, and whose attendance had been built up gradually from one hour a day to full day attendance.

20. AK asked about the reason for a suspension issued; the child had been suspended for being physically and verbally abusive to staff.
21. Governors thanked MD for the information about dealing with homophobic and racist abuse. It was thought that the number of racist incidents recorded in the statistics on behaviour might increase on account of more clarity over reporting. As a follow up, AK asked about the wellbeing of staff involved with the incidents; staff felt supported and were aware that the pupil was at risk of permanent exclusion.

Safeguarding

22. Safeguarding data for the term would be added to the Leadership data report when completed for submission to Surrey for the end of the term. MD said that anecdotally, the school was experiencing the heaviest safeguarding load it had seen for many years. AK asked if staff felt supported by the external agencies which needed to be involved; MD said that staff needed to be relentless to ensure that external agencies respond as needed to referrals and request for advice.
23. Governors sought clarification of the 2023-24 data, which showed four sexual harassment incidents but no incidents involving inappropriate sexualised behaviour; MD clarified that the sexual harassment incidents related to use of misogynistic language. AK asked if parents would be informed about such incidents and this was confirmed.
24. Governors noted the St Martin's ethos demonstrated through the support, communication and commitment to the family of a child who had been issued an EHCP in February but had been unsuccessful in their request for specialist provision. Although the child had been unplaced since July and Surrey had taken them off roll, the School continued to offer support. Surrey had now confirmed that this child would return in January 2025.

Quality of education

25. MD gave an update on the visit of the School Improvement Partner (SIP). The report from the visit of the School Improvement Partner (SIP) would be circulated. **Action: MD**
26. Regarding the review of outcomes data and resulting targets and actions, MD commented on the importance of phonics as the gateway to learning and the challenges faced by the current year 3, whose attainment had been low compared to previous years and where interventions had been identified. MD planned to provide data on the current Year 3, who had last year been identified to governors as a focus because of the context of this group, including higher levels of SEN and Pupil premium children. JT commented that this cohort would have missed communication and socialisation opportunities during a key time for their development on account of the lockdowns during the covid pandemic. **Action: MD**
27. AH asked why targets might be set lower than the previous year's assessments; MD said that this could relate to the mobility of the cohort, for example where children working at greater depth might have left and been replaced by those who were working towards expected standards. In some cases, the data was felt not to be accurate and targets adjusted accordingly. The general target was an increase of 5% overall but teachers also considered the prior data when setting targets.
28. AK asked whether there were interventions for pupils in the greater depth category; some gaps continued and there was no longer the opportunity to offer extension through, for example, visits by authors.
29. AH commented that it sounded as if teachers were interrogating the data to identify interventions needed; MD said that the Arbor system was supporting this and outlined the new process for progress meetings. MD invited governors to email their suggestions on how to shape how the data was presented. **Action: All**
30. The pupil premium impact report for 2023-24 and strategy would be published to governors and added to the website to meet the deadline of 31 December 2024. The impact of the Sports and PE premium would also be forward.

Admissions arrangements 2026-27

31. JT reported from the meeting of the Admissions Committee which had met to consider information about measures to respond to change in pupil numbers, wider demographic trends and any changes needed to the arrangements for 2026-7. A written report from their meeting had been published to the Local Governing Body. The Admissions Committee had agreed to recommend **NOT** to change the PAN or

the Admissions arrangements for 2026-27 (as members felt they needed to see the impact of measures taken to attract applications before taking this step).

32. The LGB agreed to recommend to the Trust Board **NOT** to change the PAN or the Admissions arrangements for 2026-27 and noted that, with the agreement of the Board, St Martin's would not need to consult on its Admissions Arrangements this year.
33. CM asked if the School was aware of applications for September 2025 entry; it was currently too early in the admissions cycle but the LGB would be kept informed.

Estates and health and safety

34. The LGB noted the Estates and H&S report to the LGB for autumn 2 provided by the Trust. AH asked about the asbestos management plan and its review; MD would check with the Site Manager and commented on the robust approach to ensuring that the regular premises reviews took place.

Action: MD

Consultation to introduce a 2-week half term

35. The LGB received a report from the working group which considered feedback from the consultation on the proposal to implement a 2-week half term. Notes from the meeting of the working group had been provided to the LGB. The working group had assumed that parents or staff members who were not in favour of the proposal would have submitted their comments to that effect to the consultation.
36. Following discussion of the feedback received, the working group recommended the implementation of a two-week autumn half term but with reservations about the timing and the impact on some St Martin's families. MD said that she also had concerns that some families would find it challenging to fund childcare for an additional week in the autumn term. JT reported that the working group had considered options to alleviate the challenges and financial burden on relevant families and recognised that the school budget could not be used to subsidise places at an external holiday club provider. MD said that from a staffing perspective there were good reasons to recommend this, and children's outcomes were generally better where their teachers were well. If the proposal was accepted, St Martin's would do all that it could to make sure that vulnerable families are supported.
37. The LGB discussed the report from the working party and noted the reservations considered. Following discussion, the LGB agreed to recommend to trustees that a 2-week autumn half term be implemented but strongly recommended that St Martin's dates are aligned with those of schools with 2 week half terms which are **local** to the school.

Risk Register

38. JT suggested that the updated register should no longer show in red risks where action had been successfully taken to address the risks. AH asked about the red rating for the risk related to reserves and MD agreed that this should be changed to reflect the current financial situation. Admissions was shown as red because the number on roll was short of target. CM asked if there had been any late admissions since the school census; no additional pupils had joined this term.
39. MD would raise with the Trust the queries from governors about the red rating of reserves, and whether staffing (above the 80% and in year budget not balanced) should be shown as amber or green, given the positive news to this meeting about the budget.

Action: MD

Reports from Governor monitoring and visits

40. CM planned to meet with the ELT finance team (ZL and ER) later this term and JT confirmed that meetings should ideally take place termly.
41. AH asked if MD felt that she was receiving the financial information she needed and being supported with understanding the financial statements; MD said that the team was helpful and information clear but there were some frustrations related to the disconnect between requests sometimes.
42. CM asked about how the day-to-day ordering of resources was managed; this was done through the finance member of staff at St Martins and then put through the Trust. The SLT had oversight of the budgets and PPFs and confirming that requests were in line with the needs of the SDP. CM asked about freedom to recruit staff; MD said that there could be frustration where the approval of the Board was needed, even to recruit mid-day supervisors, which led to delays and meant that in the interim gaps needed to be covered by members of the leadership team.

43. JT volunteered to take on the role of lead governor for Health and Safety, including Allergies and AH volunteered to take on the role of lead governor for EAL.
44. The RAG rated SDP would be provided to the next meeting and Governors were asked to plan their visits and meetings with staff leads in connection with their lead governor roles. **Action: MD/All**
45. Governor monitoring was planned for Tuesday 4th Feb 2025, timing to be confirmed, and governors were asked to advise the areas they wished to discuss so that a schedule could be arranged. In addition, MD invited governors to accompany leaders on their monitoring walks which took place on Tuesday mornings. Governors were asked to let the school know if they wish to attend. **Action: All**
46. NP had visited the school on several occasions as Christian Distinctiveness Lead and ES had conducted a safeguarding visit.

Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

47. The draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Local Governing Body held 7 October 2024 were approved as an accurate record for signature by the Chair. The report on actions arising from the previous minutes was taken as read. MD would share the updated 'St Martins on a Page' document for governors' information. **Action: MD**

Policies

48. The Local Governing Body noted the following Trust policies which had been approved since the last meeting: Complaints Procedure and Management of Opportunities and Risks Policy.
49. The LGB approved the SEND policy and Information report and the First Aid policy.
50. AH asked about the reference in the SEND Information report to consulting with governors on the best use of funds for supporting SEND. MD said that the school mapped deployment of personnel by year group against SEND need, planning for delivery of interventions etc Once allocated, the staff ran the required interventions and monitored them for impact. MD would share the document which demonstrated this process in order to assure governors regarding the appropriate deployment of resources against need and the menu of interventions. **Action: MD**
51. AH asked if there was a similar document to the SEND Information Report for disadvantaged children (eligible for Pupil Premium).
52. The Positive Behaviour Policy 2024-25 had been approved in March 2024 and the Supporting pupils with medical conditions (which includes Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school) was approved spring 2024.
53. The LGB sought confirmation that the Emergency Plan (BCP) had been tested. MD reported that the plan had been tested, and a lockdown procedure drill held on an inset day without children present,

Governance Update

54. Governors noted the following status report
 - three current vacancies for Foundation Governors (two 'PCC appointed'; one 'Diocese appointed') and that the PCC had recommended the appointment of Preeti Roy to the Trust Board for confirmation at the Board meeting on 17/12/24.
 - Four nominations received for the Parent Governor vacancy and a ballot would be held.
55. The LGB noted that Anna Keith's term of office as Foundation Governor was due to end June 2025.

Governors' training and compliance

56. The Local Governing Body agreed the following approach to address the identified gap in confidence of its governors to participate in panels.
57. A 10-minute training slot would be scheduled before the next meeting and led by JT. Governors were also recommended to complete relevant training from NGA. **Action: JT/All**
58. A 10-minute training slot would be scheduled before the spring 2 meeting on attending an Admissions Appeal, including questions. AK agreed to lead the session and MD suggested that anonymous paperwork could be shared. **Action: AK/MD**

Confidential matters

59. No confidential matters were raised.

Meeting evaluation

60. Governors felt that the criteria of having the St Martin’s community and pupils at the heart of their discussion and decision making was evident at this meeting.

Date of next meeting

61. The next LGB meeting would take place on 29 January 2025. Future meeting dates noted for reference:-

- Spring 2 – 12 March 25
- Summer 1- 19 May 2025
- Summer 2 – 18 June 2025

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm.

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