

## **'ST MARTIN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS**

### **Local Governing Body – Minutes of Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 5.00 pm**

#### **Governors present:**

Mrs M Down (MD)  
Mrs R Duff (RD)  
Mrs A Keith (AK)  
Mrs C McNab (CM)  
Revd N Parish (NP) (to 6.15 pm)  
Mrs P Roy (PR)  
Ms E Smit (ES)  
Mrs J Taylor (JT)

#### **In attendance:**

Mrs T Jones (TJ) Clerk to the Governors  
Mrs A Morgan (AML) Lead Governance Professional, Enlighten Learning Trust (online from 6.00 - 7.05 pm)

\* 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 Mr A Holliman (AH) and Mrs K Marchesi (MK). AM joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams from a confidential space.
2. Mrs Roy's appointment as Foundation governor had been confirmed 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.

#### **Governor training – Governor role in Complaints**

4. JT gave an overview of the governor role in School Complaints. Governors were referred to the ELT Complaints Policy, training on Complaints from NGA and the summary of key points tabled at the meeting. JT highlighted key points including
  - that the school's culture and vision is embedded in how complaints are handled, particularly in relation to treating everyone fairly.
  - the difference between a complaint and a concern
  - that often a concern or complaint is a result of perception or communication
  - Governor role in respect of complaints set out in the Trust policy and need to liaise with ELT, including to seek the involvement of governors who are not on the School's LGB
  - The importance of meeting with the complainant to understand what they hope to gain from bringing a complaint; note there are limits to what a governor or panel can realistically recommend as a result of an investigation or panel meeting.
  - The importance of liaising with ELT and the School's appointed Area Schools Officer for advice, including about the conduct of an investigation, procedures, wording of investigation report and panel letter.
  - The school is restricted on the information it can share with complainants, eg about other pupils, staff members etc.
  - St Martin's governors could be asked to sit on the panel of another ELT school as an independent governor.

5. Governors asked **how a decision or recommendation was followed up**; the investigating governor or panel chair would work with the Headteacher to frame any recommendations to ensure they were practical and governors would then monitor implementation.

#### **Chair's Actions and other Urgent Business**

6. 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 spring term 2025**

7. Governors received the spring 1 Data Leadership report. MD reported headlines and invited questions from governors.
8. Governors received a brief overview of the Ofsted inspection process and confirmed that they would welcome a short briefing on the Monday that the inspection was announced. This would be held by Teams at 5.00 pm. Subject to their availability, Governors would be asked to attend the inspection on the Tuesday.
9. As a result of the SEND review and preparation for SIAMS, a number of summary 'on a page' documents had been developed. Several of these had been shared with governors with papers for this meeting, and a full pack was tabled, as an aide-memoire. MD said that case studies were also being prepared and as requested by Governors, she would share overview data on ethnicity, languages, religions represented at the Schools.
10. ES sought **clarification of the progress data for pupils with SEND shown on the IDSR**; MD would clarify this. **Action: MD**
11. Governors noted that the number of applications for entry to Reception in September 2025 was still low.
12. MD reported the focus on 'true' PAs (persistently absent pupils), who were pupils for whom there were reasons for absence over time other than for taking holidays in term time. Initiatives to support improved attendance of this group included soft starts on Mondays, class breakfasts.
13. CM asked **whether leaders felt the new initiative to set up breakfast clubs in primary schools, with funding from the Government, could help improve attendance**; MS said that the Schools had offered this support in the past with limited take up, and at present the focus of such initiatives was therefore on specific groups of children, such as Meerkat pupils and pupils with anxiety, where a soft 8.30 am start could have a positive impact on attendance. MD noted the potential conflict with the commercial breakfast club offering from Club Vale.
14. JT asked **whether pupils who arrived for example at 10 am were given a late mark or shown as absent**; in practice few pupils arrived at this time, and where they struggled to come into school, they often arrived just after 9.00 am. Where appropriate, for example to support pupils with ADHD, a reduced timetable could be arranged.
15. AK asked **about the response where the cause of lateness or absence was a parental issue**; in such cases, the School sought to understand the root causes, such as that the parent worked night shifts or suffered anxiety about school and worked to offer support and help where it could. If not successful, families would be referred to the Inclusion Officer for support.
16. PR asked **if the attendance policy for fining families for absence was being rolled out**; MD said that this had been included as an option in the policy previously but no families had to date been fined for absence from St Martin's although she was aware that some St Martin's families had been fined for absence of siblings in other schools. A more robust implementation of this sanction was now encouraged and the 2024-25 policy reflected this change in emphasis. Leaders planned to highlight the process to parents in the summer term when changes to the absence letters would also be made.
17. MD said the School needed to be cautious in focusing on the importance of attendance given the Trust's decision to implement a two-week autumn half term holiday and noted that not many families regularly took a family holiday during term time. MD noted that among the few families who did take their children out for holidays during term time were some vulnerable families and some families with extended families who lived a long way from the UK. The Trust was working on a new attendance policy which would be received in the summer term.
18. AK commented that **staff appeared to have a good understanding of the issues around attendance and of St Martin's families** and MD agreed that staff knew the families and related issues

- well. There had been a positive impact from re-naming as an *Attendance Plan* one intervention to support attendance of pupils with emotionally based school non attendance (EBSNA).
19. Governors noted the data on behavioural incidents in the autumn term and use of reduced timetables to support behaviour and avoid exclusion. CM asked if **the data for number of suspensions and number of pupils suspended in the autumn referred to the same child** and this was confirmed.
  20. ES asked **about the response to suspensions**; MD said that the new behaviour policy included conversations about choices made and the reason for doing so, and use of restorative approaches, social stories etc. Adding a layer after year group leader to the sanctions was a further positive step. ES **commented that it was important to ensure that pupils did not see internal suspension as a way of getting the attention of other adults** and MD clarified that pupils who were suspended were required to work away from other pupils in the SLT room.
  21. AK asked **how long a suspension lasted and if the matter was formalised**; a suspension varied from a lesson to up to a day out of the classroom and was documented. ES asked **whether parents received this intervention positively**; MD confirmed that suspensions had been positively received by parents, staff and other pupils in the class.
  22. Governors noted that the data confirmed a significant increase in the level of safeguarding referrals and cases, with more safeguarding issues recorded in the autumn term than in 2023-24 and a larger number of children needing support. The LGB **noted the pressure on leadership team and staff to manage this and that this was not sustainable**.
  23. Governors discussed the amount of leadership time required in connection with pupils known to Children's Services and clarified that school leaders were required to be present at Team around the Family, Children in Need, and Child Protection meetings and as well as supporting Early Help for all these pupils. The LGB agreed the need to review roles and consider potential adjustments with the return of Co-Head teacher after Easter and her resumption of the DSL role and to respond to the increase in safeguarding issues.
  24. ES asked **whether the school Improvement Plan priority under personal development 'Children's mental Health and well-being is improved – Nurture Project' was in place or an aspiration** in response to the increase in child mental health and wellbeing needs. MD reported that this priority related to the School's participation in the Surrey-wide Nurture Project and gave an update on involvement. Following the initial focus on training, the Boxhall profile would be introduced as a tool to understand how pupils feel. MD outlined additional support in place at St Martin's, including a teacher who is trained in mental health support and that an additional member of staff had been freed up to support 1:1 wellbeing work with specific pupils two afternoons per week. One teacher already had this as part of her role and another member of staff had been released from other duties to support mental health in school.
  25. ES asked **what was the reason for the number of referrals to the Family Support Worker being lower this year than the previous year**; the 2024-25 data reflected one term only but the capacity of the Family Support Worker was limited to 6 families at a time. The Family Support Worker also supported drop-in sessions. ES suggested that the Family Support Worker attend a future meeting of the LGB and it was agreed to **request a written report from Family Support Worker for the next meeting**. RD confirmed close liaison between staff and the Family Support Worker. Action: MD/TJ (agenda)  
17.55 AM joined the meeting via Teams at this point.
  26. MD reported on staffing and Governors noted that the School had been impacted by lots of illness but looked forward to the return of a teacher from maternity leave, the Co-Head teacher from absence for long term ill-health and the Site Manager. The new Finance Assistant was doing well.
  27. Governors **welcomed evidence of St Martin's values demonstrated in classroom signage welcoming children with greetings in their mother-tongue language**.

## Finance

28. CM highlighted key points from her written report from her first meeting with the Trust's Finance link governors, including update on 25-26 budget setting and uncertainties regarding funding, on the impact of the increase in National Insurance and of school numbers on roll. The budget process had been clarified and it was noted that although LGBs did not have formal responsibility for agreeing budgets, the draft would be provided to support governors to understand the context of discussion and ensure alignment with the SDP and finance governors could challenge assumptions made.

29. CM highlighted discussion of planning for capital projects and that schools should feedback any such priorities which may form part of a larger, longer term spending strategy / vision for the Trust. It was also noted that unspent capital funds should be reallocated so the school can spend within the year rather than rolling forward year on year.
30. The LGB **supported the request from Link Finance Governors for the Trust to feedback on questions raised at the Finance Link governor meeting, related to growth of MAT** and potential merger, and in particular tangible evidence that growth of MATs is good. Governors sought **clarification of how the trustees will assess 'good'**. AM advised that this was a question for the Chair and CEO of the MAT and that the trustees were currently considering if there was a good fit with the Trust being considered for merger and whether would be the right step for ELT and its students and staff.
31. CM would **seek responses to the questions on the current financial position that she had sent to the ELT Chief Finance Officer** (shared on the Teams folder). Action: CM

#### Estates

32. There was no change to the conditions survey and St Martin's had not been successful in its CIF bid projects which would be taken into the next cycle, Following the agreement to ringfence additional funds, it was hoped that having additional funds to support bids would improve the chances of success.

#### Proposed change to term length (two week half term)

33. The LGB noted that the Trust had agreed to implement the change to the term length from September 2025 and welcomed confirmation that Trustees had supported the LGB's recommendation for the dates for the autumn half term to be aligned with those of local schools. It was noted that in practice it appeared these would coincide in autumn 25.
34. Governors asked **about the response from parents**; St Martin's families had been notified of the introduction of the two week half term autumn 25 with limited feedback and parents who had responded had not taken up the offer to meet with MD.
35. Governors welcomed the efforts made by the School to reduce the impact on families and that two (potentially 3) current providers of holiday schemes at St Martin's had confirmed they planned to support by running additional provision during this time

#### Health and Safety

36. Autumn term data was received. The interim Link Governor had not been able to conduct a health and safety visit owing to absence of the Site manager.

NP left the meeting at this point.

37. MD reported from the Health and Safety audit by Citation which had focused on risk assessment related to curriculum, related for example to the progression of skills in science. Formal risk assessment was also conducted for key areas such as the kitchen, Forest school and PE. Governors were welcome to review the risk assessment documentation.
38. AK asked **if the School undertook risk assessment linked to specific pupils**; MD confirmed that this was undertaken with staff planning.
39. ES asked **if the kitchen area was locked**; MD outlined safeguards for the pupil kitchen area, including that electrical devices were disconnected.

#### Risk Register

40. An updated register was awaited.

#### Reports from Governor monitoring and visits

41. The RAG rated SDP provided with papers for the meeting was noted. A query had been raised under agenda item 3. SIAMs on a page document was being produced.
42. CM had reported on monitoring of finances under Finance (item 4).
43. ES had provided a written report from her monitoring as lead governor Safeguarding and summarised that her visit gave her assurance regarding the embedding and rigour of safeguarding procedures and monitoring in place at the school. ES **welcomed the positive impact of changes made to the safeguarding team, including the role of the administrator, but recognised the ongoing pressure of the increasing number of concerns at the school.**
44. Relevant governors confirmed that they had brought documentation related to DBS applications into school before the meeting resolving outstanding matters related to the single central record.

45. ES said that there were links between safeguarding of pupils and supporting mental health and wellbeing, increased levels of anxiety, SEND and pupil premium. ES underlined the value of governor visits as opportunities to identify evidence of practices which help to keep pupils safe and encouraged governors to note and share these.
46. ES planned to use her next meeting to meet with a group of teachers, which would help to monitor their understanding of processes and identify any concern. She hoped that the visit would also be an opportunity to meet with children to discuss questions about feeling safe in school. MD suggested that this could be included in the Governor learning walk being held on 4 February 2025.
47. MD reported discussion at inset of safeguarding scenarios and it was agreed to include discussion of safeguarding scenarios in future LGB meetings. **Action: MD/TJ**
48. JT reported that the planned WalkThru on Talk for Reading had not taken place but she would be able to monitor teaching and learning at the Governor Learning Walk monitoring on Tuesday 4th Feb 2025 from 8.30 - 10.30 am. The learning walk would provide an opportunity for monitoring priorities in the SDP and an outline of the morning was shared with governors on Teams. **Action: Governor leads**
49. AH planned to meet with RD regarding SEND and Christian Distinctiveness Leads, AK and NP, had scheduled to meet with the School of Faith Lead on 11 February 2025. **Action: Link Governors**
50. The appointment of a substantive Link Health and Safety Governor was carried forward.
51. Governors noted challenges with scheduling meetings of the Trust link governors and that notes and a recording were available from the meeting of the Teaching and Learning Link governors.

#### Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

52. The draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Local Governing Body held 4 December 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.

#### Safeguarding

53. Governors welcomed the visibility of safeguarding provided through the Safeguarding Team Processes document, which included photographs of the DSL and deputy DSLs and a flow chart on reporting. ES suggested several amendments to the document for clarity (delete reference to 'as per order of priority' and add a note that teachers should not speak to parent or carer. **Action: MD**
54. The report from monitoring by the Link Safeguarding Governor had been discussed under monitoring and the safeguarding data noted with the data Leadership report.
55. Governors reflected that the safeguarding data provided to their meetings confirmed the high level of safeguarding referrals and cases at St Martin's. The LGB **noted the pressure on the leadership team and staff to manage this was not sustainable.** MD said that consideration would be given to the leadership structure and DSL appointment and potential adjustments with the return of Co-Head teacher after Easter.

#### Policies

56. The Local Governing Body noted the following Trust policies and documents which had been approved since the last meeting: Management of Opportunities and Risks Policy and the Finance Manual.
57. The LGB approved the policy on Supporting pupils with medical conditions (which includes Children with Health Needs who cannot attend school) and the Attendance Policy. It was noted that a revised Attendance policy was expected in the summer term.
58. The Positive Behaviour Policy 2024-25 was central to the ethos of the schools and would be provided ahead of the spring 2 meeting to give governors time to digest it and raise questions. **Action: MD/TJ**
59. AM and MD would discuss St Martin's Uniform policy, which had been developed and consulted upon in the summer 2024 in order to inform discussion at the Head teacher board meeting and development of a Trust wide Uniform policy. **Action: MD/AM**
60. The LGB noted that review of the Teaching & Learning principles would be continued at the spring term inset day and a revised document would be shared as soon as possible. **Action: MD/TJ**

#### Governance Update, recruitment and training

61. Governors noted the following status report
- Two vacancies for Foundation Governors (one 'PCC appointed'; one 'Diocese appointed')
  - Parent Governor ballot in process.
  - Anna Keith's term of office as Foundation Governor was due to end June 2025 and the LGB confirmed that it would support her re-appointment.

62. Governors discussed their development target to strengthen links with parents and noted that opportunities for maintaining informal links had reduced with changing circumstances of current governors who are parents. It was agreed to raise the profile of governors through increased presence at school events and the school calendar would be circulated. **Action: MD**

63. The LGB would consider further approaches to support links with the parent body and suggestions were invited. **Action: JT/All**

64. The LGB agreed to evaluate their experience of the new link governor approach and MAT-wide meetings after it had been in place for a term; AM explained that feedback would be likely to be requested in March. **Action: JT/All**

65. Regarding its development point related to addressing the identified gap in confidence of its governors to participate in panels, governors had received training at this meeting on Complaints panels and AK would lead a 10-minute training slot before the spring 2 meeting on attending an Admissions Appeal, which would include questions, role play and anonymous paperwork. **Action: AK/MD**

66. AM invited the LGB to suggest topics to cover in the ELT 'lightening' sessions; the LGB highlighted that they would welcome learning about how school governing bodies built good links with parents. AM reported that Parent Ambassadors were appointed at Esher High School, although these were not governors.

AM left the meeting at this point.

67. Governors discussed their role in Ofsted inspections and agreed to document, as an aide memoire, examples of where their challenge and support had had impact on the school to create a 'Governance on a page' document. **Action: All/JT**

#### **Confidential matters**

68. Part 2 confidential matters are recorded separately.

#### **Meeting evaluation**

69. Governors felt that the St Martin's vision had been reflected in discussion at this meeting which demonstrated in particular that every child is precious, their welfare and safeguarding, and the wellbeing of staff. Governors recorded thanks to all the staff for putting these principles at the heart of all they did. Governors noted celebration of the diversity of St Martin's community including through the initiative to include greetings in the mother tongues of all pupils in a class.

#### **Date of next meeting**

70. The next LGB meeting would take place on 12 March 2025. Future meeting dates noted for reference:- Summer 1- 19 May 2025; Summer 2 – 18 June 2025

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

Signed.....Chair      Date.....