The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust PART I - Minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on Thursday 9th December 2021 at 8.00 am

*** This meeting was held remotely using Microsoft Teams ***

<u>Present</u> : Helen Stevenson (Chair), Edward Vitalis, Karl Smith, Morag Davies, Christopher Davis, Mark Stanton, Annette Williams, David Donnelly, Sharon Black, Craig Parkinson, Judith McConville		Apologies: Tony Gundersen, Janine Inglis, Alison Duckworth, Kate Whittlesey Non attenders:				
			Clerk: Trish Roberts		_	
It	ems	Discussion	Action	Who	When	Notes
1	Welcome, introductions & apologies	Ms Stevenson welcomed everyone to the meeting. At the meeting apologies were accepted from Mr A Gundersen and Ms J Inglis; and since the meeting, apologies have also been received from Ms A Duckworth and Ms K Whittlesey.				
2	Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests	Trustees have received a copy of the <u>Trust's Register of Business Interests 2021-22</u> prior to the meeting. Trustees reviewed the details and no changes were requested. Trustees also reviewed the Register against the agenda and no declarations were received in respect of this meeting:				
3	To receive/ ratify PART I Minutes from THF Board meeting held on 14.10.21	Trustees received an electronic copy of PART I minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on 14.10.21. There were no amendments to be made and therefore the minutes were accepted as a true record and ratified. RESOLVE: That PART I minutes of the MAT Board meeting held on 14.10.21 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	Chair of the Board to sign agreed MAT Board Minutes from 14.10.21	H Stevenson	ASAP	
4	. To review Matters Arising not included on the Agenda (to include Action Tracker)	There were no Matters Arising from Minutes of 14.10.21 Trustees then reviewed progress on the Action Log dated 09.10.21. Q: Has there been any progress in relation to Item 1 on the Action Log? A: Trustees have received headline figures in relation to Attendance at each MAT Board meeting, but unsure if this covers off enough in order to move this item to Green. Also, we have had some technical issues with Power Bi, but they have now been resolved; we are therefore very close to being able to roll this out to Trustees. Power Bi will provide Trustees with access to live data with regards Attendance and Exclusions figures.				

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	Following discussion Trustees agreed that this item should remain on the action log until such time Power Bi has been rolled out and Trustees have access to relevant data.			
5. Chair's Action	Trustees received an electronic copy of the Chair's Action & Governor Membership			
Report (to	Update 09.12.21 report prior to the meeting; and content was noted at the meeting.			
receive)				
6. Coronavirus	Mr Parkinson provided an update to Trustees, noting that similar discussions had taken			
Update	place at this week's JCNC meeting with union colleagues.			
	Mr Parkinson explained Trustees continue to receive Coronavirus fortnightly briefings			
	which provide details in relation to attendance figures/case numbers across the Trust.			
	Mr Parkinson also updated Trustees in relation to impact of the new Omicron variant;			
	noting that at this point, schools are not seeing an increase in case numbers. Mr			
	Parkinson then went on to provide details of interventions that have been put in place			
	at one of our primary schools recently when cases numbers in a particular class began			
	to rise; ie bubble operation was reintroduced and as a result the school has not seen			
	case numbers rise across the rest of the classes. Mr Parkinson also advised that despite			
	the Knowsley region seeing a significant rise in case numbers; this not been seen at the			
	same level at our schools within the LA.			
	Mr Parkinson reported that school operations continue to be reviewed; noting that non-			
	essential activity on site is under constant review, and proportionate measures are put			
	in place and in keeping with government/public health guidance.			
	Mr Parkinson also updated Trustees in relation to vaccinations; noting that vaccine			
	uptake is still positive, however it is becoming harder to keep track as students are			
	getting vaccines through community vaccination centres and as such the data is not			
	available to schools. Mr Parkinson also spoke about how some staff have experienced			
	illness following their booster vaccination (it is assumed that it is because they are			
	receiving a different vaccine to one they were originally given, ie Astra Zeneca followed			
	by Moderna). Mr Parkinson assured Trustees that even with the additional absences			
	linked to booster vaccinations, staff absence across the trust still remains ahead of the			
	curve, with 92+% onsite staff presence.			
	Mr Parkinson also spoke about the government's introduction of 'Plan B' restrictions, (ie			
	work from home if you can), noting that this issue had been brought up at JCNC prior to			
	the change in legislation. Mr Parkinson reported that union colleagues understood that			

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the vast majority of staff within schools are unable to work from home due to the nature of their role; but that Exec Officers also confirmed that where there is opportunity for a staff member to do so it would be looked into. Mr Parkinson then went on to speak about social distancing, noting that at this point there is no advice/guidance from government to reintroduce class bubbles; and that in secondary schools, staff and pupils had already returned to wearing face coverings in communal areas; and similarly in primary schools, staff have already returned to wearing them. Mr Parkinson also advised that schools plays/end of term events are also being reviewed at school level; with the support of Exec Officers. Mr Parkinson provided Trustees with an update with regards the two staff who were absent due to long-Covid cases; noting that it was good to see both have returned to normal operations. Mr Parkinson also updated Trustees in relation to CO² monitors that are in place at some of our schools. Q: In relation to the CO² monitors, how effective are they, ie do we have any reports with regards their use and impact? A: CO² monitors are built into the fabric of secondary school buildings as they are newer stock, but with our primary school buildings being older, ventilation only takes place via traditional methods, ie opening doors/windows. Mr Parkinson assured Trustees that no issues have been reported to Exec Officers in relation to this area. Q: Can scheduled Link Trustee visits still take place this term? A: Visits are still acceptable; therefore, as long as government/public health quidance is followed (ie hands, face, space) there should not be any problems with Trustees visiting schools. Trustees also noted that it would be best practice to phone the school the day before the visit, in order to check that the visit was still good to take place, that way if there are any additional pressures on Principals/leadership teams just prior to the visit, dates can be rearranged.

Q: With regards vaccination take up figures; is it necessary for this to be reported to the Board?

A: The data provided in relation to vaccination take up is anecdotal, and we will not be looking to provide a data report at any point. Exec Officers just need to ensure Trustees feel assured that Exec Officers/Leaders are continuing to support the process for those who wish to access vaccinations.

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	Mr Parkinson then updated Trustees in relation to Covid reporting over the Christmas period; due to the new Omicron variant, the Trust has reopened the 'hotline' system used last year, and Exec Officers/Leaders will be pointing parents/staff to report any positive cases on the hotline as and when they occur. This will then allow someone within the team to pick up the messages and report on to LAs if necessary. Mr Parkinson advised that this will relieve pressure on admin staff throughout the Christmas break. There being no further questions, Trustees thanked Mr Parkinson for his update.		
7. CEO Report	Trustees received electronic copies of the CEO report (dated December 2021) prior to the meeting. Mr Donnelly reported:		
	School Improvement – Mr Donnelly reported that there had been a slight improvement in terms of this area; noting that at the recent meeting with the RSC, the tone/outcome seemed very positive in relation to the status of THFNW. Mr Donnelly also noted that this was evident; in that meetings with the RSC have been moved back to normal reporting periods rather than the termly meetings that have taken place since the Trust received its FNTI. Mr Donnelly also advised that discussions with the RSC had included the confirmation that the RSC was happy to consider/discuss the possibilities of further Trust expansion. Mr Donnelly also reported on the two Ofsted visits that had taken place this term: Section 5 - The Prescot School and Section 8 - Bridgewater Park. See PART II minutes for further details.		
	Q: In relation to opportunities for expansion, whilst it is good to hear that the Trust has moved to this position; but before anything moves forward can we receive a Board Paper from the CEO which outlines principles of growth and what the non-negotiables would be, ie geography, Ofsted outcomes etc. We want to get better at what we are doing, and therefore don't want to accept growth that will then have an adverse effect on the Trust. A: The discussions with the RSC were more a case of where do they assess our position		
	as a Trust at this point in time; and the RSC provided assurances that we are no longer on the red list and as such growth opportunities are now possible. However, saying		

this any growth proposals will be measured and considered carefully before moving forwards.

Discussion followed; with a Trustee noting that they would wish the Trust to consolidate before looking at any further expansion. Mr Donnelly spoke about how Trusts have expanded too quickly in the past (including THFNW); and noted that the THFNW is now in a much better position in that it is sustainable as it currently stands and as such he would not want to put the Trust in any jeopardy. Mr Donnelly assured Trustees that he would not be seeking further expansion at this time, but should any requests be received (and the school met the right measures), Exec Officers would approach Trustees before moving forwards. Trustees agreed with this course of action, noting that due diligence is really important, especially in terms of making sure that it is really clear with regards capacity that any incoming schools will bring to the Trust.

Q: With regards expansion, would we cover this in the Strategic Planning day?
A: Yes

Ofsted – Mr Donnelly explained that the rest of the Trust's schools fall within the Ofsted inspection window and therefore there is potential for all schools to be inspected this year.

HR

THS: Mr Donnelly reported that THS' Head of School has resigned from post and will leave as of 31.12.21; and following the recent recruitment a new Head of School has been appointed (Mark Tudor) and will take up the role as of 01.01.22. Mr Donnelly also provided details re Mr Tudor's experiences/background; noting that he was extremely keen to join the school/trust.

HPS/LMP: Mr Donnelly also updated Trustees in relation to the Executive Principal leadership model at HPS/LMP; noting that a formal process to assess the leadership's performance had been agreed, which will also include canvassing the opinion of local governors. Mr Donnelly noted that on evidence, up to date this leadership model seems to be positive; but should the assessment process deem it is not right for either school, leadership structures will revert back.

DPS: Mr Donnelly provided an update in relation to potential leadership changes at DPS (see PART II for full details).

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Attendance – Trustees voiced concerns with regards attendance at TPS, and the negative impact this will have in relation to the school trying to achieve a Good grading with Ofsted. Mr Donnelly agreed with the concerns raised noting that the percentage of students not attending school is extremely worrying.

Mr Donnelly also explained that issues with behaviour/attendance are adversely affecting Y10/11 in the main; noting that the older years in particular are finding things difficult, in that they have been disengaged from school systems during Covid and are struggling with the return to school routines.

Q: Is there any analysis in terms of where children are from, ie are there any certain areas within Knowsley where this is more prevalent?

A: We are analysing trends, (ie friendship groups, absence patterns) and we are putting in interventions/supporting students with their difficulties/barriers to learning. Covid has not only impacted our students within these age ranges, it appears to be a countrywide issue; on speaking with another Trust they are experiencing similar issues – these are more societal problems rather than local school issues. We also have to note that some young people are doing very well, but we need to find ways to re-engage those who are struggling.

Q: Do we know if Knowsley are doing anything to tackle these issues?

A: Their interventions tend to be around EWO visits and parental fines when students are absent; but these interventions can be ineffective. But saying this Knowsley are probably doing more than other local authorities to try and address this issue.

Q: With the issues Y10/Y11 are experiencing in terms of attendance, are we working with the younger years now, so that we can look to avoid this happening to them in the future?

A: Data historically shows that attendance falls away for some students as they move through school; ultimately the problem is getting them into school, and with what students have been through over the past 18 months this issue has been exacerbated. We are trying everything we can to support and encourage any children experiencing any barriers to attendance/learning.

Ms Black also provided details in relation to the reactive work that is taking place to try and address these issues; ie metacognition strategy, and how the matrix of vulnerability is used as a tool in order to build up a picture of the child and identify any barriers to learning. Ms Black also reported that there is going to a big push with regards character development from January 2022; noting that evidence shows that by introducing this

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3-yr admissions trend data (TPS) to be brought to next MAT Board meeting	Exec Officers	03.03.22	
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		story, but noted that there is much more to learn in relation to marketing the school. Mr Donnelly also advised that he will share the responses from the parental surveys with Trustees; and will also review them with Principals. Q: In terms of Governance, currently it is graded Green, but should we be red-flagging some areas of governance, ie are our LGBs effective in terms of school improvement etc? A: The grading for Governance is based on whether there are any issues which are likely to undermine our LGBs (ie significant vacancies); and whether our LGBs are carrying out their statutory duties (regular meetings are taking place and governors are attending/participating). Taking this into account the grading for Governance is green. Our LGBs also perform well during Ofsted inspection; our Governors consistently show inspectors that they know their schools well (as can be seen in recent Ofsted reports). Mr Donnelly added that the question around Governance is whether it is time to review LGB terms of reference, so that the main focus for LGBs is around School Improvement. (See Agenda item 14(i) Future Role of LGBs for further detail)				
8.	Litherland Project Update	Mr Parkinson provided a verbal update in relation to the Litherland project; noting that Phase 2 approval has been received from the RSC and Trustees were contacted remotely to request their approval, appropriate responses have been received and paperwork signed off. Contractors are due on site late January 2022, with a view to completing by May half term. Mr Parkinson advised that as a result of this process; the Project Board will need to convene in order to have oversight of this phase of the project; and as such he will come back to Trustees in the New Year with potential dates.	Review membership of Project Board in accordance with terms of reference and set initial meeting in new year	Exec Officers / Trustees	ASAP	
9.	Trust Committee Update	Education & Standards Committee Update - Trustees received an electronic copy of the E&S Committee board report dated 11.11.21 prior to the meeting. Mr Smith provided a brief overview of the report; noting that a good, robust discussion had taken place around the strategic focus of the trust, including debate with regards connectivity/coherence around what the Trust wants/needs. Mr Smith also reported that the Asst DoTL Pupil Premium had provided a detailed presentation with regards the Trust's Pupil Premium Strategy; Trustees also received Safeguarding data in respect of the secondary schools within the Trust; and an update in relation to Power Bi roll-out.				

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	There being no questions, Trustees thanked Mr Smith for his summary. Business, Finance & Audit Committee Update – Trustees received an electronic copy of the BF&A Committee board report dated 07.10.21 Mr Vitalis explained that the written report that had been circulated with the board papers reflected the details reported verbally at the board meeting held on 14.10.21; and no further BF&A meetings had taken place since and as such no additional updates were available at this point.				
10. Risk/Reporting Update	Mr Donnelly reported that following the Risk & Reporting Group meeting that had taken place on 25.11.21, the Risk template had been updated; and a copy had been circulated to Trustees. Mr Donnelly then explained the format of the document to Trustees; noting that the next steps are to agree the template framework in principle and then review and agree the tolerances for each risk item. Q: Will reports be received outside of the normal meeting cycle? A: No, reports would be included at each of the calendared meetings during the year. Following discussion Trustees agreed that the framework would work well and noted that they were happy to approve it. Trustees also agreed that the Board would review MAT Board tolerances at their next meeting (03.03.22) and that any risk items assigned to committees, tolerances would be reviewed at their next scheduled committee meetings in Spring Term 2022.	Review/agree tolerances in respect of Risk items allocated to MAT Board / Committees	Trust Board / Committees	Spring Term 2022	
11.Trust Board Self Evaluation / External Review of Governance	Ms Stevenson reported that Deloitte had been contacted in respect of the External Review of Governance proposal; a quote had been received, and the cost had come in quite a lot higher than had been expected. As such, the decision has been taken not to commence the commission with them. Ms Stevenson advised that the intention is still to look to identify an organisation outside of the education sector to undertake this review.				

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11.Trust Board Self Evaluation / External Review of Governance cont'd	Mr Parkinson also spoke about the review services that are offered as part of the retainer with Hill Dickinson; noting that Joe Orme, Senior Associate and Governance adviser may be able to do some elements of the review. Mr Parkinson advised that this would be a good starting point for the review. Mr Parkinson noted that a copy of Hill Dickinson's scope will be shared with Trustees. Trustees also confirmed that they will continue to explore the best possible option in relation to the review.	Hill Dickinson scope re Governance Review to be shared with Trustees	COO	ASAP
12. Trust Board Strategy Working Group	Trustees noted that the Strategy Working Group meeting set to take place on 30.11.21 had been postponed as a result of the Ofsted Inspection at BWP; and as such a new date would need to be identified. It was agreed that this meeting needed to take place in Spring Term 2022, before the next MAT Board meeting.	New date to be agreed for Strategy Working Group meeting Strategy Working Group to report up to MAT Board	Trustees / Exec Officers/ TGM Trustees / Exec Officers	O3.03.22
13. Link Trustees	Trustees reported that Link Trustee meetings have been taking place/been arranged: Ms Williams visited DPS 08.12.21, and a copy of her visit report will be circulated to the Chair/CEO Mr Stanton has arranged a meeting with Litherland Moss (14.12.21) and is in the process of setting a date with Litherland High. Mr Smith / Ms Whittlesey are due to visit The Prescot School in the new year.			
14. Governance Update (incl Trustee Recruitment)	Future Role of LGBs - Mr Donnelly explained that in dialogue with Chairs of Governors, he would like to look at the LGB Terms of Reference to focus of school improvement, noting that it would liberate LGBs from discussions re items where they have limited (or no) delegated authority/decision-making ability. This would then allow Governors to concentrate their efforts on areas where they can have greatest impact. Discussion followed whereby Trustees agreed with Mr Donnelly's proposal, noting that LGBs only have a finite amount of time to carry out their duties/responsibilities, and as such it would make complete sense for where decisions are made at the centre/by the Board (ie finance, estates, HR), these areas should not be a topic at local level.	Dialogue with CoGs re Future Role of LGBs to take place	CEO / Exec Officers	Spring Term

14. Governance Update (incl Trustee Recruitment) cont'd	Discussion then took place around how Mr Donnelly will approach this dialogue with CoGs. Trustees also spoke about how standardised reports could assist/support Governance across the Trust, ie introduction of standardised agenda/headteachers report etc Trustees also voiced the importance of supporting LGBs with these changes, noting that if LGBs are given too big a remit in terms of educational matters it could be risk; as it may not necessarily be their forte. Governance Update: Trustees received an electronic copy of the Governance Update		
	Report December 2021 and associated attachments prior to the meeting. Trustees accepted the Governance Update Report; and Mrs Roberts drew Trustees attention to the item on Safeguarding/Safer Recruitment training, noting that all Trustees and Governors must attend annual basic Safeguarding training updates. Mrs Roberts also explained that if Trustees have attended Safeguarding training in their professional roles, if details could be sent across, the Safeguarding Lead will be able to confirm if it covers off this duty.		
14.Governance Update (incl Trustee Recruitment) cont'd	Fit and Proper Persons Declaration: Trustees received an electronic copy of the declaration form prior to the meeting. Mrs Roberts explained that the completion of a HMRC Fit and Proper Persons Declaration is seen as good practice in the Academy Trust Handbook; and therefore in order to bring THFNW up-to-date Trustees were being asked to complete and return a form; going forwards this will become part of the annual declarations process. Discussion followed in relation to how completion of forms can be made easier and more efficient, especially when there are no changes from previous declarations. It was agreed that in the interim, Mrs Roberts will produce electronic populated versions of the forms so that Trustees can just sign and return if there are no changes; and Mr Parkinson also indicated that in future it may be possible for these declarations to be made via online platforms, ie Every.		
	Review Level & Format of Documents Received by Trust Board: Mr Donnelly advised that this was part of the Trust's annual governance review process, and therefore had been added to agenda so that it can be formally minuted. Mr Donnelly also noted that the review of documentation had been a key focus of the work undertaken by the Trustee's Risk & Reporting group. Trustees confirmed that this was the case, and		

	therefore they were happy to minute that through these meetings documentation had been reviewed over the past 12 months; and any alterations to level/format had been made.				
15. Policy Update	Trustees received an electronic copy of the THFNW Model Online Safety Policy prior to the meeting. Mr Parkinson provided a brief verbal update: Online Safety Policy: the model policy has been circulated to schools; and once updated with contextualised school information, schools will send updated policy back to Mr Donnelly for formal approval. Some policies have come back and have been approved, the remainder are on track. Mr Parkinson also reported that at the recent JCNC meeting a number of policies were discussed: Teachers Pay Policy 2021: Mr Parkinson advised that since the policy's approval by the Trust Board (14.10.21), there had been a slight change to it to reflect the temporary change to the STPCD (re Jubilee Bank Holiday), and as a result the policy had been updated accordingly. The policy discussed at JCNC included this change. Teachers' Appraisal / Performance Management: Mr Parkinson provided details in relation to the slight change that had taken place with regards dealing with concerns identified during the process, i.e. the policy now states that any concerns should be raised in a timely manner, rather than waiting until the next review meeting. Support Staff Appraisal: Mr Parkinson advised that JCNC have now agreed the support staff appraisal document, as had previously been circulated with the board. Redundancy Procedure: Mr Parkinson advised that this document would introduce a redundancy procedure that is across the whole organisation; noting that the Trust legal team have provided advice/support to Exec Officers in relation to this document and its roll out. Mr Parkinson then went on to explain the rationale that sat behind it, ie the Trust would now have a fair/transparent process in place, that allows leaders/staff to explore opportunities across the Trust and with unions should restructures need to be considered.	Draft Staff Code of Conduct / Low Level Concerns Policy to be circulated to Trustees for review. Documents to be discussed at next MAT Board meeting.	COO / Trustees	By 03.03.22	
	Low Level Concerns: Mr Parkinson advised that draft policy documents have been produced; but in relation to low level concerns, this area is currently covered off within the Disciplinary Policy/Procedure. Mr Parkinson assured Trustees that the Trust has incumbent policies in place that meet Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)				
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	obligations; however, he will share the draft updated policies with Trustees prior to the next MAT Board meeting; and at that meeting Trustees can then decide if they wish to take the drafts forward and approve.		
16. AoB	There were no AoB.		
17. Date of Next Meeting	The date of the next MAT Board meeting is Thursday 3rd March 2022. Trustees also agreed to review the query re venue for the meeting closer to the time of the meeting; decision to be made mid-February 2022. Ms Stevenson concluded the meeting by thanking Executive Officers and their teams on behalf of the Trustees for everything they have done this year. Ms Stevenson also thanked Trustees for their contributions, and then went on to wish everyone a good, restful and safe Christmas.		

Meeting closed at 9.45 am

These min	utes are approved as a true record of the meeting
Signed:	
	[H Stevenson – Chair]
Date:	3 rd March 2022

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