

The Heath Family (NW) Multi Academy Trust
PART I - Minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on
Thursday 28th April 2022 at 8.00 am

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

<u>Present:</u> Helen Stevenson (Chair), Edward Vitalis, Karl Smith, Janine Inglis, Annette Williams		<u>Apologies:</u> Christopher Davis, Alison Duckworth,			
<u>In Attendance:</u> David Donnelly, Sharon Black, Craig Parkinson, Judith McConville		Tony Gundersen, Mark Stanton			
<u>Observer:</u> Joe Orme (Hill Dickinson)		Non attenders:			
		Clerk: Trish Roberts			
Items	Discussion	Action	Who	When	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions & apologies	<p>Ms Stevenson welcomed everyone to the meeting and as there was an observer in attendance, introductions took place.</p> <p>Trustees then noted and accepted apologies from the following Trustees: Mr C Davis, Ms A Duckworth, Mr T Gundersen, Mr M Stanton</p> <p>Ms Stevenson also noted that she had received email correspondence from two Trustees advising of their wish to step down from their role as Trustee:</p> <p><i>Ms M Davies:</i> term of office ended 15.03.22, email received 25.04.22 to confirm that Ms Davies would not be seeking reappointment.</p> <p><i>Ms K Whittlesey:</i> email received 23.04.22, due to personal reasons Ms Whittlesey noted that she had taken the decision to step down and had requested whether this could be with immediate effect. Ms Stevenson has responded to confirm that in the circumstances she is happy to accept the resignation with immediate effect.</p> <p>Trustees accepted the resignations and noted the contributions that both Trustees have made.</p>	<p>Formal letter of thanks to be sent to Ms Davies & Ms Whittlesey</p> <p>Companies House / GIAS to be updated</p> <p>Vacancies to be advertised on Academy Ambassadors</p>	<p>TGM / CoB</p> <p>TGM</p> <p>TGM / CoB / CEO / COO</p>	<p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p>	
2. Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests	Trustees received a copy of the Trust's Register of Business Interests 2021-22 prior to the meeting. No further changes have been received since; 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 03.03.22	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of PART I minutes from the MAT Board meeting held on 03.03.22. There were no amendments to be made and therefore the minutes were accepted as a true record and ratified.</p> <p>RESOLVE: That PART I minutes of the MAT Board meeting held on 03.03.22 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	Chair of the Board to sign agreed MAT Board Minutes from 03.03.22	H Stevenson	ASAP	
4. To review Matters Arising not included on the Agenda (to include Action Tracker)	<p>There were no Matters Arising from Minutes of 03.03.22</p> <p>Trustees then reviewed progress on the Action Log dated 03.03.22.</p> <p>Meeting with Suzanne Berry (SRMA Report Originator): Mrs McConville advised that following the decision taken at BF&A to move to Post Implementation Review, she has contacted Suzanne and they have agreed the details for the review. Ms McConville also noted that the finance team are in the process of sharing documentation with Suzanne, and meetings will take place during the first part of June 2022.</p> <p>Q: When will the report be available to Trustees? A: If everything stays on track, the report should be available for the July 2022 BF&A meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also asked Trustees whether they would be happy to move this action to Green, now that the review has been arranged and is in process (albeit further actions will come from it). Trustees agreed that they would be happy for this to happen.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also suggested that any actions within the document that are linked to the same area of focus should be combined; noting that this will then make the document more succinct. Trustees agreed that this should happen.</p>	<p>SRMA Post Implementation Review report to be circulated to BF&A Committee</p> <p>Action Log to be updated to reflect the changes agreed by Trustees on 28.04.22</p>	<p>TFC</p> <p>COO/TGM</p>	<p>July 2022 (or as soon as available)</p> <p>For next MAT Board meeting (26.05.22)</p>	
5. Chair's Action Report (to receive)	<p>Trustees received an electronic copy of the Chair's Action & Governor Membership Update 28.04.22 report prior to the meeting; and content was noted at the meeting.</p> <p>Executive Principal Arrangements</p> <p>Mr Donnelly provided an update in terms of recruitment processes that have taken place/are underway.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also reported that the Deputy Head of School posts are now at expression of interest stage. Should there be a need to advertise externally if no expressions of interest are received, then he would be looking to go out to advert in early May, this</p>				

	<p>would then ensure a recruitment process could take place before the summer term teachers' resignation deadline (31.05.22).</p> <p>Q: Have all staff had the opportunity to apply for these vacancies, is there a fair process in place?</p> <p>A: Yes the process has been fair; the affected postholders were the initial focus, ie those positions that were at risk and/or at detriment loss of role; and then only once the period for expressions of interest had closed would we look to open up to external applicants / wider internal processes.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also spoke about the recruitment process, including providing details on who had been involved in the interviews; ie for Executive Principal roles the CEO, 2 x CoGs have been involved, and for the Head of Schools roles, it would involve the CEO, CoG and Executive Principal etc.</p> <p>Q: As these internal roles are in effect promotions, are you confident that the staff appraisal process is robust enough, ie will leaders be able to identify issues as soon as they arise?</p> <p>A: Yes, robust appraisal processes are in place. Mr Donnelly then explained the processes/structures that the Trust/Schools follow. (See PART II minutes for full details of discussion)</p> <p>Q: In terms of the Scheme of Delegation what is the Trustees involvement in leadership roles?</p> <p>A: Trustees are involved in the CEO appointment process, however for school leadership roles; the CEO has delegated responsibility.</p> <p>Trustees then debated whether they should be involved in top level leadership appointments, ie Principal and above; noting that there was concern that Trustees could become distanced from schools if they were not involved. Mr Donnelly also noted that Ms Stevenson had been involved in the appointment process in respect of LHS' Principal.</p> <p>Mr Parkinson also shared a copy of the Trust's current Scheme of Delegation document on screen, which provided details of each layer of delegated authority, and Trustees noted that current delegation indicates that the conduct of Principal appraisal/ appointment rests with the CEO. Mr Parkinson suggested that this section could be broken down into the particular recruitment levels so that it identified the differences between delegated responsibility levels for each leadership role. Mr Donnelly also</p>	<p>Scheme of Delegation and High Level Division document to be reviewed in respect of Trustee involvement in top leadership roles</p>	<p>Exec Officers</p>	<p>ASAP</p>	
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suggested that by adding 'Trustee have the option to have engagement in leadership recruitment processes' it would allow for this to happen.

Q: If you are unable to appoint to all of the roles by the 31.05.22 deadline, what is the back-up plan?

A: If this happens, we will need to go out to advert again, as some schools may allow staff to leave outside of this window. If after this, we are still in the same position, we will need to look at 'acting' arrangements.

Q: Are we paying the right salary to secure the right person?

A: We abide by national pay and conditions, but the Trust can pay enhancements.

Discussion followed regarding the importance of being competitive rather than following the norm. Mr Donnelly advised that to date the Trust has not had significant problems with recruitment; noting however that the Trust also needs to be aware that reports are indicating that there are a record number of teachers leaving the profession. Mr Donnelly also noted that the upcoming Head of Maths vacancy at LHS will 'test the waters'; adding that if any problems were to be encountered he would come back to Trustees to discuss further.

Mr Parkinson also explained that when looking at salary structures, the ISR group / context of the school must also be taken into account. Mr Donnelly added that the Trust does have flexibility and that every setting/post should be treated as objectively as possible, however the advice would be to hold with the current pay structure.

Q: Some organisations offer 'salary perks' and/or incentives as a thank you to their staff, is this something we could look at?

A: In relation to 'salary perks' we need to be careful about going outside of the salary structure; the reason being that the structure is how we ensure salaries are comparative across all of our schools. Over the past couple of years, a lot of work has taken place in order to ensure salaries are comparative for all of our employees; however, we do take on board that the jobs market is getting increasingly difficult. In terms of staff incentives, this is something we are currently looking at. Mr Donnelly then went on to provide details about a salary sacrifice public sector car lease scheme (NHS Trust scheme) that Exec Officers are hoping to offer all staff in the near future. Mr Parkinson also advised that with the scheme being a public sector scheme there are benefits for all parties. Mr Parkinson also noted that now that payroll services have been centralised, any salary sacrifice schemes would be easier to deliver.

	<p>Trustees also noted the importance of thinking about how we can make THFNW the Trust of choice.</p> <p>Q: How imminent is the roll out of the car lease scheme? A: Days rather than weeks.</p> <p>Everyone agreed that if the roll out is close; it would then be worth including it in any future adverts.</p> <p>Q: In terms of the Executive Principal Arrangements within the primaries would it be possible for Trustees to have a diagram that shows the new leadership structure? A: Yes, no problem at all</p> <p>Service Centralisation 2022/23 Mrs Roberts advised that approval to move forward with the Service Centralisation 2022/23 proposal was granted by Trustees via electronic means (email) in March 2022; however, the decision needed to be formally minuted at this meeting. Trustees therefore</p> <p>RESOLVED: to formally minute approval of the Service Centralisation 2022/23 proposal</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also noted that he wanted to take this opportunity to thank Exec Officers for the smooth transition of payroll services (move date April 2022), noting that there had been minimal queries following the move.</p> <p>Q: Which payroll provider did we go with? A: Neo People Management. Mr Parkinson then provided details about the tendering process that had taken place in relation to identifying the successful payroll provider; Mr Parkinson also noted the work that had been undertaken with Neo People in order to transition payroll services across the Trust. Mr Parkinson also advised that the next stage of the process is to look at how Neo People can support the Trust with the HR administration of contracts; noting that this will help to streamline HR processes across the Trust.</p> <p>Q: Do we have a HR Manager? A: We did have a HR Manager but they left in Feb 2021; following on from this we advertised for a HR Officer and successfully appointed Ms Natasha Godwin in Aug 2021.</p>	<p>Diagram showing THFNW primary phase EP Leadership Structure to be provided for Trustees</p>	<p>Exec Officers</p>	<p>For next MAT Board meeting (26.05.22)</p>	
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	<p>Q: Are you looking for Neo People to produce the contracts? A: Yes, we would be looking for them to do the administration; however the template contracts would be ours (using Hill Dickinson’s templates), and the contract’s details would be provided to Neo People by our HR Officer.</p> <p>Trustees also thanked Mr Parkinson and Mrs McConville for the work that took place in respect of the transition of payroll services.</p> <p>Governance Membership Mr Parkinson explained that it was with deep sadness he had to inform Trustees that Mr McFarlane (CoG at LHS) had died. Mr McFarlane had suffered serious medical issues back in Dec 2021, which had led to an end of life diagnosis. Mr Parkinson noted that given the true governance professional Mr McFarlane was, whilst he was in hospital, he stepped down from the LGB (03.02.22).</p> <p>Trustees asked about support that had been offered from the Trust, and asked if the Trust/School were looking to do anything to note Frank’s service to the school?</p> <p>Mr Parkinson noted that he was in regular contact with Mr McFarlane’s family throughout this time, and representatives from the school and Mr Parkinson were able to visit Mr McFarlane before he died, and they also attended his funeral. Mr Donnelly also noted that flowers were sent on behalf of the Trust/School to Frank at the beginning of his illness so that he knew everyone was thinking about him (flowers will also be sent to his wife once things have settled down). The school also held a memorial service a week after the funeral and Frank’s family were invited to attend, and school have named their Library after Frank, as he was an English teacher in his past experiences and English was his passion.</p>				
<p>6. Coronavirus Update</p>	<p>Mr Parkinson provided an update to Trustees.</p> <p>Mr Parkinson reported that schools received the latest risk assessments/ procedure guidance in readiness for their return following the Easter break. Mr Parkinson explained that guidance means that schools are nearly back to business as usual, apart from when a student/ staff/member shows symptoms. Mr Parkinson also assured Trustees that the guidance provided follows national guidelines; and that the Trust’s Health & Safety advisers checked/ advised on the guidance prior to it going to schools. Mr Parkinson also reported that from an operational perspective there were no concerns/issues at this point; however, focus continues to be on being ready to support when needed.</p>				

	<p>Q: Do we have a stockpile of Lateral Flow Tests? A: Yes, all of our schools do have a supply of LFTs, and our secondary schools also have a supply of asymptomatic testing site packs as well.</p> <p>Q: With Year 11 Exams coming up, is it worth publicising to parents that LFTs are available from schools? A: National guidance is that schools retain a stock of LFTs rather than distribute the stock they have left; however, we can take further advice on this.</p> <p>Q: for Year 11 Exams, do we have robust plans in place in the event that a pupil/pupils test positive? A: Yes we do have plans in place, but it would be a worry if we get large numbers of pupils needing to sit exams in isolation.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly advised that there are more people in schools with Covid, but the symptoms are not as severe; and added that as we move into the exam season, Exec Officers/leaders will be keeping a close eye on things.</p> <p>There being no further questions, Trustees moved to the next agenda item.</p>				
<p>7. CEO Report</p>	<p>Trustees received electronic copies of the Performance Dashboard (dated April 2022) prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly noted that the report is still in the development stages, and as such this is the 2nd reiteration of the report:</p> <p>Basic Data – Number on Roll: Mr Donnelly noted that there had been a slight increase in pupil numbers.</p> <p>Basic Data – Number of applications allocated for next academic year/PAN: Mr Donnelly drew attention to the specific issues/concerns in relation to primary school applications in the Runcorn area.</p> <p>Mr Parkinson also spoke about school sites/entrances, noting that although they need to be secure, they also need to be welcoming, ie if the entrance to the school is based solely on security there is a chance that it will put some parents/children off the school before they step inside in the building. Mr Parkinson is looking into this issue across Trust sites.</p>				

Q: Is there a need for us to decide whether we need to invest in schools in order to increase pupil numbers, ie do we have models based on 10% upwards trend, 10% downwards trend?

A: Mrs McConville confirmed that this analysis has been carried out with BWP; and also spoke about other budgetary issues, ie energy costs.

Mr Donnelly then went on to explain the role of the EEP, ie the EEP QAs the Trust's internal judgements. Mr Donnelly also provided examples of the work the EEP has recently undertaken, ie this term the EEP has reviewed Writing at our primaries and has provided a holistic view across the Trust; Mr Donnelly also advised that he can commission the EEP to look at specific areas of focus/concern as and when they arise. Mr Donnelly then spoke about the triangulation of the Trust's, School's and EEP's judgments; and what happens when inconsistencies are identified.

Q: Do we have sufficient capacity to move on at pace or is this a risk to the school? Do we have enough focus on primary improvement?

A: Previously the greatest proportion of the school improvement team's time was on the secondary sector as this was the biggest issue/risk to the Trust; but in September 2020 we increased capacity of the school improvement team, which included appointing the Trust's Leader of Primary Education, (who is also the Executive Principal of HPS/LMP). We also expect that the addition of the Deputy Head of School roles will also add capacity to the school's structure.

Q: Will the Deputy Heads of School have a teaching commitment?

A: If they do, it will not be a full time teaching commitment.

Further discussion followed regarding the Deputy Head of School role; and then discussion moved on to collaboration across the Trust's primary schools; Ms Black noted that collaboration within the primary sector is strong, adding that the next iteration is to introduce subject primary leads, ie Halton History Lead. Ms Black also explained that due to the size of primary schools, they are too small to have their own subject leads for every subject, and as such, these new subject primary leads will be a resource that support all primary schools across the Trust/LA area.

Q: Is there a rule, which states that children have to go to school within their own borough?

A: No

Q: If we can get to a point where we have got the pupil numbers up (albeit from neighbouring/other boroughs) is there a way we can lease/purchase a minibus, in order to get these children to school?

A: It is unlikely to happen at primary level as parents like to have their children schooled close to home; however, there is the potential for it to happen at secondary level but whether it would be cost effective is debatable. Executive Leaders then spoke about observations in relation to Liverpool/Knowsley, ie there are partially selective schools within Liverpool boroughs, which parents choose to send their children to; and TPS used to commission a bus service at a cost of £160K per annum, but when it was stopped, there was not much change in terms of student numbers and their attendance figures.

Discussion then moved on to areas that the Trust needed to look at in order to attract parents/pupils to THFNW schools, ie Marketing and the importance of getting our message out, Visibility of Leadership within THFNW schools, School Improvement (eg Good schools attract more children).

Trustees spoke about the Marketing Strategy, noting that Trustees/Exec Officers need to agree 'what are we trying to sell' and also noted that we as a Trust 'need to have a catch/incentives' that attract children/staff to our schools.

Mr Donnelly also spoke about the staff/parent voice data provided on page 4 of the dashboard document; noting that for the majority of schools and from responses received, the data indicates that parents would recommend the school/s their child attends. Mr Donnelly also drew attention to the staff response data for PFP, and provided further information regarding possible reasons for the low number of responses. Mr Donnelly noted that whilst these figures are not a point for complacency they do provide us with strong foundations to build on.

Further discussion followed regarding the nature of education recruitment. Trustees noted that on occasion recruitment processes sometimes can happen really quickly, ie a staff member can hand in their resignation at the very end of the recruitment period or outside of the recruitment period (eg on or after the 31st May), and as such the time available to go out to advert/recruit is then lessened. Trustees and Exec Officers also agreed that although this is not preferential, sometimes it is the better option for the staff member/school.

	<p>Following further deliberations, it was agreed that Exec Officers would bring back to the Board a basket of measures on how the Trust will/can incentivise staff. These measures will then be built into the Trust’s strategy session (July 2022).</p> <p>Mr Donnelly also spoke further about the leadership changes that have taken place at TPS, noting that the leadership plans were part of the Trust’s long-term strategy. Mr Donnelly also reported that he would hope to see an impact of these changes this year.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that this was part of the long-term strategy, but also noted that they still needed to see rapid improvement, in order for it to impact on current cohorts.</p> <p>Mr Donnelly provided further clarification around review processes and analysis, interventions etc.</p> <p>[EV left the mtg at 10.55 am, AW left the mtg at 11.00 am]</p> <p>Trustees also voiced concern in relation to the safeguarding data (referrals). Mr Donnelly noted that a piece of work is currently being undertaken around the consistency of reporting, and also noted that context around the data is also needed. For example: high numbers can reflect that staff understand the procedures and therefore follow reporting processes or that the school has a problem around safeguarding; and low numbers can either evidence that there are no/few safeguarding issues at the school or that there is misunderstanding of procedures.</p> <p>A Trustee also spoke about the recent Safeguarding training they had attended (facilitated by the Trust’s Safeguarding Lead); noting that they had found the training really beneficial.</p> <p>(See PART II for further detailed discussions in relation to this item)</p>	A basket of measures on how the Trust will/can incentivise staff to be brought back to Board	Exec Officers	For July MAT Board meeting (08.07.22)	
	<p>Risk and Reporting Update Mr Donnelly advised that there were no changes to report; and no questions were raised by Trustees.</p>				
<p>8. Trust Committee Update</p>	<p>Education & Standards Committee Update Trustees received an electronic copy of the E&S Committee board report dated 28.04.22 prior to the meeting. Trustees accepted the report, and there were no questions raised.</p>				

	Business, Finance & Audit Committee Update Due to the BF&A24.03.22 meeting being cancelled, there were no further updates available for this Board meeting.				
10. Link Trustee Updates	There were no further Link Trustee updates at this meeting.				
11. Governance Update	Governance Update: Trustees received an electronic copy of the Governance Update Report April 2022 and associated attachment (Governance Newsletter Spring Term 2022) prior to the meeting. Trustees noted the Governance Update Report; and no questions were raised.				
12. Policy Update	There were no policy updates for this meeting.				
13. AoB	Risk & Reporting: Trustees received an electronic copy of the Risk & Reporting board paper data 28.04.22 prior to the meeting. Mr Donnelly reported that he is due to meet with the Chairs of Governors next week to discuss the Trust's new approach to Risk & Reporting. Mr Donnelly also noted that this Board paper had been prepared in order to seek Trustees approval for the implementation of the Risk & Reporting framework for LGBs, and to seek Trustees comments in relation the items outlined within the paper itself. Ms Stevenson suggested that due to meeting time limitations, the document is agreed in principle, however should Trustees have any comments to raise; they would contact Mr Donnelly direct. All Trustees in attendance agreed this proposal.	Further review the Risk & Reporting Board paper outside of the meeting (28.04.22) and raise any queries/direct any comments to the CEO	Trustees	ASAP	
14. Date of Next Meeting	The date of the next MAT Board meeting is Thursday 26th May 2022. Following discussion, Trustees also agreed that the meeting would be held virtually. Mr Parkinson also advised that he has spoken to Joe Orme (Hill Dickinson) and it has been confirmed that Board/Committee meetings can be hybrid in nature, ie if Trustees are unable to attend a meeting in person, they can dial in via Teams and attend remotely.	Teams invite to be circulated to Trustees/Exec Officers	TGM	ASAP	

Meeting closed at 11.10 am

These minutes are approved as a true record of the meeting

Chair's initials to record approval of minutes:

Date: 26.05.22

Signed:

[H Stevenson – Chair]

Date: 26th May 2022

Chair's initials to record approval of minutes:

Date: 26.05.22