



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TRUST
OF CONGLETON PRIMARY ACADEMY TRUST LTD
T/A MARLFIELDS PRIMARY ACADEMY
ON WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH 2024**

GOVERNORS IN ATTENDANCE:	Sandie Isherwood Gary Provis Clare Foster Zoe Griffiths Jessica Rosson Mike Wall	(SI) Headteacher (SP) Vice Chair (Acting Chair) (CF) Co-opted Trustee (ZG) Parent Trustee (JR) Parent Trustee (joined the meeting at 5:36pm) (MW) Co-opted Trustee
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Lomas	Clerk to governors

MINUTES: PART ONE: NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting commenced at 5:31pm.

ITEM		ACTION
1.	WELCOME	
2.	APOLOGIES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) ITEMS a) Apologies were received and accepted from the following governors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MG • KV • SA • CN b) There were no other items of business tabled for discussion at this meeting.	
3.	CONFLICT OF INTEREST There were no declarations made or conflicts of interest raised by governors with the business of the meeting.	
4.	MEMBERSHIP a) There were no changes to the membership of the Board of Trustees to receive at this meeting. b) Governors gave consideration to current vacancies. Governors were informed that MW has received an expression of interest from a candidate with governor experience. ACTION: Forward a short biography of the governor candidate to MG, GP and SI for consideration. c) Governors noted that there are no terms of office that are due to expire before the next meeting. d) School confirmed that they are responsible for updating GIAS and there were no current updates required. JR join the meeting at 5:36pm. e) The subject of the financial handbook was raised for discussion which states that members should not be trustees and the intention of MG and GP to step back from the trust board was reiterated with an emphasis on the requirement to recruit further trustees to the board and for current governors to consider taking on the chair and vice chair roles.	MW
5.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING a) The Part 1 minutes of the previous trust board meeting on 29.11.23 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings. Governors approved the minutes.	



	<p>A copy of the minutes were signed by the vice chair during the meeting and retained by the school.</p> <p>b) The action log from the previous meeting was considered and the following items were noted: Governors were shown the new website that is currently being prepared for launch. It was noted that class information needs to be added to each class page and there is a deadline in place for the end of April. Other items requiring updating included eco schools along with the partnerships and links section of the website. ACTION: Update the eco schools, partnerships and links section of the new school website.</p>	SI
6.	<p>CHAIR'S ACTION Governors noted that the chair had dealt with a complaint under the chair's power to act. The complaint related to school communication regarding childhood illnesses. A response was issued to the parent to confirm that the school is not required to communicate on this issue and the parent was invited in for a meeting but no response was received. The complaint lodged has now been resolved. The school confirmed that cases of headlice are reported to children via newsletters and there is a wide range of parental communication in place via class Dojo, text and emails.</p>	
7.	<p>PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES To receive:</p> <p>a) The minutes of previous committees had been circulated for review prior to the meeting. i. Resources Committee 07.02.24 ii. Curriculum Committee 06.03.24 iii. Resources Committee 13.03.24 Governors approved the minutes.</p> <p>b) The school confirmed that there were a number of subject reports missing including science, art and modern foreign languages. Q: Was a previous request made to ensure that the formats of the subject reports were standardised? A: Yes, KV and GP had an action to draft a standard template but this has not been completed. ACTION: GP and KV to draft subject report template.</p> <p>c) There were no recommendations to receive requiring the approval of the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>d) There were not monitoring reports to receive at this meeting.</p> <p>e) Governors were informed that the section 175 safeguarding audit has been completed but is not due for submission until May and it was agreed that this item would be added to the summer term agenda for an update on a confirmed submission date. ACTION: Add section 175 safeguarding audit to the summer term agenda for confirmation on the submission date.</p>	GP/KV Clerk
8.	<p>FINANCIAL/COMPLIANCE MATTERS</p> <p>a) The publication of the 2022/23 audited financial statements on the school website was confirmed by trustees in line with the deadline of 31st January 2024.</p> <p>b) Trustees confirmed receipt of the auditor's management letter and that financial statements had been submitted by 31st December 2023.</p> <p>c) Trustees confirmed the submission of the 2022/23 accounts return online form in line with the 19th January 2024 deadline.</p> <p>d) Governors confirmed that the admissions arrangements and appeals timetable for 2024 had been published on the school website and a copy has been sent to the Local authority.</p> <p>e) The school risk register had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting for review. Q: With regard to the new school catering provider, given that poor catering standards were identified previously as a risk but this has now been rated green – is this since the new catering provider has been in place and is the school confident in the robustness and quality of the new provision?</p>	



A: Yes, the school are as confident as they can be in the current provision. Children enjoy the meals but there is an element of trial and error in finding meals that the children prefer.

Governor Comment: There was a recent news article where a headteacher had posted on social media about the poor quality of school meals communicating how nationally, the standard of school meals is generally poor.

The school confirmed that the standard of meals from the new provision is good. The school does not employ a cook as the meals are pre-made and frozen in line with strict guidelines. The reduction in staffing costs enables increases in meal sizes. The cost for school meals with the previous provider was £21,000 from September to December but from January 2024, the school has made a significant saving on these costs.

Governors noted that Cheshire East have confirmed that the catering service to schools will be withdrawn and therefore all schools must outsource their catering. Due to the reduction in cooking and preparation, the school should also realise savings in utilities.

Governors noted that pupils are receiving a hot meal and dessert and there is less waiting times at the servery. Pupils are also able to have seconds servings. It is a requirement to serve bread with the meals, but the children are not consuming this. It is also essential that schools provide a variety of meals and are unable for example to serve a baked potato five days a week. The school encourages pupils to try the meals that their parents have ordered even if they are not keen on the choice. The school are also trialling a new IT system. Previously, the payment system was provided by the catering provider. The transition to an electronic ordering system requires due diligence works to be undertaken which may take time.

Q: It is noted that the senior leadership team section within the risk register is highlighted as amber, is this related to the deputy head vacancy?

A: It was confirmed that this subject would be covered within Part 2 of this meeting.

- f) The school confirmed the completion and submission of the School Resource Management Self Assessment checklist in line with the deadline of 15.03.24.
- g) A summary of the latest set of monthly management accounts were shown to governors during the meeting. The headteacher provided a summary to governors as follows:
- Income is currently £99,000 better than forecast. This is partly due to the ongoing deputy headteacher vacancy however an additional member of teaching staff has been appointed which impacts on the overall staffing costs.
 - Cleaning and site management costs remain stable.
 - The nursery costs have increased due to additional pupil needs being identified which has resulted in additional staffing requirements prior to formal diagnosis or assessment.
 - Staff absence has resulted in additional supply staff costs with a £23,000 overspend against budget.
 - In terms of premises, heating costs have risen.
 - Resource costs have also increased but it is anticipated that this position should improve over the course of the year.
 - Technical costs have increased mainly due to breakages which the insurance will not cover where damage was not accidental.
 - Three new kitchens have been installed within school and the new school gates are now installed.
 - Overall expenditure is currently £66,000 over budget and this is an unusual position for the school. Governors were informed that it is not known if this overspend can be clawed back over the course of the remaining financial year.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The only bad debts outstanding relate to monies owed to the school from the Local Authority relating to high needs SEND funding which the school continue to chase.• Governors were informed that the bad debtors reports are now ordered by customer number following a request from governors. Governors issued their thanks to MH and SI for making this change which has improved the ease with which reports can be reviewed.• The school account is healthy in terms of reserves, but this does not form part of the budget.• School trips are an additional cost, but these are essential for enrichment purposes.	
9.	<p>PART ONE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT</p> <p>The headteacher's report had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting for review.</p> <p>Items within the headteacher's report were summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupil numbers are positive at present with a capacity of 180 pupils and 194 pupils on roll. One pupil has left the school and 10 have joined as in-year admissions.• There are 61 pupils in receipt of free school meals which is higher than the national average. The school has 14 EAL pupils.• In terms of SEND, there are 24 pupils with an EHCP which is significant for a school of this size, and it is hoped that Ofsted will recognise this challenge. There are 9 pupils currently within the resource base and a further 23 pupils currently undergoing assessments. Governors noted that there were 39 EHCPs in place last academic year so the EHCP figure has officially reduced. <p>Governor Comment: However, the 23 pupils awaiting or undergoing assessment could drastically increase the current number of EHCP plans in place and therefore the data is skewed so the context behind the data is important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governors noted that it is significantly more difficult to gain an EHCP in the current climate. Pupils require an assessment by the child and adult mental health service (CAMHS) along with a range of assessments and there is currently a two year wait for CAMHS.• Class sizes were discussed with Year 4 highlighted as a small class with eighteen pupils. The school commented that key stage two has no cap on pupil numbers, and it needs to be considered whether it is affordable to provide a full time class teacher for 18 pupils. This is beneficial from an educational perspective but can provide challenges for social and emotional development. The school is also overstaffed at present and the budget needs to be considered. <p>Q: What are the pupil numbers in years 3 and 5?</p> <p>A: Neither of these year groups are currently full so in theory they could be spread between year groups to create mixed classes.</p> <p>Governor Comment: There are 28 and 29 pupils respectively in Year 3 and Year 5 so this suggestion is worth noting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school commented that in theory, there could be over 40 pupils in a class if that is all that the school can afford. There are significant budget decisions that need to be made over the next few months and governors will need to consider these carefully. <p>Governor Comment: It is also important to factor in the data for Year 4 as their Year 2 SATs data was poor and therefore it must be considered what would the impact be on pupils if they were moved into mixed aged classes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In terms of safeguarding, there is one child on child protection and the attendance rate for this pupil is 44%. There are two pupils an early help but governors noted that this is optional and parents do not have to engage with this level of social care. There are four pupils assigned as a child in need.	



- Currently the designated safeguarding lead is the headteacher who was supported by two other members of staff who have expressed that they do not wish to renew their DSL qualification and therefore future coverage in this area needs to be considered. The school attends regular safeguarding meetings related to attendance.
- Attendance is currently 91.3% across the whole school. The school do not approve holidays. The school have purchased the local authority attendance support and meet regularly to discuss processes and procedures relating to attendance. Governors noted that the school receives a significant amount of abuse from parents and there are also a high number of anxious parents which can have an impact on pupil attendance.
- Governors noted that the school had today received a letter from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding attendance and a new initiative which has been launched where the DfE will be working with schools to share best practice and strategies to improve this area. A multi-agency approach is required for some children and it is hoped that this additional support will help schools.
- Governors were informed that persistent absence relates to any child below 90% attendance. There are a significant number of persistent absentees in Year 5 and there are a range of reasons for this. There are some pre legal meetings taking place regarding attendance whereby the local authority meet with families and then take the decision whether to pursue legal action or not.
- Staff absence remains a challenge within school and is impacting subject leadership roles whereby some subject reports have not been submitted.
- Behaviour and attitudes are good. There was a suspension applied in January 2024 which was the first suspension in over 18 years. A member of staff was hurt during the incident. The pupil concerned has since returned to school on a part time timetable.
- CPOMS remains vital for recording safeguarding incidents. Governors noted that it was interesting during the Ofsted inspection that the school were asked whether they analysed behaviour and the inspectors were shown the CPOMS dashboard of behaviour analysis however Ofsted communicated during the feedback meeting that behaviour was not analysed as a formal report was not provided to inspectors.
- In terms of health and safety, the schools are satisfied that the items on the action plan are being implemented with three items identified as low and medium risk currently being actioned.
- There has been one child accident which was reported to Prime. There was one incident of staff illness which required a hospital visit but was not RIDDOR reportable.
- The Cheshire East health and safety audit is scheduled for 09.05.24 and GP will attend this audit.
- Proposed works included the installation of a playhouse in the nursery area which exceeds the £7,000 finance limit. The cost of the project is £9,000 and the headteacher requested approval from governors to undertake these works. Governors **approved** the £9,000 expenditure for the nursery playhouse.
- Governors were informed that the GDPR reporting is run each day and no breaches have been found to date.

Q: Should GDPR training be updated?

A: Yes. this should be undertaken annually.

- A buildings update was provided, and governors were informed that the asbestos in the old nursery building has been removed and it is anticipated that the resource base will move into this space during the summer. The kitchen works have been completed. Flood carpeting has been installed along with CCTV, new signage and new school gates.
- Governors were informed that there have been complaints from neighbours relating to the school gates which have been dealt with by the school.
- In terms of staffing there has been a request from a teaching assistant for a reduction in hours from 5 days to 4 days. The request was considered by governors and in light



	<p>of the current budget position it was agreed that governors would offer a reduction to three days. Governors approved the offer to the member of staff for reduction in hours from 5 days to three days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is currently over staffed with high numbers of both teaching staff and teaching assistants. Conversely the number of non-teaching support staff is low. The resource base is heavily staffed to cater for pupil's needs, but this is having a significant impact on the budget. The local authority do not agree with this position. Currently the staffing within the resource base comprises one teaching assistant and one teacher for seven pupils. • There is an apprentice teacher in post. • All permanent teachers are subject leads in at least one area and are provided with leadership time and are requested to keep a record of tasks undertaken during leadership time. The current CPD focus for staff is writing. Training has been attended by staff on reading for pleasure and early years writing improvement. • In terms of staff well-being, there are trained staff mentors however these have not been utilised as far as senior leaders are aware but staff have been informed of their presence within school and the support they can offer. The school mental health lead has been on long term absence which has impacted the completion of the mental health lead training, but it is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of May 2024. • Development of pupils is positive and pupils enjoy the school trips provided. The school have been awarded the holiday activity funding in previous years and the local authority has requested that the school apply for this again with a focus on SEND pupils. The school have responded that they will apply for funding but for a mixture of all pupils to ensure inclusivity. <p>Q: Does the school have the staff available to provide this provision? A: This is a challenge as previously the staff available were the headteacher and Mrs Bennett.</p> <p>Q: Given the staffing challenges, how can the board decide on this moving forward? A: The school can apply for the funding but are not obliged to provide the service if it cannot be staffed. Some staff would be keen to work during the summer holidays particularly TAs due to their salary, however teachers generally do not wish to work during the holidays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that the headteacher only had one day off last summer and there can be issues with children which mean that staff may need to remain on site beyond the time expected if a child is not collected for example. • The Swans provision in place at school was discussed with governors requested to consider increasing this for the forthcoming academic year. Children are very engaged with the provision and require an increased level of provision. Governors were informed that there are a number of waiting lists currently in place. Governors agreed to review this provision. 	
10.	<p>SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN a) The school development plan (SDP) had been circulated to governors for review prior to the meeting and the school confirmed that all priorities were in place and being monitored and the SDP would be updated in the summer term.</p>	
11.	<p>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNER / EXTERNAL ADVISER Governors were informed that the most recent SIP visit was cancelled due to the Ofsted inspection and would be rescheduled for the summer term.</p>	
12.	<p>STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE – ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND CLERKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2024/25 Governors considered the clerking provision for the board for 2024-25. Governors approved the purchase of the Cheshire East clocking service to cover all trust board and committee meetings.</p>	
13.	<p>CONFIRM TERM DATES AND HOLIDAYS FOR NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25</p>	



	<p>The term dates for 2024-25 have been circulated to governors prior to the meeting for review. The school confirmed that the Cheshire East term dates are followed, and inset days are planned as required. Governors approved the term dates for 20/24/25.</p>																	
14.	<p>DIRECTOR'S REPORT Governors were briefed on relevant items from the Director's report including: 1.1 CIF application window open 1.1 SRMSAC checklist 1.2 Governor training 1.4 Draft guidance on gender questioning children 2.2 Attendance 2.3 Disadvantaged strategy 2.4 Library service 3.1 Admissions arrangements 3.3 Updated HR policies 3.4 Recruiting RE education advisors</p>																	
15.	<p>TRUST BOARD TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT a) GP was confirmed as the training link governor. b) CF confirmed her attendance at two of the three pupil premium training courses with the final instalment of training to be completed in the summer term. Governors were informed that the organisation of the courses required improvement with governors informed that candidates should have been assigned tasks to undertake outside of the training and then bring the results of their work for discussion, but no tasks were issued. Relevant safeguarding training had also been logged in line with annual requirements.</p>																	
16.	<p>TRUST POLICIES The following policies have been circulated to governors prior to the meeting for review:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>a) Equality Policy</td> <td>i) Parental Involvement Policy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Use of Reasonable Force</td> <td>j) Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Complaints</td> <td>k) Foundation / EYFS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d) Sports Funding</td> <td>l) Admissions</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e) Whistleblowing</td> <td>m) Humanities (Geography/History)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f) Records Management</td> <td>n) Mental Health and Wellbeing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g) Gifts & Hospitality (not due for review until March 2025)</td> <td>o) Accessibility</td> </tr> <tr> <td>h) Pay Policy</td> <td>p) Charging, Remission and Lettings (not due for review until January 2025)</td> </tr> </table>	a) Equality Policy	i) Parental Involvement Policy	b) Use of Reasonable Force	j) Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE	c) Complaints	k) Foundation / EYFS	d) Sports Funding	l) Admissions	e) Whistleblowing	m) Humanities (Geography/History)	f) Records Management	n) Mental Health and Wellbeing	g) Gifts & Hospitality (not due for review until March 2025)	o) Accessibility	h) Pay Policy	p) Charging, Remission and Lettings (not due for review until January 2025)	
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	<p>Governors noted that the front pages required updating on the Whistleblowing Policy. ACTION: Update the front pages on the Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>The Pay policy changes were highlighted following a request from EFSA. Governors noted that the draft policy had been agreed with EFSA.</p> <p>Governors approved the above listed policies a) to p).</p> <p>It was noted that the latest version of the financial handbook could not be located. The school conformed that this was currently being updated by the school business manager but there had been a lot of pressure to undertake other work. The headteacher confirmed that they may assist with completion of this document. ACTION: Discuss be required work to update the financial handbook with MH and ensure completion of the document for the summer term.</p> <p>Q: When does the document need to be updated? A: As soon as possible, the document needs to be updated in line with changes.</p>	<p>SI</p> <p>SI</p>																
	<p>The following policies had no proposed changes and were recommended for approval at the Resources Committee on 13.03.24 and had not been circulated for review.</p>																	



	<p>q) Anti Bullying r) Selecting & Managing Contractors s) Pupil Premium t) Data Protection & Privacy u) Dealing with Racist Incidents v) Head Lice w) Parent Code of Conduct x) Whole School Food y) Fairtrade</p> <p>Governors informed the school that the latest version of the anti-bullying policy could not be located on the school website and the policy circulated to governors was dated 2021. It was agreed that the anti-bullying policy would be deferred for consideration at the summer term meeting. ACTION: Add anti bullying policy to the summer term trust board agenda for review.</p> <p>It was also commented that a number of the policies circulated for review required the cover sheets to be updated in terms of the dates on the policies. ACTION: Request that staff responsible update the front sheets for all policies as required.</p> <p>Governors approved the above listed policies r) to y) subject to the amendments to cover sheets as required.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>SI</p>
	<p>Governors noted that the following policies had been delayed and will be brought to the summer term meeting for review. z) Writing aa) Marking and Feedback bb) Behaviour and Discipline ACTION: Add the above listed policies z) to bb) to the summer term Trust Board agenda for review.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>17.</p>	<p>PLANNED RESIDENTIAL VISITS Governors noted the previous approval of the Glan Lyn residential trip for Year 6 on 17.06.24. All risk assessments have been completed and sent to the local authority. The staffing of the trip was confirmed as Miss booth and Miss Carter. Q: What will be the staffing provision within the resource base given Miss Booth's attendance on the trip? A: The school confirmed staff replacements within the resource base have been agreed.</p>	
<p>18.</p>	<p>MEETINGS The date of the next trust board meeting was confirmed as: • Wednesday 3rd July 2024 at 5:30pm.</p>	
<p>19.</p>	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS There were no other items of business tabled for discussion at this meeting.</p>	
<p>20.</p>	<p>IMPACT STATEMENT The Board of Governors has helped to move the school forward in the following ways during this meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous minutes and action log were reviewed and minutes were approved. • Governors received an update on a chairs action undertaken outside of the meeting relating to a complaint. • Governors had reviewed the financial situation of the school following the submission of the February monthly management accounts and the financial difficulties were highlighted with an action taken to review areas where savings could potentially be made. • The recent Ofsted inspection was discussed with governors acknowledging some of the challenges faced and the board will await the results of the final report. • A range of policies were reviewed and discussed with amendments requested relating to dates. 	



The meeting moved to Part 2.

.....Chair

.....Date