



Minutes of the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust incorporating
Hereford Sixth Form College, King Edward VI College, Stourbridge
and Worcester Sixth Form College.

held on 16th March, 2023 at Hereford Sixth Form College

Present: Sheila Boniface. (vice-Chair), Marion Hawkins,
Peter Cooper (Executive Principal),
Craig Holden, Daniel Pearce-Higgins, Katie Jackson

In attendance: Jonathan Godfrey (Clerk to the Trust),
Sallyanne Griffiths (Finance Director)
Andrea Marshall (HoM Quality Improvement Officer)

		ACTION
1.	Apologies for absence: Ken Hopkins, Shirley Tully	
2.	Re-Election of Directors Ken Hopkins, Shirley Tully, Marion Hawkins and Sheila Boniface are due to complete their four year terms at the end of March 2023. All had expressed a desire to continue for a second term. A virtual meeting of the Members of the Trust had taken place on 8 th March and their re-election was unanimously agreed. The Board fully supported this decision. These directors are, therefore, 'section 50' directors re-appointed by an ordinary Resolution of the Members.	
3.	Declaration of interests and gifts None was declared	
4.	Minutes of the meeting of 8th December, 2022 The minutes of the meeting were approved.	

5. **Matters arising and outcomes of action points**

It was noted the action point regarding Jonathan Godfrey's minuting the next meeting of the Chair, EP and LGB Chairs had occurred and discussions on improving the communication between LGBs and the Board were ongoing, including a common approach to induction. It was suggested that a specific Director be linked to each academy for a year. The linked Director would change annually to enable Directors to gain knowledge of all academies in the Trust. As previously agreed a plan will be drawn up for the remainder of this academic year for Directors to attend LGBs.

JTG

6. **Executive Principal's report**

The Report was noted. The following issues were discussed:

HSFC inspection: Following a 4 day inspection the College had been graded outstanding in all areas. An issue about data had involved the Regional and NW Senior HMI but had been resolved following robust argument from the college. The Board offered warmest congratulations to all staff on the outcome.

Appointment of Principal: Peter Cooper reported that following the inspection he had met the Board Chair and LGB Chair to discuss the record of the acting Principal, Catherine Brearey. It was agreed that this should be an internal appointment and Catherine Brearey be interviewed for the permanent position. Following the interview, the EP, Chair of the Board and Chair of the HSFC LGB were proposing that she be appointed. Following discussion this appointment was unanimously supported by the Board.

WSFC inspection: Following a 2 day inspection, WSFC had retained its Good grade. Following some difficult years, this was an excellent outcome and all staff were congratulated.

Chantry High School inspection: Having been Outstanding previously, the school was graded good. It was noted that a large majority of outstanding schools had been downgraded in this recent inspection cycle, reflecting the change in the inspection regime. Some safeguarding issues had been identified but generally the report was very positive.

Funding Issues: ESFA have confirmed a 2% increase in the basic rate but an unfunded 5% pay increase and the significant loss of funding for Core maths has resulted in a need to review expenditure, including staffing and courses. The 5% pay award, including on-costs, is in this year's budget.

Increasing the size and diversity of the Board: Recent adverts had resulted in Katie Jackson's joining the Board but two other potential Directors preferred an LGB role rather than joining the MAT. It was agreed that increasing board membership was still a priority.

PC, KH, JTG

Preparing the MAT to oversee secondary schools: Peter Cooper will arrange for Stuart Wetson, Headteacher of St Mary's RC High School, to give a presentation on the 11-16 sector to the Board as a first step.

PC

Staff Training days: It was noted feedback from both staff and support staff had been very positive, particularly the latter. The session for support staff on mental health and well-being was oversubscribed. Andrea Marshall outlined the provision for well-being and mental health support in the colleges for staff and students, which, though badged differently, were generally similar and comprehensive.

MAT Attendance and Retention Data: Post-Covid, levels of attendance and retention were down in all colleges, reflecting the national picture. Staff are doubling down on this. Systems are in place to text students immediately absence is noted. Generally the data are above national levels. The variation between colleges reflects the average ability of their entry. It was noted attendance in secondary schools (c85%) nationally is a cause for concern.

MAT Expansion: The Headteacher Board of the Regional Schools Director will meet next week to consider the proposed assimilation of Chantry and John Kyrle High Schools into the MAT. Ceri Morgan, the MAT Director of Strategy, was introduced and reported on recent work on inspection with Chantry and JKHS and ongoing discussions with a range of other schools in the region, He is preparing a bid for a grant from the ESFA Trust Capacity fund to cover the cost, up to £200K, of improving software and other IT developments to support the growing size and complexity of the MAT. [A confidential minute was recorded for some of the discussion]

7. **HoM MAT Assurance Framework**

Peter Cooper explained that the Assurance Framework had been completed in response to discussions which had taken place with the office of the Regional Director of the DfE. The MAT financial forecast which showed a deficit in year 3 had caused the Schools Resource Management Inspector to raise concerns over the ability of the MAT to expand. Following further discussion and a review of the completed assurance framework it had been confirmed that no issues impacted adversely on the MAT's ability to assimilate further schools. The self-assessment showed that the MAT had a good capacity to support and drive institutional improvement. Action plans were in place to improve areas for development. The report was noted.

8. **MAT SAR and Action Plan**

Andrea Marshall summarised the MAT SAR outcomes and resulting action plan. An updated action plan showed progress was being made to improve areas for development. It was noted that there were now three documents with action plans – the SAR, Assurance Framework and Strategic Plan and it would be helpful to produce a single summary to facilitate monitoring by the Board. The annual meetings calendar showing indicative agendas will be reviewed to ensure all reports and reviews are listed.

AM
JTG

9. **College SARs**

The College SARs were noted. All now adopt a common format. Strengths outweigh areas for development and action plans are in place to address identified weaknesses.

10. **Ofsted Inspection reports: HSFC and WSFC**

Discussion of the reports took place as part of the Principal's report above.

11. **MAT Summary Evaluations**

Andrea Marshall summarised the Ofsted approach to inspecting MATs. Two out of the three MAT academies having been inspected in close succession, the MAT may be asked to undergo a summary evaluation. The recent inspections would form stage 1 of the process which would be followed by a visit to the central academy Trust. The focus is to assess the educational impact of the Trust. No judgment is given but a report is produced. We receive up to 5 days' notice and if we are selected it will be next term. The review comprises: meetings/discussions with key MAT representatives (Senior leaders and Trustees), opportunities to present evidence, discussion of overall quality across the MAT looking at 4 key areas- governance and delegation, curriculum and quality of education, leadership and management and behaviour and attitudes. The inspectors will visit academies to capture the views of academy leaders and staff about the impact of the MAT.

Although we can decline the offer of a Summary evaluation, it was agreed it would be a useful exercise to support the MAT's ongoing improvement agenda.

12. **External Governance Review**

Jonathan Godfrey gave a verbal update. Ron Hill and Rachel Robson of Stone King have completed their examination of documentation and interviews and a draft report has been sent to Ken Hopkins, Peter Cooper and Jonathan Godfrey. The main issues identified relate to communication between the Board and LGBs, level of scrutiny of the MAT and LGBs by the Directors, level of scrutiny of the Academies by the LGBs and greater consistency and detail in some procedures.

13. **Report on LGB meetings**

The summary minutes of recent LGB meetings were discussed. It was noted that HSFC are reviewing expenditure in the face of considerable funding challenges; KE VI College have amended procedures for allocating bursary awards following a £125K claw-back from ESFA arising from a methodology based on household income rather than individual need; WSFC are reviewing Senior staffing following a Deputy assuming this role in another academy in the Trust.

It was suggested that a common approach to reporting the outcomes of LGB meetings be adopted.

14. **Minutes of the meeting of MAT Chair, EP and LGB Chairs of 28th February, 2023**

The Minutes of the meeting were noted. Jonathan Godfrey reported that there had been universal positive feedback on the value of Trust membership. It was agreed this forum was a good first step in improving the relationship between the MAT and LGBs.

15. **Minutes of the Committee Meetings of 27th February, 2023**

The Audit Committee minutes were summarised by Craig Holden.

Following discussion, the minutes of the meeting, the Schools' Resource Management self-assessment and Freedom of Information Policy/Publication Scheme were approved. It was noted that Sallyanne Griffiths had clarified the term 'near miss' in respect of data breaches. The importance of cybersecurity was discussed and it was agreed that Mark Ridgway, MAT IT Manager, should be asked to update the Board on this at its next meeting.

The Finance and Resources Committee minutes were summarised by Sallyanne Griffiths. Following discussion, the minutes of the meeting and the Safeguarding Supervision policy were approved. The Anti-Bullying Policy and the Senior Staff disciplinary had been recommended for approval by the committee subject to an amendment allowing staff to be accompanied by a legal representative at any hearing arising from implementing the policies. Following the meeting, however, the Policy's author, Matt Hall, had recommended that this be only granted on an individual basis at the discretion of the Board. It was agreed that he should attend the next board meeting to explain this proposed change to the amendment. To ensure policies were in place in the intervening months pending the outcome of this discussion, the original policies which allow a staff member to be accompanied by a friend or union representative at any hearing were approved.

PC/MJR

MH

It was agreed the board should receive an annual report at its final meeting on HR issues.

16. **Any other business:**

There was no other business

Date of Next Meeting: 22nd June, 2023 at KE VI College, Stourbridge