



Colne Valley Local Schools Board (LSB)

Date: Thursday 24 June 2021 Time: 5.30pm
 Virtual details: Meeting held by MS Teams
 Clerk: Elizabeth Murphy
 Quorum: One half of the numbers of the LSB rounded up which must not be less than three

LSB Members	Other attendees:
Cathy Shergold (CSH) (Chair)	Emma Wigmore CEO
Emma Flin (EFL), Head of St Andrew's Primary, Great Yeldham	Suthan Sathanguru DFO
Julie Sarti (JSA), Head of Colne Engaine Primary	
Danielle O'Connell (DOC), Head of Belchamp St Paul Primary	
Kirsty Stuart (KST), Head of Ridgewell Primary	
Claire Kearney (CKE)	
Godfrey Evans (GEV) (Vice Chair)	
Nigel Benwell (NBE)	
Richard Hopkins (RHO)	

Meeting Summary for Vine Trust Board

Key issues discussed

- Hot topics with the CEO and DFO
- Structure and roles and responsibilities of the LSBs and Community Boards
- Poor communication across the trust
- The need for SBMs to receive the recognition they deserved as they were vital support for Heads
- The need for trust wide procurement
- Plans for the development and delivery of the curriculum

Actions/Decisions taken

- Some trust model policies adopted
- Minutes of the April LSB approved

Items requiring Trustee Approval

None

Issues outstanding

- Clarity between the roles and responsibilities of the Community Boards and the LSBs required– **The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity** (Carried forward from March meeting)
- Governors questioned whether the LSB would have the right to veto any changes made by schools to model policies but there was nothing in the Scheme of Delegation to advise on this so clarity on accountability was needed – **The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity** (Carried forward from March meeting)



- It was unclear who would sign off policies that were models that could be adapted or unique to schools – **The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity** (Carried forward from March meeting)

Minutes: Summer 2

No	Agenda Item	Action
1	<p>Welcome and Opening Prayer The meeting opened in prayer.</p> <p>Members were welcomed to the meeting plus the CEO and DFO who introduced themselves and questions were sought.</p> <p>Members questioned the DFO about the best and worst issues he had identified in the finances department since joining the trust recently. He felt that there was a good team spirit and he was willing to listen to his team and the SBMs as he was keen to implement changes for the better. The not so positive feedback was that Heads had reported that efficiency and processes of reporting were not good and he advised that work was already underway to resolve this. He hoped that the trust would be able to bring economies of scales that would benefit all of the schools too.</p> <p>Members questioned the value that was placed upon the SBMs by the trust as they were of vital support to any Head and had huge responsibilities and it was important for their status was recognised. The DFO recognised this and planned to attend the next SBMs meeting to get to know as many of them as possible and to listen to what they had to say and understand the issues they faced so he was able to help improve areas of concern. He added that the transition from LA to academy status was significant and was planning an induction programme to help SBMs with this. A common theme was poor communications across the trust and the CEO advised that work on this was already underway.</p> <p>Members questioned the approach to procurement as there did not seem to be sufficient priority for this and it would benefit all schools. The DFO said that this was already being considered e.g. broadband contracts, and he would be seeking input from the SBMs in this regard. Heads encouraged the DFO to visit the schools to see the children and this was already planned.</p> <p>The CEO and DFO were keen to receive emails or calls about any matter should the need arise and members were encouraged to make contact at any time.</p> <p><i>The CEO and DFO were thanked for attending and left the meeting at 5.50pm.</i></p>	



	It was agreed that the meeting could be recorded, which would be deleted once the minutes had been agreed by the Chair.	
2	Apologies for Absence None. Nigel Benwell joined the meeting later.	
3	Declaration of Pecuniary, Business Interests and Confidentiality No business interests or conflicts of interest were noted nor had any gifts or hospitality been received. Members were reminded of the confidential nature of the discussions until such time as the minutes were published and available for the public record.	
4	Any Other Business None.	

Business

5	Minutes from 20 April 2021 Members approved the minutes of the meeting which would be signed by the Chair and provided to the Clerk. ACTION 1 Copies would be sent to each Head for the public record, the Clerk to the Trustees and CEO's PA. ACTION 2	Chair Clerk
6	Matters Arising (a) Actions All actions were discharged except: Action 5: Further discussion established that a narrative alongside the data on the School on a Page report to provide the background story would be most helpful to the LSB and would build up a picture over time for members. Again, the Community Boards could assist with this by providing the most appropriate information. A narrative would be provided in future. ACTION 3 Members were still awaiting a response from the Trust to the three actions that were raised at the March LSB meeting as follows i.e., a, b and c below: (a) Clarity between the roles and responsibilities of the Community Boards and the LSBs required– The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity	Heads



	<p>(b) Governors questioned whether the LSB would have the right to veto any changes made by schools to model policies but there was nothing in the Scheme of Delegation to advise on this so clarity on accountability was needed – The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity</p> <p>(c) It was unclear who would sign off policies that were models that could be adapted or unique to schools – The Vine Trust Board needed to provide clarity</p> <p>The trust had decided to leave the LSBs to decide the best approach and it was thought that the Community Boards (CBs) would review them and then recommend them to the LSBs. When questioned JSA advised that mandatory policies were issued as PDFs whilst models were in Word. Members discussed the approach to policies taken so far and the options as to how this might be organised ahead. It was felt that the workload was too significant to ask one member to take responsibility for reviewing all of the policies, and it was important that the documents were read and understood, and so the help from the CBS as described earlier was preferred. Now that policies were being issued to a timetable it was agreed that a method of showing where the changes were in each updated document could be provided unless the policy was subject to a complete re-write, this would have to be determined on a case by case basis. A RAG system was proposed too.</p> <p><i>Nigel Benwell joined the meeting at 6.05pm</i></p>	
7	<p>Chair’s Update/Governance Matters</p> <p>The single biggest issue across the trust was communications, as mentioned above, and examples of how this was very inefficient were described. It was also felt that the Vine model of trustees, LSBs and CBs still had some way to go before everyone involved was clear of their roles and responsibilities and how the structure worked as a whole. Members agreed that the new approach was different to anything they had experienced as governors previously. There did not appear to be a job description for members in place.</p> <p>The discussions ranged far and wide and after much debate it was felt that the CBs would become essential as those members involved would have an intimate knowledge of the schools that they represented. Some discussion was had about whether a member from each hub could be tasked with having a responsibility for an individual school but in effect this was already the case for 3 out of the 4 schools in the hub. Belchamp St Paul did not yet have a CB and so it was agreed that CKE would take on the responsibility for getting to know this school in detail. It was also debated as to whether some members should be responsible for particular themes across the schools e.g. the curriculum, with mixed views.</p> <p>Members noted that the Scheme of Delegation made regular mention of the CBs as one of the sources for the LSBs but they had no delegated authority. The Vice Chair had some influence here and was continuing to attempt to get the document improved.</p>	



	<p>Members had attended an Ofsted training session recently and a number of issues discussed there were revisited e.g. trustees had overall responsibility for schools and not members etc. Whilst the training was useful it remained unclear which individuals would be responsible for responding to questions during an inspection (as they would need to have the detailed knowledge to do this) and so how this was to be organised in advance was unclear.</p> <p>Members noted the three principles of good governance in the Governors' Handbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; - holding executive leaders to account for educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and - overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money was well spent <p>Members noted that the trust was responsible for the financial performance of the schools and the vision of the trust was clear, but it was difficult for members to be responsible within the hubs without being involved in all areas of school life. Members felt it was important to be able to triangulate the information they received to be able to hold the Heads to account and it was difficult to do this without visiting schools. Whilst government guidelines still needed to be followed members could visit as long as this was planned in advance, although close contact with individuals still needed to be avoided so book looks etc might be an issue. Again, it was felt that the CBs could help with this but the lines of communication through to the LSBs still had to be finalised so that members felt sufficiently knowledgeable and able to carry out their functions. Invitations to individuals on the CBs to attend LSB meetings to help share knowledge of schools was thought an option for identifying key issues and this could be supported by the members that had an intimate knowledge of the schools too. Members were keen for Heads not to have their workloads increased any further by their actions. It was clear that some flexibility was required.</p> <p>Members agreed that the impact of the pandemic had not helped matters and caused much frustration and it was hoped that clarity on the way forward would be seen in the new academic year.</p>	
--	---	--

School Improvement

8	<p>Headteacher's Reports</p> <p>These were noted and members thanked the Heads for the time they had devoted to these to provide the detail. Questions and comments were sought.</p>	
---	--	--



	<p>Members questioned the long-term plan for the new RE curriculum. The Heads had worked closely to ensure the long term fit with their curriculum and had been involved in shared assessments, moderation etc. and the Diocesan Adviser had been involved in this too.</p> <p>Members noted how wrap-around care provided by schools seemed to be encouraging take up of places and asked if this was supported by any data. Heads reported that it was more anecdotal evidence and was mentioned when parents were considering the school and was definitely thought to be a benefit compared with other schools that did not have this locally. Members questioned whether this additional provision had any impact on staff time and energy. Whilst these morning and afternoon sessions were a separate model, staff were called upon when sickness had to be covered. Heads were considering whether the pooling of resources between the schools in the hub might help here; the benefit of the LSB was felt in this instance.</p> <p>Members asked how the Heads ensured a full curriculum was in place across the schools and how the sequencing of learning was ensured in all areas of the curriculum. through sequencing embedded into all areas. It was felt that this could be considered as part of a monitoring visit but whoever undertook this would need to know the school well to be able to establish this. Heads said they could share supporting documents to help but it would take up much time. Members questioned what support might be needed to put this in place especially with regard to managing workloads in small schools. It would need a separate discussion to explain but the Heads supported one another in generalised themes.</p> <p>Members asked for their appreciation to be passed on to all staff in the schools as they recognised the lengths that they had gone to and how tired they were all now feeling.</p>	
9	<p>School Development/Improvement Plans</p> <p>Members noted these and said they provided a very good overview of the schools.</p> <p>Members noted the joint information provided by the Heads in one document and questioned the model of the leadership across schools now. EFL said that the subject leaders were much more accountable and actively drove their own action plans which fed into the SDPs. They monitored progress and as a result were more engaged with staff who also had input to the process and this built good team work too working together on the bigger picture.</p>	



	<p>Members questioned whether it was the plan to have a leader for every subject. This was not usually possible in any of the schools and how this was being managed was described and it was hoped that templates could be shared between schools which would assist with this. Members felt that the detail provided was a good example of how the schools could collaborate effectively within the hub. Curriculum planning was already being undertaken collectively too which was also working well and it was hoped this would support the development of leadership and management over time too.</p> <p>KST explained how the staff were working so much better together as a team following a difficult year and there was a plan to allocate staff meetings around these over time with a rolling programme for the next two years mapped out.</p>	
10	<p>Finance Update Members commented that it did not always make sense to split staffing and other resources as teachers were by far the most important need in schools.</p> <p>The Clerk questioned whether the schools needed to approve budgets, but this was not in the Scheme of Delegation so not required.</p> <p>Members commented that the summary provided a very valuable analysis of the situation and could help with understanding the impact on the curriculum and enable Heads to highlight any issues at these meetings.</p> <p>Members questioned where the loans at Ridgewell had been sourced from and the repayment plans. These were historic loans and were within the trust and were being repaid over time.</p>	
11	<p>Outcomes and action as a result of any external / internal monitoring visits None.</p>	

Safeguarding

12	<p>Safeguarding Report The reports were noted.</p> <p>Members advised that they discussed any matters with the Community Board members should the need arise so that they were kept informed and this would continue to an important link when all of them were in place.</p>	
----	--	--



	<p>Members questioned the single central record check at Great Yeldham. This was undertaken internally and Heads agreed to provide the name of the individual who conducted this in the future for clarity.</p> <p>ACTION 4</p> <p>It was clarified that other than the trust no other external reviews were necessary. The process as to how schools were held to account for safeguarding through various checks was briefly discussed.</p>	Heads
--	---	-------

Final Business

13	<p>Approve Local Policies/Adopt Trust Policies</p> <p>The Colne Engaine CB did undertake a review of the whole set of trust model policies which they had received and considered them fit for purposes so were recommended for adoption. These models were for Attendance, Sickness Absence, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Education of Children in Care, Children Missing in Education, RHSE and Children Missing or Absconding, and Colne Engaine were keen for these to be accepted for adoption so that they could be put in place in the school. Members agreed to this request.</p> <p>The Social and Behaviour Policy for Belchamp St Paul was not yet ready for approval but the Chair agreed to read this and email the Head on the following day.</p> <p>ACTION 5</p> <p>In the meantime the policy was adopted.</p>	
14	<p>GDPR</p> <p>There was nothing to report.</p>	
15	<p>Communication to and from the Vine Trust Board</p> <p>Members felt there was nothing further to add.</p> <p>Members were reminded to copy the Chair in on any correspondence so she can keep up to date and respond appropriately to any subsequent discussions with the trust.</p>	
16	<p>Governance</p> <p>This had been discussed in some detail under item 7 above. The Chair advised that there was much discussion going on behind the scenes to get various matters resolved so that the Heads can be supported well in the future.</p>	



17	<p>Meeting Planning 2021-22 The Vice Chair was working on a draft structured programme of agendas which was to be issued to all for comment. ACTION 6</p>	Vice Chair
18	<p>Self-Evaluation A draft set of strategic focuses for the LSB was being prepared by the Vice Chair and would be issued for comment. ACTION 7</p>	
19	<p>Dates and Times of Future Meetings Dates were noted as follows all at 5.30pm: September 7th October 21st December 7th January 18th March 8th April 26th July 5th</p> <p>Members discussed whether meetings should remain virtual or face to face and agreed that this was still uncertain at this stage but there might be a blended approach over time.</p>	
	<p>Closing Prayer The meeting closed with a prayer.</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Drafted: 290621

Issued: 120721 (inc. Trust on 120721)