



Minutes

Meeting of Fir Bank Primary School Local Advisory Committee

Thursday 13th February 2020 at the school at 5.30pm

Present:	Mr Alex Reed	Committee Member (Chair)
	Mrs Rachael McLaughlin	Co-Headteacher and Committee Member
	Mr Rob Walker	Co-Headteacher and Committee Member
	Mrs Lorraine Bowler	Committee Member
	Dr Rachel Cowen	Committee Member
	Mr Peter Ferris	Committee Member
	Miss Jennifer Wright	Committee Member
	Mr Paul Matthews	Committee Member

Also Present:	Mr David Challen	Clerk to the Local Advisory Committee
	Mrs Gillian Hindle	Trust Executive Director of Business & HR
	Mrs Suzanne Millar	School Business Manager

The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance to this meeting of the Fir Bank Primary School Local Advisory Committee (LAC).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr Stephen Kirkland.

2 REGISTER OF BUSINESS, PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Committee members were invited to declare any additional business, pecuniary or personal interests to those which had been declared previously in the school's 'Register of Declaration of Interest'.

Mr Peter Ferris declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 (Contractor Quotes for the New Learning Area) as he is friendly with one of the contractors who had submitted a quotation for the work.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the LAC meeting held on 10th October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

4 ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 Arising from minute 7 (Reports from Link Committee Members), a Committee member questioned how the links to the school's priority areas would work in practice, now that the Trust had decided that there should be no further meetings of the Standards Sub-Committee, as it was intended that the reports from these link meetings would be considered at these Sub-Committee meetings.

The Chair reported on his recent meeting with the Co-Headteachers at which this issue was considered. The outcome was whilst these meetings created a lot of additional work for the school leaders, there was little overall benefit to the school. Mrs Hindle explained that this had also been discussed at a meeting of the Executive Management Board, which had also concluded that whilst creating a significant amount of extra work and a duplication of information, unless a school had particular issues, there was very little benefit to the school from holding these Sub-Committee meetings.

Challenge/Support: The Committee questioned the Co-Headteachers, Mrs Hindle and the Chair about the most effective way of fulfilling their role to challenge and monitor the effectiveness of the school's provision for its pupils, during which the following issues were considered:

4.1.1 Mrs Hindle acknowledged that whilst the Trust retains the responsibility for pupil outcomes in its schools and is challenged at Trust Board level, the structure of governance in individual schools is still an area for further development.

4.1.2 From a school perspective, the Co-Headteachers explained that they would like to avoid a situation where there is constant change and uncertainty. In order that LAC members could fulfil their role effectively, it was suggested that they be offered two dates each term when they could visit the school. The agenda for these visits could include a walk around the school site, a discussion about progress on the priorities in the School Development Plan (SDP), monitoring pupil attainment and progress etc. etc.

4.1.3 LAC members need to be confident that what is included in the Co-Headteacher's reports is accurate and is that is what is happening in practice. It is still intended that the individual subject reports would be presented to the Committee at LAC meetings. Committee members need to be confident about how well they know the school and feel empowered when speaking to Ofsted.

4.1.4 All the Trust's schools will no longer hold Standards Sub-Committee meetings, with the exception of Thorp Primary School, where its overall performance currently necessitates that this should continue at the present time.

4.1.5 As a Trust school, there are different levels of scrutiny now in place to assess the school's performance including by the senior members of staff working across all the Trust's schools, the CEO, Trust Board, DfE and Ofsted.

4.1.6 Within the new Ofsted framework, the Trust has the responsibility for the governance in its schools and for dealing with pupil outcomes.

4.1.7 The school's subject leaders have other roles and responsibilities and preparing reports for Sub-Committee meetings is hindering them in fulfilling their primary role and placing an additional burden on them.

4.1.8 Some statutory roles would continue e.g. Safeguarding Link, SEN Link and Mr Matthews would be continuing with his link to Finance, Risk and Compliance (including health and safety).

The Committee agreed to move to the suggestion made by the Co-Headteachers whereby they would offer LAC members two dates each term when they would visit to get a better understanding of the school.

ACTION: Co-Headteachers

4.2 Arising from minutes 4.2 and 5.4 (Finance, Risk and Compliance), Mr Matthews agreed to report on his monthly meetings with the school's Business Manager under agenda item 7 (School Budget Update). Mrs Millar was present at this meeting of the LAC as discussed under minute 5.4

4.3 Arising from minute 4.2 (Common Format for Presenting Financial Information), Mrs Hindle informed the Committee that Mrs Copson (Senior Director of Finance) was doing some work on developing a common format for presenting financial information to each LAC.

4.4 Arising from minute 4.4 (Pupil Targets), the Committee was informed that these are included within the Co-Headteacher's termly report.

4.5 Arising from minute 8.3 (LAC Terms of Reference), the proposed changes to the LAC Terms of Reference would be considered by the Trust Board at their meeting on Wednesday 25th March 2020.

4.6 Arising from minutes 8 and 9.5 (Quality of Education Sub-Committee and Subject Leads), as discussed earlier in the meeting, these Sub-Committee meetings would no longer be held.

4.7 Arising from minute 12.1 (Internet Provider), as agreed, Mrs Hindle had thanked Mrs Janet Eppleston and Mr Phil Foden, from North Chadderton School, for arranging to change the school's internet provider.

4.8 Arising from minute 13.5 (Nursery Provision), this was an item on the agenda for consideration later on in this meeting of the LAC.

5 CO-HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

Challenge/Support: The Co-Headteacher's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and Mrs McLaughlin and Mr Walker responded to questions from the Committee in respect of the following points

Staffing

5.1 Unfortunately, the level three teaching assistant (TA) appointed last September had left the school after only three weeks in post. The post had been advertised and the school had recruited a good TA3 from January 2020, to replace her in Upper Key Stage 2, and who understands the needs of the curriculum for these pupils. During the interim period, a regular supply TA had covered this role and there had been minimal impact on the pupils

Curriculum

5.2 The school's current curriculum is unable to provide the coverage needed in non-core subjects i.e. geography and history. Co-Headteachers have recognised this and are in the process of rewriting a curriculum (with subject coordinators) that has clear intent for the children at Fir Bank that demonstrates full coverage of all National Curriculum subjects.

The Co-Headteachers have attended a three-day curriculum course (funded by the Oldham Opportunity Area) led by Clive Davies and it has been decided to trial his 'off the shelf curriculum' for History and Geography in Year 1 and Year 4. The curriculum is very clear in respect of 'sticky knowledge' from Reception to Year 6 and in identifying the key knowledge that children at Fir Bank need to be learning.

With regard to the support offered for greater depth pupils, the CoHeadteachers explained that they want to build local knowledge into the curriculum and use the Oldham Pledge, which acknowledges the skills that pupils have and are not linked to national curriculum subjects. It was recognised that the school already provides its pupils with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Currently the school only partially uses an 'off the shelf curriculum' called Prospectus so it is difficult to determine the skills and knowledge built up during the year and it does not always reflect the local context.

5.3 The LAC noted the wide range of recent trips and events provided for pupils, which had included the opportunity for pupils to play on the Oldham

Athletic pitch during their game with Orient on 6th December 2019. Mr Walker reported on the additional opportunities available to pupils as a result of the school's involvement with the Oldham Athletic Community Trust

Attendance

- 5.4 A revised Attendance Policy would be presented for consideration by the Committee later in the meeting.

An unauthorised absence of ten sessions or more will now automatically lead to the school requesting that the Local Authority (LA) issues a fixed penalty notice.

- 5.5 At 96.6% for the Autumn term 2019, whole school attendance is currently just above the national average. The current percentage of persistent absentees is 6.6% against the national average of just under 9%.

Safeguarding

- 5.6 Currently there is one TA in school without a current DBS certificate but has one from her previous school. Applications are currently taking a long time to process, and the TA is not being left alone with pupils until her DBS certificate is issued. In response to a question, Mrs McLaughlin agreed to review the school's Single Central Record (SCR).

ACTION: Mrs R McLaughlin

- 5.7 There are currently no children on the Child Protection Register and there are now 2 children in need.

Health and Safety

- 5.8 It was noted that there had been no major incidents/accidents during the Autumn term but several minor incidents/accidents. In response to a question about the difference between the two, the Committee was informed that a major incident or accident is one which involves a hospital visit.
- 5.9 A successful fire drill had taken place on 5th February 2020 and no concerns had been identified.

Premises

- 5.10 The school's Site Manager is currently off school due to ill health and the Co-Headteachers explained how his duties are being covered. If he does not return to work, the LAC will need to consider how his duties might be covered in the long term.

On behalf of the Committee, it was agreed that Mrs Bowler would arrange to send a card to him wishing him a speedy recovery from his current illness.

ACTION: Mrs L Bowler

- 5.11 One item discussed was deemed to be confidential and would not therefore be included in the minutes and papers to be made available for public inspection.

Standards and Progress

- 5.12 A progress and attainment sheet for the Autumn term 2019, for all year groups, had been circulated prior to the meeting and Committee members questioned the Co-Headteachers about the following points arising from the data:

5.13.1 A Committee member questioned why the expected + targets for Year 4 appeared lower than those in other age groups.

5.13.2 Due to some concerns about Year 3, an HLTA was working in this class each morning to support targeted pupils with their Reading. It was already known that this cohort has a poor bottom end and the HLTA was enhancing the support that was already being provided for pupils in this class.

The pupil progress meetings after Easter will give a better indication about whether this additional support has moved pupils back to the level at which they need to be at.

5.13.3 The school has identified those pupils requiring additional speech and language support and a member of staff had been moved from EYFS to give these pupils additional support and to provide some additional phonics support for some Year 1 pupils. The Committee was informed that much of TA's time is directed dependent on the needs of pupils.

5.13.4 The different approach used to identify SEN pupils at an early stage has led to the submission for an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for a child in Year 3.

RESOLVED: that the Co-Headteachers be thanked for their comprehensive report.

6 REPORTS FROM LINK COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- 6.1 Mrs Bowler reported on her very positive meeting with Mrs Rachel Taylor (Maths Lead) and Mrs Taylor's subject lead report had been circulated for consideration by LAC members.

- 6.2 **Challenge/Support:** Mrs Bowler informed the Committee that one issue that had arisen during the meeting was that since joining the Trust, it had been established that Fir Bank's expectations in Maths was higher than those of the secondary school to which pupils transferred.

Fir Bank was now working closely with North Chadderton to ensure standards do not fall during transition and regular meetings are taking place between the subject leads for Maths and those for other subjects.

Whilst this has emerged as one of the benefits of the school being part of the Trust, this is harder to manage for those pupils moving across to other secondary schools. There is however a Transition Hub working on this and which is already producing new opportunities for Year 5 pupils.

It was recognised that as relationships develop across the Trust, the benefits for pupils should increase.

RESOLVED: that Mrs Bowler be thanked for her report of her meeting with the subject lead for Maths.

7 SCHOOL BUDGET UPDATE

- 7.1 Mr Matthews informed the Committee that he was now meeting monthly with the school's Business Manager and the latest budget summary report had been circulated for consideration by the Committee.

- 7.2 **Challenge/Support:** The Committee questioned Mrs Millar and Mr Matthews about the following areas of spending within the report:

7.2.1 BO5RMC – Repairs Maintenance and Cleaning – Mrs Millar explained that this budget heading was likely to be around £3000 overspent by the end of the financial year. This is due to the costs of an asbestos survey and tree survey which were not included in the original budget figures.

7.2.2 D30REPRO – the school had now joined the Trust's global contract but the estimated spending by the end of the year is £7370 against the original budget for £6225. Mrs Copson is to investigate why these costs have increased under the new contract.

ACTION: Mrs C Copson

7.2.3 LPSN - With regard to the spending on Professional Charges (Accountancy Fees), a Committee member questioned why these are not top-sliced by the Trust and including in the annual corporate support fee.

Mrs Hindle explained that the Trust is trying to keep the percentage support fee paid to the Trust as low as possible so that schools can retain as much funding as possible to address their own priorities.

7.2.4 FICT04 - A similar question about top slicing was asked in relation to whole school ICT services.

Mrs Hindle explained that the Trust does not apply a refined business model in respect of the services provided to schools and many of the staff engaged in supporting the primary schools through the Trust are employed by North Chadderton School.

Although there is a document about the central services provided to all schools by the Trust, that was written when the Trust was first established, Mrs Hindle explained that if all the support that staff from North Chadderton School provide to the Trust was costed, it was likely that the percentage corporate support fee would need to increase. Mrs Hindle agreed to send Mr Matthews a copy of this document.

ACTION: Mrs G Hindle

It was also noted that the Trust does not make a profit from the fee that schools pay into the Trust but that any school facing unexpected difficulties can apply to borrow money from the Trust.

7.3 Mr Matthews reported that the original budget for 2019/2020 has now been revised and that whilst the overall budget was in line with predicted spending, the predicted surplus balance at the end of the year was expected to be £7,000 compared to the original prediction of £14,000.

RESOLVED: that Mrs Millar and Mr Matthews be thanked for their budget update.

8 POLICIES

The following policies and reports had been circulated prior to the meeting and these were approved by the Committee as follows:

- 8.1 Science Policy – the Committee suggested that the policy be amended to include the framing of the aims and intent, to make specific reference to cultural capital and to show how the policy allows children to access age appropriate reading.
- 8.2 Accessibility Plan – it was suggested that policy should be amended to identify the skills and knowledge around SEN pupils.
- 8.3 Attendance Policy – the policy had been amended slightly so that children who arrive in school after 9.15am are deemed to have missed the morning session and therefore this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- 8.4 EYFS Supervision Policy – in response to a question, the Co-Headteachers explained that they will carry out the supervision meetings with staff.
- 8.5 SEND Policy

9 SAFEGUARDING

Mrs Hindle explained that safeguarding was an agenda item on all the LAC agendas this term. During a recent Ofsted inspection at another Trust, inspectors had questioned how the Trust knows that safeguarding is good in all of its schools.

9.1 The Co-Headteachers explained that the school's Safeguarding Policy had been updated since the beginning of the academic year to take account of the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance published by the Government.

All staff had signed to say they had read the policy and guidance, and this would be tested through a quiz, which would be carried out at a future staff meeting.

9.2 Dr Rachel Cowan was the school's Safeguarding and Pupil Well-Being link LAC member.

9.3 Dr Cowan has produced a report from her visits to look at safeguarding procedures and these would be shared with the Trust Board.

10 REVIEW OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM 2020/2021

10.1 This item had already been looked at in detail during the consideration of agenda item 5 (Co-Headteacher's Report). Mr Walker explained that he and Mrs McLaughlin would be attending two further training sessions on the curriculum led by Mr Clive Davies.

10.2 The school's School Improvement Partner (SIP) would be visiting in the near future, with a specific focus on the school's curriculum. In addition, two full days will be set aside for staff to look in detail at the curriculum for 2020/2021 and Mrs McLaughlin agreed to give a presentation on the new curriculum at the next LAC meeting.

ACTION: Mrs R McLaughlin/Clerk – Agenda Item

11 BUILDINGS – NEW LEARNING AREA

11.1 The Co-Headteachers reported on the proposal to remodel the current accommodation to create a new learning area and referred the Committee to the quotes that had been received for carrying out the work required.

11.2 £30,000 had been included in the revised budget to meet the cost of the building work. Under the scheme of financial delegation, the LAC can approve spending up to a limit of £30k, without seeking approval from the Trust Board.

11.3 **Challenge/Support:** A question was raised about whether building regulation approval is needed and of the need to inform the LA about the work as part of the Trust's lease agreement with them.

Mrs Millar agreed to contact the LA's Building Control to inform them of the school's proposals.

ACTION: Mrs S Millar

- RESOLVED:** (i) that subject to the appropriate checks about the building regulation requirements, the LAC agree for the building work on the new learning area to progress; and
- (ii) that the LAC appoint Royton Builders as its preferred contractor to carry out the work required.

12 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT LAC MEETING**

RESOLVED: that the next LAC meeting be held on Thursday 14th May 2020 at 5.30pm.

13 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

13.1 Mr Alex Reed

Mr Reed informed the LAC that he had recently qualified as an Ofsted inspector, in addition to continuing in his role as Headteacher at another school. As an inspector he would be spending a lot more time away from home so regrettably, he would be resigning as both Chair, and as a LAC member, at the end of the school year

ACTION: Clerk – Agenda Item

14 **CONFIDENTIALITY**

There was one item of confidential business.

(There being no further business, Committee members were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was declared closed at 7.20pm).

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____