

DULWICH HAMLET EDUCATIONAL TRUST (DHET)

Meeting of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Date: Thursday, 5 December 2019

Time: 18.30

Location: Dulwich Hamlet Junior School, Dulwich Village, SE21 7AL

MINUTES

Present:	Crispin Tuckley	Chair	Chair
	Sonia Case	Executive Head Teacher	EHT
	Simon Latham	Trustee	SL
	Christopher Parsons	Trustee	CAP
	Karen Robinson	Trustee	KR
	Rebecca Tee	Trustee	RT
In attendance:	Liz Cohen (items 1 – 9)	Head of School, BPS	LC
	Claire Purcell	Head of School, DHJS	CP
	Suresh Shan	Head of Finance	SS
Clerk:	Kathleen Formosa		Clerk

1. Welcome, Quorum & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair opened the business of the meeting at 18:30, welcoming the members of the Board and others in attendance.
 - 1.1.1 The Chair extended a special welcome to the Heads of School who were in attendance to support Trustees in their discussion of Ofsted readiness and to SS who was in attendance to support Trustees in their discussion of the recent audit and the 2018/19 accounts.
- 1.2 Apologies were **received** and **accepted** from David Swordy (DS) and Maryah Tafri (MT).
 - 1.2.1 It was **noted** that SL had notified his late arrival to the meeting and this was **accepted**. SL arrived at 19:10.
- 1.3 A quorum was **confirmed** and the meeting proceeded to business accordingly.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 SL declared as a standing interest his work as Head of the Town Clerk & Chief Executive's Office at the City of London Corporation, noting that he could be reasonably expected to be privy to discussions about the strategy and management of the City of London Multi-Academy Trust ("CoLAT") which the City Corporation sponsors and of which the Town Clerk is a company member. This might occasionally include discussions about expansion of CoLAT in Boroughs neighbouring the City (i.e. including Southwark). SL confirmed that he exercised no executive and/or delegated authority functions in respect of this matter, but would nevertheless recuse himself if necessary from any discussions pertaining to DHET's growth or expansion.
 - 2.1.1 There were no other declarations of interest.

3. Dulwich Hamlet Junior School ("DHJS") Ofsted Preparations

- 3.1 CP reported on DHJS's preparations for Ofsted inspection, noting that as an "outstanding" school, DHJS had been exempt from Ofsted inspection since 2008. CP confirmed that DHJS had been judged outstanding by Ofsted upon its last full inspection in 2008.

- 3.1.1 It was **noted** that the new Ofsted inspection framework specifies that outstanding schools are subject to inspection, and for this reason DHJS is currently preparing for inspection. The school has received no specific indication that the school will be inspected soon. However, three outstanding schools in the area have had Ofsted inspections since the new inspection framework came into force in September.
 - 3.1.2 CP reported that Section 8 as well as Section 5 Ofsted inspections are now two-day inspections, and that decisions on what type of inspection is made would be determined based on risk assessment – e.g., complaints from parents, safeguarding, etc. The length of time since the last inspection would be considered as part of any risk assessment. It was **acknowledged** that the length of time since DHJS was last inspected may factor into Ofsted considering DHJS to be a higher-risk school.
 - 3.1.3 CP thanked LC for her support in DHJS’s preparations for Ofsted inspection. It was **noted** that Belham Primary School (“BPS”) had been inspected last year under the previous Ofsted framework, but as the new framework was in consultation.
- 3.2 CP stated her view that the new inspection framework speaks to DHJS’s strengths.
- 3.2.1 CP reported that the school development plan for 2019/20 had been developed using the new headings in the inspection framework – i.e., quality of education, leadership and management, behaviour and attitudes, and personal development – with self-assessment undertaken in respect of the key inspection areas of intent, implementation and impact under each heading.
 - 3.2.2 CP reported that DHJS had worked with a consultant who held an extended session with all teachers on preparation for inspection, and a separate session with senior leaders. She reported that the consultant had also met with subject leaders and teams of teachers working in specific subject areas to deep-dive into curriculum and to consider each area of the curriculum through the lens of Ofsted inspection. The school has subsequently made small adjustments to the curriculum to ensure that it explicitly tracks with the new inspection framework.
 - 3.2.3 CP reported that preparations for Ofsted inspection have led the school to go back to the national curriculum to check that all the different components of each key stage are being taught. Preparations have also led the school to re-emphasise to teachers the importance of keeping current with research in their subject areas and general educational practice to ensure that decision-making in the school takes such research into account.
 - 3.2.4 CP reported that assessment data would be given much less emphasis in the new inspection framework. Rather, Ofsted would want to see evidence of how the school’s assessment data and other internal data was being used to support the intent and impact of the curriculum. Regarding impact, evidence also would be sought to support the school’s effective preparation of pupils for the next stage of their education.
 - 3.2.5 CP reported that DHJS had been mindful of cultural capital, and ensuring that all pupils, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were given the same opportunities as all other pupils.
- 3.3 CP stated her view that DHJS is well-prepared for inspection. She noted that since the last inspection, the school had become part of a MAT, and that whilst inspection would focus on the school, there would also be a need to talk about the school as part of a MAT.
- 3.3.1 Activities undertaken across the school to prepare teachers, staff and governors for inspection were **reviewed** and **discussed** in detail.
 - 3.3.2 KR reported that she, in her capacity as Chair of the local governing body, and CP had enlisted DHJS governors to take responsibility for gaining detailed understanding of likely inspection questions and what governors and senior leaders will need to know and understand ahead of any inspection.

- 3.3.3 KR stated that for governors, a key issue is being able to understand Ofsted terminology and to have clear examples of current practice that can be shared with inspectors to illustrate effective teaching, learning and good practice.
- 3.3.4 CP stated that the school's work would be to ensure that all subject leaders were working at the same level of confidence. She stated that curriculum deep-dives and curriculum health checks undertaken by governors had been helpful in this regard.
- 3.3.5 It was **discussed** and **agreed** that the Hamlet Herald should feature a piece from a curriculum leader in each issue. This would be a way of ensuring that parents and governors are kept informed of what is being taught in the school and the impact of the curriculum.

ACTION: CP to arrange a schedule of curriculum leader contributions to the Hamlet Herald.

- 3.3.6 CP reported that the annual governor morning had been brought forward in the yearly calendar, and would take place in March 2020. The focus of this event would be the school's curriculum. Trustees were invited to participate.
- 3.3.7 **A Trustee asked whether Trustees were expected to attend inspection meetings.**
- 3.3.8 It was **noted** that Trustees were present at last year's BPS Ofsted inspection, but that their input was not particularly welcomed by the inspector. It was **discussed** that not all inspectors welcome the participation of Trustees in academy school inspections, but that this should not preclude Trustee participation.
- 3.3.9 LC stated that in her experience of BPS's inspection last year, having documentation ready for review by inspectors was key to a successful inspection. It was **discussed** that documentation as well as the confidence of subject leaders to speak clearly and authoritatively about their subject areas would be emphasised in DHJS's preparations for inspection.
- 3.4 Trustees **commended** CP and LC for the support shown between the schools and the willingness to share good practice between them.
- 3.4.1 CP was thanked for her presentation.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 4.1 The minutes of the Board of Trustees held on 10 October 2019 (**Paper 1**) were **reviewed** and approved subject to minor correction.

ACTION: KF to amend and recirculate the minutes.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting (**Paper 2**) were **reviewed** and **discussed** as follows:
 - Regarding item 6.3, SS assured Trustees that the consultancy work being sought fell within the procurement threshold and that there was therefore no need for a full tendering exercise; and
 - Regarding item 11.4.8, EHT reported that a part-time member of staff had been found to coordinate and to bring the schools' and Trust's websites up to date.
- 5.1.1 It was **noted** that all other matters arising were complete or would be dealt with as part of the meeting agenda.

6. Executive Headteacher's Report

- 6.1 EHT thanked the Heads of School and the administrative teams at both schools for their support in a successful start to the year and preparations for the possible Ofsted inspection at DHJS.
- 6.2 EHT reported that the new Pay and Performance Policy for support staff considered by the Pay and Personnel Committee ("PPC") and agreed by Trustees had helped to clarify expectations for staff, and had been welcomed by staff and management.

- 6.2.1 EHT reported that following approval of the new Pay and Performance Policy, she had a positive meeting with the Head of Human Resources for the Trust, Sue Roberts (SR), who was now taking forward the new staff handbook in line with the policy and other recent policy developments.
- 6.2.2 EHT reported that she and SR were currently dealing with a range of staffing issues. She assured Trustees that all were in hand.
- 6.2.3 EHT stated her view that her 0.5 contract is working, and thanked the Heads of School and the School Business Managers for their support. She stated that the work to consolidate the finance and HR functions across the schools continued and was working well.
- 6.3 EHT reported that she continued to pursue a response from Southwark regarding the Trust's proposed possession of the Caretaker's House on the BPS grounds.
- 6.3.1 EHT reported that she had sent four letters to the local authority on behalf of the Trust, and that none of these had received a response. She suggested, and it was **agreed**, that a letter from the Chair of the Board of Trustees to local authority councilors should be the next step after the Christmas holidays.

ACTION: Chair and EHT to discuss and agree the content of a letter to local authority councilors and report back at the next meeting.

7. Chair's Report

- 7.1 The Chair reported that a growth strategy working group had been convened and has now met twice. The output from these meetings would be discussed as part of agenda items later in the meeting.
- 7.2 The Chair reported that since the last meeting of the Trustees, he had met on three occasions with EHT to review the budget management reports.
- 7.2.1 The Chair reported that he had also met with EHT to discuss personnel matters.

8. Trust Annual Report & Financial Statements

- 8.1 The Trust's Annual Report and Financial Statements (**Paper 3**) were **reviewed** and **agreed** for presentation to the Members at the Annual General Meeting.
- 8.1.1 The financial statements were **reviewed** in detail. It was **acknowledged** that the Trust remained in a healthy financial position, although there were a number of key risks that Trustees would need to monitor going forward.
- 8.1.2 SS reported that the auditors had made an adjustment between the two schools regarding VAT charges and that the adjustment had affected the reserves at both schools – i.e., BPS reserves were increased by £11K (and were therefore closer to the expected year-end position than previously reported) and DHJS reserves were decreased by £11K. SS assured Trustees that the adjustment did not affect the bottom line in the accounts, and that the adjustment had been made in the accounts circulated to Trustees.
- 8.2 The Auditor's Letter of Comment (**Paper 4**) was **reviewed** and **accepted**.
- 8.2.1 It was **noted** that a list of recommendations was included in the letter of comment, but that most were low priority. The few medium priority recommendations were briefly **reviewed**. It was **noted** that there were no high priority recommendations.
- 8.2.2 The management response (**Paper 4a**) was **reviewed** and **accepted**.
- 8.2.3 CAP reported that many of the recommendations made by the auditors pointed to minor administrative procedures needing some tidying, and that many had already been addressed. He assured Trustees that the Audit Committee would continue to monitor progress against the auditor's recommendations.

- 8.3 The Letter of Representation (**Paper 5**) was **reviewed** and **agreed for signature**.
ACTION: Chair to sign the letter of representation on behalf of Trustees.
- 8.3.1 The outstanding £40K in funding from Southwark for healthy school meals and highlighted in the letter of representation was **discussed**. SS reported that the Trust is entitled to this funding and it is being chased. Although all evidence had been submitted in advance of the audit, the Trust was still awaiting a response at the time of the audit's completion.
- 8.3.2 It was requested that wording regarding cheques is removed from future letters of representation and other reports from the auditors as cheques are no longer used by the Trust.
ACTION: CAP / SS to request that auditors amend their advice and documentation regarding cheques in acknowledgment of the Trust's current practice, going forward.
- 8.3.3 The Trustees **commended** the Audit Committee, SS and school staff on a smooth and uneventful audit. CAP stated that the two local governors who had joined the Audit Committee during the year should be commended especially as they have brought a high level of professional skill to the committee.
- 8.4 The guidance, "Making Sense of the Annual Accounts" (**Paper 6**) was **noted** with thanks to Baxter & Co.
- 9. Finance Update**
- 9.1 It was **noted** that the paper on the Trust's financial position and financial update (**Paper 7**) had not circulated. SS provided a verbal update to Trustees.
- 9.2 The Budget Management Reports for the Trust and the schools (**Papers 8a-c**) were **reviewed**.
- 9.2.1 SS reported that £30K had been taken from the reserves at each school for capital investment. At DHJS, the funds were needed for urgent repairs. At BPS, the funds would be used to support set-up costs for the music department and Year 6 class.
- 9.2.2 **Questions were raised regarding BPS's draw down of reserves if the school is projecting an in-year surplus, whereas no such surplus is projected at DHJS.**
- 9.2.3 It was **discussed** and **agreed** that it should not be the case that if DHJS is drawing down reserves for essential repairs that BPS should draw down the same level of reserves, particularly if the funds would be spent on discretionary investment.
- 9.2.4 It was **agreed** that a clear capital works plan should be developed at each school and scrutinised by each school's business committee. Plans should then be signed off by each local governing body with reports made to Trustees in due course.
ACTION: KR / SL to report back at the next meeting decisions made by the local governing bodies regarding capital works expenditure.
- 9.2.5 It was recommended by Trustees that expenditure at BPS should be kept within the agreed in-year income budget where possible.
- 9.3 The School Resource Management Return (**Paper 9**) was **reviewed** for information.
- 9.3.1 SS reported that this was the first year the Trust had completed the return. He explained that completing the return was currently voluntary for MATs, but would be submitted annually in line with ESFA recommendations.
- 9.3.2 SS reported that the Trust had met all ESFA requirements regarding the prudent use and application of resources. He suggested that reading through the return may be valuable for new governors as it highlights strengths and areas for development in the Trust's internal controls, management and governance.
ACTION: KR / SL to include the School Resource Management Return in induction information for new governors.

10. Trust Strategy & Growth

- 10.1 The Chair reported that he and EHT met with a representative from DfE for the annual academies review. He stated that as the meeting with DfE took place within the purdah period, limited feedback was provided.
- 10.1.1 The Chair reported that he and EHT had sought to determine how DfE could help the Trust identify potential new partners or provide support in identifying schools the MAT could approach. It was clear that most of DfE's work was focused on helping MATs and academies in distress, rather than those who are working well.
- 10.1.2 EHT stated that she would like to re-approach DfE in the new year. It was **discussed** that if DfE were focused primarily on academies in distress, DHET might present itself as a potential partner.
- 10.1.3 It was **discussed** whether it would be in DHET's best interest to take on an underperforming school as a sponsor, and how this may affect the Trust.
- 10.2 The draft strategy paper (**Paper 10**) was **taken as read**.

This section of the minutes has been removed to Confidential Annex A.

- 10.3 The output from the "20 Questions" workshop (**Paper 11**) was **noted**.

11. Trust Governance & Information

- 11.1 The amended Governance Plan (**Paper 12**) was **reviewed** and **agreed**.
- 11.2 The updated Scheme of Delegation (**Paper 13**) was **reviewed**. It was **noted** that this document remained in draft.
- 11.2.1 It was **discussed** that further consideration should be given to delegation to PPC.
ACTION: Trustees to submit their comments on the scheme of delegation to the Chair by 13 December.
- 11.3 An explanation of the role and establishment of the Trust for the website (**Paper 14**) was **reviewed**. It was **noted** that the document had been presented in draft.
- 11.3.1 The Chair stated that he had drafted the summary on prompting from a DHJS local governor, who had observed that specific information about DHET and its relationship with the schools was not easily available on the schools' websites and not well understood by all parents.
- 11.3.2 Trustees expressed support for the Trust summary around the table. The Chair invited further comments after the meeting. It was **agreed** that approval of the final draft would be sought by circulation.
ACTION: Trustees to submit their comments on the Trust summary for the website to the Chair.
ACTION: Chair to seek approval on a final draft of the Trust summary by circulation.
- 11.4 EHT reported that all Trustees and local governors were now members of NGA and should receive welcome emails from NGA in the near term. Trustees were encouraged to make use of the information and resources available through NGA.
- 11.4.1 The Chair stated that he would continue to forward to Trustees emails from the Confederation of Schools Trust, which provide information particular to academy schools and MATs.

12. Committee Reports

- 12.1 Minutes of Audit Committee held on 26 November 2019 (**Paper 15**) were **taken as read**. It was **noted** that much of what was discussed at the Audit Committee meeting had been discussed by Trustees earlier in this meeting.

12.1.1 CAP reported that the auditor's fees have now been benchmarked, and it has been confirmed that Baxter & Co's fees are at the low end of the range. He stated his view that DHET continues to get full value for money from the auditors.

12.1.2 CAP reported that DS and MT had attended the 26 November 2019 meeting of the Audit Committee as observers. Both have subsequently expressed an interest in joining the committee. It was proposed and **agreed** that both be approved as members of the Audit Committee.

ACTION: Clerk to add DS and MT to the distribution list for the Audit Committee.

12.2 The minutes of the BPS local governing body held on 14 October 2019 (**Paper 17**) were **taken as read**.

12.2.1 SL reported that one parent governor had stepped down as a governor following the October meeting of the local governing body. An election for a new parent governor would take place before the next meeting in January 2020.

12.2.2 Trustees **commended** the BPS local governing body for their attention to the performance of disadvantaged pupils in the school.

12.3 The minutes of the DHJS local governing body held on 16 October 2019 (**Paper 18**) were **taken as read**.

12.3.1 KR reported that a co-opted governor had retired from the local governing body since the October meeting. A new co-opted governor would be recruited later in the year, following the completion of the governor skills audit currently in progress.

13. Items for Review

13.1 The Support Staff PPM Policy (**Paper 19**) was **taken as read**.

13.1.1 EHT reported that the policy's assessment procedures had been simplified and streamlined following feedback from the Heads of School.

13.1.2 EHT assured Trustees that all staff now had clear job descriptions and that these would be regularly reviewed and referred to per the terms of the new PPM Policy. Line management arrangements had also been clarified.

13.1.3 The Support Staff PPM Policy was **approved in principle**. Trustees suggested that the trade union liaison should take place before final approval is given. It was **noted** that such consultation would need to be done externally as there was no trade union representative in the school.

ACTION: EHT to consult the trade union liaison on the Support Staff PPM Policy and report back.

13.2 A new Trustee and Governor Allowances Policy (**Paper 20**) was **taken as read**. The Chair stated that he had drafted a new policy to apply to Trustees as well as governors. It was **noted** that the previous policy applied only to governors.

13.2.1 The Chair stated that having a clear policy agreed and in place was part of the Trust's commitment to openness and inclusivity, enabling governors and Trustees of any means to fully participate in governance and the life of the schools and Trust.

13.2.2 The Trustee and Governor Allowances Policy was **agreed in principle**. It was **noted** that a decision was needed on how the policy would be communicated to all and where it might be incorporated into related policies documents. .

ACTION: Chair, SL, KR and EHT to consider how the Trustee and Governor Allowances Policy should be communicated.

13.3 The Whistleblowing Policy (**Paper 21**) was **reviewed**.

13.3.1 It was **noted** that the new version of the Academies Financial Handbook provides that a Trustee and a member of staff are designated in the policy as individuals a whistleblower can approach. It was **noted** that the handbook does not provide that these individuals are named.

13.3.2 It was **discussed** and **agreed** that the Chair of Audit Committee would be the Trustee designated in the policy. It was **discussed** that this addition should be made to the policy along with other minor editorial adjustments.

ACTION: Chair to add Chair of Audit Committee as the designated Trustee and make other editorial adjustments to the policy.

ACTION: EHT to add the Whistleblowing Policy to the staff handbook and post to an accessible area of the website once finalised.

14. Items for Information

14.1 The party education (schools) policies in their election manifestos for the general election (**Paper 22**) were **noted**.

15. Safeguarding

15.1 KR reported that safeguarding training had been arranged for all Trustees and local governors, and that this would take place on 11 February 2020 at BPS. It was suggested and **agreed** that Trustees should advise the trainer via KR in advance of any areas of focus or key questions they would like to have emphasised in the training.

ACTION: All Trustees to advise KR of any areas of focus of key questions they would like to have emphasised in safeguarding training.

16. Any Other Business

16.1 The Chair reminded Trustees that clerking arrangements would be changing at the end of the school year.

17. Confidential Business

17. The minutes of the Pay and Personnel Committee ("PPC") (**Paper 16**) were **received** and **noted**. It was **noted** that these minutes had circulated as confidential to the Trustees.

The business of the meeting concluded at 21:08.

Date of the Next Meeting - Thursday, 5 March 2020 at 18:30 at Belham Primary School.

KF/kf: 30/12/2019