



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DRAFT MINUTES of the nineteenth meeting of the Directors of the Academy Trust
Company duly convened and held at John Mason School on Thursday 7th July 2016
at 5.30pm.

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| Present: | Helen Bottomley (HB), Sarah Brinkley (Headteacher) (SB), Paul Brooks (PB), Simon Burchill (SBu), Jean Challis (JC), Maxine Evans (ME), Barry Graham (BG), Anne Highsmith (AH), Jonathan Hopkins (JH), Amanda Sissons (AS). Mark Timbs (MT). |
| In attendance | Alan Lane (AL); Lucy Foster (LF), Mat Davies (MD) (from 6.12pm) – SLT; Jonathan Dennett (JD) (Headteacher Fitzharrys School), Lynn Fathers (LF) (Chair of Governors, Fitzharrys) (agenda item 8). |
| Apologies | Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Douglas Aitken (DA), Emma Brown (EB) and Louise Griffin (LG). |

| Item | | Action |
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| 1. | Notice and quorum | |
| | Due notice of the meeting had been given and a quorum was present. | Clerk |
| 2. | Apologies | |
| | As reported above. | Clerk |
| 3. | Declaration of Governors' interests | |
| | No revised or new declarations of interest were declared. | Clerk |
| 4. | Confidential matters | |
| | There was a confidential matter notified on the agenda at item 12. The outcomes of discussions on this matter are recorded at minute 12 below. | Clerk |
| 5. | Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2016 | |
| | The minutes of the meeting held on the 21 st April 2016 were agreed and signed as an accurate record and filed accordingly. | JH/Clerk |

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| 6. | Matters arising | |
| | There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda and in these minutes. | |
| 7. | Student Council report | |
| | Representatives of the Student Council had reported to Directors preceding the formal meeting and had focused on some inconsistencies in the application of the behaviour policy. | |
| 8. | Board training | |
| | <p>Jonathan Dennett and Lynn Fathers attended for this item on the agenda to reflect on their experience of the recent HMI Ofsted full inspection of Fitzharrys School. This was supported by a brief paper that was circulated to the Board at the meeting and is attached to the signed minutes.</p> <p>LF outlined that the inspection included a short discussion with the inspector that focused on the importance of minutes as evidence of Governors’ awareness of their challenge and support roles, of the school’s website as a source of information (eg school ethos, statutory policies) and for compliance purposes. This emphasised the value of being prepared, pre-inspection, because of the considerable reference by the inspector on the school website and externally available data beforehand. The approach of the inspector and of the Governors in pre-inspection preparation was on the question of what had made a difference to the school since the last HMI. In doing so, the School and Governing Body had referred to consistency in the quality of teaching, developing high ambitions during the improvement journey, looking externally for advice and guidance (eg other Ofsted reports), the helpful and recent external review of governance and the key partnership between Governors and the senior leadership team. The importance of data in demonstrating improvement towards the Ofsted inspection, was also critical.</p> <p>JD added that from his perspective, critical features in preparing for the successful inspection included having an agreed focus among all staff and Governors, Governors’ familiarity with Raiseonline data and good governance being embedded in the school eg each meeting of Governors concluded with an “impact statement” on the effectiveness of the meeting’s contribution towards the school’s improvement. The openness and outward facing features of the school and the Governing Body were also critical.</p> <p>JH congratulated LF, JD and Fitzharrys School on achieving a “good” judgement at inspection.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Board questioned what had made a difference between the recent inspection and the previous one in 2012. Among factors identified were that the SEF had been honed down to its key elements and was therefore concise and useful; the mind-set of all concerned at the school (the extent to which everyone signed up was noticeable) and a focus on three questions: “Did Governors know what the issues were? Did Governors know what the interventions were to address these issues? How did the school know that these interventions were the right ones?” The school’s and Governors’ good preparedness to be able to respond to these questions had made a difference.</p> | |
| 9. | Headteacher’s report to Governors | |
| | <p>SB referred to a written report that had been circulated with the agenda. The report was presented in three sections; the current Self Evaluation Form (SEF), a RAG-rated SIP and a full narrative of the year to date.</p> <p>In presenting the report SB, drew attention to the following on which Directors questioned her and made comments as indicated:</p> <p><u>Leadership and management:</u> there had been minor changes to the new SLT throughout the year. An Associate Senior Leaders group (middle leaders) joined the SLT once a week for its full meeting and were involved in key decision making, strategic planning and most significantly, improving quality first teaching across the school.</p> <p>5 staff were leaving at the end of this academic year, compared to 21 this time last year. In addition, teacher absence through ill health had been reduced from 769 days last year to 201 which was an indication of the commitment to the school by teaching staff. There were no long term absentees among these figures.</p> <p>Following the examination results in 2015, external reviews of SEND provision (December 2015), Pupil Premium (April 2016), Safeguarding (October 2015) and Teaching and Learning (November 2015 – whole school, May 2016 – KS3) had been commissioned. A review of governance took place in July 2015. Governors had been highly engaged at every stage.</p> <p>A review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum had been carried out and as a result, KS3 schemes of learning were being revised. A bid for funding to support Character Education links focusing on life long, transferable skills had been made with Fitzharrys and Rush Comoon named as partners to the bid.</p> | |

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| | <p>The school leadership were also considering the policy on AS entry and a blended vocational and academic offer for post 16 students, with partners in the Abingdon Consortium for Education.</p> <p><u>Personal development, behaviour and safety:</u> current attendance stood at 94.5% which was an improvement from 94.1% last academic year. Attendance for Pupil Premium students stood at 89.9% which was an improvement from 89.4% last academic year. The attendance of SEN students remained a focus, but there had been an improvement for statemented students, where last year their attendance gap was 17.2%, and now sat at 5.7% (nationally 7.1% last year). There had been a sustained improvement in the Persistent Absence (PA) figure. Of the 51 PA students concerned, 76% had improved their attendance this year. In relation to these matters, the Board asked for an "Inclusion" update to its October meeting.</p> <p>The Board received a summary of SEN policy and provision for 2015/16 and SB thanked SBu (as Governor with responsibility for SEN) for his visits, elaborating at Directors' request on the programmes in place for SEN/pupil premium eg the SENCo having developed new pupil profiles, monitoring procedures and a Key worker SEN support system in order to embed best inclusive practices to the pastoral support system and within Faculties. SB continued to have concerns that the gap between the school and national levels of progress for SEN pupils was not closing as quickly as she would wish. Nevertheless, the Board noted that SEN and pupil premium (performance) gaps were identified as a key line of enquiry in the SEF and that a full review of SEND provision was due to be reported in the autumn term 2016.</p> <p>In terms of behaviour it was reported that there were 15 students, 1.7% of the student population, that were responsible for 37% of all recorded incidents. There were 5 Year 9 students who were responsible for 44% of all Year 9 recorded behaviours and 6 Year 8 students were responsible for 51% of behaviours recorded in that year group.</p> <p><u>Teaching, learning and assessment:</u> The key emerging theme in these areas was of increasing consistency. The overall database of lesson observations showed that 70% of teaching and learning across the school was consistently 'good' or better. However, the Teaching and Learning Review Day which focused on KS3 in May, had revealed weaknesses in expectation, challenge and a consistent approach to marking. There had been a sharp push on skills led learning objectives and the launch of 'Our Written Work Is' (the rules by which the school expected written work to be presented), had been a positive one, but needed to be consistently embedded.</p> | <p>SB to report</p> <p>SB</p> |
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| <p>There had been expansive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teaching staff during the year as it was clear that there was under-investment in this previously. Great progress had been made.</p> | |
| <p><u>Outcomes:</u> headline data for the next academic year appeared to be very positive. Leadership had developed the use of data, especially whole school collection of data and the reports that were produced, to enable a more streamlined approach. The results of the 'Final Report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels' had been very influential on the school's new approach. John Mason School was trialling new approaches to assessment without levels, developing a departmental progression map for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils to use in their daily learning, and to refer to for next steps. This would be launched in September 2016. Lessons were planned using SPOT folders; some headway has been made through Tuesday Training, to skill up staff in using the data for planning learning. In response to questions the Board was advised that pupil progress would be monitored (without levels) by aligning old assessment levels with GCSE grades.</p> | |
| <p>With respect to the SEF and Key Lines of Enquiry that had been circulated, these were noted on the understanding that SB and the SLT would regularly review them. The Board was reassured that Governor "buddies" for each KLE were indicated in the SEF. A brief update on strategic ICT aims and activity had been circulated and would be revisited at the next Board meeting, together with an update on staff wellbeing.</p> | |
| <p>In light of Ofsted inspectors' recent focus on risk in all aspects of school improvement during inspections, it was suggested and AGREED that there should be a common format for reporting (ie SEF, KLEs. SIP) that should identify areas of risk.</p> | <p>SB and SLT</p> |
| <p><u>Key Stage 3:</u> The CWA Committee and SLT had discussed at length a proposal to move to a two year KS3/3 year KS4 curriculum model. The SLT were convinced that the change would be a positive way forward, there being strong evidence that similar KS3/KS4 models in other schools correlated with good and outstanding Ofsted judgements for the schools concerned. At this stage, agreement in principle to this strategic change was being sought; a fully detailed proposal would then require Governors approval as the basis for consultation with parents. The Board AGREED in principle to a change to a two year KS3/3 year KS4 curriculum model and delegated authority to the CWA Committee in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, to work up a detailed proposal and timetable for consultation with parents.</p> | <p>CWA Cttee/SB/SLT</p> |
| <p>The Headteacher was thanked for her report.</p> | |

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| 10. | Reports/minutes from Committees | |
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| | <p>(a) <u>Committee reports and minutes</u></p> <p>(i) <u>Curriculum, Welfare and Achievement – 7th June 2016</u></p> <p>BG gave an oral report and drew attention to the following matters that were discussed by the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a summary of SEN policy and provision for 2015/16 had now been provided to the Board (see 9 above); • a common format for the data dashboard had been introduced that was more accessible and easier to understand; data use training for Governors would be provided in the autumn term; • with regard to suggestions about changes to homework policy, an agreed process to progress a homework pilot to improve KS3 homework completion rates would be continued. The Committee would decide whether or not to introduce a new policy in due course • it was recommended and AGREED to adopt a new data assessment and reporting policy. • Student voice had been considered elsewhere on the agenda for this Board meeting; • A behaviour and attendance update was received. <p>(ii) <u>Finance Premises and Personnel – 7th June 2016</u></p> <p>JH reported that the Committee’s discussions had mainly been concerned with matters that were covered in the finance reports that were presented at item 11 on the agenda (see below). The Committee had also received a presentation from the local authority’s health and safety lead officer.</p> <p>(iii) <u>Strategy & Audit – 23rd June 2016</u></p> <p>It was reported that whilst the principle of shortening the school week with early closure on Wednesdays to provide more time for professional development (CPD) had been accepted, the school was not yet in a position to go out to consultation with parents. The Board would need to consider a revised paper and to approve the consultation with parents and the timing of this would preclude shortening the school-week for September.</p> <p>(b) <u>Lead Directors’ reports</u></p> <p>JH reported that a template document had been produced for Governors to record their school visits and that this should be completed for</p> | <p>SB and SLT to initiate</p> <p>CWA</p> <p>All</p> <p>All to note</p> |

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| | <p>reporting to the Board after all visits. Pupil Premium and SEN visits and reporting by Directors had been referred to in the Headteacher’s report; AH had undertaken a safeguarding visit, JC a health and safety visit and an update on ICT had been given elsewhere at the meeting and would be considered fully in the autumn term.</p> | <p>Clerk for next agenda/ EB</p> |
| 11. | Finance and Other Reports | |
| | <p>AL attended the meeting to present:</p> <p>(i) <u>The Quarterly Financial Report</u> The reported showed an under-spend of circa £20,000 on premises; however, a proportion of these savings had already been allocated for other projects. Savings had been achieved for energy procurement due to the low cost of fuel and energy sources at this point in time.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Budget Report July 2016</u> A proposed draft budget 2016/17, together with indicative budgets for 2017/18 and 2018/19 had been considered by the Finance, Premises & Personnel Committee on 7th June and had now been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>AL spoke to the report and the draft budget and drew the Board’s attention to its key features. The Board emphasised that the budget forecast should reflect the priorities of the School Improvement Plan and identify clearly the key assumptions and risks that informed the budget.</p> <p>It was AGREED subject to the forgoing comments, to:</p> <p>(a) APPROVE the initial budget for publication to the Education Funding Agency; and</p> <p>(b) to authorise the FPP Committee to review and amend the budget at its September meeting in the light of further information available at that time.</p> <p>(iii) <u>Draft JMAT Business Plan</u> The draft Business Plan was tabled at the meeting. AL emphasised that in preparing the plan he was keen to emphasise that it should be driven by the school’s educational priorities first and foremost and before its budget planning priorities.</p> <p>He summarised the sections of the draft document as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Where we are now” • What are the priorities we have identified? • Where is money coming from and what will it be used for? | <p>AL and All</p> <p>FPP Cttee</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our curriculum? • Staff projections • Expenditure this year and projections for next year • Income streams • “Business units” • Capital investment • Structure of staffing/financial structures. <p>In response to the Board’s questions, AL advised that JMAT was in a more secure financial position than at the start of the 2015/16 academic year but that it would be naïve to assume that income available to the school would improve relatively in the years’ ahead. However, in being part of a multi-academy trust, economies of scale could definitely be achieved in procuring a range of services corporately.</p> <p>Directors and the SLT were asked to review the draft document and to suggest improvements that could be made to it. As was the case for the budget 2016/17 (above) the Board advised that the document should make explicit the key assumptions and key risks to the Plan (eg staff leaving, recruitment, whether the current risk register was up to date); furthermore, that there should be closer linkage of the school’s educational priorities to the budget in the narrative; for instance a commentary on the relationship between SEN priorities and whether the agreed draft budget currently reflected these.</p> | AL to note and incorporate |
| 12. Governing Body business 2015/16 | | |
| | <p>JH had included on the agenda (as a confidential report) an update on the strategic direction of JMAT in light of earlier consideration by the Board and discussions concerning a proposed Abingdon Academy Trust and including local collaboration, partnerships and Consortium.</p> <p>The Board commented on the possibility of a formal merger/consolidation of local educational establishments in the future and were advised that from a financial perspective, there could be a funding available by way of capital assistance grant from the EFA to assist in forming a local MAT.</p> <p>Directors were reminded of due diligence documentation that was required of any schools expressing interest in joining MATs and AL advised that work on this documentation was proceeding over the summer break.</p> <p>The Board AGREED: (a) to establish a joint strategy committee between Fitzharrys and John Mason School to oversee and support the Head Teachers</p> | AL |

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| | <p>in closer collaboration and convergence;</p> <p>(b) that the JMAT Board would review consortium arrangements, advised by the Head Teacher, Board Chair and CWA Chair early in the new school year, to allow appropriate time for any consultation and notice of financial or curriculum changes.</p> <p>(c) that in addition to the Head Teacher and Chair meeting before the start of the new school year, consideration would be given to convene a Strategy and Audit Committee open to Board Directors on Tuesday 30th August.</p> | <p>JH/SB/AL</p> <p>JH/SB/BG</p> <p>All</p> |
| 13. | Policy review schedule | |
| | There were no policies before the Board at this meeting for review or adoption. | |
| 14. | Correspondence | |
| | There was no correspondence to report. Strike action by the NUT on 5 th July 2016 had taken place. | |
| 15. | Any other business | |
| | <p><u>Performance management</u>: mid-year reviews and lesson observations had been completed and pay panel review dates were in place for the autumn term.</p> <p><u>Open day</u>: the years 7 and 8 open day and celebration took place on the 7th July.</p> <p><u>Quiz night</u>: The JMA quiz night would take place on the 8th July and a sponsored walk on the 18th July.</p> <p><u>Free school in Grove</u>: PB had been approached concerning a proposal to set up a 900 pupil free school in Grove.</p> <p><u>Behaviour policy</u>: this was undergoing review and would be presented to Strategy & Audit Committee for adoption at its next meeting.</p> <p><u>Consortium teaching and learning group</u>: BG reported on developments and whether the current model was appropriate for JMAT.</p> | |
| 16. | Date of next meeting | |
| | Thursday 14 th October 2016 at 5.30pm. | |
| 17. | | |
| | The meeting ended at 8.13pm | All |

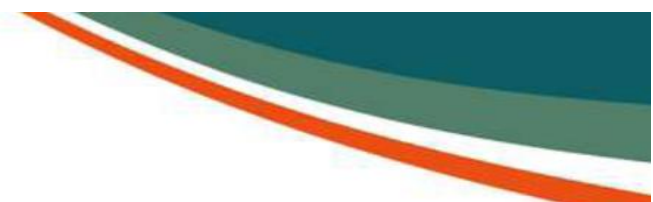
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John Mason Academy Trust

John Mason School

Headteacher: Sarah Brinkley



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Minutes drafted 8th July 16 12.55pm

Date of signing..... In the Chair.....

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