**The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust**

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**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting**

**5.00pm on Monday 18th December 2023**

**PRESENT:**

Mr J Briggs (Headteacher), Mrs E de la Motte (Chair), Mr M Fryer, Dr L Bryant, Mrs N McDowell, Mr N Little, Mr G Buchanan , Mrs A Gibbs and Mr A Phillips

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr S Leigh – Clerk to the Governing Body

**Action**

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| **Procedural Business** | | |
| **1.** | **Welcome**  The meeting opened at 5.00pm with all welcomed. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could move to business. |  |
| **2.** | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Stow-Smith who was unable to attend due to personal commitments.  ***Directors RESOLVED to consent to the absence of Mrs C Stow-Smith.*** | **Clerk to Board** |
| **3.** | **Notification of items of any other urgent business**  The following items were raised for discussion at item 18 of the agenda:   * Merger documentation from Muckle LLP |  |
| **4.** | **Declarations of Interest**   1. **Declarations of Personal or Pecuniary Interest**   All Directors were reminded that any personal or pecuniary interest relating to items on the agenda should be declared. There were no declarations of interest made by any governor in relation to items on the agenda.   1. **Register of Business Interests**   Directors were reminded of the requirement to maintain a register of business interests and for this to be updated on a regular basis. ***All governors present confirmed that their registers were up to date at the time of reporting.*** |  |
| **5.** | **Approval of Governing Body Meeting Minutes**   1. **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st September 2023**   ***Directors RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2023 be approved for signature by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting with a signed copy being provided for the school file.***   1. **Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2023**   ***Directors RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2023 be approved for signature by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting with a signed copy being provided for the school file. Thanks were extended to Dr Bryant for chairing this meeting in the absence of the Chair.***   1. **Matters Arising from the minutes**   **Admissions Consultation** – Directors were reminded that at their meeting of 21st September 2023, approval was given to the progression of an admissions consultation for the Federation’s admissions arrangements effective from September 2025 in line with the suggested widening of the catchment area for the school. It was confirmed that the consultation had been progressed with only 1 response being received (which related to distance from the school). The parent was happy with the explanation to the question raised.  **Federation merger with Melrose Learning Trust** – noted that Muckle LLP had been appointed as the Federation’s legal advisers to its merger with Melrose Learning Trust.  **Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2023** – noted that these had been considered, approved and signed at the Board meeting held on 29th November 2023.  There were no other matters arising from the minutes that were not already covered elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting. It was confirmed that all actions noted at the previous meetings had been completed. | **Chair**  **Chair** |
| **Reports** | | |
| **6.** | **Reports of Committees**   1. **Audit & Finance Committee 9th November 2023**   Directors were presented with a copy of the draft minutes form the Audit & Finance Committee meeting held on 9th November 2023. Headlines from the meeting were noted as follows:   * Budget discussions – noted that the projected position for 2023/2024 was better than originally anticipated. Year end position for 2022/2023 resulted in a circa £18k in-year surplus and a small in-year surplus was also anticipated for the current year. Thanks and appreciation were extended to the Finance Team for all their hard work and efforts in securing this position for the Federation. * Out of School Income – noted as being very good for the school. * Field drainage issue – noted that this still needed to be resolved.   ***Directors RESOLVED to receive and note the draft minutes form the Audit & Finance Committee meeting held on 9th November 2023.***   1. **Pay Review Sub Committee 9th November 2023**   Noted that all recommended performance related teacher pay awards had been reviewed and approved. Headteacher appraisal had also been completed with all objectives met or exceeded. Targets for 2023/2024 had been discussed and agreed.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive and note the draft minutes form the Pay Review Sub Committee meeting held on 9th November 2023.*** | **All to note**  **All to note** |
| **7.** | **Management Accounts and Autumn term Budget Monitoring Report**  Directors received copies of the Autumn term Finance Report together with the Management Accounts for October 2023. It was highlighted that there were no significant issues to raise with all planned income and expenditure on track for this point in the year.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive the Autumn term 2023 Finance Report and October 2023 Management Accounts as presented.*** | **All to note** |
| **8.** | **Chair’s Report**  The Chair reported that she had worked alongside the Headteacher to resolve a parental complaint in relation the school’s SEND provision. The matter had been closed with no further correspondence being received to the issue raised.  ***Questioning if the Federation needed to pursue any actions from the issue raised***, it was highlighted that there were some required actions needed to the narrative of the Federation’s SEND Policy which would be addressed. |  |
| **9.** | **Headteacher’s Report**  Attention was drawn to the Headteacher’s Report which had been circulated. The following points were highlighted from the report:  **Attendance** – data for the term received and noted as being very strong for this time of year. All efforts continued in support of good attendance levels.  **Admissions** – Directors acknowledged that the schools had received a few more admissions over the term with current numbers on roll totalling 621 pupils. Noting the Infant school data, it was highlighted that a waiting list was now being maintained for KS1.  **Pupil Premium** – Directors were presented with a reviewed pupil premium strategy for the period 2023 – 2026. Good focus was being made with required actions embedded within the School Development Plan for the year.  **SEND** – noted that the schools currently provided for 54 SEND pupils (13 infants, 41 juniors) with an expectation that this number would increase again into the Spring and Summer terms. ***Questioning situations of low-level disruption with a challenging cohort (particularly in KS1)***, it was highlighted that this was being very well managed to minimise disruption for all pupils. Directors noted the arrangements that were in place to manage low level disruption.  Discussing the external support available to the needs and requirements of the schools’ SEND pupils, Directors acknowledged that a number of services, particularly those offered by Educational Psychologists, were significantly stretched.  **Curriculum** – Directors noted the range of curriculum developments and supporting initiatives that were in play which included:   * All subject leaders have dedicated time and support from SLT when needed * Maths CPD accessed by all and Maths lead * Other CPD accessed – Science, Writing, Grammar and Spelling, * Termly curriculum meetings with local primary school to share good practice * Termly year group meetings with local primary school to share good practice * Termly writing moderation events accessed (eg KS1 and KS2 Writing)   **Leadership & Management** – activities over the term to date included:   * Headteacher continues to be the primary school representative to the secondary school network * Maths and English leads were now accessing Melrose Learning Trust CPD * Staff accessed positive handling training – booked for whole staff for January PD day * Deputy Heads have implemented new playground and lunchtime behaviour policy that links directly to the class systems – under review, more cases of vandalism this term * Business Team continuing level 5 finance and HR training * MAT CPD accessed for first aid and behaviour   Discussing the positive handling training, Directors suggested whether it would be beneficial to communicate this to parents to aid understanding of actions / process that will be pursued in those situations requiring this intervention. The Headteacher agreed to look at this.  There being no further questions, the Headteacher was thanked for his report. | **Headteacher** |
| **10.** | **Safeguarding Report**  Directors received a copy of the Headteacher’s Safeguarding Report as at December 2023 which covered the following areas:   * Categories of need (number of pupils) * Staff safeguarding training * Emotional Health & Wellbeing * World Mental Health Day * CPOMs   As discussed earlier in the meeting, Directors acknowledged the range of challenging needs presented by a cohort of pupils, particularly in KS1, noting the strategies and interventions (particularly around lunchtime arrangements and activities) that had been introduced to support these pupils and minimise disruptions for all other pupils. ***Questioning if parents were aware of the situations highlighted***, it was noted that parents of the pupils concerned had been made fully aware of the issues presented and were very supportive of the actions being taken by the schools.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive the Safeguarding Report for the Autumn term 2023 as presented.*** | **All to note** |
| **11.** | **Governor Monitoring**  Directors received and noted governor monitoring reports that had been completed from recent visits which covered the following areas:   * Maths * English * Behaviour and personal development (verbal report)   Observations from the monitoring visits identified very engaged and enthusiastic groups of pupils who were very settled in their working. Excellent progress over the year was evident. Some pupils did comment on class disruption created by a small number of pupils. As discussed earlier in the meeting, staff were fully aware of this with measures in place to mitigate this.  Directors were thanked for their time in visiting the school and preparing the written reports presented. For future visits, Directors felt that it would be beneficial to get back into classrooms to observe learning. | **Headteacher** |
| **Items to Arrange / Consider** | | |
| **12.** | **School Development Plan (SDP) & Self Evaluation Form (SEF)**  Directors were presented with a demonstration of a new software platform (School IP) that the schools had adopted in the recording and monitoring of the School Development Plan. All Directors would be provided with their own individual login details where they could access the platform and review progress being made in the delivery of School Development Plan priorities and activities at any point in time.  Directors welcomed the adoption of the platform, appreciating the benefits to working that it provided. | **Headteacher** |
| **13.** | **Current Pupil Numbers on Roll**  This item had been covered earlier in the meeting under the Headteacher’s Report. There were no further questions or points of discussion to raise. |  |
| **14.** | **Health & Safety Accident Statistics**  Directors received and noted the accident statistics report for the period July 2023 to December 2023. There were no significant issues to raise from the reporting.  ***Directors RESOLVED to receive and note the accident statistics report for the period July 2023 to December 2023.*** | **All to note** |
| **15.** | **Governor Report Back**  **Central Record for Recruiting and Vetting** – noted that a review of the Single Central Record had been arranged for 3rd January 2024.  **Health & Safety (Director visit)** – Directors received a written report that had been produced from a walk around the school sites with a focus on Health & Safety. Noting the content of the report, Directors commented on the quality of support that was being provided by the Site Manager with the sites looking to be in a very good state of repair and presentation from his working. Issues that required further attention included:   * the condition of the playground area * re-painting of external cladding   Directors were thanked for taking the time to visit the school and record their findings for the Board. |  |
| **16.** | **Performance Management Report**  At this point, the Headteacher declared an interest in the item and left the meeting.  As referenced earlier in the meeting, Directors were informed that a Headteacher Performance Management review had been undertaken earlier in the term which confirmed that all objectives set for 2022/2023 had been achieved or exceeded.  The meeting with the Headteacher had also discussed and agreed objectives for the 2023/2024 academic year. Accepting that this had been undertaken by the review committee and behalf of the Board, ***Directors questioned if the set objectives could be shared with all Directors for information***. It was acknowledged that this was a confidential matter for the Headteacher and objectives could only be shared with his agreement.  Objective 1: Ensure that in all areas of the curriculum school leaders and subject leaders develop essential skills so that they know exactly what is being taught in subjects and ensuring accurate assessment provides leaders with a clear picture of gaps and strengths in pupil learning.  Objective 2 :- During 2023-24 continue to prepare the school for its transition into joining Melrose Learning Trust  Objective 3: Continue to manage the development of pupils’ writing skills, resilience and stamina through consistent and effective practise. | **Chair / Headteacher** |
| **17.** | **Board Membership**  Directors acknowledged that its current membership was in line with the governance arrangements of Melrose Learning Trust with no need for any additional appointments at this point. The composition of local governing bodies under Melrose Learning Trust arrangements was noted as follows:   * Parent Governors (minimum of 2) * Headteacher * Staff Governor * Director appointed governors (up to 5)   To aid planning for training and development, a Skills Audit would be undertaken in the Spring term 2024. | **Clerk to Board** |
| **18.** | **Federation of Abbey Schools / Melrose Learning Trust merger update**  The Headteacher informed Directors that Muckle LLP were currently working on legal documentation in support of the merger with Melrose Learning Trust which would be presented for approval and signature. Draft documents received to date for reading / amendment as appropriate and approval, were noted as follows:   * Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA) between the Federation of Abbey Schools Trust and Melrose Learning Trust. * Deed of novation and variation of the current supplemental funding agreements of the Trust between the Secretary of State for Education, Federation of Abbey Schools Trust and Melrose Learning Trust. * Deed of termination of the master funding agreement of the Federation of Abbey Schools Trust between the Secretary of State for Education, and the Trust * form TR1 for the transfer to Melrose Learning Trust in relation to the land held by the Federation of Abbey Schools Trust. * Advice note on the indemnities in the Deed of Novation and Variation produced by the Trust’s solicitors   With due diligence work completed and no issues to flag for attention, Directors noted that the recent Board meeting of Melrose Learning Trust gave its full support to the completion of the merger with the Federation of Abbey Schools. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the legal documentation with submission to DfE to given deadlines, a conversion date of 1st February 2024 was currently being worked to.  ***Questioning how staff felt about the conversion,*** the Headteacher confirmed that staff were very supportive of the merger and looking forward to the opportunities that it presented.  ***Directors expressed their full support to the merger, requesting that outstanding activities in support of the merger be seen through to completion to the suggested timeline of 1st February 2024***.  Directors RESOLVED that:   * The Chair of the Trust be authorised to approve any amendments to the legal documents or any ancillary documents in their finalisation. * The legal documents supporting the transfer be approved, subject to any required amendments approved by the Chair * The Chair and/or any other Director in the presence of a witness be authorised and instructed to execute / sign and deliver any documents relevant to the Transfer requiring execution as a deed.   Directors noted that the Governing Board would need to remain in place (represented by a minimum of 3 Directors) to oversee the dissolution of the Trust and the closure of its accounts. It was agreed that all Directors would remain on the governing board for this purpose, recognising that this business needed to be kept very separate from that of its working under Melrose Learning Trust’s governance arrangements. | **Headteacher / Chair**  **Headteacher / Chair**  **Headteacher / Chair**  **Headteacher / Chair** |
| **Policies for Review** | | |
| **19.** | **Policies**  **Directors RESOLVED to approve the following reviewed policies for adoption with immediate effect:**   * *Reading Policy* * *Social Media Policy* * *GDPR policy*   ***Questioning if the GDPR breach experienced earlier in the term required a further review of the GDPR Policy, it was explained that the nature of the incident did not require any changes to the policy.*** |  |
| **Concluding items** | | |
| **20.** | **Any Other Business**  **Car-parking** – Directors expressed their ongoing concerns to the car-parking situation external to the school at drop-off and pick-up times, and the safety issues it presented. All efforts continued to inform parents of the dangers that this presented with requests for cars not be parked outside of the school entrances. It was suggested that the local Councillor, Police and local MP be made aware of the situation to ascertain whether any further actions could be pursued. | **Headteacher** |
| **21.** | **Approval of documents for inspection**  ***Directors RESOLVED that the agenda and supporting papers circulated for this meeting be approved for inspection. Papers to be exempt from such requests were noted as:***   * ***Health & Safety incidents*** * ***Safeguarding Report*** | **Headteacher** |
| **22.** | **Date and Time of Next Meeting**  Noted as follows:   * Wednesday 31st January 2024 at 5.30 pm   There being no further business, Directors were thanked for their attendance and contributions to the meeting and the meeting closed at 6.45pm. | **All to note** |

Chair…………………………………………………………………

Signed……………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………………….