

BRINE LEAS SCHOOL

An Academy

Local Governing Board Meeting

Held on Wednesday 10th July 2019

MINUTES – PART 1

Present:	Mrs A Ashley (AA)	Appointed Governor
	Mr D Cole (DCE)	Headteacher Governor
	Mrs M Hennessy Jones (MHJ)	Appointed Governor
	Cllr P Groves (PG)	Appointed Governor
	Dr K Jones (KJ)	Appointed Governor
	Mr T Maclellan (TMN)	Elected Staff Governor
	Mr T Marsden (TM)	Appointed Governor (Item 4 onwards)
	Mrs J Thomas (JT)	Appointed Governor
	Mrs S Turner (ST)	Elected Parent Governor (Chair)
	Mrs D Varley (DV)	Elected Parent Governor

In Attendance: Mr A Cliffe (CEO, Brine MAT) and Mrs E Fletcher (Clerk)

Please note – orange/brown text shows governor challenge/questions.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs M Mulliner. Apologies were considered carefully and governors agreed to accept them for this meeting. In addition, apologies in advance for arriving late to the meeting were received from Mr T Marsden.

Outcome: Governors accepted apologies from Mrs M Mulliner.

Outcome: Governors accepted apologies for a late arrival to the meeting from Mr T Marsden.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were raised in respect of this meeting's agenda.

3. Safeguarding Ambassadors

Governors welcomed two members of the Student Safeguarding Ambassadors group to give an update on their work around school. They were accompanied by Miss L Jones who co-ordinates this student group.

Information was presented to governors on the previous work and plans for the future. The ambassadors explained about the new facility for students to report unkind behaviour via the school website and their work with SCIES and working to ensure that all students feel safe in school.

Minutes Approved by Chair of Governors Date:

The ambassadors informed governors that they have carried out staff training and shared information with students in a variety of forums including assemblies. Governors were informed that the Safeguarding Ambassadors' aim is for students to feel safe in school, reduce bullying and have someone students can go to with issues. They will make themselves known as safeguarding ambassadors by wearing a badge.

Governors were informed that the group has worked on students' understanding of the difference between bullying and unkind behaviour. Staff will remind students how to report incidents to the ambassadors.

Governors asked whether the Safeguarding Ambassadors would be willing to help provide some training to parents to help them understand issues facing young people including improving their understanding of technology. The students present agreed that the group would be willing to this.

Governors asked whether students seem to come to them more easily than teachers. The ambassadors felt that this was the case and highlighted that, although they are not very a very experienced team yet, they will be making sure people can speak them about issues, particularly the Year 7 who will be joining soon.

AA asked the students what they would do if another student told them something, which indicated they were at risk of being harmed. The Ambassadors confirmed that they would go to Mr Cole or Miss Jones and explained that they may have to break trust regarding confidentiality for the best interest of the child, if they are at risk.

Governors queried if there was a similar student group focusing on e-safety group. The students confirmed that there is a group for this also.

Governors thanked the students for their presentation and emphasised what an excellent job they were doing in school.

4. Governor Visioning Exercise

Governors broke from the normal meeting to spend an hour with Heads of Curriculum Areas, Senior Leadership Team Members and other departmental leads from key areas around the school (including support staff areas).

Governors felt the process was very positive and groups had varied conversations. Immediate feedback from the session was as follows:-

Group 1

- An external PP review was suggested to evaluate effectiveness of the use of PP funding within school. Also access to the PP funding and the impact was discussed in detail.
- More time is needed for the PP postholder to carry out the role.
- The group talked about the impact that the PP team have in targeting students that are PP and it was highlighted that they did a lot more than they actually think they did in terms of engagement. The positive impact of Office 365 was discussed.
- PP team are also generating income and work is being done with PP students in transition, which is having an impact.
- The group queried whether the school is getting over the stigma attached to the PP funding for some families.
- The pastoral department was discussed and in particular, the new appointments have been made in the area.
- The group spoke about assessment and new policy and procedures around and it was highlighted that this is something governors really need to understand.

- Governors noted that feedback from this group was that BLS is an exceptional school to work in and for the students to attend.
- It was noted that the improvement plan is aligned to the Ofsted framework.

Group 2

- This group discussed H&S and facilities, including how the building work is having an impact.
- Culture changes with regard to site and H&S issues were also discussed and TMN shared that he is going to meet with the Site Manager to go through these ideas.
- Governors noted the experience within industry and private sectors that the new facilities manager brings with him, highlighting how useful this is to the school.
- Literacy was discussed and doing cross-curricular projects to support literacy development. A suggestion made at the meeting was inter-departmental meetings to look at what could be developed across several areas.
- Time constraints and staff becoming isolated within their departments because of this was, discussed.
- KS3 was discussed, including motivating boys who may only do the bare minimum rather than going over and above.
- Transition and looking at ways of improving transition was discussed.
- Using technology and data more was also discussed within this group.

Group 3

- Support provided to staff was welcomed and one group said that they could not offer suggestions to improve this area.
- Money was a recurring issue, funding and cashflow issues were raised but staff were aware that this has been taken up with Cheshire East.
- Staff felt that behaviour was increasingly an issue with uniform and skirts being an ongoing theme.
- Funding to allow school trips to take place would be welcomed – staff felt that this would benefit the children. This was mainly in reference to funding to allow a trip to run, i.e. covering staff etc.
- Governors mentioned the recent Apollo group seminar and felt that this may be useful to be rolled out to other student groups.

Group 4

- High Needs Funding was raised and it was felt that this is not meeting the needs. Uncertainty around this funding was also raised as a concern.
- The high numbers of EHCP students was raised as a concern for staff.
- Improving involvement in the House system was discussed, particularly with regard to disadvantaged students.
- This group raised low-level disruption as well. It also suggested that changing procedures for dealing with students that do not turn up for detentions would be welcomed. For example, can the MIS be updated so that escalation of detentions can be done electronically rather than staff having to process this manually?
- Staff were happy with governor links and the 1:1 relationships that have been built up between the departments and their link governors.
- The group talked about using governors as a group to go in for problems – to dig into these.

Group 5

- This group spoke about improving discussions around careers and educational pathways for those careers, involving more businesses with this.
- Funding for departments was an issue and this ties in with a governor focus on funding and income.
- MFL was discussed and the decline of German take up.
- Parental support was discussed and it was felt that it was an idea to look at ways to improve this.
- Safeguarding was discussed around staff rather than students.

Governors agreed funding is an issue and highlighted that they do need to look at funding streams. Governors suggested looking at quick wins as well as longer-term goals and aims.

It was agreed that the exercise was positive and some important things have been discussed. DCE shared that he was also pleased with the process and the discussions taking place.

Governors will look at this information and work to aligning it to the improvement plan.

Governors wished to thank staff for their time at the meeting.

Action: ST to prepare a report/formal notes from the visioning session and work with DCE to use this to update the Improvement Plan where appropriate.

5. Governor Vision

This was discussed in conjunction with Item 4.

6. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes from the Part 1 meeting held on Wednesday 22nd May 2019 were provided prior to the meeting and were put forward for approval as a true and accurate record of the meeting. All governors present approved the minutes.

Outcome: Governors accepted the Part 1 minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 22nd May 2019 as a true and accurate record

7. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not already covered by this meeting's agenda.

8. Whole School Improvement Plan inc Key Areas of Focus for SLT

An outline of the proposed key areas for the Improvement Plan 2019-20 was provided prior to the meeting.

DCE shared that he feels that the main issues discussed at the visioning session are already covered in the focuses within the improvement plan but this will be cross-referenced with the notes from the vision session. DCE shared that this will be used to form the SLT development plans and thereon down to the departmental plans.

ACE shared that there is a reasonable chance for other schools to join the MAT over the next 12-18 months and school should consider what benefits this could have for BLS. DCE confirmed that there is collaboration work already, the IT provision is one area. DCE confirmed that this has been added to the improvement plan leadership and management, but will become a strand on its own eventually.

ACE confirmed that one school has applied and discussions with a number of other schools are taking place. ACE shared that the Trust is contemplating a shadow operational group so that schools can see how things operate within the MAT before they commit – this is the opportunity for school headteachers and possibly the chairs of LGBs to discuss issues.

A common theme is them asking how their school is represented and this needs to be addressed to explain how the Trust structure works. ACE shared that the Trust will need to re-consider the trustees currently on the board despite them already being independent in order to address the issue over Trustees being seen to be independent of BLS.

AA asked whether ACE is provided with names of schools that are under an Academy Order. ACE shared that some MAT's have been approached regarding taking on academies under an Order. It could be that this MAT has not been seen as suitable yet. It is felt that there are a number of schools in the Cheshire area that are looking to join MAT's. ACE confirmed that he would follow this up. KJ suggested that we look at what benefits, other than financial, that could be gained from other schools joining the MAT, i.e. developing a shared ethos or picking up techniques from other schools to improve the environment. ACE shared that the LGB needs to be a bit selfish and ensure it keeps focused on BLS during the process of expanding the MAT.

DCE confirmed that the final version of the school improvement plan will be brought to the first meeting of the new academic year and this will have the results factored into the document by then.

Governors noted the jargon buster document and shared that this had been particularly useful to them.

9. Head's Report

• **Mobility/Admissions**

- DCE shared that he has no concerns. He has followed all of the leavers up and there are no issues.
- KJ queried permanently excluded children and whether they would be included in these figures. DCE confirmed that they would be included in these figures.
- Governors were informed that the school is aiming for 240 in the new Year 7 as per the agreement around the funding for D Block.

• **Attendance**

- DCE shared that overall attendance is higher than this time last year.
- The school will not quite break the 96% target, but there is an improvement despite the week in winter with high levels of absence.

• **LAC/PLAC/EHCP**

- DCE informed governors that there are currently 21 on roll, however, the number of EHCP children in Cheshire East has risen as they are clearing the backlog. DCE shared that the increased numbers are of huge concern and the school will be close to having 40 students in this category.
- Governors were informed that the High Needs Funding is a concern and DCE shared that BLS is included in the trial for the banding system for assessing the funding received per pupil. DCE highlighted that Element 2 funding is a block funding and BLS will be spending more Element 2 relating spending than we receive in funding. DCE highlighted that BLS receives a very low amount compared to some other very local schools and although the banding will not increase this, it may increase the Element 3 funding. AA asked if the school has any say in the process of deciding which band is applied to each student. DCE confirmed that they do not, but there is the scope to challenge it. AA noted the difference in funding between SEND settings and a mainstream setting and highlighted that it is significantly different despite students having seemingly a very similar EHCP on paper. AA suggested that the school should consider this when the funding is applied to the school to see if it can meet the needs based on the funding to be received. DCE explained to governors that BLS' top up funding is normally approx. £1-2k where a SEND setting could be £21k. ACE stated that the banding system does include an opportunity to comment. DCE shared that there have been occasions when the school has challenged cases to say that they cannot meet the needs of the child with the funding received.

KJ queried whether the lack of funding for these students have any impact on the rest of the children in the school. DCE confirmed that this would be the case, as the low funding level will mean that he has to make budget decisions in order to meet EHCP needs. DCE shared that he will work hard to make sure the Element 3 funding covers the lack of Element 2 funding. AA asked if there was liaison with free schools and SEND schools in the admissions process for SEND children. DCE shared that there is not and that the school is currently not at the point of looking at current Year 5. DCE shared that the funding situation is far from being resolved but is becoming urgent.

- BLS will have the highest number of students in these categories than any other school in Cheshire East by September. Expectations would be to have 11 children in this category.

- **Achievement and Standards**

- DCE informed governors that the exam season is over, there was no external inspection this year and all exams went well.
- Moderation has taken place and no additional samples/information was needed. They have actually taken some work to publish as exemplars. It is hoped that the outcome of this will be positive.

- **Building Works**

- Governors were informed that the D Block building is not quite ready yet. It will be ready before the school re-opens in September. DCE also shared that the toilets are due to finish shortly and labs works are starting this month.
- DCE shared that the facilities will be excellent when the school re-opens in September.

- **Finance**

- DCE confirmed that all deadlines have been met and the one due at the end of July is on schedule to be submitted on time.
- Governors were informed that the SMRA visit took place yesterday and is due in again next week for some more information. DCE shared that there has been no feedback yet, but what has been said so far has not caused concern. Feedback will be later this month. Governors were informed that the second day would mostly be about the Trust. ACE asked whether they considered the success of the school compared to income and expenditure as part of this process. DCE confirmed that they did not do this although they have raised a question over whether we are being overly cautious with BL6 numbers. DCE shared that the approach from the person responsible for carrying out the SMRA has been refreshing and encouraging. ACE confirmed that, when it is available, he would circulate some feedback via the Clerk.

- **Permanent Exclusions**

- DCE confirmed that there have been no permanent exclusions issued this academic year.

10. School Calendar

A copy of the proposed school calendar was provided to governors prior to the meeting and it was noted that, since then, there have been two small changes:-

- The Year 11 Geography trip has been moved from 18th to 16th October 2019.
- The Blood Brothers trip has been cancelled.

DCE shared that a lot of new trips are being tried this year and it would be interested to see how well these go down with students.

Governors were reminded that they are approving all events and trips contained within it. The term dates have been approved previously and the calendar has used those dates.

Governors agreed to approve the school calendar for 2019-20

Outcome: The school calendar for 2019-20 was approved.

11. Music Tuition Fees

Governors were asked to consider the following proposed changes to music tuition rates:-

Annual Charge – increase from £385 to £400

Three Instalments Charge – increase from £133.50 to £138.50 per instalment (£415.50 in total)

Governors asked whether, by introducing these increases, it would ensure that the school is not subsidising the tuition that takes place in school. DCE confirmed that the school cannot subsidise this extra-curricular activity and the change to fees will keep a zero balance.

Outcome: Governors approved the new music rates from September 2019

12. Policy Approval/Acceptance

There were no policies for approval at this meeting, however the following MAT policies were submitted for acceptance (all approved at the June Trustees meeting):-

- Absconding Policy (BLS personalised version)
- Adoption Leave and Pay Policy (MAT-wide policy)
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy (BLS personalised version)
- Equality Policy (MAT-wide policy)
- Investment Policy (MAT-wide policy)
- Leave of Absence Policy (MAT-wide policy)
- Maternity Leave Policy – Support staff (MAT-wide policy)
- Maternity Leave Policy – Teaching Staff (MAT-wide policy)
- Performance Management Policy – Support Staff (MAT-wide policy)

Governors noted that in the Equality Policy, the term 'girl' and 'boy' is used in section F, point 5b. A request was made to make this reference gender neutral. The Clerk confirmed that she would liaise with the Trust and arrange for the policy to be updated.

KJ asked whether the Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy could have a contents sheet in the September version. It was agreed that this would be possible and the Clerk will feed this request back before the next approval date.

Outcome: All the above policies were accepted by the LGB subject to the amendment to the Equality Policy as outlined above.

13. LGB Skills Audit and Link Governors

Skills Audit

- ST shared that overall, the outcome of the skills audit is good. It showed a few gaps exist but nothing of great concern. The audit showed that governors were all very committed to the school and education.
- One very strong areas was the responsibilities of being a governor, i.e. ethics, diversity etc.
- ST shared that the area which is traditionally weaker than others is around buildings, procurement and purchasing and this is the case with this audit. In addition, HR experience is showing as a slight weakness although some do have experience with this.
- ST highlighted that Ofsted and the inspection framework is an area of training need and it was agreed that DCE will arrange a training session for governors around this. Governors queried whether an external Ofsted person could deliver the training via a format online. It was agreed that DCE and the Clerk will look to see if there is a training DVD for governors.
- ST confirmed that this information will be used to recruit to the one vacancy.
- ACE questioned the induction process for new governors. It was agreed that this is an area for development – The Clerk, JT, ST agreed to look into preparing a document for governors for the new academic year.

Outcome: A new governor induction pack and procedure to be written.

Action: JT, ST and the Clerk to prepare induction documents for governors in the new academic year.

Link Governors

- ST highlighted that links are currently to subjects and then key areas have created additional links. Governors were asked to share their views on this and consider whether, now the school is focusing on Ofsted strands, links should be attached to these areas instead.
- The benefits of a cross-curricular approach compared to departmental links was discussed. DCE highlighted that the cross curricular model may mean having to meet with more people over time as you get deeper into the link focus. **KJ felt that the curriculum link gave staff an opportunity to get governor involvement directly with their department and felt that this was invaluable.** DCE shared that key is making sure that time is spent equally about the school. ACE shared that when link visits are done and are done well, it makes the HOCA feel they have a voice and can be very positive.
- Governors drew the example from the visioning around literacy and highlighted that the aim of link governors is to make sure that the improvement plan is being carried out. **MHJ queried whether it was therefore possible to link the current model with the improvement plan, i.e. give those governors specific tasks/questions for their visits.** It was agreed that this would be possible and recommended a review on what governors do during link visits should be undertaken.
- **Governors also queried if some governors have too big a role for an individual person, i.e. safeguarding link governor. Would another person on this role be beneficial?** As the link for Safeguarding, KJ did not feel that another person was required.
- After discussing, it was agreed to carry on with subject links next year, but give a route of cross-referencing the visit with the plan.
- **KJ also shared a view that discussing of link visit reports needs to happen in order for any model to be effective.** Governors all agreed with this although concern was raised about the amount of time this would take during an LGB meeting and would need to be reviewed.

Outcome: To continue with subject/departmental link governors but introduce common key lines of enquiries for link governors to go through during their visits.

Action: Link Governors to ensure that reports are completed and submitted to the Clerk after visits.

Action: ST and DCE to look at key lines of enquiries for link visits.

14. Governance

Link Visits

- KJ has prepared two reports (Maths and Technology) which will come to the next meeting. Maths had no major issues with exam papers and they are positive about the expected results. Technology shared some concern about numbers in Engineering. KJ is also due in shortly for a safeguarding visit.
- ST has done the wellbeing link visit and the report will be shared at the next meeting.
- MHJ has carried out a science link visit. One area of worry for science was low-level behaviour issues. The department feel this may be because the lab is a different environment, which causes this change in behaviour for some children.
- The Clerk confirmed that all subject links have been organised with the exception of two and these are in the process of being organised.

Action: Link governors to provide their reports to the Clerk to be shared at the next meeting.

Changes to Membership

- Governors were informed that since the last meeting, Alison Ashley has been appointed to one of the vacant governor positions.
- One current vacancy remains and this will be filled as soon as possible using the information from the skills audit.

Action: Remaining governor vacancy to be filled as soon as possible.

15. Future Meetings

A copy of the proposed meeting dates for 2019-20 was provided to governors prior to the meeting. Governors were informed that the proposal is based on the model agreed at the previous meeting with some work around organising the sub-committee meeting based on the recommendations shared by governors.

Outcome: Governors approved the meeting calendar for 2019-20

End of Meeting