

The meeting was conducted online using MS Teams due to the Covid pandemic

Present: Mr Dominic Course (Chair)
Miss Sarah Cox

In attendance: Mrs Rachel Hill – Clerk
Mr Matt Matthew – Trust Business Manager

Welcome: The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies: Apologies from Mr Jason Hayward Jones and Mrs Nicky Dunford were received.

Declaration of Business Interests: The CEO and Dominic Course are Trustees of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. The CEO is a Trustee of the Bearnas Education Foundation.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of 20 January 2021 were approved.

2. **Matters Arising**

- 2.1 Minibuses. The CEO provided a detailed update of all risks associated with individual minibuses. This is filed in SharePoint.
- 2.2 Transfer of funds from the SDMAT schools with the Westcountry Schools Partnership. The Chair reported that the anticipated transfer of £16k approximately in relation to Moretonhampstead School will not be reimbursed by SDMAT. Until solar panel discussions have been resolved the SDMAT can't be wound up.
- 2.3 Annual Report and Financial Statements. The Auditor's requirement of final minutes for post year-end meetings has been actioned. The TBM is holding a pre-audit meeting on 14 May 2021. It was agreed by Trustees in 2020 to continue with Bishop Fleming on a three year tenure.
- 2.4 Internal Audit. The TBM advised that a scrutiny of the payroll and income systems had been completed.

3. **Internal Audit**

- 3.1 The TBM reported that the Spring term visit by Griffin Accountancy had been undertaken. One comment received was the basis of accruals which Griffin would like to see monthly. A Trust decision had been made that due to the minimal amounts of accruals they would be completed at year end so as not to create an additional workload. *The Chair noted that it had been a clean audit.* The TBM responded that the Trust has a rigorous approach to audits.

The Chair noted that at the Standards & Curriculum meeting the committee had been advised that Morchard Bishop would be transitioning to the Trust in October 2021 and he questioned whether it made it cleaner if they transitioned in September. The TBM responded that the time of transition was not an issue and a long due diligence process will take place before they join.

The TBM advised that Griffin's Summer Term visit will review insurance cover, purchase systems, fixed asset controls (including review of capital funding applications as per specific risk on risk register). The TBM advised that this is the second year that Griffin Accountancy has been used as the Trust's Internal Auditors. The quality of their work is markedly better than what the Trust has experienced in the past and that he would recommend their services to other Academies and for the Link to continue with their appointment.

4. **External Audit**

The TBM reported. The preliminary draft external audit programme for 2021-22 has been completed and will be recommended to the Board of Trustees on 24 May 2021. The Trust has a good relationship with Bishop Fleming who are well regarded in the sector. *The Chair noted that it was useful to look at the Bishop Fleming website and their benchmarking publication.* Benchmarking for the Trust was discussed and it was agreed to make this a future agenda item.

Agenda Item

5. **Health & Safety**

The Trust Health & Safety Co-Ordinator's compliance matrix was received by the committee. The TBM reported that EVERY provides the software system for the compliance tool. Each school has access into the system and maintains their own records. *The Chair asked how serious the reds were in the RAG rating.* The TBM advised they raised no serious concerns. Automated meter reading systems are used for water. *SC asked whether any insurances were invalidated if electrical installations and/or fire-alarms were down.* The TBM replied that newer schools to the Trust are asked to check their paperwork to ensure it is correct. *SC asked how soon do inconsistencies get picked up on.* The TBM replied that with the appointment of the Health & Safety Officer monitoring has improved and the RAG rating should move to green by the next meeting of the Audit committee.

6. **Risk Register**

6.1 Regulation and Statutory compliance. The amendments made by the committee/CEO at the January Audit meeting were received and recommended to Board of Trustees for approval.

6.2 The Chair advised that individual Academy Risk Registers have been received. The next stage is to clarify links between them and what should be flagged up on the Trust Risk Register. SC will now read through the RR's and send her comments to the Chair. Agenda item at the next meeting.

Agenda Item

The suitability of the current Academy Risk Register as a working document was considered by the committee. It was agreed that it could be improved to be more user friendly and less wieldy. The TBM advised that the EVERY software has risk register capability. It was agreed that the TBM would follow the matter up with EVERY and enquire if their software might be suitable for the Trust.

Action TBM

7. **Data Protection**

The TBM advised that there were no data protection issues that he had been made aware of. The Data Protection Officer will be undertaking formal training in the near future.

8. **Safeguarding**

It was noted that a Safeguarding report had not been brought forward to the meeting. The TBM advised that the Trust's Safeguarding and SEND lead was undertaking safeguarding audits with schools and that he was not aware of any issues as present.

9. **Policy**

9.1 Risk Management Policy. It was agreed that subject to one minor amendment the committee recommended the policy to the Board of Trustees for approval. Clerk to action amendment.

Action Clerk

It was noted that pupil numbers need to improve, in particular at Cheriton Bishop, Drakes, Otterton and Moretonhampstead.

SC asked the Chair whether risks should be delegated to Local Boards where they have vacancies and should this be audited. SC also noted that she had had difficulty identifying how LBs were represented according to the Scheme of Delegation. The TBM recommended that SC contact the ATSIL Sarah Clarke from the Executive

Improvement Team as she is the current liaison with Local Boards and has been working on this matter.

School website compliance was discussed. *DC asked where the overall responsibility sat for school websites.* The TBM advised that with individual schools the responsibility sat with the Executive/Head Teacher assisted by the administrator. The HR Officer checks school websites on a termly basis for compliance and advises schools accordingly. It was agreed that there was a need to ensure that the schools made changes as advised. Up to date websites are an important tool for successful Ofsted visits.

The Chair noted that the Board of Trustees is lacking a trustee with experience in primary education. It might be possible to identify a potential Trustee from local governors. The TBM added that frequent reminders are made to the Diocese for Trustee recommendations.

10. **Date of future meetings**

10 November 2021

19 January 2022

11 May 2022