

Minutes of the Extraordinary Full Governing Board of Beckley and Peasmarsh Primary Schools

Held on Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 5pm.

Attendance

Name	Governor	Other	In Attendance	Apologies
Jane Burnett	Chair		Y	
Ian Bryan	Vice Chair		Y	
Lison Smart	Head of Sch Peasmarsh		Y	
Simon Thurston	Head of Sch Beckley		Y	
Emma Hogg			Y	
Kate Sims			Y	
Greg Russell			Y	
Jane Nash			Y	
Peter Mayers			Y	
Martin Harper			Y	
Marie-Clare Erith			Y	
Alan Lloyd-Smith			Y	
Annie Wiles	CEO Aquila		Y	
Marion Scally	Finance Director Aquila		Y	
John Crouch	Locum Clerk		Y	

		Action
	Purpose: To receive a presentation from Directors of “Aquila” Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust	
1.	Welcome from the Chair	
2.	Declaration of Interests: Jane Burnett: Aquila Governor – Brenzett Sch Martin Harper: Director DCAT Kate Sims: Director DCAT Ian Bryan : Partner an Aquila governor John Crouch: Chair of Quercus Federation and Governor Clerk at Herstmonceux and IEB Clerk for St Mary Star of the Sea.	
3.	Presentation by Directors from Aquila. Tabled background reading – “Introducing Aquila” and “Services to Trust Academies”. The CEO and Finance Director talked through the Visions and Structure of the Trust, outlining key points and taking questions throughout. From the General Annual Grant the Trust takes an annual deduction of 5% from each member school to cover core central services.	

	<p>Mandatory Services are provided by the Trust on a “charge-back” system to the Academy schools. Academy Choice services, are purchased directly by each individual academy school. This list may reduce as the Trust becomes more able to centralise purchasing in these areas.</p> <p>Items 14/15/16 of the Core Central Services are funded via the Canterbury Diocese.</p> <p><i>Governors asked how this differs from, and would affect the arrangement with Chichester.</i> Currently an SLA is paid to Chichester, this arrangement would continue.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the 5% was across all schools regardless of pupil numbers?</i> It was confirmed that this is the arrangement.</p> <p>The Aquila team confirmed that they have a team of Ex-Headteachers and ex-HMI’s, all of whom have experience of working with Church schools. Each Academy school is allocated a Lead Practitioner. Academy schools select Improvement Advisors for the 12 individual bespoke days of supported training per annum. There is an option for schools not to take all 12 days. The Trust becomes all staff – TUPE arrangement applies. Each Academy school retains a Local Governing Board The Trust holds responsibility for Mandatory and Health and Safety Policies. The LGB has responsibility for Teaching and Learning Policies. The Trust supports, and has involvement in the appointment of HT and DHT. Each school GB manages its own Finances and Staffing, reporting to the Trust. Schools appoint all other staff. Should the school choose to join Aquila, then there would be a review of compacity of staff conditions. Aquila manage Capital funding and bids.</p> <p><i>Governors asked how many schools in the Trust?</i> Currently there are 10 with one more about to join. All are Primary schools and there are just under 3000 pupils in total.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about there being a possible Free School being set up.</i> There is the potential of one in the Ashford area. The Aquila team gave clarification on the difference of a Free School and how this could fit within the Trust.</p> <p>Aquila confirmed that they provide Senior and Middle Leadership Training. The costs of these is borne within the 5%.</p>	
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	<p>Support for NPQH leadership is supported provided it is recommended by the LGB.</p> <p>Aquila offer “Achievement for All” across the Trust, which supports Vulnerable pupils on a 2year programme with external coaching.</p> <p>Tracking system would be through SIMS which has been tailored to meet Aquila requirements. The setting up of this bespoke system, was supported by Headteachers from the Trust.</p> <p>There is support for reporting of surveys with links to school SEF aiding measure of impact.</p> <p>All staff would have a coach, as well as a Line Manger.</p> <p><u>There followed an extensive Q & A session</u></p> <p><i>Governors asked if the in the first year of a school joining, the Trust operates with heavier hand?</i></p> <p>Dependent on the state of the school. A Good/Outstanding school would have a greater degree of autonomy, while a school in RI would receive more input from the Trust, in particular with regard to Finance.</p> <p>Each school has its own Scheme of Delegation which would be published on the school website.</p> <p><i>Governors asked how many schools currently in the trust are RI?</i></p> <p>Only 1 currently but several in category.</p> <p>Aquila emphasised that this is where sharing good practice across schools in Trust comes in to its own.</p> <p>On joining the Trust there is a 2day post conversion external HMI review. This establishes what support is required. Schools doing the supporting must have the capacity to support – this is encouraged <u>not</u> directed.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if there was a financial offload from Good schools to the those in RI?</i></p> <p>Aquila confirmed that all school budgets are separate.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about transition of finance arrangements.</i></p> <p>Aquila replied that there is constant support throughout the transition with the Trust Finance team working closely with SBM and/or Bursar. The Trust supports moving towards a consolidated system – Civicon.</p> <p>The Trust works with a school from pre-conversion, training led and supported, with remote access. Support given, in particular where there is a lack of in-school finance backing.</p> <p><i>Governors asked when due diligence was carried out.</i></p> <p>Most is done during the pre-conversion period, however Finance is likely to be dealt with nearer to the actual conversion date.</p>	
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	<p>Governors asked about Trust staffing breakdown. Currently there are 5 HQ staff and 8 on the Consultant team. The Trust are looking to expand these numbers to match and meet capacity as the Trust expands.</p> <p>Governors asked what is the optimal size of a Trust and how large would the Aquila Trust look to become. This is currently a changing picture. Figures of between 1500 to 3000 have been given previously. 5000 pupils being the general figure.</p> <p>Governors enquired if there were any plans to include Secondary schools. No. Reasons given were: Financial, Buildings, amount of LA support/impact, and lack of capacity within the Trust.</p> <p><i>What is the size of the smallest school in the Trust?</i> 62 pupils.</p> <p>Governors raised a question regarding the ethos and practicalities of coaching. The Trust recognise that there is a challenge due to the geographic spread of the schools. As growth continues they will look to developing clear groups of schools. Working in hubs will strengthen: moderation; joint staff training; Governor shadowing, and sharing data.</p> <p>Governors wanted to know how common the curriculum was across the Trust. Curriculum was determined by the LGB and responded to local circumstance. The Trust confirmed that the school name does not have change, nor the timings of the school day, these decisions remain with the LGB.</p> <p>Governors asked, if a school was under-performing were there sanctions applied? To date this has not been an issue. With the right people engaged in support and regular contact with schools following up on the accuracy of reporting it is considered that intervention would reduce any risk in this eventuality. Sanctions that could be considered would include: In the event of Financial concerns – removal of Financial oversight from LGB.</p>	
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	<p>Data concerns – communication with the LGB asking what steps are being taken/support needed. The ultimate sanction would be to remove the LGB.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the Trust would remove a teacher?</i> The expectation is that, local staffing issues would be led by the school Head Teacher and LGB. The Trust has engaged Ellis Whittam for support with HR and H&S support and this has been favourably supported by existing Heads. Where it was identified that a school was under-performing one head teacher has left since conversion.</p> <p><i>Governors confirmed the current arrangement at Beckley/Peasmarsh of Exec HT overall and HoS at each site. This is due to continue until July 2018. What support would there be for HoS?</i> The Trust would provide Leadership training for the HoS with the addition of school-to school across the Trust. If the structure continued beyond conversion the Trust would provide Exec HT support in the same way. Appraisal would remain with the LGB.</p> <p><i>In response to an enquiry about Mandatory Services charges,</i> these are £55 per member of staff, and this is cross charged back to schools over the year. (Ellis Whittam and Capita) Statutory Moderation Services should be in common with current charges to ESCC. Aquila would seek clarification.</p> <p><i>Governors wanted know if schools had improved since conversion.</i> 7 of the schools have moved from RI to at least Good. Honesty has developed within the Trust schools. With greater openness and support, data has improved. HMI/LA Categorisation ceases on conversion. The Trust however engage external consultants in order to gain a Category. The LA would look at this this, but can then only offer advice. Once an academy then a school is directly under the Trust and ultimately the Regional Commissioner.</p> <p><i>Governors asked the Aquila team for their view on the Government change of stance regarding Academies.</i> They felt that the removal of the terminal date for all schools to become an academy had been wise. Since the date was removed they had witnessed an increase in the level enquiries for joining</p>	
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	<p>the Trust.</p> <p><i>Kent still has Grammar Schools, does this impact/impinge/</i> No</p> <p><i>Governors advised that some parents are unhappy that the schools are considering this move, what reasons would the Trust give for this being the right thing to do?</i> From a Financial point of view, the Services and provision from the LA is diminishing. Working in isolation will not give any economy of scale. With there currently being 2800 pupils in the Trust schools this is now being reached. Working closely together is helping address issues such as National Insurance contribution and Pension increases, use joint purchasing and service procurement to reduce costs. Greater openness gives better opportunities to support each other. It was confirmed that there is no direct financial support from the Diocese. <i>If not receiving financially supported by the Diocese, is the Trust breaking even.</i> Yes, but it has been a challenge.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the impact of the Trust on improving teaching standards.</i> There has been a lot of support provided across the Trust. The School Improvement Partners have proven experience, not all are current practitioners, but all are very well considered by HT's within the Trust schools and beyond.</p> <p><i>Governors enquired about the "Marketing" post being currently advertised.</i> As the Trust recognises that it cannot afford to stand still and will need to increase capacity and provision, it therefore needs to improve the expertise available to them. This will be a non-remunerated member of the Trust Board.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the focus was only on Church Schools and what was its relationship with the Diocese?</i> While the Trust has been set up as a VA trust there is nothing to preclude them including Community schools. There are other Church led MAT's being set up. At present Aquila is the only one to be taking on-board VA schools.</p> <p><i>A Hub structure was discussed earlier, is this how Aquila see</i></p>	
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	<p><i>things developing?</i></p> <p>While Aquila recognises hubs of schools, it is not operating a hub structure. Being part of the Trust does not prevent schools from operating with non-trust schools within its geographic locality, schools should be encouraged to co-operate as widely as possible.</p> <p><i>Governors expressed concern that Beckley/Peasmarsh may be isolated. How did Aquila see this being alleviated?</i></p> <p>Nearest current school will be Brenzett. The Trust are also speaking with church schools in the Goudhurst area, which may look to federate before joining a MAT. It is the belief of Aquila that Beckley/Peasmarsh would benefit from being part of a larger structure.</p> <p><i>Does the Diocese have representation on the Trust Board?</i></p> <p>Yes</p> <p><i>How is the church ethos delivered and what would be the expectation regarding a Community school?</i></p> <p>Church ethos is monitored through the SIAMS inspection routine. School Improvement Partners incorporate this within their role – having a SIAMS background. There is an expectation that Church schools would have a “Good” or better for SIAMS.</p> <p>Community Schools could convert to the Trust as they stand, there would not be an expectation to change to either a VA/VC model. It is not anticipated this would be a problem.</p> <p><i>The Free school mentioned earlier, is this to be a church school?</i></p> <p>Yes</p> <p><i>Do all schools use the same tracking system?</i></p> <p>Yes – Assessment Manager. Support for any school needing conversion.</p> <p><i>Is there Trust involvement with the HT Performance Management?</i></p> <p>Yes, the CEO has direct involvement and oversees/moderates all targets. There is training provision for the LGB who will set and monitor the HT PM working with the School Improvement Partner.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the situation in respect of a school becoming un-sustainable financially and at what point would</i></p>	
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	<p><i>pupil numbers reduce to before the Trust stepped in?</i></p> <p>The Trust would be intervening at an early stage. Regular reporting and strong communication links would ensure the Trust were aware of a changing situation early. With regard to finances the Trust would work closely with the LGB through a Management Action Plan. In respect of pupil numbers, there would be conversations with the LA who have a greater understanding of the local demographics, though the responsibility for the school will remain with the Trust. This would not be an overnight situation and currently there are no schools within the Trust at such a risk.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the situation pertaining to Special Needs support.</i></p> <p>Funding for Special Needs remains the responsibility of the LA and the Trust is aware of differing funding arrangements between ESCC and Kent. Within the Trust there is a Senco forum which meets regularly and shares good practice. Individual schools control their own allocated funding, there is no cross-school funding spread applied by the Trust.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Aquila for their time and presentation. The Chair thanked the Governors for their support.</p> <p>Meeting ended 18.20.</p> <p>Meetings approved by the FGB Date.....</p> <p>..... Chair of Governors</p>	
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