

**By Brook Valley Academy Trust**  
 (Company Registration Number 8020467)  
**Academy Board Meeting**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024**



**Minutes**

**Present:** David New (“DN”), Deborah Henshall (Head teacher) (“DH”), Natasha Nicholas (“NN”), Jaclyn Cross (“JC”), Lisa Nicolson (“LN”), Merope Sylvester (“MS”), Craig Parrott (“CP”), (from 6.08pm) Elizabeth Gilbertson (“EG”) and Martin Lowe (“ML”)

**In Attendance:** Michelle Hocking (Clerk/Company Secretary) (“MH”)

**Apologies:** Rosemary Jago (“RJ”)

Item	Minute	Action
	<b>Opening Prayer</b> JC led the opening prayer	
1.	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> In RJ’s absence, DN took the chair and opened the meeting at 6.03pm. Apologies were noted and accepted from RJ. DN declared that a quorum was present and formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	<b>Pecuniary and Business Interests Register</b> It was noted that all present had completed the annual Related Parties Declaration of Interests forms and no interests were declared in the business of this meeting.	
3.	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting – 9 May 2024:</b> <a href="#">BBV Academy Board Minutes 09.05.24 v1.docx</a></p> <p><b>The minutes of the last meeting were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of that meeting. ACTION: DN to sign the May minutes (as chair of that meeting) and return them to MH for filing/publication.</b></p> <p><i>EG joined the meeting at 6.03pm</i></p> <p><b>Matters arising not covered elsewhere)</b> <a href="#">FGB Actions Log 2023 24.docx</a></p> <p><i>ML joined the meeting at 6.08pm</i></p> <p><b><u>ACTIONS:</u></b> (i) DH and DN to circulate School Improvement Action Plan (SIAP) following their September meeting to all committees (for review at first committees’ meetings of the academic year – NB: F&amp;P require costed SIAP) (ii) all committees to add review of SIAP to their next meeting agenda.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DH/DN Committees’ chairs</p>

<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Headteacher Report</b> Termly Monitoring Report and HT Report circulated. DH highlighted:</p> <p><b>Staffing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resignations: 1 x class teaching assistant (<b>TA</b>) + 1 x 1-2-1 TA</li> <li>Appointments: NN and Carrie Davies job share deputy headteacher role</li> </ul> <p><b>Parental Engagement</b> Attendance is low</p> <p><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Improvement Adviser (<b>SIA</b>) continuing next year</li> <li>From September, as a new headteacher (rather than 'acting'), DH will have a formal headteacher mentor</li> <li>External visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Career Teacher (<b>ECT</b>) programme has been externally validated – very, very positive</li> <li>Phonics – Local Authority (<b>LA</b>) conducted check of test procedures</li> <li>Standard Assessment Tests (<b>SATs</b>) – LN conducted a governors' SATs overview visit <b>ACTION: LN to complete SATs visit report and upload here: <a href="#">Visit Reports</a></b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Attendance</b> Details in report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Above national overall</li> <li>Disadvantaged cohort = 95% (above overall national)</li> <li>Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities (<b>SEND</b>) cohort = 94% (in line with national overall)</li> <li>Very little difference between level of attendance between genders</li> <li>Persistent absenteeism is well below national</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that the report circulated tracks those with less than 85% attendance (less than 90% attendance becomes persistent). <b>ACTION: <u>DH to update the attendance reporting template moving forwards to track those with less than 95% attendance (so they can be captured and support implemented before they officially become 'persistent absentees')</u></b></p> <p>New guidance being implemented across the UK from 19.08.24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penalty notices will be standardised centrally</li> <li>The school is working with local hub schools to produce a new attendance policy which will be published on the website during the summer (subject to governors' ratification) and brought to governors for ratification in September <b>ACTIONS: (i) DH to draft and publish new attendance policy and (ii) MH to add ratification of new attendance policy to the next agenda.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Complaints</b> It was noted that both complaints had been closed (following investigation and withdrawal respectively).</p>	<p>LN</p> <p>DH</p> <p>DH MH</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Policies:</b></p> <p><b>(a) Recommended by F&amp;P:</b></p> <p><b>(i) Fraud</b> It was noted that, whilst not mandatory, the committee recommended adoption of an anti-fraud policy based on a model</p>	

	<p>policy, but this had been deferred at the last F&amp;P meeting.  <b><u>ACTIONS:</u></b> MH to add Anti-Fraud Policy to the next F&amp;P and FGB agenda.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Cyber Response Plan</b>  (iii) <b>Business Continuity Plan</b>  (iv) <b>Charging &amp; Remissions Policy</b></p> <p>(b) <b>Recommended by F&amp;E:</b>  (i) <b>SMSC Policy</b>  (ii) <b>Accessibility Plan (deferred)</b>  (iii) <b>Equality Statement (deferred)</b></p> <p>(c) <b>Recommended by CT&amp;L:</b>  (i) <b>Learning Outside the Classroom</b>  (ii) <b>Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions</b>  (iii) <b>Teaching &amp; Learning (deferred)</b></p> <p>It was unanimously agreed that each of the Cyber Response Plan, Business Continuity Plan, Charging &amp; Remissions Policy, SMSC Policy, Learning Outside the Classroom Policy and Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions Policy be and is approved in the form circulated.</p> <p><b><u>ACTIONS:</u></b> MH to (i) file the approved policies as approved and, where appropriate, arrange for their publication on the school website and (ii) add Accessibility Plan, Equality Statement and Teaching &amp; Learning Policy to the next agenda.</p>	<p>MH</p> <p>MH</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Safeguarding/Single Central Record Update</b></p> <p>JC reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plan (arising from LA visit and generally agreed areas for further development) for all safeguarding issues is being worked through, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alarm being fixed to fire door</li> <li>○ Categories on CPOMS (DH plans to archive current categories and then set up new ones – whilst it is recognised that this impedes like for like trend analysis, it is believed it will assist more accurate recording by staff)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Q1: Will incidents recorded but archived still be picked up on a future search against a particular child's name?</b></p> <p>A: Yes.</p> <p>DH added that the LA is scheduled to return to visit in October to check on progress of action points.</p> <p><b>Q2: The items highlighted are largely administrative issues, are there any cultural areas for development identified?</b></p> <p>A: No – the only item which could materially impact child safety is the alarm on the fire door, for which quotations are currently being obtained.</p> <p>JC and DH reported that some of the points raised by the LA were a matter of personal preference rather than compliance and it was agreed that the school team would record that governors/JC had considered and, where relevant, made active decisions to disregard the LA suggestions (where these are not strictly compliance but rather preferred</p>	

	<p>working practices points) <b>ACTIONS:</b> JC and DH to consider RAG-rated safeguarding action plan and note items which are personal preference/very low priority and whether to proceed with those items.</p> <p><b>Q3: Do any of the LA 'preference' items enhance the school's ability to react to behaviour?</b></p> <p>A: We are considering some – e.g. splitting categorisation of 'behaviour' and 'bullying' for the sake of clarity. In particular, the LA (and, according to recently inspected local colleagues, Ofsted) recommend closing cases on CPOMS unless a specific action is awaited. DH and the school's SENDCo are reluctant to do this. <b>It was unanimously agreed that retaining cases as 'open' on CPOMS, based on leadership advice, gave better oversight and so governors supported DH and the leadership team's decision not to close cases unless very obviously closed (e.g. child left).</b></p> <p><b>Child Protection Policy</b></p> <p>It was noted that the LA model policy (personalised for the school) had been circulated. <b>The Child Protection Policy was unanimously approved in the form circulated. ACTION:</b> MH to file and publish the <u>Child Protection Policy on the school website as an approved policy.</u></p> <p><b>Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (KCSiE24)</b></p> <p>It was noted that the link to KCSiE24 had been circulated prior to the meeting. <b>ACTIONS:</b> (i) MH to circulate KCSiE24 acknowledgement to all <u>via online forms and (ii) all governors to complete acknowledgement of KCSiE24 (via online forms) as soon as feasible.</u></p>	<p>MH</p> <p>MH All</p>
7.	<p><b>Link Governors Update: <a href="#">Visit Reports</a></b></p> <p>Plea for more visits to be conducted and visit reports completed/uploaded – DN noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There have been 19 visits recorded (conducted by 5 governors)</li> <li>• He is aware that others have been in, but documentary evidence is lacking</li> <li>• Safeguarding is checked termly (and reported to FGB under a standing agenda item)</li> <li>• Behaviour continues to be regarded and observed to be generally of a high standard for the vast majority of children</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b> (i) ML to upload H&amp;S visit report and (ii) EG to upload reports for 3 visits conducted.</p>	<p>ML EG</p>
8.	<p><b>Curriculum, Teaching &amp; Learning (CT&amp;L) Committee Report/Minutes (matters arising)</b></p> <p>It was noted that the minutes and documents had been circulated. DN highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and art curriculum focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Very positive reports</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Positive impact of extra subject leadership time evident</li> <li>○ Staff and governors are keen to publicise high quality paperwork, scrutiny, improvements in provision/children's retention, etc</li> <li>● It is recognised that staff have worked exceptionally hard</li> <li>● Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Much to celebrate – pupil outcomes are very successful</li> <li>○ Trends in outcomes have improved swiftly this year</li> <li>○ Multiplication Check is the only measure which is not at or above national</li> <li>○ There is clear context around all those who have not reached the expected standard in Standard Assessment Tests (<b>SATs</b>) – the children and their needs are well known and well supported</li> <li>○ Phonics outcomes in particular have justified the investment in books and training</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Questions were invited. There were none.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Foundation &amp; Ethos (F&amp;E) Committee Report/Minutes/Action Plan (matters arising)</b></p> <p>It was noted that the minutes and associated documents have been circulated.</p> <p>JC highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Next year planned focus on church/school partnership (award is ready to be renewed) as part of preparation for SIAMS (which is due probably in 2025/26)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>● Plan also to work towards WIRE Award<sup>2</sup></li> <li>● Following a letter from the diocese (to all schools) about lack of engagement in diocesan CPD (including an invitation to attend free training) the committee acknowledged a desire to maintain a good relationship with the Diocese and, where needs, availability and budget permitted, were committed to attend training</li> <li>● Parent survey has been (for reasons of staff wellbeing, etc) deferred until September</li> </ul> <p>MS added that the Church Experience Day in June went extremely well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The children were very proactive (only one did not participate)</li> <li>● There were lots of activities/tasks and it was a very productive day</li> <li>● There was lots of positive feedback</li> </ul> <p>Questions were invited – there were none.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Finance, Premises, Staffing &amp; HR (F&amp;P) Committee Report/Minutes/Finance Report/Budget Approval and Risk Register Update</b></p>	

<sup>1</sup> [Schools and Parishes in Partnership - Diocese of Bristol \(anglican.org\)](http://anglican.org)

<sup>2</sup> [WIRE Award - Diocese of Bristol \(anglican.org\)](http://anglican.org)

EG reported:

- Tendering:
  - Cleaning: Tenderers were broadly comparable (services and costs) and so decision taken to maintain current provider as per email approvals **The email approval of the cleaning preferred tenderer (Direct Cleaning) was unanimously ratified**
  - HR: The preferred tenderer is clearly working well with other schools, is big enough to be viewed as secure but not too big and impersonal and priced competitively and so decision was made, as per email approvals, to appoint Juniper **The email approval of the HR preferred tenderer (Juniper) was unanimously ratified**
  - Catering: The catering tender has been cancelled [for technical reasons

#### **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

##### **Catering Tender**

EG reported that the catering tender was cancelled as, following provisional selection of one of the two bidders, it came to light that there had been inadvertent disclosure of information to the preferred bidder. The existing supplier has agreed to extent its contract on broadly consistent costs on condition that on the next tender process (i) the other tenderer in this terminated process is not invited to tender and (ii) the staff member who disclosed the information is not involved in any subsequent tender (the risk of any legal proceedings is, following correspondence between the school and the catering provider, is considered to be low but is unlikely to be covered by insurance)

The board acknowledged that closer supervision and management of the office was required:

- RJ has volunteered to provide some specific mentoring and support over the summer but the level of governor involvement is not sustainable
- F&P discussed and agreed to conduct a specific review of staffing issues, including management of the office immediately before October half term

##### **Office Update**

EG reported:

- As per her email of 05.07.24:
  - At the last F&P meeting we discussed the lack of monthly financial reports and agreed that if they were in place by end May and that we were content that they represented a sound financial position, we would write to the auditors and explain that we would not be creating the reports for the missing months (Jan-Apr). This position was outside of the guidance in the Academy Handbook but we considered it an appropriate measure given the staffing situation in the office since Jan 24. We have not received the monthly financial report for end May and as such, have reached a position whereby we are unable to state that we have a clear understanding of the school's financial status. Moreover, we do not currently have a sound basis for the generation of next year's budget. This must be submitted by end-Aug.
  - I have spent the day with Karen going through the finance system

and helping her to generate an end-June report. It is clear to me that invoices and payments have been entered into the system throughout the affected period. Using this data, it has been possible to generate the majority of the report today. Current indications suggest a slight surplus at the end of accounting period 10 (Jun) where a £42k deficit had been expected. Accruals and prepayments have yet to be accounted, as have adjustments to the budget for increase in income etc.

- I have asked Karen to prioritise finalising the end-Jun report to ensure we have it available for F&P next Friday. If we are satisfied at this point, I will propose that we write to the auditors as per our intent at last F&P. If the report is not satisfactory, we will have to act to regain financial control. This may include contracting for accounting support in the very near-term.
- With regard to the budget, we must aim to agree the budget at F&P for presentation to FGB next week. Today, we worked through many of the details of the budget. On the basis of the IY marginal surplus forecast above, we have carried forward the full £112k surplus that we brought in to this FY. This is a £60k uplift vice the position we expected to be in when we created last year's budget; however, it is currently showing a £110k increase in staffing costs for FY 24/25. This subsumes all surplus and maintains the concerning forward looking deficit position. This staffing costs position is not expected from the modelling undertaken prior to the recent recruitment rounds and as such, Deb is going to review the position. Hopefully there are embedded errors that are causing the sharp uplift. If a cost reduction is not found, we will need to assess whether we can support such a significant increase against a deficit budget.
- More broadly, I firmly believe that the office team is lacking leadership and management oversight as constituted today. This view is born out of our recent experiences during the tendering process where unreasonable levels of support have been demanded of Rosie and Michelle, and within the financial management. The team needs mentoring, professional development and oversight. I do not believe Deb, nor the SLT, can realistically provide the quite significant level of support that is needed. Whilst staffing costs are clearly an issue, I strongly recommend that to support the strategic stability of the school, we consider options for the recruitment of a manger within the office team.

Following further discussions and correspondence:

- It is clear that the finance officer is figuring out a new system (having had no handover from and a three-month gap since departure of previous finance officer)
- It is clear that invoices have been raised and cashflow maintained
- Accruals (where the school has received the benefit but not yet paid) and prepayments (where the school has paid but not yet received the benefit) have not yet been accounted for in full

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Budgeted outturn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Originally was £50,900 in-year deficit (i.e. not including carried forward surplus)</li> <li>o Now showing as £16,000 in-year deficit (with pre-payments and accruals factored in this could go up to £30k)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o Whilst this is a more positive position (which we must get a better understanding of during August) we are not compliant with the Academy Trust Handbook (note F&amp;P minutes: <a href="#">F&amp;P Minutes 03.05.24 v1.docx</a> and <a href="#">F&amp;P Minutes 12.07.24 ChairApproved.docx</a>)</li> </ul> <p>It was unanimously agreed that extra capacity be brought in at a cost of up to £5K to ensure end of year position is clarified and documented as required and secure draft budget for 24/25 is produced <b>ACTIONS:</b> (i) DH to seek extra capacity on this basis (ii) DH/EG to arrange for closedown budget monitoring and draft budget 24/25 to be circulated for email approval (initially by F&amp;P and then by FGB) and (iii) MH to add ratification of the closedown figures and draft budget for 24/25 to the next agendas for F&amp;P and FGB.</p> <p>EG reported that the provisional draft budget circulated in the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Had been prepared based on the assumptions here: <a href="#">Budget Assumptions for Governors - July 24.docx</a></li> <li>o Forecast an in-year deficit rising to £144K</li> </ul> <p>EG explained that the major cost difference was staff (just for one year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o £100K more proposed to be spent on staff next year in comparison to this year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o SENDCo</li> <li>o Full time deputy</li> <li>o Two of the three ECT temporary contracts moving to permanent</li> <li>o Leaving teacher replaced with more experienced candidate (no capacity for more ECTs)</li> <li>o Extra support for particular class (to give best chance to catch up) - use returning maternity leave senior staff member to run targeted interventions with very experienced class teacher</li> <li>o Three TAs initially sought (2 x 1-2-1s and 1 x class TA) – F&amp;P agreed two only and PPA cover teacher to continue for September but review in October alongside office management</li> </ul> </li> <li>o Second model shows £13K deficit (which is probably c.£30K worse)</li> </ul> <p>The board discussed, noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Every class has a TA in the morning (not afternoon) and some 1-2-1s</li> <li>o The number of children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) has doubled – but the school has to cover £6K of funding for each of these from its own budget</li> <li>o There is not yet confidence in the figures and there may be some double-accounting/erroneous entries (e.g. catering staff)</li> <li>o The school will still be in deficit next year even if able to return a balanced budget at the end of this year (which is unlikely – somewhere between c. £16K - £30K in-year deficit)</li> <li>o Positive context is upturn in number on roll (NOR) to 191 in</li> </ul>	<p>DH/EG MH</p>
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	<p>September 2024 (up from 181 at the start of this year)</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b> (i) DH/senior leaders to produce a prioritised costs savings plan for consideration alongside the budget and (ii) ML and EG to support production of end of year 23/24 and draft 24/25 budget figures.</p>	DH ML/EG
11.	<p><b>Governor Training and Participation</b></p> <p>(a) Brochure on Teams + Cascaded training materials: <a href="#">Training</a></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> All to book LA training via MH.</p> <p>(b) Ofsted Preparedness: <a href="#">Ofsted Preparedness</a></p> <p>Ofsted Preparedness folder and its contents noted.</p>	All
12.	<p><b>Chair's Update</b></p> <p>DN reported:</p> <p><b>Complaint</b></p> <p>Investigated, not upheld and, following meeting with RJ to discuss desired outcomes, complainant has confirmed satisfactory closure.</p> <p><b>Behaviour Challenges</b></p> <p>As previously reported there have been significant behaviour challenges with a particular child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Alternative provision has been secured for the child concerned</li> <li>o Dealing with these challenges has had a significant knock-on effect on staff and other children</li> <li>o Parent concerns are acknowledged but these must be considered in the context of the school's wider obligations – including under the Equality Act – and leadership is carefully considering the most appropriate ways to repair relationships with the specific class's parents</li> </ul>	
13.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>(a) Academy Trust Governance Guide Update: <a href="#">Academy trust governance guide - summary of changes</a></p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>(b) Authorised signatories</p> <p>Pursuant to Article 97 of the Articles of Association, DH and Karen Robinson were unanimously approved as authorised signatories and DN authorised to sign the authorised signatories' amendment form on behalf of the governing body.</p> <p>(b) Next year's meeting dates:</p> <p>26 September 2024</p> <p>21 November 2024</p> <p>23 January 2025</p> <p>13 March 2025</p> <p>15 May 2025</p> <p>17 July 2025</p> <p>Noted and approved.</p>	
14.	<p><b>IT update/beginner's guide:</b></p> <p><a href="https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/first-things-to-know-about-files-in-microsoft-teams-4c1b6c25-3794-49f9-93aa-bf6fdc211299">https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/first-things-to-know-about-files-in-microsoft-teams-4c1b6c25-3794-49f9-93aa-bf6fdc211299</a></p> <p>Noted again for reference.</p>	

15.	<b>How have we contributed to the vision of By Brook Valley C of E Primary School today?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved key policies</li> <li>• Celebrated excellent outcomes and supported staff hard work over the whole year</li> <li>• Supported and challenged staffing structure – particularly within financial constraints</li> <li>• Robustly challenged financial records/ appropriate provision of financial oversight and sustainability of the school</li> </ul>	
16.	<b>Date of next meeting: Thursday 26 September 2024 at 6.00pm</b>	<b>Note</b>

**Next meetings:**

- 26 September 2024**
- 21 November 2024**
- 23 January 2025**
- 13 March 2025**
- 15 May 2025**
- 17 July 2025**

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm

Signed.....

Date.....