

Part 1

Minutes of the Arbour Vale School Local Governing Body (LGB) meeting held on Thursday 21st March at 4pm

Present: David Jeffrey [Chair] (DJ)
John Wise [Vice-Chair] (JW)
David Thomas (DT)
* Prav Bassi (PB)
Matt Downey (MD)
Dr Motomori Labode (ML)

Also in attendance: Neil Sykes [Principal] (NS)
Don Blaylock [Associate Principal] (DB)
Suzanna Challenger [Clerk] (SC)
Brenda Scott [Head of Finance, OHCAT] (BS)
James Plant (JP)
Sarah Brooks (SB)

* Denotes absence

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

DJ welcomed all to the meeting. Governors welcomed ML to the LGB as the new parent governor.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Prav Bassi.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations were made.

All present noted the requirement to complete a declaration of interest form.

4. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS

- i. Governors **NOTED** that the OHCAT Board of Directors approved their appointments for a three year term commencing 14th December 2018.
- ii. Governors **NOTED** the two remaining vacancies on the LGB, for HR and Finance portfolio holders respectively. The Clerk advised that Susanne Wicks (OHC&AT Governance Manager) continues to work on recruiting to these vacancies and has made contact with two possible candidates. Recruiting suitably skilled local governors is an ongoing challenge for most schools. Governors discussed further options for recruitment, including via their own local networks and possible quid pro quo arrangements with other local schools. **Action: Susanne Wicks to**

update DJ about prospective governors for these vacancies.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- i. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19th November 2018 were **APPROVED** and signed.
- ii. The confidential minute of the meeting held on Monday 19th November 2018 was **APPROVED** and signed (see item 18).

6. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

- i. Further to item 4, governors confirmed that they had all returned a completed skills audit form with the exception of DT. **ACTION: DT to return a completed skills audit form to the Clerk.**
- ii. Further to item 7, governors confirmed that they had received data on numbers of LAC and a breakdown of behaviour by phase, and that these matters would be discussed under item 8.
- iii. Further to item 7, the Clerk requested that any outstanding governor photos and bios be sent to Susanne Wicks by the end of next week for inclusion on the new school website. **ACTION: Clerk to check whether Susanne Wicks has received previously sent photos and bios from JW and DT.**

7. PRESENTATION FROM SARAH BROOKS AND JAMES PLANT

JW introduced the presentation, praising staff for their willingness to embrace such an open process of development. While the assessment system is still a work in progress, JW said he is confident that it is evolving to meet the needs of pupils, families, staff and governors.

SB gave a brief overview of development to date: Arbour Vale has a semi-formal, formal and informal curriculum with a thematic approach that is age appropriate and strands on -ability appropriate, allowing individualisation for each pupil, and a strong focus on transitions throughout. The school has worked with Swiss Cottage School to develop a bespoke assessment system, following the removal of National Curriculum levels and P levels. Each student is baselined against their EHCP targets and the data fed into a Personalised Holistic Learning Outcomes (PHLO) Plan. Targets are set termly. Staff use Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP) to score pupils at the start and end of each term against targets in four areas of skills development. Evidence for learning is captured 'in the moment' on class iPads.

Governors discussed the following points:

- Evidence to date: the initial data harvest is promising, although work is ongoing to ensure that high quality data is being captured. As further data drops are made, trends will emerge that will give better visibility of trends, accuracy etc. and enable areas for development to be identified. Governors noted the case studies circulated and asked when meaningful reports could be expected. JP said that by the end of the year there will have been three data drops, which should be sufficient for meaningful analysis to begin.

- Governors queried the drop in expected progress shown in the current data. SB and JP attributed this to a lack of scoring/evaluation experience within the staff team, and unfamiliarity with a new and evolving system, rather than a genuine reflection of pupils' progress. DJ asked about consistency of assessment. NS said that observations of staff put the majority of teaching and learning at good or better, and he considered this an endorsement of their ability to make accurate assessments. Actions are around further improving staff use of the system to ensure data is robust e.g. there are clear descriptors for each score, and cross-team moderation helps to give consistency.
- Target setting and next steps for pupils: DT asked whether frameworks were in place to inform the identification of next steps for individual pupils, particularly in relation to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). He asked how teachers set target and how leaders knew that targets were robust, appropriate and challenging. There are plans to incorporate Engagement Profiles in relation to PMLD, and KS5 outcomes are aligned to the Preparing for Adulthood pathways. SB reiterated that the system is still in development and that working slowly and carefully will ensure that staff are confident in assessing pupils. In relation to the 'hidden curriculum' e.g. managing emotions, there was discussion around the importance of frameworks in ensuring accurate individualised target setting and assessment. Currently EHCP targets are drawn into the system and tracked; however, governors noted that this relies on the quality of EHCPs. NS said that training with the SENCO had been very useful in this regard and that work is ongoing to ensure that EHCPs are of a high standard. DT noted that the challenge in atypical target setting is ensuring that targets and next steps are robust. NS gave credit to the staff team's openness and willingness to look at other models, saying that the wider OHC&AT family has been very helpful in this respect. There are further plans to explore this and the system is still evolving. Governors noted the sensitivities within the staff team around smoothing out previous concerns around assessment and separation between Key Stages. NS highlighted the focus on the continuous curriculum, in line with the Ofsted framework, adding that two days have been allocated this term for middle leaders to quality assure targets for each student.
- Governors noted that the purchase of class iPads has enabled the development of the system. Wifi coverage within the school is not always reliable, which can create issues with data capture. Arbour Vale is soon to move onto the OHC&AT network, which should improve matters.

DJ suggested that governors revisit the curriculum and assessment system at the Autumn 2019 meeting. Governors **AGREED** this proposal. **ACTION: Clerk to add curriculum and assessment system update to Autumn 2019 agenda.**

Governors thanked SB and JP for their informative presentation.

SB and JP left the meeting at this point.

8. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

NS presented his report. Matters discussed are detailed below.

PF1

Mission and Vision: NS circulated the revised mission and vision statement, which have been developed through a consultative process with staff, families and governors.

Governors **APPROVED** the revised statements.

School Development Action Plan (SDAP): Members of SLT have been allocated to lead on one of four specific areas. The summary sheet gives an overview of progress, with the more detailed plan sitting below. The SDAP is regularly discussed and evidence/RAG ratings updated at SLT meetings in order to ensure that it remains live and current. Governors felt the format was strong and the review mechanism promotes school improvement as a whole team responsibility, noting that it also provides useful oversight for governors. DT suggested linking the SDAP to portfolio areas; governors can note within their reports that they have discussed their specific areas and this can then be recorded on the SDAP. The Clerk advised that Sandy Turner, Principal of The Link Primary School, has made similar links between her School Development Plan and governor portfolios, and that NS and DB may wish to contact her for further information.

Governors **APPROVED** the SDAP.

Self-Evaluation Form (SEF): DJ asked how the self-evaluation process works. NS said they use a template based on Bedelsford and Dysart's SEFs, and have had support from OHCAT in adapting it to Arbour Vale's context. The whole SEF will go on the website, and there will also be early years/primary-, secondary- and post 16-specific SEFs. There was discussion around the accuracy of ratings, with governors seeking assurance that ratings are robust and appropriately benchmarked, whilst recognising that core systems, such as the TES are still embedding, as is the new curriculum. Development of middle leadership is also key to accurate assessment, and the SDAP includes a middle leadership development plan. MD said that he feels the school is on the right journey, well supported by OHCAT: teaching and learning is improving and staff are accessing good quality CPD including qualified teacher status where necessary. JW noted that as a governor, he wants to be able to understand a school's strengths and areas for development and the SEF summary is very helpful in that regard. DJ suggested that the SEF be reviewed again by governors at the Autumn 2019 meeting, following the upcoming 'health check' visit as well as year-end results and baseline data. **ACTION: Clerk to add SEF to Autumn 2019 agenda.**

ML requested that the SEF and SDAP include acronym keys and explanations of gradings so that parents and other stakeholders could be confident in understanding these public documents. Governors **AGREED** this proposal. **ACTION: NS to include acronym/ratings guidance within school documents as necessary.**

Re. the percentage of students with verbal communication skills who are classed as having English as Another Language (EAL), there was discussion around the importance of differentiating between a student's SEND and their EAL needs impacting on their verbal skills, as this would help to inform meaningful next steps for

that student. Governors **AGREED** to amend this statement to clarify that “55% of students that have verbal communication skills also have EAL.”

Governors **APPROVED** the publication of the SEF on the school website, subject to the noted amendments. **ACTION: ML to review the SEF before publication to ensure it is accessible to families.**

PF2

Governors noted the continuing improvements in teaching and learning at Arbour Vale, including the work on the curriculum discussed under item 7. Governors also noted the information on educational visits, as had been previously requested. Phased introduction of the Teacher Evaluation Schedule (TES) is providing a more robust and holistic view of quality of teaching. NS said he is confident that the learning environment would be graded at 1c. An initial cohort of unqualified teachers will begin the ‘assessment only’ route to Qualified Teacher Status before Easter.

PF3

Finance was discussed under item 11. Governors noted the premises works completed during the spring term.

PF4

Safeguarding: governors noted that the school had recently carried out a local authority Section 175 safeguarding audit, achieving an excellent overall score of 96%. This has been shared with Jackie Van-West (OHC&AT Director of Safeguarding and Learning Support) and papers were available at the meeting for governors to view.

Attendance: governors noted the comprehensive breakdown of attendance data given in the Principal’s report. DT added that he has observed the Safeguarding team monitoring and managing attendance both proactively and sensitively in response to students’ individual needs.

Behaviour: governors noted the behaviour data, including the breakdown by Key Stage as previously requested. Arbour Vale continues to maintain a strong focus on positive behaviour. The Positive Behaviour Working Group has recently concluded its review of behaviour management and the report was provided to governors at the meeting. **ACTION: NS to send behaviour management report and related background papers to the Clerk for circulation to governors.**

Governors **AGREED** that an update from the Positive Behaviour Working Group at the next LGB meeting would be beneficial. **ACTION: Clerk to add Positive Behaviour Working Group update to next meeting agenda.**

PF5

Admissions: governors noted that there are 311 confirmed pupils for 2019-20, against a PAN of 304.

Stakeholder engagement: the updated Arbour Vale website will be launched shortly. This will facilitate compliance with online publishing requirements as well as showcasing the school to families and other stakeholders.

NS noted his thanks to Kevin Hughes (Assistant Head of PE) for his continuing hard work in promoting stakeholder engagement e.g. parent forums, as well as the students themselves for their work around Student Voice, including an informal presentation made to governors by one of the students, ahead of the start of the formal meeting.

PF6

Governors noted information in the report regarding the termination of 27 agency staff. In response to governors, NS gave assurance that effective deployment of the staff team is ensuring that educational provision is not compromised. OHCAT HR staff continue to support the SLT in managing staffing issues.

Governors **RECEIVED** the Principal's report.

9. PORTFOLIO GOVERNOR VISITS

Governors **RECEIVED** the portfolio visit reports. DT apologised for not being able to complete a portfolio visit before the meeting, saying he would make arrangements to meet with Michelle Healy-Wallis before Easter. **ACTION: Clerk to send ML the portfolio guidance for Marketing & Business Development.**

10. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Governors discussed the skills audit, noting that there are no obvious gaps identified. DJ suggested that if LGB meetings become twice-termly, the shorter meeting in the first half of each term could include a development session. DB circulated a list of suggested development topics. Governors **AGREED** this would be beneficial.

Governors also discussed the OHC&AT Governor Portal. Some governors have been unable to access the portal to date, for which the Clerk apologised, saying that efforts are ongoing to resolve this speedily. **ACTION: Susanne Wicks to follow up on portal access issues and update DJ accordingly.**

NS expressed concern that governors who cannot access the portal may not be able to complete key compliance units of training via Educare. Governors noted that they had not received any information about Educare training.

ACTION: Clerk to communicate to check on Educare training and provide information to governors on any training requirement, and how such training could be accessed.

Clerk's note: Arbour Vale's DSL has since set governors up with Educare access via their home email addresses, therefore training should now be accessible to all.

DJ suggested that the Clerk could deliver a short development session at the next meeting, demonstrating how to use the portal. **ACTION: Clerk to add portal use training session to next meeting agenda.**

11. FINANCE AND FUNDING

BS presented governors with an overview of the management accounts, noting that this was the first time they had received this information as an LGB. NS noted that BS is at Arbour Vale one day a week to support him with financial matters, and that her thorough oversight in this regard has proven invaluable.

Overall the financial situation has improved, but the school is still in deficit; the year end projection was £500k, reduced from initial projection of £1.4m. DT noted the significant savings made so far, and asked how further savings might be made. BS acknowledged that this is a challenge. The school currently has no reserves and whilst the recent extensive re-banding exercise will improve the school's income, this will not be felt until 2019-20. PFI and staffing are the major costs.

JW asked whether the recorded deficit was calculated prior to termination of the 27 agency staff. BS said yes, so the reduction in staffing would have some positive impact, but that this was offset by complexities in staffing costs arising from unclear due diligence information supplied prior to conversion.

The aim is to reduce the deficit to approximately £400k by year end. DJ asked whether OHCAT absorbs the deficit at that that point. BS said that OHCAT has no reserves – each school retains its own. NS said that he and BS have had extensive discussions regarding school finances, particularly the pressing issue of cash flow. NS is now on the Slough Schools Forum which has influence over the high needs budget; like many LAs, Slough Borough Council is in deficit with its high needs budget but has resources to manage this. PFI also continues to be an issue, and NS noted that the DfE has recently agreed to meet PFI costs for maintained schools, so there may be scope to extend this to academies too. Re-banding is helping and NS is looking at possibly increasing the out of borough top up. Admissions are strong and over numbers place funding also helps. DJ asked what percentage of students are out of borough. NS said that SBC has commissioned 294 places, with anything over that being out of borough.

NS said that further staff savings are achievable, including two resignations that will not require replacement. He is determined to achieve an in-year balanced budget for 2019-20 by September 2019. BS agreed that, while difficult, the overall picture is much improved.

Governors raised questions about the level of the Core Service Contribution to OHCAT. NS noted that as this is set on a sliding scale dependent on where each school is on the improvement journey, Arbour Vale will not be able to make savings in this regard until the next Ofsted inspection which will be at least 5 terms hence. This is a further compelling incentive to push hard for Good.

DJ said that the overall strategy of managing cash, looking at further savings and income going forward, setting a balanced budget for the academic year starting

September 2019 and working towards reducing the deficit in the long term is sound. Governors agreed that the transparency provided by these accounts is very welcome, and thanked BS for her work on this. DJ requested that the inclusion of a narrative report for governors in future financial updates, along with the figures in the management accounts to highlight the key issues/updates at each meeting.

ACTION: BS to include a narrative overview with the management accounts going forward.

Governors **RECEIVED** the management accounts.

12. PROPOSALS FOR ARBOUR VALE HOUSE

Governors discussed the proposals for use of the former residential building. NS stressed that any provision must be cost-neutral. DT asked about the need for a nominated person. NS confirmed that this would need to be an independent person qualified to level 5 and able to meet residential standards. DB clarified that the immediate proposal is for post-16 curriculum provision linked to the school, rather than any residential provision as such; should respite be offered in the future, an independent person would be required at that point.

Governors **APPROVED** the proposals for development of usage at Arbour Vale House.

ACTION: NS to update governors on Arbour Vale House at the Summer 2019 LGB meeting.

13. OHC&AT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- i. Governors **NOTED** the policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board at the Autumn term meeting.
- ii. Governors **APPROVED** the updated Arbour Vale Admissions Procedure. NS commended the SENCO for her hard work on this document.

14. OHC&AT GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTATION

Governors **NOTED** the OHC&AT Scheme of Delegation and Schedule of Responsibility, specifically the amendment to the Schedule reflecting the responsibility of LGBs with regard to some fixed term exclusions (FTEs). NS highlighted that there are no FTEs at Arbour Vale.

15. CONSULTATION ON REVISED OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

Governors **NOTED** that this consultation is open until 5th April. The Clerk circulated a consultation overview resource from the Key, which was welcomed.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Governors suggested 23rd May and 4th July as provisional dates for summer term meetings, subject to confirmation. Governors agreed that having one LGB meeting per term left quite a long gap between meetings, given that the school remains on an improvement journey, although this is partly offset by the termly portfolio visits by governors and by the fact that the school receives support & challenge from the professional leadership OHCAT that would not be available to a stand-alone school. However, the OHCAT Governance model is based on a single LGB meeting each term, and the service level agreement with OHCAT only provides resources for clerking on meeting per term, **ACTION: DJ to contact Susanne Wicks regarding the scope for moving to half-termly LGB meetings, with OHCAT clerking support.**

18. CONFIDENTIALITY

BS and MD left the meeting at this point.

Governors **APPROVED** the confidential Part 2 minute.

The meeting ended at 7.08pm

CHAIR _____ **DATE** _____

Summary of actions		
Item 6i	DT to return a completed skills audit form to the Clerk.	DT
Item 6iii	Clerk to check whether Susanne Wicks has received previously sent photos and bios from JW and DT.	Clerk
Item 7	Clerk to add curriculum and assessment system update to Autumn 2019 agenda.	Clerk
Item 8	Clerk to add SEF to Autumn 2019 agenda.	Clerk
Item 8	NS to include acronym/ratings guidance within school documents as necessary.	NS
Item 8	ML to review the SEF before publication to ensure it is accessible to families.	ML
Item 8	NS to send behaviour management report and related background papers to the Clerk for circulation to governors.	NS
Item 8	Clerk to add Positive Behaviour Working Group update to next meeting agenda.	Clerk
Item 9	Clerk to send ML the portfolio guidance for Marketing & Business Development.	Clerk
Item 10	Susanne Wicks to follow up on portal access issues and update DJ accordingly.	SW
Item 10	Clerk to check with the OHC&AT Training Administrator whether governor access to the portal can be temporarily reset to use their home email addresses.	Clerk
Item 10	Clerk to add portal use training session to next meeting agenda.	Clerk
Item 11	BS to include a narrative overview with the management accounts going forward.	BS
Item 12	NS to update governors re. Arbour Vale House at the Summer 2019 LGB meeting.	NS
Item 17	DJ to contact Susanne Wicks regarding moving to half-termly LGB meetings.	DJ