

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body
held in the school at 6.30 p.m.
on Monday 9 July 2018

No. 2017/2018 - 5

Present: Mark Broadbent (MB, chair), Lia Campos (LC), Patrick Coughlin (PC), Jo Coward (JC), Joseph McCrossan (JMcC), Janet Muir (JMu), Sarah Smith (SS), Jo Wager (JW), Rachael Beale (RB, clerk), Teresa Selvey (CEO of Our Lady of Walsingham MAT), Greg Burke (observer)

Apologies for absence: Canon Eugene Harkness, Graham Hughes, Bill Merrick

1. Teresa Selvey – presentation of MAT modelling

Teresa Selvey presented her modelling based on the budget and income statement sent after the last GB meeting. She had looked at what services would be brought into the MAT and therefore what the net position would be. A document was circulated showing these findings, which Teresa then talked through.

The funding statement from the LA forecast schools block formula funding for St Alban's at £791k; TS had also considered de-delegation (the money that the LA takes before it passes the budget on for centralised services). Services that are potentially covered by our current de-delegation include: CREDS (racial equality & diversity service); The Key; FSM eligibility (admin for this); Trade Union facilities (covering staff release); insurance (although St Alban's has already arranged insurance for next year on the advice of the Diocese); school difficulties contingency; maternity insurance. £14,830 is deducted before funding reaches the school. The largest expenditure will be staff, and most significantly teaching staff.

The 5% due to the MAT would be £39k; just under £11k would be de-delegated. TS projected that facilities costs would be £2k rather than £5k, as some may sit with the MAT, using a centrally managed service that is localised; similarly for grounds maintenance. The DPO role will be held centrally at the MAT (by the Financial Officer due to start on 1 November). Broadband is taken out of the IT grant, not de-delegated, and has already been paid for. There are possible savings for joint procurement, although this is based on an assumption that 80% of budgets go on salary (St Alban's is 95%). TS commented that when the school joins the MAT the staffing costs might be a worry. £52,446 is the total of the projected savings by joining the MAT, leaving the school £13k better off.

Additional services provided by the MAT include: PiXL (a diagnostic assessment system that allows the identification of borderline pupils to help introduce interventions) and Educare, a training platform. EPM services are purchased centrally by the trust for HR, so overall the cost is cheaper; similarly payroll. Caretaking, cleaning, site repairs and maintenance (day to day) are also covered.

It was asked whether St Alban's would have to find the difference between what the school has budgeted and what the MAT is offering. TS advised that the school look at purchasing annually, and being cautious about long-term commitments; then the MAT will make provision. The extra work should not cost the school more; the MAT has prioritised appointing the finance and ops director so that it can focus on

achieving economies of scale. Critical to this is St Alban's high school joining in September; it has 1,000 pupils, and its 5% top-slice will contribute a lot. TS also stated that the school would not be penalised because of its location, and that St Mary's in Ipswich is already seeing savings as a result of the facilities manager.

What are the assumptions behind the £12k saving on back office? Typically on joining a MAT, a small school like St Alban's would save half a person from the office team, using the MAT-provided SPM Services. It was asked when the school could expect to achieve this, as this wouldn't be in the first year but a saving over time. TS said that it would be a priority for the finance and ops director. There is no desire to make people redundant; back office staff are most vulnerable in that respect. The MAT is looking to use people more efficiently; the St Louis business manager, for example, left 18 months ago and was not replaced; the MAT put in support and upskilled existing staff. A governor commented that this was therefore dependent on 'natural wastage', and that the assumptions made were open to a degree of change and uncertainty over time. TS said that the finance and ops director, Mark Wilkinson, came from the tertiary sector and had worked for an agricultural college, which was in RI. The finance team was very strong, and he left because the finance department were doing a good job and making cost savings; this wasn't having an impact on outcomes for students, who were feeling disenfranchised. The MAT wants to see the cost savings that it is making having a positive impact for the students. It was noted that there are numbers in the budget with which St Alban's could replace some items labelled 'assumption' in TS's model. The net position is that the MAT is expecting St Alban's to pay in £39k and get back £52k worth of services, due to items in the school's budget that can be removed because they will be supplied by the MAT.

The MAT is buying EPM's full package - HR and payroll, plus legal advice (and more legal services from Winkworth Sherwood). Maternity insurance is included in insurances; however, this is being done by the Diocese, so won't be saved because the school will have to continue to do this, having been encouraged to make its own arrangements to cover the work that was going on with the wall. It was asked whether there was hope that the saving would increase year on year? This is dependent on the MAT being full and growing; 11 schools are anticipated to be in the MAT past September 2020. However, the MAT will already be able to do quite a bit because of St Alban's high school joining. The high school is joining because it has a vested interest in improving outcomes for primary schools (generally primary schools are better off and high schools worse as a result of joining MATs).

Does the MAT recognise unions and special services staff? TS said it does, and that the TUPE consultation with St Alban's high had gone really well. The MAT is committed to the teachers' pay & conditions document as well. This also applies to all the executive roles in the MAT. The teachers' pension scheme and local government pension scheme for admin staff will continue, but it is anticipated that contributions will be negotiated down without reducing the benefits.

ACTION: TS to send Excel spreadsheet for updating with more real figures.

TS would want to negotiate the broadband centrally; she would hope for even better IT support services, although it was noted by governors that the school was pleased with its current supplier. If St Alban's already has good providers, would the MAT consider adopting them? TS said the approach was about taking the best of what's on offer across the groups; this was how using EPM came about.

The directors set the budget: if the school wishes to use the money differently, what happens? TS said that there would need to be a good reason for the disagreement (in either direction). Each school's local needs are different, but overall the aim is to

improve outcomes for pupils. TS is happy for JMcC to share her board-level reporting with governors (but it is quite high-level, key performance indicators based on a 'red amber green' scale). TS concluded by saying that it is a question of "when, not if" – what is the impact on timing rather than whether or not St Alban's joins. If all schools leave it until the last minute, there are concerns about capacity. The current plans assume St Alban's join later rather than sooner.

TS left the meeting at this point, and the chair introduced Greg Burke, who is in the process of being appointed as a foundation governor, and joined the meeting as a guest/observer. Governors briefly introduced themselves. Greg told the GB he has a background in business and law. A discussion on the MAT figures followed.

There were concerns about potentially losing the 'personal touch'. This year, the school has had a surge of needs for TAs; will it retain enough independence to do something similar in future? There were also concerns about the head's role, around whether there would be enough of interest to keep him challenged and engaged under the MAT system. It was felt that the current approach was 'top-down' rather than collaborative. The school will not have the same kind of autonomy and will need to find a way to accommodate that. The staffing policy will be determined by the senior MAT team. In previous years, St Alban's has deliberately retained its TAs because of their positive impact on pupil outcomes, but it might lose the ability to do this.

The next step is to look to have someone in place to support St Alban's. JMcC will no longer have a role at MAT level. An executive head has been appointed for St Felix, St Mary's and St Louis, with the head of St Mary's becoming the executive head. The school's 'hub' is St Alban's, St Laurence's and St Felix; if St Alban's joined in September, then this executive head will be the executive head of St Alban's (primary). There are also two secondaries by themselves, not involved with any executive head positions. It was pointed out that this also means it might be a long time before any savings can be made. Many other schools that might join the MAT still have headteachers, so the executive head model is a long way off. Although if the St Laurence head left, it might seem an obvious choice to make the existing teacher executive head, the MAT prefers to have executive heads with no school of their own. The executive head of St Mary's is job sharing to release the time to allow her to carry out the executive head role. There is no detail in the modelling to explore what might happen in the headship situation over the next 5-7 years. One governor felt that this represented a lot of upheaval for minimal cost savings; it was further noted that the approach could be demotivating for people already in schools.

Since St Alban's will not have executive representation in the trust, it needs to establish what its line of influence will be. Diocesan policy is that all schools will join the MAT. It was noted that St Philip's had refused to join the CofE MAT; what happens if the school declines to join? The Diocese could potentially remove all the foundation governors in that event. If the consultation with parents comes back with negative results, and the governors are also finding it difficult to support the decision, what would happen? Ultimately, the MAT is accountable to the secretary of state via the regional schools commissioner.

It was noted that the geographical structure of the hubs is not ideal; St Louis might be better grouped with Cambridge and Haverhill. Is there any way of revisiting the way the MAT has been structured in terms of its school clusters?

The Bishop is due to resign in February because of age (although he may obviously be reappointed). The Bishop, David Bagstaffe and Julie O'Connor are the trustees; each

school in the MAT has its own local GB. Directors are responsible for finance, and the local GBs for standards; the schemes of delegation are quite confusing.

A comment was made that St Alban's has experienced difficulty in influencing the direction of development; it was felt that the school's feedback had not been heard, and there had been limited collaboration. Are there any other possibilities for communicating suggestions and concerns? The directors are appointed by the trustees, and the trustees are appointed by the Bishop. Could the school approach the directors at all? It was felt that, while St Alban's is not fundamentally opposed to the MAT, and indeed was very supportive of the concept in its early stages of development, the way its creation has been approached has left good, competent people feeling disenfranchised. Other schools in the Diocese have stated privately that they will not join the MAT.

Might it be possible to approach the Bishop directly, or other senior priests in the Diocese, to highlight the risk to the Diocese of the disillusionment of some of its (scarce) Catholic heads? As a governing body, the priority is what is good for the staff and students of this school, and it would be wrong to remain silent when such significant concerns exist. Long-term, the MAT appears to offer a solution, but based on developments so far St Alban's should anticipate many iterations in the structure and approach. Staff retention is a serious concern. St Alban's would want to be sure of proper progression for its staff, using their many skills to move the MAT forward; it would be a huge loss to the Diocese if these skills went elsewhere.

It was felt that it would be necessary to present a sufficiently attractive alternative vision of what might work better. It would be useful to understand how widely these concerns are held amongst other schools, and what they feel the best way forward might be; it would also be important to compare these ideas with existing MATs that have been successful elsewhere. More detail in the modelling presented would have been helpful. Broadly speaking, the governing body felt that St Alban's still supported the overall concept of MATs for the Diocese, but had serious concerns about the better deployment of skillsets across the trust, particularly amongst head teachers. Early indications of effects of the MAT on school performance might be seen in the key stage results due to be released.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Monday 23 April 2018

Confirmed.

3. Matters arising

ACTION: JC to re-draft minutes of November's meeting, based on the clerk's original draft.

RB is following up safer recruitment training with the LA.

4. Reports from termly briefings/training/subcommittee meetings

LC attended the termly briefing, at which the new ASP system was presented. The new Director for Cambridge & Peterborough Education, Jonathan Lewis, spoke. The local authority is very keen to open new schools, and they could be faith schools; he needs to see evidence that the places are required. He is following up with the Diocese and the DfE. St Alban's has significant evidence in terms of places, and also a track record of supporting other schools.

5. Updates on curriculum areas

These reports were circulated ahead of the meeting. All governors commended these as excellent reports, and congratulated staff and pupils. A further report on EYFS will also be available soon. It was noted that progress in RE highlights how much Mrs Sharpe has brought to the school as a TA. It is to be hoped that Julia Caddick, OLEM's new Song School director, might possibly be interested in doing some work with the school.

6. Headteacher's report

This was circulated ahead of the meeting. Year 1 Phonics (and Year 2 follow-up) is at 100%, which is fantastic. The Year 2 combined result stands at 77%, which is excellent; the projected combined result for Y6 is really good (88%), although this will be confirmed tomorrow when the audited results arrive.

Mrs Leslie has resigned the NQT cover element of her role, although she will remain in post. Mrs Slattery is leaving, and will be a big loss to the school. The school also says goodbye to Mrs Sharpe. An Educational Health Care Plan next term will require more TAs. These are always difficult to appoint due to the high cost of living in Cambridge.

The wall work is coming in as less than expected; LCVAP money needs to be spent to refresh the pergola and the green area.

There is a need to develop the school's links with the church better. The P&S subcommittee should examine FHC preparation with regard to plans for the future; there are many opinions about how it has gone this year. There is a schools' working party about the expectations of chaplains which is due to present to Julie O'Connor; it would be good to follow this up to see if there is anything the school can adopt.

There have been a number of appeals against admissions decisions from members of churches who claim to be in communion with the Roman Catholic church.

The City Kids playscheme is full, which means that new children in Reception cannot be accommodated; only two children from Year 6 are leaving, and there are people on the list who have been waiting for longer. It's a space issue, not a staffing issue, but there are complaints that City Kids are not providing enough places. The afternoon sessions are only St Alban's pupils now (although a couple from St Paul's attend in the morning); there are around 40 in each session. Access to the music room is not possible; occasional access to the committee room is allowed, but that is not really big enough. The school was asked to provide more places, but it can't for legal reasons.

Global Day was a great success; a governor who attended commented that the array of food was fantastic. Sport continues to be a great success for the school; St Alban's coaches have been recognised outside the school for their achievements. The Gaelic football team for Hertfordshire has seven former pupils of St Alban's in it, and recently won a major tournament. Music school will no longer be offered by Cambridgeshire Music.

Swaffham Prior school, where JMcC has been offering support this term, has a swimming pool, but has been told it can't open to the community over weekends and holidays because they don't officially have a headteacher. All the facilities are in place, but they need a responsible person. It has been agreed that St Alban's will invoice Swaffham Prior for JMcC's services (at the same overall rate) from April to 31 August 31 so that there is a formally a headteacher in place, and the pool can be opened.

JMcC thanked governors for a really successful year; governors reciprocated.

8. Key Stage results

This discussion was delegated to the rescheduled P&S committee meeting (Wednesday 18 July). JW will be away and offers her apologies.

9. Succession planning

MB is at the end of his third term as a foundation governor and indicated that he would prefer not to seek exceptional permission to extend his term further. The vice chair thanked MB for his many years of service as a governor and chair; it was felt that the GB should arrange a special celebration. JMcC stated that, as a head, he has always felt very supported and challenged by MB, and reassured by his leadership. He will remain as a governor until 31 August, but will need to be replaced as a governor, and the GB will need to appoint a new chair. The extra effort made by MB has borne fruit, and the GB is hopeful that he will continue his involvement with St Alban's. He stated that he would be happy to talk to anyone about the role who might like to be involved.

JC has also decided not to continue; she is in her 4th term and should have stepped down two years ago, but was asked to stay on. JMcC and all governors offered their thanks to JC for her work. It was noted that her Ofsted experience had been particularly invaluable.

10. JMcC school support

Rosemarie Sadler has asked JMcC if he could support St Luke's primary from September, in Victoria Road (full time). The school is in RI; it is going through a similar journey to Swaffham Prior, and looking for someone to provide stability. Governors were asked to provide their views & thoughts on this over the next couple of weeks. JMcC estimates that it is likely the school will only need him for a term, although this hasn't been confirmed. There is a concern about underpayment, because of annualised pay versus termly. Will this sort of request be happening more and more? This is a potential concern. JMcC is not currently aware of any more schools within the city that might need this support; other heads have also been offering support in similar ways. The feeling was that generally the extra school support meant that JMcC was seen less in the playground, but this might be more manageable on this occasion given this school is close. Logistically and practically, this will be a better situation; it's a local school and it is not the summer term, so SATs are less urgently on the horizon. It was noted that it is particularly important at the moment to offer JMcC opportunities for challenge and development, and from an Ofsted point of view, that the school continues to spread its good practice. One benefit of the head being less around is that it has raised the profile of the deputy head. Governors were inclined to support JMcC in this if he wants to take it on. It was noted that these sorts of arrangement didn't take up any more of the head's time than his previous roles with school clusters and so on.

11. Preparation for Headteacher's performance review

Deferred to first meeting of next term.

12. Governing Body 'self-evaluation tool'

To be discussed at a later date.

13. Child protection review

This was circulated ahead of the meeting.

14. AOB

Termly briefing dates are not yet available for next term; RB will circulate these as soon as possible.

Date for first meeting next year: **Thursday 27 September**

PC announced his intention to stand down as a parent governor, feeling that it is important that the parent governor role was fulfilled by a current parent, and his daughter is due to leave the school. He did, however, also indicate his willingness to continue as a parent governor if no one comes forward.

Meeting closed 21.26