

**Notes of the BCAT meeting
2 April 2020 at 10.00am
Meeting via video and phone**

**Present and
in attendance:**

Ian Pryce (IP) (Chair) Elizabeth Nash (EN) (Vice Chair), Pat Jones (PJ) (Accounting Officer), Mary Langley (Headteacher Wixams Tree Primary), Claire Nash (Business Manager BCAT) Rachel Nicol (Company Secretary), Dave Roffey (Project Accountant), Paul Spyropoulos (PS) Principal, Wixams Academy

It was agreed, due to the restrictive capabilities of video conferencing, the complexities of the items and need to prioritise reflection on Covid 19 and the financial position to hold a smaller meeting. The papers however were circulated to the whole board in advance of the meeting together with a matrix for them to comment and raise questions on.

Feedback on the papers was provided on a matrix in advance of the meeting by Anthony Abrahams (AA) Mark Kiteley (MK), Jasmin Masih (JM), Christine O'Reilly (CO'R), Kay Rodger (KR), Gill Scobie (GS) Dave Roffey (Project Accountant)

BCAT/17/20	Apologies for absence	Action
	Not applicable	
BCAT/18/20	Declarations of Interest	
	Ian Pryce, Kay Rodger, Pat Jones and Rachel Nicol are employed by Bedford College. Mark Kiteley is a non-executive director and Chair at BCS Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bedford College.	
BCAT/19/20	Matters arising	
	The issue of Development plans for the Principal and Head-teacher was raised. It was agreed that both would submit their personal development plans before 1 May 2020. Anthony Abrahams had offered to work with the individuals to review the plans and arrangements will be made to convene a remote Remuneration Committee meeting to review these and objectives going forward.	

BCAT/20/20 Wixams Academy, Covid 19 update

The Principal provided an update;

- Team established to cover school opening to support children of key workers; week one between 1 and 8 pupils, week 2 between 1 and 2 pupils. 3 pupils are planned to be catered for during the Easter break.
- Staff rotas for cover and a minimal administration function.
- Measures in place to check pupils and staff for temperature on entry, to ensure regular hand washing and ensure distancing were outlined.
- The cleaning is being carefully managed by the Business manager to ensure adequate resource is engaged to preserve the cleaning standards.
- Remote management of staff. A line management system is in place and video / telephone contact established each day to monitor staff wellbeing.
- Staff sickness levels, process for logging sickness and isolation. HR are being notified and are advising as required.
- Use of "Showmyhomework" as platform for continued learning for pupils with work being set each Monday. It was confirmed that the system is already established and has been impact assessed for GDPR purposes. Pupils have 2 online methods for questions with an expectation that staff will check and feedback at 2 points in the day, 8.30am and 3.40pm. Contact is made with pupils who are not engaging in work with all identified vulnerable and children with EHCP receiving at least one phonecall per week.

The following was discussed;

- Whether there is potential for sharing with other schools. This had been reviewed by the management teams of the Academy and local primary schools including Wixams Tree Primary. The potential for increased transmission and issues associated with mixing secondary and primary pupils had deterred the schools from linking.

- How the required changes around safeguarding are being managed. Guidance had been provided by the DfE. **It was agreed that the school will amend the policy as required under the guidance via an appendix and that there is not requirement to ensure Board approval for the changes to avoid delay to implementation.**
- Issues with contracts and suppliers. It was confirmed that CN and PJ are liaising and that the bus contract has been placed on hold.
- Updates required for the Board. **It was agreed that monthly updates will be provided.**

BCAT/21/20**Wixams Academy budget, staffing and performance**

The Chair summarised the questions raised by the Board on the various papers and the following were discussed;

- Concerns over the budget position and whether any savings in respect of the bus contract and SENCO consultant have assisted the budgeted position. It was confirmed that mini buses are still being provided for key worker families but taxis are being looked at as an alternative. Management are checking the DBS position of taxi firms. The SENDCO consultant is still being paid as is engaged for approximately 1.5 days a week and is preparing EHCPs
- The contingencies in place in respect of the staff budget, what plans are in place to reduce staffing costs and the Board's need for confirmation that the staff plans are affordable. The Principal confirmed that the curriculum plan has been costed and includes current and projected increments. The claw back of the deficit was also understood to have been included over a 2 year period.
- The potential options for the Principal to consider in order to bring the staff budget back within the budget framework including freeze on pay rises.
- How the overall staffing budget balances with the projected staffing levels on the ESFA numbers. It was confirmed that the staffing budget equates to 79%. The budget framework

was noted to limit staff costs to 75% of overall expenditure.

- The requirement for Board assurance that the Academy will deliver a balanced budget. It was agreed it will be helpful to state assumptions being made on any proposed pay rises.
- Reference made to allowances for Head roles was questioned as the Board had not agreed any allowances. It was clarified that the roles had been properly assessed as new and distinct jobs but with internal appointments being made.
- Reasons the Principal considered the deficit had arisen and his request for the Trust to consider use of reserves.
- Potential for an in year funding adjustment from ESFA and implications.

It was agreed that the Board should be presented with a budget in line with the framework as previously requested with reference to previous decisions of the Board as relevant. Options may then be presented in terms of the curriculum and full explanations given on any proposed variations.

Further discussion took place on;

- ***Numbers for September 2020*** with planned intake of 150, 300 applications of which 231 were first choice. The provision of places was noted to be becoming more *local*.
- ***Progress on recruitment*** with 2 NQTs, 2 more experienced teachers and the final appointment to the Senior Leadership Team of an individual who will have oversight of pastoral care. The operation of the HR process in recruitment. It was reiterated that the schools should identify the individual but that the negotiation of the salary within the salary range should be carried out by HR. **It was agreed that the Principal will ensure this process is followed.**
-

BCAT/22/20

Wixams Tree Primary Covid 19 update

The Head-teacher provided an update;

- The school has supported between 4 and 12 key worker children each day. No cover is required during the Easter break.
- Use of online learning platform, Purplemash, has been successfully established with teachers posting a timetable each week. Contact is being made with families where children are not engaging and provision made for paper copy packs to be collected where pupils do not have access to a computer.

The following was discussed;

- Required changes to the Safeguarding Policy. **It was agreed that the Head-teacher will update the Policy via an appendix to reflect the DfE guidance.**
- Staff sickness with only one incident where a member of staff was required to isolate.
- The requirement for a monthly update for the Board on Covid-19

BCAT/23/20

Wixams Tree Primary budget, numbers and progress

The following was discussed;

- 60 places offered with a further 15 on the waiting list. The geographical reach was noted to be narrowing.
- Progress on the budget planning for 2020 – 2021 with successful recruitment of an NQT and a reallocation of teaching staff. The proposed budget was noted to be the current best estimate. **It is anticipated that a further paper will be presented in due course setting out the potential option of either budgeting in line with the agreed funding or on additional recruitment on assumption of additional pupil numbers. The paper will set out the risks involved.**
- Progress on the development of the leadership team and management structure. Further confirmation of numbers and funding is required

before a final decision can be made on implementation of an assistant or deputy position.

- Head-teacher's development plan. **It was confirmed that the plan will be presented before 1 May and taken forward with Anthony Abrahams and the Remuneration Committee as agreed for the Academy.**
- Member of staff referenced in the report as having left with no notice. It was confirmed that an immediate resignation had been accepted. Given the circumstances, assurance was given that proper procedures had been followed and HR advice taken.
- Absence management within the school. Assurance was given that HR advice being taken as appropriate.

BCAT/24/20 Balance papers and approvals of the Board.

It was further discussed and agreed;

- **WA LAB to provide reports in advance of Board meetings following their next meeting.**
- **Pupil progress will be looked at in more detail at a future meeting.**
- **The report of the Business Manager at agenda item 10 was noted.**
- **The Trust will review strategic questions arising out of meeting with the Local Authority in more detail at a future meeting.**
- **The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.**
- **The HR procedures presented were approved.**
- **The Trust budget progress in 2019-2020 was noted.**
- **The appointment of Alana Warburton as a member of the Wixams Academy LAB was approved.**

BCAT/25/20 Next meeting

An agreement will be reached on how the next planned meeting in the summer term will be managed during Covid-19

The Accounting officer will review an additional presentation of financial information during the summer break.