

**Notes of the BCAT meeting
22 May 2020 at 10.00am
Meeting via Lifesize video and phone**

Present:

Ian Pryce (IP) (Chair) Elizabeth Nash (EN) (Vice Chair), Pat Jones (PJ) (Accounting Officer), Anthony Abrahams (AA)(part), Lesley Glover (LG), Mark Kiteley (MK), Jasmin Masih (JM), Christine O'Reilly (CO) Kay Rodger (KR), Gill Scobie (GS),

In attendance:

Mary Langley (Headteacher Wixams Tree Primary), Rachel Nicol (Company Secretary), Dave Roffey (Project Accountant), Paul Spyropoulos (PS) Principal, Wixams Academy

BCAT/26/20 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence but AA would attend part of the meeting only.

BCAT/27/20 Declarations of Interest

Ian Pryce, Dave Roffey, 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/28/20 Matters arising

The Re-opening risk assessment for Wixams Tree Primary had been emailed prior to the meeting. It was agreed that ML was talk the Board through the risk assessment as part of the Covid-19 update.

BCAT/29/20 Wixams Tree Primary – Covid-19 update

ML outlined the current position including;

- Engagement of pupils.
- Communication with parents.
- Planning for the return of reception, year 1 and nursery pupils.
- Risk assessment for re-opening including;
 - staggered start times and entrances
 - Group sizes.
 - all staff meetings
 - Deep cleans prior to opening and ongoing cleaning.

- Approach to PPE.

The Board discussed;

- Assurance provided that the approach taken is to follow official guidance.
- The guidance that PPE is not required in educational settings. However the Board endorsed the Head-teacher's planned approach to allow staff to wear PPE if they choose to do so. Staff will however be prepared to ensure they can respond to questions from pupils on their reasons for wearing PPE.
- Availability of supplies including hand sanitisers and cleaning products.
- Union communication to Heads on employer liability if staff contract Covid. The Board considered that the position could be managed provided the risk had been tested and guidelines followed.
- Use of free school meal vouchers and acceptance in local supermarkets. ML confirmed that the system is operating well and that the school checks with families who have not redeemed vouchers to identify and resolve any problems.

The Board congratulated ML and staff for progress made with the re-opening plans and conveyed thanks for all their hard work.

The update was noted.

BCAT/30/20 Wixams Tree Primary, staffing structure

The staffing structure for 2020-2021 had been circulated with the papers. It was confirmed that the Vice Chair (who has HR expertise) had already provided feedback.

The updated structure was noted to include a Deputy and 2 assistant heads. 3 applications have been received internally.

The Board discussed;

- Assurance that the structure of the leadership team is appropriate to support the school's development.
- Assurance that the structure is affordable within the budget.
- Need for recruitment process to be formalised. GS and CO'R agreed to assist with the interview process as appropriate under the scheme of delegation. It was reiterated that directors involved would only act in an advisory capacity and that the decision on appointment would rest with ML.

AA left the meeting.

The staff structure was endorsed.

BCAT/31/20 Wixams Academy Covid-19 update

It was noted that Wixams Academy is not currently impacted by the guidance on re-opening. ***ML will send a copy of her risk assessment to PS.***

PS provided an update on the current position including;

- Continued provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children including new guidance from the DfE encouraging children of key workers to attend.
- Engagement level of pupils (circa 75%) considered to be positive.
- Transition from academic focus to well being and development of more opportunities for face to face contact between pupils and members of the pastoral team.
- Fortnightly tutor contact and development of live stream lessons in response to feedback from parents.
- Use of IT equipment; all pupils have been provided with lap tops purchased as part of the IT set up.

The Board discussed;

- Measurement of pupil progress and how this will be managed through Covid-19
- Safeguarding measures, policy changes and contact with pupils, including those on EHCPs, those with special needs, those with social care involvement and other considered vulnerable or in receipt of pupil premium funding.
- Temperature testing for admission to school. Assurance was given that no data is recorded and that the process is voluntary. The guidance will continue to be monitored and the position reviewed as larger numbers become involved.

The Board conveyed thanks to the Principal and staff.

The update was noted.

BCAT/32/20 Wixams Academy Staffing Budget

The Principal introduced the papers and highlighted;

- Growth of school since opening.
- Current progress on recruitment using video interviews; including areas where recruitment has been difficult.
- Curriculum developments including increase in number of pupils following EBAC route and impact on group sizes.

- Increased number of Heads of Department and impact on accountability and performance management.
- New assistant Principal to lead on pastoral behaviour.
- High number of pupils with special needs in relation to the national average; number of EHCPs and management of provision of support.

The Board discussed;

- Management of staffing costs, appropriate allocation of costs between leadership and teaching staff. Assurance was given that the structure is a sensible structure for the development of the Academy, is built around Ofsted priorities and that the proportion of leadership costs will reduce as the Academy grows. The Board reiterated the BCAT way is to operate with a lean management structure.
- Budget assumptions around pupil premium and EHCP income and allocations to schools.
- Whether there is a specified number of hours of support required and how this is managed. It was explained that a detailed matrix is maintained explaining how support is provided between one to one support and other activity.
- Impact of social distancing requirements on distribution of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs).
- Funding of LSA costs between special needs funding and main budget.
- Benchmarking of salaries across regions.
- Contingency required in budget to manage the re-opening costs.
- Progress on painting and decorating.
- Teaching hours and intention to freeze SLT hours. The Board had previously received papers recommending teaching hours. **The Board was content that leadership teaching hours will be reduced in the future and that teaching hours for other staff can be increased to 21.**
- Previous costs budgeted for non-core agency staff no longer included in budget and how these will be covered. Split between payroll and use of consultants for different functions was explained.
- Assurance that the appointment of a cover supervisor will reduce the reliance on and cost of supply staff.

BCAT/33/20 Any other business – part 1

PS made a recommendation that a working group is established to review the potential for a Sixth Form to be opened.

It was understood that the Local Authority have funding to increase secondary and primary provision. Potential to extend the Academy

to include a Sixth form and implications on space and for other year groups was outlined.

It was agreed that;

- **A group will be established to review demographic evidence and market information on demand for places.**
- **IP will seek to arrange for a representative from the Local Authority to attend a Trust Board meeting.**

BCAT/34/20 Trust Budget – Part 2 meeting

DR presented the paper setting out the methodology on budget setting.

The following were highlighted and discussed;

- Assumptions in respect of income based on prior year numbers and teachers' pension costs.
- Trust retention of 5% to cover Trust corporate costs and services.
- Direct staff in addition to the 5% to provide services to the schools including an IT Technician, a Marketing individual and Schools Accountant. It was acknowledged that in some cases the staff are seconded to the Trust from Bedford College to ensure that supervision and support are given at the right level. Assurance was however given that the individuals will spend the majority of their time at the schools. **It was however agreed that the employment status of the individuals should be clarified.**
- The rationale for the recruitment of a Schools accountant and Marketing specialist was outlined. It was agreed that the intention is for the Schools Accountant to operate at a senior level with skills to be able to develop Trust planning frameworks and report to the Trust. **The Board supported the plans to recruit to both posts as soon as possible.**
- Management of the pupil premium grant in the budget. Although it was acknowledged that all income belongs to the Trust it was agreed that the grant should be ring fenced to each school. **It was agreed that an adjustment will be made to the budget to ring fence the pupil premium grant to each school.**
- Depreciation of assets and confirmation that an asset register is being maintained. It was confirmed that the Business Manager is reviewing maintenance of equipment and monitoring the requirements for replacement of IT equipment.
- Planned treatment of overspend in the Academy. The original plan was for repayment of £100k over 2 years. The overspend is currently calculated at £50k and the budget

provides for repayment in one year. **The Trust supported recoupment of the overspend in one year in accordance with the budget.**

- Plans for reserves and need for the Trust to monitor the operation and appropriateness of the Reserves Policy.

Any other business

The Board discussed the desire to convey thanks to the staff for their hard work during difficult circumstances.

It was agreed that Ian would arrange for a letter to be sent from the Trust.

The Board discussed required papers for the June meeting and the following will be considered;

BCAT/35/20

- **Plans for September opening to deal with guidance following lock down.**
- **Strategic plans for the Trust – Local Authority attendance.**
- **Technology Strategy following review of online learning (PS and ML)**

Meeting closed

BCAT/36/20

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 25 June 2020 at 10am** by video link