

**Minutes of the BCAT Board meeting  
3 October 2019 at 10.30am  
Wixams Academy, Wixams**

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

**In attendance:** Heather Cunliffe (Chair of WA LAB), 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

**BCAT/49/19 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**BCAT/50/19 Declarations of Interest**

It was noted that Ian Pryce, Pat Jones and Rachel Nicol are employed by Bedford College and Mark Kiteley is a non-executive director of Bedford College Services Ltd who provide catering to the schools. Kay Roger's husband is employed as a part time site agent by the Trust.

**BCAT/51/19 Matters arising**

**Appointment of LAB members**

The Company Secretary has carried out an audit on terms of office. The Chair of WA LAB has been informed that a number of individuals are not recorded as endorsed by the Trust. The Chair of the LAB has confirmed that Joe Canzano and Lucy Tanner were recommended for re-appointment as external members at the LAB meeting in June but this was not recorded in the minutes.

At their meeting on 19 September 2019 the LAB were advised by the Chair of the LAB that the terms of office for Alan Burgess and Darsh Chand had expired.

The LAB confirmed the recommendation to re-appoint Alan Burgess and Darsh Chand for a further two years to 31 August 2021.

**The Board confirmed their endorsement of the appointments of Alan Burgess, Joe Canzano, Darsh Chand and Lucy Tanner.**

It was agreed that further discussions on the composition of the LAB and impact on the terms of reference and governance arrangements will be taken during the governance section of the meeting.

The planned timetable for the meeting was outlined.

**BCAT/52/19 Head-teacher's report**

The Board confirmed they had read the report.

The Head-teacher provided highlights;

- KS1 and early years' results have been submitted to the Local authority and they produce progress tables. The summary had been presented at the July Board meeting. The results are above national average in all areas with a good level of development evidenced. The school is reviewing the provision for the SEND pupils. There were more children by the end of the year as a result of in year transfers. Progress in this area is being reviewed as currently below national and local authority averages. The writing development was impacted by gender and summer birth dates. An action plan is in place to develop this area and also to progress development in working at a greater depth. Fisher family trust data is used for tracking and takes into account pupil premium and residential area and results in this area exceed the expected level within Fisher family trust data.
- The school is focussed on all pupils progressing.
- The results are teacher assessed at this stage.

The Board discussed;

- The performance on pupil premium pupils and how the school is ensuring the pupil premium spend is having an impact. The school is reviewing the context of spending and work is being done to assess the impact.

The SEF was presented. The Chair sought to understand the process in schools. It was confirmed that the SEF will be submitted to Ofsted by 8am on the day of any inspection. WA has created an Ofsted area on their website which can be accessed by Ofsted.

The agenda is set based on published results, safeguarding documentation. It was considered that the SEF will be reviewed at the outset.

It was considered that there will be triangulation between the SEF and evidence seen on the ground. The SEF is considered a live document and is constantly updated.

The Board reiterated that the SEF should drive the agenda for the Local Advisory Body. The Head-teacher confirmed that the LAB at WTP review the SEF routinely. The Head-teacher is also looking at external sources of verification.

The Board role;

- Approve overall approach
- LABs to scrutinise the evidence
- Board to review key strengths and weaknesses
- SEF to be scrutinised in terms of the BCAT way

The Head-teacher provided an overview of strengths and weaknesses as follows;

- Effective and growing senior leadership team
- Pupil progress scrutinised by LAB and Trust with strong skills at both LAB and Trust (including ex teachers, health and safety)
- Need to move curriculum within the constraints of a small team.
- Dedicated SENCo who has undergone significant training and has enhanced the area
- Subject leader roles in place and being further developed in staff meetings.
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment positive and triangulated during the DfE visit by observing pupils, reviewing books etc.
- Good work load awareness
- Parent feedback positive
- Areas for development, further interventions in respect of and review of use of pupil premium money.
- Safeguarding effective and triangulated by visit and scrutinised by LAB (evidenced in an audit carried out by the LAB)
- Strong community, inspirational with behaviour and learning exemplary with collaborative working.
- Further development of playtime staff and play equipment. Benches to be engraved with "be kind, be kind" one of the school values.
- Promotion of health and wellbeing. Health and Wellbeing policy, PE coordinator, clubs each evening, golden mile.
- Outcomes for learners are positive, data used effectively.

- Challenging most able and those with good level of development and a consistent approach to phonics and handwriting

The Board sought assurance that the LAB have scrutinised the parent views etc. and it was confirmed.

The Board stressed other strengths in respect of;

- Focus on access to outdoors learning environments.
- Pre-school on site, strong culture, preparation for WTP.
- Progress with children joining part way through the year and enhancement.
- Summary of strengths at forefront of SEF with reflection following.
- Strength of school in managing rapid growth.
- Cultural strength in high expectations for behaviour and for staff.

The Head-teacher asked for feedback from the Trust on strengths and areas for development.

The Board reiterated their observations on further strengths including;

- The work done with staff and the community and respect gained.
- Purposeful and calm environment.
- Strong vision.
- Passion and intimate knowledge of the school.
- Proportion of teachers to administration felt to be a strength but ML will review the data and check benchmarks to provide evidence.

The Board was satisfied with the approach being taken.

### **Pay and scales**

Teaching assistants salaries have been increased as they were paid and the lower level of level 2.

The Board reiterated that they have agreed a framework with posts approved. With the exception of the senior leadership team the Board were content that if a post exists and the budget exists then the decision to recruit rests with management. The Business Manager confirmed that no scales were in place for support staff. ***IP will look at scales with EN in particular for the Learning Support Assistants.***

It was considered that the objective justification for differentials in salaries of learning support assistants is the existence of a level 3 qualification.

Post exists in framework and post and budget exists management decision.

The Chair confirmed that scales generally increase year on year.

Every year Trust needs to determine the scales by the Spring with knowledge of the national scales so that budgets can be set.

Board to provide any further feedback on the Primary SEF with RN and CO'R to be shared with the LAB

ML was thanked for her report.

**The report was noted.**

**BCAT/53/19      WTP accounts**

DR reported a slightly better position than budgeted.

Ofsted will review that money is well spent and particularly pupil premium.

**BCAT/54/19      Principal's report Wixams Academy**

The Board confirmed the report had been read.

The Principal provided highlights as follows;

- 11 students over plan. Appeals still being heard
- Quality of education, assurance given that new SENDCo is having a positive impact on the area.
- Behaviour and attitudes, 2 risks of permanent exclusions. The school aims to minimise exclusions. However the 2 students are persistently disruptive. All actions are in place and assurance was given that the relevant policy is being adhered to. Adjustments have been made in terms of in class support, counselling, medication and social services involvement. The Principal had reflected on the previous permanent exclusion and has followed earlier advice from the local authority. Greater support is in place from pastoral leads and advice sought from the Local Authority Inclusion Officer. The Board sought to understand the benchmarking locally and nationally on exclusions. The position will be monitored and it was confirmed the process is being followed and records kept. The Board explained that if

there is felt to be a defect in the policy it needs to be brought back to the Board with proposed amendments.

- Open evening 17 October. PAN is set at 120, indicated that no proposal to increase the PAN this year. The Trust last year agreed to take 150 pupils. The Principal stated that there is an option for the Trust to again take more pupils in 2020. The Trust reiterated that the agreed approach is to take all pupils for whom this is the nearest school. It was agreed that the demographics need to be checked with the Local Authority. **PJ to talk to the LA**
- Safeguarding recording has benefitted from the introduction of the C Comms system.
- An Ofsted inspector consultant is attending to carry out deep dives in curriculum areas.
- JM is working with the Director of Assessment and maths to facilitate an appropriate dashboard for the Board.

## SEF

The SEF has been prepared by the Senior Leadership Team and has been sent to the LAB. The Principal provided headlines;

- Percentage of children on the SEND register is significantly higher than the national average. The Trust has supported the resourcing of additional support but it was acknowledged that the numbers do have an impact on behaviour and exclusions. The Board was however delighted to note that recognition has been received from the Parent SEND forum in respect of the positive work being done by Wixams Academy for the SEND community.

## Strengths

- Quality of education, targets set at FFT 20. The availability of additional qualifications was outlined. In addition to academic excellence the academy has developed a broad curriculum offer. SEND children are supported to engage in all areas of the curriculum. 91% of pupil premium pupils take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Positive progress made by pupils who come in below national benchmarks.

## Key areas for development

- Number of non-specialist and temporary teachers. Teaching and learning considered to be good but with actions in place to support teachers.

The Board asked;

- If any areas of the curriculum particularly at risk – confirmed as business and DT but with assurance given that there are plans for resolution of issues by Christmas. Professional development has been put in place and a teaching and learning team led by Lyndsey provides support. Appropriate support is in place for the pupils. The Board discussed the potential for primary subject teachers with secondary subject development. The Principal is focussing on the curriculum planning time line.

**Further strengths**

- Behaviour, positive ethos and values, BCAT way, relationships with staff and pupils. Turnover of staff was referenced. Behavioural issues have been identified. Actions and impact of Heads of Years providing pastoral support, on call system highlighted. Challenges with cohorts were outlined but mechanisms for management of behaviour is positive. Staff are trained and incidents managed. Experienced pastoral team.
- Attendance higher than national. Number persistently absent is below national and is a strength. Pupils on SEND register disproportionately represented on exclusions but this needs to be viewed in the context of numbers of SEND pupils being double the national average.
- Cultural capital is strong, knife crime ambassadors, Anne Frank ambassadors, peer ambassadors at WTP. Part of Voice 21 project teaching children to be more articulate
- Leadership, culture of opportunity, meeting the needs of the community. Noted equality of opportunity underpins the ethos. Parent satisfaction is strong and a further survey is being carried out.
- Strong support for curriculum and expertise in Board and LAB.

The Chair raised the Trust's relationship with staff, dialogue and behaviours. It was agreed that high level HR KPIs should be brought at regular intervals to the Board. PS confirmed he now has sufficient pastoral support in place. The Board acknowledged the need for reflection and will monitor the need for scrutiny of staffing matters at the right level in the governance structure.

Comments to be fed back on the SEF.

The Board asked how the LAB was involved in the production of the SEF. The LAB reviewed the initial document and have commented on the expanded version. They will review the final version at their next meeting.



The Board particularly commended the extra-curricular activity. The number of shows (musical and dance) and quality was also recognised.

The Board considered that the strengths should be written as outstanding.

The link between staffing and the 3 year GCSE curriculum was explored. Assurance was given that the expansion of the curriculum is manageable with quality not being compromised.

The Board sought to understand whether there is any correlation between SEND children at WTP and WA. It was understood that children with EHCPs can choose which school they attend. WTP currently has more local children.

The report was noted.

#### **BCAT/55/19 Staffing Structure Wixams Academy**

The paper had been read. The Trust confirmed the structure had broadly been agreed but that time frames for recruitment within the framework need to be agreed.

The Trust sought to understand the articulation of the senior roles and line management responsibilities.

Appraisals were referenced. It was noted that objectives are set and scored. It was considered that objectives would be best scored on a met, partially met or not met rating.

The spread of grades was discussed particularly in light of previous comments on teaching staff.

The differences between teaching and non-teaching pay and the requirements for outstanding were discussed.

The timing of recruitment was discussed. It was confirmed that adverts for the next academic year need to be placed by January. LSAs may be advertised later due to the timing of confirmation of EHCPs.

The difficulty of offering contracts before the budget is agreed was acknowledged. Some certainty is achievable based on overall numbers but with difficulties with curriculum choices. Knowledge of increments – **PJ agreed to look at predictive modelling.**

The Board discussed the senior leadership team and line management responsibilities. It was explained that there is an



internal structure that ensures all teaching staff have one line manager. There are 2 part time technicians line managed by the Business Manager.

Chart C was presented as the proposed structure for 2020/21. The structure enhances the behavioural management discussed by the Board. The senior team split, effectively between curriculum, quality and student services was supported. The Head structure had been discussed at the previous board meeting. Clarification was sought on the “Heads” It was agreed that departments can be various sizes but the name should remain consistent. The Board reiterated that the number of roles being line managed require review. The Board raised the issue of proportion of Heads to teaching staff. The rationale set out was explained.

The Board sought further assurance that the proposed management structure will support the school to capacity. A further review is planned for 2 years’ time. It was reiterated that precedents set in terms of salary scales etc. are appropriate for the future. The need for brackets and ranges to be agreed was identified. For budgeting purposes it was agreed to look at ranges and averages.

The Chair had met with the teaching staff and raised the issue of the two tier teaching structure. Further communication is needed on the justification for higher paid teachers. The other responsibilities assumed, need for assessment and deep dives by those who are no longer managers will be articulated.

The Board approved the changes to the 2020/21 structure subject to further consideration on the points outlined above.

The Board raised an issue on the reference to budget flexibility. The Principal raised the issue of additional payments and barriers to recruitment. It was reiterated that the issues need to be considered with consideration for the BCAT framework.

The role of the LAB was raised and the requirement for HR matters to come to the Board was reiterated.

The Board raised the issue of planned teaching hours for Heads of Department. The current plan is for a slightly reduced teaching load. These planned reductions will be articulated in the staffing structure.

The Chair reported a lack of understanding of the BCAT way amongst teaching staff. The need for an explanation of the main differences at the outset during the recruitment process was acknowledged.

It was confirmed that BCAT is paying higher salaries than other schools. The potential for opportunities to be broadcast in advance will be reviewed.

**The report was noted.**

**BCAT/56/19      Wixams Academy indicative outturn 2018-2019**

The report was read and noted. Overspend in 2018-2019 was noted and it was confirmed that the 2019-2020 budget has been adjusted to reflect this. Higher than anticipated costs were noted to be the cause of the overspend.

Wixams Academy did not achieve the budgeted surplus but it was confirmed that the surplus that was achieved will form part of the BCAT reserves.

PS left the meeting  
HC left the meeting

**BCAT/57/19      Strategic update**

The Chair confirmed that an approach has been made by 2 schools and he has agreed to make a presentation to one of the schools.

The current position of the LABs was raised. The WTP LAB was noted to be working well and this has been evidenced by the DfE.

The use of the correct terminology by all parties to the governance structure was reiterated and it was recognised that clear protocols between management and governance require reiteration.

The chair confirmed that the agendas for LABs will be reviewed and assistance given in the current academic year to ensure terms of reference are met.

The revisions to the BCAT Way were outlined. Market research was highlighted. Further work will be done on educational research.

The geographical reach of the Trust was confirmed as Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, west towards MK and east towards St Neots. The Board questioned whether a target should be set to acquire schools. The position will be continually reviewed. The maintenance of the BCAT way ethos was

reiterated. The position on new schools and red lines will be monitored.

**The Board approved the revisions to the BCAT way document.**

**The Board endorsed the Chair to explore strategic options**

**BCAT/58/19 Governance update**

The Board confirmed they had read the report and the action plan for development of governance in the forthcoming year.

The Board discussed the potential for committees including suggestions of a quality Committee, a cultural committee with oversight of community links and sponsorship.

The Board had previously agreed a remuneration committee

It was agreed that at the present time the Trust would invest in supporting and developing the Local Advisory Bodies for each school with a director from the Board attending each LAB meeting.

PJ will ask the auditors for advice on the requirement for an Audit Committee.

The Trust register and further requirements for approval of appointments will be brought back to the next meeting.

The role of the Chair was discussed. It was confirmed that in order to provide consistency in the current year and to support the schools in their first Ofsted inspection Ian Pryce would continue as Chair.

Anthony Abrahams confirmed he would be willing to sit as Chair Designate with a view to assuming the role of Chair in 2020.

Elizabeth Nash confirmed her willingness to act as Vice Chair.

**The Board endorsed the appointments.**

**BCAT/59/19 Any other business**

[REDACTED]

Data presentation at Trust level to ensure the Board knows the Trust profile would be beneficial. JM agreed to finalise.

**BCAT/60/19**

KPIs for HR management will be reviewed  
**Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5 December 2019  
at 10.30am