

**MINUTES OF THE OAKFIELD LODGE SCHOOL
LOCAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN SCHOOL ON
5TH DECEMBER 2023**

Members Present: John Edmonstone JE Chair
 Gemma Bailey GB Headteacher
 Vicky Diamond VD
 Claire Howarth CH
 Mike Taylor MT
 Jamie Light JL Staff Governor

Also Present: Sue Lambeth SL Clerk to the Governors
 Sian Nixon SN Bursar

PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting was quorate and commenced at 15:18.

Item	
1.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Any Other Business The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Jamie Light, the newly appointed Staff Governor.</p> <p>All governors were present and no other items of business were requested. The Chair confirmed that the annual governance planner was now correct and on GovernorHub.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest/Code of Conduct There were no conflicts of interest with the business to be discussed at this meeting.</p>
3.	<p>Membership The Manor Hall Local Advisory Board (LAB) Terms of Reference state that the number of people who shall sit on the LAB shall be not less than seven but not be subject to a maximum but must be of such number that the board remains efficient and effective.</p> <p>The LAB shall have the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 staff member – Jamie Light • Minimum of 2 elected parent members (vacant) • The Headteacher (GB) • Co-opted members (JE, CH, MT, VD) <p>Link governor roles were confirmed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Behaviour and attitudes – CH ○ Quality of Education (inc Pupil Premium) – MT ○ Leadership & Management – JE ○ Personal Development (inc Careers / SEND and Cared for Children) - VD ○ Safeguarding JE

	<p style="text-align: center;">○ H&S - CH</p> <p>The latest MHAT LAB Terms of Reference now called for a School Improvement link governor to be in place, and governors were of the view that each person had responsibility for School Improvement and confirmed that a governor attended the School Improvement Partner (SIP) feedback. The current links complied with the DfE requirements, and further discussion, including the newness of the board and the size of the LAB, would take place with Paul Spreadbury (School Improvement Lead). Feedback was awaited. The LAB Terms of Reference were available on GovernorHub in the MHAT Statutory documents folder.</p>
4.	<p>Chair's Action</p> <p>The Chair reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair had thanked the Head for her performance and commitment and discussion on the HTPM would take place in Part 2. • The refreshed governance statement would be available shortly for the website.
5.	<p>Autumn 1 Pt1 minutes/matters arising and actions</p> <p>OL LAB Autumn 1 Pt1 mins OL LAB Autumn 1 Pt1 actions</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 3rd October 2023 were agreed to be a true and accurate account and would be signed by the Chair on GovernorHub.</p> <p>The action log was reviewed and updated, and the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the Parent Governor vacancy had been shared at the start of the autumn term; however, recruitment difficulties were compounded by the changing cohorts of pupils. Attempts to recruit would continue. • A report on behaviour and attendance was included in this meeting. • Data would next be presented to governors in Spring 2024 in an amended format. • Responses to the Chair's questions on the Scheme of Delegation and an update on the process were awaited. The MHAT Governance and Compliance Lead would be contacted. • A governor skills audit had been completed and would be discussed in this meeting. • All governors had completed National College safeguarding training and certificates were available on GovernorHub. • A copy of the OL H&S audit had been shared with governors. • The Pupil Premium Strategy Document would be completed by 31st December 2023 and available on the school website by the deadline of 31st January 2024. • Details of the remaining inset days for 2023/24 were now on the website.
6.	<p>Financial Matters</p> <p>The LAB accepted the Academy Trust Handbook Academy Trust Handbook and the MHAT Manual of Internal Financial Procedures MHAT Finance Policy</p>

[2023](#)

Finance Report

Budget to date

The SBM explained the current position with the lack of integration between the two financial systems used – PS Financials for ordering / invoices and BPS for budgeting - which was due technical issues. MHAT were to introduce new budgeting software, the IMP system, shortly. Governors learnt that the move from the previous Cheshire East (CE) system to the MHAT system had not been smooth, the school had been in a unique position and had dealt with many changes over a short space of time.

Governors expressed their serious concern that it had been difficult to carry out rigorous budget scrutiny for 2 years and the SBM stressed the urgent need for training and greater clarification from MHAT. She had proposed a working party to deliver financial training and to deal with the current frustrating situation. The MHAT Chief Financial Officer (CFO) was aware of the desire for finance training.

MT joined the meeting at 15.34.

A finance meeting was scheduled for 15th December with the CFO and other financial leads and further discussions would take place at that time.

Q: What is the position of the school's finances?

A: The school is in a satisfactory position. The trust examines spending on a monthly basis which does not reflect the annual payment of some outgoings. The new reports should allow line by line analysis and live up-to-date information.

The cost of the Teacher Pay and Pension Grant had been invoiced to CE where it had been retained and the 3.4% uplift on base and top up funding. Delays had been due to CE staffing changes. The first £60k of the 6 additional places had now been received and the £10k payment for outreach would be pursued.

There were no MHAT funding bids and the solar panels were now installed and working. The electricity supplier had also changed, and it was thought that the school was likely to use all electricity generated by the panels.

School Risk Register Update

Oakfield Lodge Risk Register

The document had been updated at trust level and shared with the SBM who had added in school specific areas. Decisions around risk ratings were made by MHAT and the Chief Operating Officer (COO).

SN left the meeting at 15.47.

7. **Safeguarding Governor Report**

Information had been included in the Head's report; however, the normal full

	<p>and detailed report had not been possible due to the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (see Part 2 of the meeting). A detailed report in the MHAT standard termly reporting format would be produced by the Head and uploaded to GovernorHub.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Headteacher's Pt 1 Report (including an update on the PASS survey) HR Report</p> <p>The Head pointed out that data for the current term would be produced over the next two weeks and was therefore not included in the document.</p> <p>Q: What is the additional £10k Special Educational Needs and /or Disability (SEND) funding? And what is it used for?</p> <p>A: Currently the school is funded the same amount for each child; however, in collaboration with Springfields School an additional £10k has been found to provide outreach to the other schools. Rather than the Head receiving telephone contact for advice, a school submits a online form which goes to Springfields School and the Oakfield Lodge Head then goes out to mainstreams to assess pupil referrals. The cost of her time and work is then deducted from the £10k funding. CE will be alerted once funding reaches £1000 and further funding will be requested for the work to continue. As part of a separate outreach work initiative there are currently six pupils on the register of the school who are based at The Lodge, Sandbach School which accounts for the increased Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school to 66. There are increasing numbers of pupils at home who are awaiting places and Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) assessment who may only be seen once a fortnight which gives rise to safeguarding concerns. OL has no capacity for an increased number of pupils. The arrangement is that CE provides funding for 6 places which is then used to purchase places at The Lodge, the Sandbach School in-house alternative provision, staffed by Sandbach School. The Lodge provides a very therapeutic, trauma-informed base; however, pupils are required to be on a school roll to attend. The arrangement allows the pupils to start on the Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) process. CE is also funding half a day per week of the OL Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to complete the required EHCP paperwork and mediation, and also for half a day of safeguarding time each week to cover Child Protection and Child in Need meetings and also for 2 hours of the Attendance Officer's time. This arrangement is only in place until the end of the academic year due to the number of pupils currently involved.</p> <p>Q: What is the curriculum at The Lodge?</p> <p>A: The pupils receive English, Maths, Science and Technology; however much of it is trauma informed work e.g. dogs, chickens and Lego therapy. Initial signs are very positive and the purpose is to get pupils back into a classroom. These are not long term places but the pupils have extremely complex needs. The pupils will return to OL in September 2024 but will have begun their EHCP journey. This is a collaborative piece of work aimed at reducing the number of pupils in their bedrooms.</p> <p>The Head explained the principle of 'Safety Valve' which related to the current</p>

serious financial position of CE and the £5m overspend in the high needs block. Should ring fencing of the high needs block be removed together with the right to roll over, the deficit would have to be offset against the council budget which would make CE effectively bankrupt. This would then impact all residents in the authority as all non- statutory services would cease e.g. Early Help and children's centres. It was thought that the only way to offset the increase required in the high needs budget would be a 20% increase on council tax. Hence the LA were putting an application for Safety Valve, which would involve working monthly with an independent DfE adviser to produce a plan to reduce the deficit. The final plan would be submitted on 12th January. If accepted to Safety Valve, the government would make an investment to mitigate some of the changes which the council deems necessary for long term savings to be made. There was a danger for the future of alternative provision with a reduced number of special school places and increased funding for mainstream schools to address inclusion. It was likely that full-funded alternative provision would be reduced to 50% with the balance paid by the mainstream school. Re-negotiation of top ups within the high needs block was also under discussion, and there was the possibility that the top up funding received by the school could be potentially reduced by 25% which would have to be mitigated for by the school within its 5-year development plan. A further meeting of Sarah Burns (Sandbach School), Ed O'Neill (Eaton Bank) and the Head was scheduled to ascertain the experiences of other authorities in the same process. Governors were urged to read any information on the subject carefully.

The [SDP 2023-24 RAG rated update](#) was available on GovernorHub. Governors requested sight of the line management structure and the Head confirmed responsibilities were as follows:

- Emma Thompson (Deputy Head) line manager of all teachers
- Subject staff line manager for their HLTA
- The Head line manager for Andy Souter (Assistant Head), Sian Nixon (Bursar), Emma Thompson, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead and the SENCO.

ACTION: To upload the line management structure chart with leadership roles and TLR. (GB)

[SIP Visit Report 2023](#)

[SIP Report Nov 2023](#)

A discussion around the report would be required and arranged. The SIP comment on learning behaviour and confidence matched the PASS report.

ACTION: To meet to discuss SIP report. (GB and MT)

[Pupil Attitudes to Self and School \(PASS\)](#)

The low response had been due to the length of time required for completion and school would in future look at the approach for further surveys. The pupils clearly demonstrated their positive relationship with school staff and enjoyed attending but had little confidence in themselves as learners and in their prospects. The cohort showing as mostly red was Year 10, who at the time of

	<p>the survey had just begun their GCSE courses with its attendant pressures. The survey would be redone at a suitable point early in the summer term in order to capture Year 11 before they left the school. There was no other suitable survey available. Some key information would be obtainable; however, governors were reminded of the ever-changing composition of the cohorts.</p> <p>Q: Is there a school council in place? A: There is no School Council; however, student voice is logged through Arbor and the Child Protections Online Management System (CPOMS). Pupils thoughts, suggestions and feedback are made known.</p> <p>Governors expressed an interest in meeting with a group of pupils in a round table setting. This was thought possible if guided by questions and a clear structure. Students could also have the opportunity to question governors on their backgrounds, careers and reason for being a governor which could lead to a display.</p> <p>ACTION: To discuss setting up a round table meeting with students (Student Voice). (JE/GB)</p> <p>ACTION: To send student voice comments to governors. GB)</p>
9.	<p>Policies Governors approved the following policies shared via GovernorHub: Policies for approval Autumn 2 LAB meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam Contingency Policy 2023 • Exam non assessment Policy 2023 • Exams Policy • Health & Safety Policy 2023-24 • Provider Access Policy statement 2023-24 • Literacy Policy 2023 <p>And the following policies <u>approved on Parago</u> since the Autumn 1 meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt Policy • Grievance Policy • Pay Policy • Travel & Expenses • Complaints • Anti-Bullying • Reporting Staff Absences • Gifts & Hospitality • Managing persistent, unreasonable and vexatious complaints policy <p>Queries on the Exam Policy would be answered on GovernorHub. The new Health and Safety Policy reflected the new Outdoor Ed Lead and would be reviewed to ensure clarity around the person to call the fire brigade in the event of a fire.</p>

10.	<p>Governor training, professional development Governors were requested to continue to log all training completed since the previous meeting.</p> <p><u>Governor skills audit outcomes</u> The Chair agreed to analyse the results and compile a proposal for training. The Head advised inhouse training would be provided for governors in the areas identified.</p> <p>ACTION: To analyse the results of the governor skills audit, to compile a proposal for training and share with the clerk for uploading to GovernorHub. (Chair)</p>
11.	<p>Skills Training Session for Governors (linked to governor skills audit) There was no session at this meeting.</p>
12.	<p>Link Governor visit reports <u>Behaviour & Attitudes</u> Behaviour & Attitudes Governor report Nov 2023 Comments had also been made in the SIP report which would be discussed further with the school lead.</p> <p>ACTION: To discuss SIP report references to Behaviour & Attitudes with Andy Suter after Monday 11th December. (CH)</p> <p>The Head thanked CH for her report which had a primary attendance focus.</p> <p>The report on the recent <u>staff/governor meeting</u> Staff wellbeing meeting and Staff wellbeing responses were received and aspects for further consideration would be followed up.</p>
13.	<p><u>A.O.B.</u> <u>Staff survey follow up</u> JEs report was available on GovernorHub with details of topics governors wished to discuss with SLT. Governors agreed to join an SLT meeting to do this. Based on staff feedback, all Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) were shadowing their form groups. The Head confirmed the school was open to change and wanted assurance of the consistency of routines and staff compliance. Lesson observations and learning walks had shown inconsistencies in expectations. The HLTAs were to meet to discuss what it is like to be a pupil at OL. The benchmarking of national surveys could be possible.</p> <p>The outcome of the HLTA initiative will be fed back to governors when complete; at this time any remaining issues arising at the staff wellbeing session will be discussed with SLT.</p> <p>Governors approved the CEC Term dates 2025-26</p>

14.	<p><u>Next meetings</u></p> <p>It was agreed the remaining meetings of the year would be in person with a 3.15 p.m. start.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30th January 2024 • 5th March 2024 • 30th April 2024 • 25th June 2024
15.	<p><u>Impact Statement</u></p> <p><u>Impact of the discussions, decisions and actions of this meeting on the pupils of Oakfield Lodge School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors were reassured that their concerns around the trust finance system were being addressed and the new system would enable the Head to make decisions based on the up-to-date financial position of the school. • The new Staff Governor, an integral member of the school team, now added strength and expertise to the governance team. • Governors were assured that the safeguarding of the pupils at the school continued at the highest level during the current staff absence. • Action has been taken by the head in response to staff wellbeing feedback, which should demonstrate to staff that their concerns are taken seriously and that there is positive dialogue between LT and governors.

JL left and the Pt 1 meeting closed at 16.39.

Signed.....

Date