

The Viridis Federation of Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden Schools
Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 24 January 2019

Governors present	James Gowland	Co-opted Governor - Chair of Governors
	Stephen Hall	Executive Headteacher
	Richard Allen	Co-opted Governor - Vice Chair of Governors
	Claudia Moreira	Staff Governor
	Kay Richardson	Parent Governor
	Alberta Senyah	Co-opted Governor
	Andrea Klettner	Co-opted Governor
	Lenna Marson	Parent Governor
	Sara Fox	Co-opted Governor
	Sara Walsingham	Co-opted Governor
	Laura Theobold	Co-opted Governor
	Hannah Lownsborough	Co-opted Governor

Others Present:

- Rachel Davie, Headteacher, Orchard School
- Stephen O'Brien, Headteacher, Southwold School
- Rachel Adams, Headteacher, Hoxton School

Clerk:

Leah Begley – Leah.Begley@learningtrust.co.uk

1. Apologies/consent for absence

1.1. Noted Ian Rathbone had sent his apologies.

2. Governing Body Organisation

2.1. Governors were provided with the membership and terms of reference for their information.

2.2. The declaration of interests had been updated however all Governors were encouraged read and provide updates if necessary.

2.3. The code of conduct was included for Governors to read and consider.

2.4. Governing Body Annual Calendar

2.4.1. Noted the Resources Committee meeting will now take place on 7 March at Orchard, 4:30pm.

2.4.2. The next FGB will take place on 23 May at Hoxton, 6pm.

2.4.3. Noted the next Governors visit would take place on 13 Feb at Hoxton, 9am. The theme will be Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Governors will be meeting with

children and staff responsible for those children. SH will send an agenda 2 weeks prior and encouraged all to attend. The Chair noted that the Ofsted inspector who visited Southwold school asked questions regarding SEND children and the substance behind data and Governor visits so all should be mindful of these groups and consider the impact of the schools actions related to them.

3. Agreement of minutes from the last meeting

- 3.1. Agreed the Clerk would correct HL's name. **Action: the Clerk**
- 3.2. **Action number 2.1.2:** terms of reference and membership updated and uploaded to the website.
- 3.3. **Action 2.3.1:** register of pecuniary interest was updated.
- 3.4. **Action 4.1 storyboards:** noted a storyboard was completed for Hoxton however needed further input. It was suggested that three sample initiatives were created that require funding and then pitch to various companies who provide funding for such projects. It was agreed the process would continue and more contribution from Governors was required, template to be sent round. **Action: Laura Theobald**
- 3.5. **Action 5.7:** the developers have resolved the issue with the search engine optimisation and the federation is now falling into the top 10 searches and loading much quicker.
- 3.6. **Action 6.2: Hackney Schools Group:** to be discussed later in the meeting.
- 3.7. **Action 7.5, link Governors positions:** it was confirmed the SEND link Governor was Andrea Klettner and she would meet with an inclusion lead at Hoxton in February. **Action: Exec. HT to facilitate.**
- 3.8. Clarified the designated safeguarding Governor is the Chair and all school deputy heads and Headteachers are safeguarding leads.
- 3.9. **Action 10.3:** the Governors newsletter was circulated sent and the next one will be completed for the spring term. It was suggested it should include:
 - Governors visits
 - Governor profiles
 - Schools future (HSG)
 - Governor training.
- 3.10. **Action 12.3:** GDPR was added to the glossary. Noted the Chair did not send the training programme as all courses had taken place therefore will distribute when more become available.
- 3.11. The Clerk to add 'a' and 'interactive to point 11.1. **Action: the Clerk**
- 3.12. Noted the IT equipment was received and software will be updated however the cabinets were the wrong size so have been returned.

4. Executive Headteacher Report

- 4.1. The report provided to Governors included an overview report from the Executive Headteacher and an overview from each Headteacher.
- 4.2. The Executive Headteacher gave a headline overview and invited Governors to read each report individually. The Federation continues to focus on standards and ensuring children achieve well and despite various challenges and difficulties teachers face, the

schools continue to aspire to be above national average. It was recognised this was an achievement for all concerned.

- 4.3. The Federation continues to invest in the depth and development of the curriculum, which is also now a consideration the new Ofsted framework.
- 4.4. Recruitment for September has begun across the schools; 4 apprentice teachers are due to start in June. The schools will continue to work closely with the London Metropolitan University and host their students.
- 4.5. Noted a new class has been introduced at Hoxton Garden due to the growing roll, which Governors noted as positive. There has also been significant interest in Reception for Hoxton and Southwold therefore it was hoped both schools will hold full rolls in September 2019. It was explained that the issue with a lack of Reception intake was a Hackney wide issue that many schools are facing. Orchard continued to be oversubscribed.
- 4.6. The Federation continued to share best practice and have signed up to a school improvement initiative that has matched the school to a struggling school in Bury St Edmunds. This will include strategic planning over 3 days, brokered support for the school and school leaders and visits. Governors queried how the schools were matched. Explained this was by virtue of the application process, which is completed by the local commissioners. A requirement was the school supporting had to be rated outstanding. Viridis was originally asked to support three schools however refused to due a significant amount of capacity this would require. Noted this was a positive initiative and an opportunity to share best practice.
- 4.7. Noted Chinese students will be visiting Hoxton in the coming weeks. The school also won the London Mayors Music Award, which Governors congratulated them for. Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship status was awarded to Hoxton Garden and Southwold schools.
- 4.8. Noted the website provider suffered a cyber attack and the school websites were temporarily shutdown. The issue has now been fixed and is working fine.
- 4.9. Hoxton Garden was closed for 1.5 days due to low water pressure and it was believed this was a result of the new flats near the school which have impacted on this. Pumps have now been installed to mitigate against further disruption.
- 4.10. The Executive Headteacher asked Governors if the format of the report was useful or could be improved. All agreed it was useful however some noted it was difficult to understand the level of detail unless they are a member of a sub committee. It was noted this was why detail of each school was delegated to sub committees and minutes shared to ensure each school is scrutinised in detail by Governors.
- 4.11. Governors questioned that in all 3 schools, how was it determined that there were no reported incidents of bullying. Noted schools have established the difference between bullying and unkindness (e.g. not sustained over a long period of time or based on a power imbalance) therefore some incidents may have been investigated, established it was unkindness and resolved. Noted many incidents are dealt with quickly due to amount of staff alerted and trained on this approach. Also parents and children have been educated around what bullying is as this can be a grey area. It was questioned whether the data was sophisticated enough and helpful for Governors. Suggested that

the report includes how many alleged incidents were investigated rather than incidents of bullying.

4.12. **Resolved: Executive Headteacher to include this data in the next report.**

4.13. Orchard are taking part in the City of Air pollution project; Hackney Council have installed test tubes in the playground which are checked on a monthly basis and results analysed to measure the amount of pollution in the playground compared to the streets. It was noted the consultation was now open for Southwold to have a school street and Governors were encourage to complete and tweet the link.

5. Governor Self Review

5.1. The Chair noted he had engaged with the NGA to make use of their tools; the results of the questionnaire completed by Governors was included. The Chair had a separate session to talk through the results and the feedback was that the NGA commended the high response rate and the proportion of green responses was positive. The NGA recommended carrying out 360 reviews for Governors around governing board effectiveness. It was recognised that Governors already give a significant amount to time to the role however also the need to ensure Governors are properly trained and reviewed. It was also suggested a review of the Chair questionnaire should be completed by Governors. **Action: the Chair.**

5.2. It was also noted that the Federation is in a good position in terms of succession planning.

5.3. It was questioned what the Governors term of office was. Noted this currently is not in place therefore should be agreed. It was suggested a 3 year term with the assumption Governors would serve at least 2. A suggestion was also made that Governors should move between schools to share their expertise. Noted the Federation should be mindful of terms of office expiring at the same time.

5.4. **Resolved: terms of reference to be updated with Governors term of office. Action: Executive Headteacher**

5.5. The NGA made a suggestion to complete an annual review, which would look at how Governors are feeling in the role, their contribution, learning from others, perspectives being capture. Suggested that attendance and training records provided to Governors to review and a skills audit initiated, to which it was agreed. **Action: the Chair/Exec. Headteacher**

5.6. Noted the NGA was particularly complimentary around the examples of positive elements of the school and the very expansive answers, which was also a focus from Ofsted. By virtue of doing this, it demonstrated excellent Governance.

6. Discussion & Update regarding Schools Future

6.1. Noted the Chair and Executive Headteacher had attended consultation meetings and circulated a letter from Annie Gammon to staff, outlining the Hackney Schools Group proposal.

- 6.2. Governors questioned why another Board was required. It was explained the HLT are focusing on school led improvement and a model that aligns to the McKenzie model. Also there was currently a review underway of the HLT structure. It was described as an advisory group that will form a strategic vision and a vehicle of better practice.
- 6.3. It was queried what the Board would do differently. Noted this was currently unclear. The change was to prevent forced academisation however the initial deadline proposed for all schools to academies has been halted by the Government and HLT are continuing with the proposal.
- 6.4. Queried if the focus was a school led system, how come there are not more Headteachers on the board, to which all agreed was a valid point.
- 6.5. Further queries were how does the accountability work, what information is being used to create the proposal and if it was too local authority driven. Also what would happen to schools that don't join HSG as there is no opt in or opt out mechanism.
- 6.6. Governors queried where HLT sat in the structure chart as the one provided appeared not to include the organisation.
- 6.7. It was noted the proposal could bring in useful resources and better sharing of information and practice across Hackney schools however in contrast, could be a process taking place for little reason, at a cost. It was agreed in the current political climate, the Federation was not worried in terms of being pushed into becoming a MAT.
- 6.8. Governors expressed concerns around funding for schools and SEND pupils in particular and the impact HSG could have on this. It was explained that funding for schools is nationally driven, therefore would not affect this. The Government calculate a certain amount of funding for SEND pupils, per school which is dependent on pupil numbers and the local authority then transfers this money to schools. The only possible impact would be on policy.
- 6.9. It was clarified that Governors would still retain authority in their schools however the proposal links to a wider strategic vision therefore worth being informed and having the discussion. Noted it was helpful to hear Governors points of view.
- 6.10. The Executive Headteacher noted it was positive to have a Head of HLT and have to a clear strategic direction and voice.

7. Feedback from School Subcommittees

7.1. Orchard

- 7.1.1. Noted the KS2 results were very positive and the team were congratulated. The Committee discussed the benchmark data, the evolving leadership team in orchard and the positive change to the structure of lunchtimes. Also, fixed term exclusions were discussed and how the school was selected to be on the exclusions review panel created by the local authority, who are looking at exclusions across the borough, bringing together primary schools, secondary, PRU's and special schools. Noted no exclusions this term however positive to be represented on the board. Targets and the PPG statement were also considered. Noted junior road safety officers to be added to the glossary. **Action: EHT**

7.2. Southwold

7.2.1. The Committee discussed the Ofsted report, which was positive and the summer target of achieving 60% level of teaching and learning. It was noted that the leadership was stable and discussed how well apprentice teachers are progressing. Noted the general feeling the school was more settled and general wellbeing was good. In terms of data, combined increased to 86%. The concerns regarding falling rolls have lessened as rolls have increased to 389. The school carried out many reception tours and parents have called the school showing interest. It was discussed how the PP and non PP comparison was significant nationally and how the school are narrowing the gap. The school development plan noted the how progress was evidenced in non-core subjects and the ongoing focus of the wider curriculum.

7.3. Hoxton Garden

7.3.1. The Committee noted how the school continued to improve each term and in particular, how well disadvantaged children were progressing. Noted the percentage of disadvantaged pupils in this year 2 was 49% therefore considerably lower to last year, due to change in make up of local residents. Noted the schools results were very encouraging. Noted Governors discussed the 'Mini Me' initiative which was designed to encourage children to engage in different activities which had a positive impact. Noted intake had increased by 25 pupils therefore only have 1 combined class; it was hoped by next year, the school will have 2FTE at each level. Noted a new Governor had also joined.

7.4. **Resources Committee** – the Committee analysed the half year spend and no issues were reported and focus was on carry forward balances. The meeting considered benchmarking and a high amount of CPD for staff, which was a positive. Health and Safety was discussed, noting the fire doors were completed at the local authorities expense. It was also noted the pumps in water supply were added and fire drills completed mostly finished within 3mins.

7.5. Financial Audited completed, the highest rating of significant assurance was awarded and only 2 recommendations made, which were minor.

8. Governor communications

8.1. Noted the newsletter will be circulated prior to May, as discussed earlier in the meeting.

8.2. The Chair encouraged all Governors to access resources on the NGA website and subscribe to the newsletter.

9. Consideration of key policies to be updated

9.1. Noted the complaints policy had been updated as the school have had some complaints received recently whereby Governors are contacted directly, which means they cannot then sit on a complaints panel if required therefore this element has been clarified. It has been reviewed to ensure it was up to date however the basic essence had not changed. It was clarified that the recording of meetings via a device was not permitted; the meeting were only recorded via minutes, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

9.2. Clarification was given on the types of complaints and what came under the policy, e.g. exclusions, grievances, and staff conduct have their own policies. The schools

complaints unit was also updated. Governors noted in terms of speed of escalation, it was useful for Governors to have transparency and for the complainant regarding expectations and timescales.

Resolved: Governors agreed the Complaints Policy.

10. Any other business

10.1. None.

The meeting finished at 7:45pm.