

**MINUTES  
UNIFIED ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY (LGB) MEETING  
18 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 5.30 PM (REMOTE)**

**Present:** Barbara Macintosh, Chair (BM)  
Ian Bowers, Vice-Chair (IB)  
Annabelle Thomas, Principal (AT)  
Diane Brazier, Governor (DB)  
Shirley Bryant, Governor (SB)  
Ruth Duggan, Governor (RD)  
Liam McGivern, Governor (LM)  
Kelly Phillips, Governor (KP)  
Janet Sherborne, Governor (JS)

**In attendance:** Laurie Cornwell, Executive Principal, OHC&AT (LC)  
Kayleigh Franklin, Management Accountant, OHC&AT (KF)  
Kelly Collett, Clerk

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

All those present introduced themselves.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Geoff Tanner and Bronwyn Van Vuuren, and consent was given for their absence.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- i The clerk undertook to check which Governors had completed and returned their annual declaration of interest form. There were no declarations made regarding agenda items.
- ii The clerk undertook to check which Governors had completed and returned their skills audit form

**4. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS**

- i Governors agreed to recommend that the OHCAT Board appoint Barbara McIntosh as Chair and Ian Bowers as Vice chair of the LGB until the autumn term 2022.

**5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Subject to the correction of a minor error, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

**6. MATTERS ARISING**

- i Governors received Equality and Diversity Objectives document ahead of the meeting. AT advised governors of the following points:
  - The school recognises that the Unified cohort is not particularly diverse.
  - The school strive to expose the pupils to more diversity, through learning about different cultures, religions, and races.

- The school are working on ensuring they learn about various celebrations for different religions. These include Christmas, Diwali, and Eid.
- Fearless (Crimestoppers) have done some work with the pupils and staff regarding hate crime.
- A lot of work is also being done around sexual orientation and sexuality.

#### Governor Questions:

IB asked if the school receive reports from external bodies regarding the pupil's behaviour outside of the school?

AT explained that yes, the school have received such reports in the past, and the school then work closely with that external body and the community to address the behaviour reported. The school are really trying to educate the community about what type of school Unified Academy is as the school can be perceived as a 'naughty boys' school'. AT feels it is so important that the school educate all to realise that the pupils may exhibit challenging behaviours, due to their needs and barriers in communication. AT advised that in the future she will be welcoming local community members into the school for events such as coffee mornings, to encourage a more positive opinion and greater understanding of the school.

## **7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Governors received the principal's report ahead of the meeting. Points noted were:

- Since the start of this academic year the school community have been working to continue to improve all areas of the school, and implement the changes needed to address areas of concern raised by Ofsted.
- Unfortunately, the pandemic has continued to affect day to day operations and the school is currently experiencing an outbreak amongst staff and students. This has had a significant effect on staffing levels and additional measures have been introduced to prevent further spread.
- Student numbers as of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021 stand at 76 on roll, a lower number than expected at this time of the year.
- Student attendance has increased to 69.46% overall in Autumn 1 from 64.59% in Summer 2. However, detailed analysis of the daily attendance, separating the students into respective groups (onsite, Alternative Learning Programmes (ALP), tribunal and school refusers) shows an overall attendance of 83.53% for the onsite students, and 73.33% for ALP. This gives a total of 83.02% attendance for Autumn 1 including onsite and ALP students (refusers and tribunal students removed).

- Attendance is managed by a new Attendance Officer with support from the DDSL/Home-School Link Worker. Having one person to manage this ensures there are no errors and is providing parents and carers with one point of access and greater consistency.
- The school has introduced a new 'Parent Mail' system that sends texts and emails straight away if the pupil does not arrive in school that morning.
- All Year 11 students have been entered for Entry 1 Maths and English and Entry 2 Maths qualifications.
- Each Year 11 student currently attending school has achieved an Entry Level 1 Maths qualification with eight Year 11 students passing their Entry Level 1 English, Reading, and Writing. Four Year 10 students have passed their Entry Level 1 Maths qualification.
- Recruitment continues to be a priority, with substantive posts having been filled, subject to final clearances.
- The Director of Safeguarding and Wellbeing continues to support the Safeguarding Team on a weekly basis to ensure policies, procedures and practices are robust and stand up to scrutiny.
- All staff (including agency staff) have completed a range of safeguarding training since returning in September.
- Ben Walsh (Principal, St Philip's School) completed an external peer review of safeguarding on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021 in preparation for the next Ofsted monitoring visit and a full 'Health Check' is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
- Provision of SEN transport is impacting on learning and increasing safeguarding risks for some students. SLT continues to work with Surrey SEN Transport to improve the provision of taxis where families move house or are in temporary accommodation.
- All learning walks, lesson observations and work scrutiny feedback has been recorded in writing and shared with staff. Strengths and areas for development have been identified and actions provided to support staff with their professional progress.
- A CPD schedule is in place to facilitate the development of Quality of Education with CPD delivered to support with lesson planning, delivery, and assessment.
- A plan is in place to offer more opportunities for teachers to observe 'good or better' teaching in mainstream or alternative settings. This will allow teachers to share good practice and increase the number of teachers gaining a 'good' in learning walks and lesson observations.
- All 76 students have Positive Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments in place which are accessible for all staff, enabling them to be equipped with necessary skills to manage complex needs and protect vulnerable students from harm.
- Works continue to develop the site and address any health and safety concerns. Work to repair the sports hall continues with an expected completion date of 29 November. Unfortunately, the field remains largely unusable and the surface covering for the MUGA is still awaiting completion.

- A complaint had been made to Ofsted. The Leadership Team were supported by OHCAT colleagues to provide a detailed response to concerns raised, which included information on how each incident had been addressed. Surrey was satisfied with the response and to date have not requested any further follow up information.  
**ACTION: Response from school to be circulated to Governors.**
- One complaint was submitted directly to the school. The Leadership Team responded to the concerns and have invited the person who raised the complaint to attend the school on a coffee morning to meet the SLT and get an insight into the school. This complaint has now been resolved positively.
- There have been two incidents of single pupils being able to access the roof this academic year.

#### Governor Questions:

SB queried the use of 'Parent Mail' and described the difficulties she is having using it.

**Action: AT will investigate and ensure that the contact details on the school system are all correct.**

SB asked who completes the EHCP's for the school at present and AT advised it is herself, and the Deputy Principal.

SB asked that if students are off sick with Covid, does it affect their attendance record. AT explained that there is a different SIMS code attached to Covid absence, so this does not affect their attendance record.

BM asked about the lesson observations, and what is being done to improve teaching and address any teaching observed as inadequate. AT acknowledged that some teachers need to improve their planning, so that they are proactive instead of reactive. LC added that the school has a fair number of staff new to teaching, having just completed the Diploma in Education Training, together with a cohort of pupils that do not learn in the same way that most mainstream pupils do. LC noted the need for teachers to really get to know and understand their cohort, so that they can balance their lessons correctly to meet their students' needs and keep them engaged throughout the lessons. This is a skill that will come with experience and training.

BM asked if Unified were taking on Early Career Teachers because of the challenge in recruiting experienced teachers. AT explained that the school will be adjusting their interview processes going forward for all staff by increasing the number of lessons observations and asking the candidate to present at a Student Council meeting, as well as inviting them to attend a lunchtime session, so they can observe the pupils in different environments.

BM asked if it's the case that not all staff are prepared for what they will face on a day-to-day basis. LC advised that when the school joined OHCAT,

many of the teachers were unqualified but a lot of resource has been invested into these staff so that they have the skills and knowledge to succeed in their roles. The Teacher Evaluation Schedule means that ongoing monitoring will pick up where the practice is not up to standard. The SLT will constantly support and challenge teachers to raise standards.

SB noted that the pupils deserve the best and she is happy that the school are recognising and challenging teaching if it is not up to standard. LC welcomed the Governors' challenge in this regard.

KP suggested that SB could be involved in some capacity in teachers' interviews and LC and AT welcomed this idea. AT reassured Governors that the school would not employ anyone who did not reach expected standards.

**Action: LC and AT to consider how Governors might be involved in teacher recruitment.**

LC asked about the roof incident and what protocols were referred to. AT explained that staff had accessed the roof to ask the pupils to come down, which they did straight away, and their parents were alerted by telephone. She confirmed that all risk assessments were updated, and relevant paperwork completed.

BM expressed her concern about the lack of outside space and the impact that may have on behaviour. AT advised the field is being completed as soon as possible and once this is done the students will have access to many more outdoor activities.

SB asked if there is a reason for the delay in the work and LC attributed it to the impact of the pandemic which has slowed down the process. However, Surrey County Council are supporting the school in resolving the issues.

SB stated that she felt the changes in the last two years have all been positive with the school and that the school was much more transparent in its communication with families. She thanked both LC and AT for their hard work.

LM asked if staff get regular online safety training and AT replied that they undertake ongoing training in staff meetings. The training is drip fed, so that it is constant instead of just one session per school year.

## 8. DASHBOARD

Governors received the dashboard ahead of the meeting. LC queried the Safeguarding data as it was missing some information, including how many students are accessing the school's targeted and specialist offer. AT explained that this information is being double checked with Jackie Van-West prior to being uploaded.

BM asked about exclusions relating to behaviour and if any trends had been identified. AT said that the incidents involve physical assault and damage to

cars by two pupils. AT explained that the right therapeutic interventions are needed for these two pupils, and at present the school is unable to access these interventions for them. The school are investigating future options.

IB stated that he felt it was important that if the school were unable to provide the right provision for these pupils, that the school fully supported the pupils in finding the correct provision for them. AT completely agreed.

KP asked that in future could the governors receive the racist and sexual behaviour incidents separated out on the behaviour dashboard in the future. **ACTION.**

KP also requested that in future, some details be added regarding 'harmful sexual behaviour' so that Governors may receive a high-level analysis of this information. **ACTION.**

AT advised that 'restrictive physical intervention' have greatly reduced, due to the greater emphasis on de-escalation. There has only been one 'restrictive physical intervention' this half term.

## 9. **FINANCE AND FUNDING**

The final Management Accounts for 2020-21 and Period 1 of 2021-22 were received by Governors ahead of the meeting. KF made the following points:

### **Management Accounts for full year 2020-21**

- The ESFA funding positive variance of £88k is due to the Covid Catch Up grant (£62k) and Teachers Pay and Pension (£26k).
- The budget was based on 107 on roll but the current number is 91, which has driven the funding shortfall.
- Staff costs were budgeted at 76% and out turned at 74%, leading to an underspend of £157k.
- Staff related costs are overspent driven by training, redundancy, and recruitment costs.
- The Curriculum cost overspend is driven by the alternative provision costs (construction, mechanics) for those not engaging in the school setting.
- The school makes good use of the two therapy dogs. The full year costs of these (£45k) were not included in the budget (it is for this year).
- This shows general reserves carried forward of £124k. As period 12 results are still to be approved the final number may change (at time of call it was £128k)

### **Period 1 2021-22**

- There should be a noticeable decrease in catering costs this year due to a change of supplier.
- Numbers on roll have decreased so this is an area of risk.
- The ratio of staff to pupils is high due to the cohort needs.

Governor Questions:

BM asked if there had been any success in negotiating with Surrey County Council regarding funding per pupil and LC advised that Surrey is consulting on a banded funding arrangement. The school are constantly voicing their opinion that pupils are underfunded.

KF advised governors that weekly monitoring of the budget is ongoing with herself and AT.

## 10. PORTFOLIO GOVERNOR VISITS

Governors received the following reports ahead of the meeting, with governors also giving verbal highlights regarding their reports:

- i Ethos, Vision and Strategy.
- ii Child Protection and Safeguarding.
- iii Health & Safety
- iv Finance & Resources.
- v HR and Organisational Development.
- vi Business Development and Marketing
- vii Marketing
- viii Attendance

### Governor Questions:

#### **Ethos, Vision & Strategy**

IB asked if the school were engaging with the local MP about the limited availability of intervention resources such as clinical psychologists etc., as the school are having to raise funds to pay for these areas of expertise themselves. LC advised that there was an MP that the school engaged with prior to the pandemic and that they will re-engage with that person to see if they can lend any support

**Action: LC to share contact details of the MP with BM.**

#### **Health & Safety**

SB asked about deep cleans. DB explained that these are carried out by an external company on a termly basis. Regular sanitisation is carried out by the contracted school cleaners.

LM asked about the tree situation. DB advised that a tree survey has been completed and any works needing completion will take place over the Christmas holidays.

#### **HR**

IB noted that he has much more confidence and understanding of the school's strategy and attributed this to AT's input.

## 11. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Governors were advised of training that is available to them on Educare and The Key. Governors also acknowledged that AT had emailed some Andrew Hall Safeguarding webinars.

BM has completed some Early Development Training offered by the Anna Freud Centre.

**12. PAY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Governors noted that the Pay Committee met on 18 October 2021 and reviewed the recommendations made by AT. Each of the pay recommendations were provided with a rationale for the Committee to discuss and challenge and all recommendations were agreed.

**13. OHC&AT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Governors noted the following policies and procedures which were approved by the OHCAT Board on 2 July 2021 , and these are available on [GovernorHub](#).

**14. KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION SEPTEMBER 2021**

Governors noted that 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' has been updated with effect from September 2021 and that all relevant policies have been appropriately updated.

**15. ACADEMY TRUST HANDBOOK**

Governors noted that the Academy Trust Handbook, formerly known as the Academies Financial Handbook, took effect from 1st September 2021. LC emphasised how important it is for Governors to understand this document and recommended that they read it.

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- i. BM asked how the school has managed to stay open amidst an increase in positive Covid-19 cases and the high staff to pupil ratio. LC advised that the government's aim is for schools to remain open as far as possible, which this school supports completely. AT has created a timetable to support pupils being in school as much as possible, despite staffing shortages on occasion. There were only a few periods where the pupils had to have two days of remote learning some weeks. All children, and especially Unified's learners need to be in school in order for them to learn and progress. A lot of the provision is not something that can be easily delivered at home so remote learning has been kept to a minimum in order to maintain the structure and daily learning that the school brings.
- ii. BM asked if Covid-19 vaccinations will be given in school and AT confirmed that they will be on offer by the Immunisation Team. Regular LFD testing is being done and students are provided with tests to do at home.
- iii. LC thanked Governors for their continued support and emphasised that governance is about challenge and support of school. Another

Ofsted visit is expected in the near future. LC expressed her thanks to AT, acknowledging the challenges that she faces daily.

- iv SB thanked the school for the phenomenal support they have given during the last half-term and giving all their students a chance for the future.

**17. CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items were deemed confidential.

**18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 17 March 2022
- 16 June 2022. All to start at 5.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Barbara McIntosh, Chair of LGB**

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS		
Item	Action	Initials
7	Response from school to be circulated with governors.	AT
7	To ensure that the contact details on the Parent Mail system are all correct.	AT
7	To consider how Governors might be involved in teacher recruitment.	LC/AT
8	Governors to receive information on racist and harmful sexual behaviour in future dashboards.	AT
10	Share contact details of the MP with BM.	LC