



MINUTES

Local Governing Board Meeting

17:00 on Monday 17 January 2022

PRESENT: Babu Bhattacharjee (VC), Chris Weavers (Ch), Aaron Mulhern (Headteacher), Akilah Jeffers, Helal Ahmed

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Lisa Tharpe (Deputy Head), Jesse White (T4, Interim CEO), Julie Pierzchniak (Director of Safeguarding, T4), Kimberley Bailey (T4, Finance Officer), Jan Tomlinson (Project Manager) – for Item 5 only, Asad Muzammal (Clerk)

1. Apologies for Absence and welcome of any new Governors:

- a. None.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests:

- a. There were no declarations of pecuniary interest in any of the agenda items.

3. Membership Matters:

- a. The Headteacher said that he had invited the Chair of the local Residents Association to visit the school and to pass on thanks to local residents for their patience during the building works. The Headteacher plans to ask him to propose a candidate from the RA to join the LGB. Governors suggested to also send thank you cards to local residents, or to create an appreciation event for them, where they could have an opportunity to look around the school. The Headteacher said that there has been some recent interest from groups in lettings and this could also be used to promote local relationships.
- b. Governors acknowledged that they should also seek representation from parents and staff on the LGB.

4. Minutes of the previous meetings and matters arising:

- a. Actions carried forward:

Action 210913/01: Annual declaration of Business Interest forms to be submitted. (AJ, JM, HA)

Agreed: The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 November 2021 were agreed as a true record.

5. Headteacher's Report:

- a. JT advised that all paperwork for the CIF project is with the DfE and the school is now waiting for preparation of the final accounts. The original DfE grant was for £386K and this was topped up by the T4 Board by £75K. The actual submission received from the contractor totalled £391K. The contractor has submitted a £25K claim for loss and expenses for the four weeks the contract overran. The Quantity Surveyor is of the opinion that there was a legitimate extension due to the external works that could not have been foreseen and they are prepared to grant an extension of time payment. However, the main internal works were not completed in the timescale that originally had been agreed and so some of the work was behind already and so they are not prepared to agree the expense claim for each element of that extension of time. It is hoped to reach a conclusion to the matter in the next few weeks. In response to questions on whether there is funding available to meet the contractor's claim, if that is the final position, JW said that the Trust has reserves, but it would be preferred that these are used to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust. JT added that the school has also incurred additional site security costs and premises rental costs due to the project overrunning and could choose to pursue these costs from the contractor.
- b. Governors received the Headteacher's Report.
The Headteacher said that the students had a very positive return into the school building. Parents were invited in to see the school and to take part in Christmas celebrations, which was very well attended.
- c. Many of the school's Covid measures remain in place, such as mask wearing, sanitising procedures and ensuring good ventilation. The school has a good stock of LFTs from the DfE and results continue to be logged on the Medi-tracker. There have been six confirmed cases of students testing positive for Covid and three staff members tested positive and were required to isolate. They have all recovered well.
In response to questions on the LA plans to use the school as a site to deliver vaccinations, the Headteacher said that this did not proceed. The school had expressed reservations to the LA, given the nature of the students and their capacity for consent and there were also some anxieties on the proposal from parents. Students were not vaccinated in school and instead parents were provided with information about where they could receive the vaccine for their children if that is their wish.
In response to questions on the CO² monitors and whether there are higher readings being recorded as the weather has turned colder and people may be reluctant to open windows and doors, the Headteacher said that it is now practice amongst staff to increase ventilation whenever there is an Amber reading. Students understand that staff are trying to keep them safe and are prioritizing their health. Governors discussed how if the weather turns colder, there could be implications from ventilation on working temperature rules and fuel bills.
- d. In discussing Teaching & Learning, the Headteacher said that the focus over the last term has been on sequencing and curriculum mapping, with support from GP. GP has also been working with the curriculum lead for English and has said that there is good linking and mapping of the curriculum. GP also carried out a deep dive in Maths and observed six lessons. He interviewed the teacher and students and reviewed the data. GP reported that the teaching of Maths is of high-quality, with well established routines and relationships to help students to settle into lessons quickly. He said that all students he spoke with said that they like Maths and the work in their books was of a consistently high standard.
- e. In discussing the Social curriculum, the Headteacher said that teacher contact hours are being reviewed so that students are provided with higher quality activities when they arrive for the

morning session. This includes a computer club, digital music sessions, guitar lessons, a drama club, a reading club and a range of different sports and games. In response to questions, the Headteacher said that the school would be able to clearly explain to Ofsted the rationale behind the delivery of the social curriculum.

- f. There are 45 students on roll and 11 new referrals being processed, including four Yr6 transition referrals. The Headteacher advised that he had a positive meeting last week with the new SEN manager at LBTH, who is keen to use IMHS's expertise.
- g. Attendance for the last term was 88% and for a few weeks, attendance had been over 90%, which is an aspiration target for the school. Governors discussed attendance at the school historically being recorded at 75-80% and welcomed the signs of an improving trend. The Headteacher said that a regular monitoring exercise is to review what attendance would be with the three students with the highest PA rates removed. For last term, attendance would have been recorded at almost 94%. The Headteacher said that the LA AWA visits the school every two weeks to scrutinise and authenticate attendance figures. Governors noted that the national average for Special schools is 82% and wished to pass on their thanks and appreciation to the Attendance team for their good work.

In response to questions on students with high rates of PA, the Headteacher said that when there is a small cohort of students, even one or two students could heavily skew reporting of all data metrics, not just attendance. Many of the students who arrive at the school have a history of PA at their previous school and attendance is not always measured against national averages, but also the progress of individual students from their starting attendance rate. LT said that attendance reporting is also complicated in cases such as students remaining on the school roll and included in attendance reporting, while a new placement is found for them. One such student is residing in Wandsworth and a new provision has not yet been arranged for him. He is not attending school and the LA are reluctant to take him off the IMHS roll until he has secured a place elsewhere. The school continues to support his education by providing him with a laptop so that he can engage with online learning, although this is proving difficult for him.

The Headteacher said that there are many significant reasons behind changes in attendance figures: a student who had 100% attendance at the start of term has now dropped to 67% after his mother was diagnosed with cancer; a LAC student who arrived with chronic non-attendance has been enrolled at a college for two days a week and now his attendance is over 70%. He remains on the school's list for interventions; a student whose attendance has dropped is being supported by CAMHS for exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia. Governors acknowledged that attendance is affected by geography and the complexity and multiplicity of problems that students are facing can be difficult to overcome and agreed that they are satisfied with the school's effort and input in supporting and engaging with individual students and their families to help improve attendance. The Headteacher said that staff regularly go above and beyond in supporting students and their families by visiting them at home, taking students on activities and providing them with opportunities to reflect. The school takes a holistic approach in supporting each student.

- h. The Headteacher said that there had been 17 responses to the Parent Survey so far. The responses have been overall very positive, with most parents agreeing or strongly agreeing that their child feels happy and safe at school; the school supports students to behave well and challenges poor behaviour; the school has high expectations of students and their children make good progress at the school; students take part in a range of activities and there is a good range of subjects in the curriculum; the school supports their child's wider

personal development; the school deals effectively with bullying; the school is well led and managed; parental concerns are responded to promptly; and the school provides valuable information on their child's progress. 82% of respondents would recommend the school to other parents.

The Headteacher said that a meeting is being arranged to understand the concerns of the parents who indicated that they would not recommend the school. There is one parent who provided negative responses throughout and the school will work with the parent to understand why they feel this way. Governors discussed how in school surveys, there is often some correlation to the length of contact with the school and there might also be some responses from new parents, who would have preferred for their child to have remained at their previous school and have not yet understood the support and ethos at IMHS. Governors agreed that the school should continue to encourage parents to complete the survey if they have not already done so, as a survey response rate of above two-thirds of all parents would provide a more accurate reflection of parent feeling.

- i. The Headteacher advised that the school website is being redesigned. The chosen web developer will also train a member of staff on how to update the website. The school currently must pay a fee every time a change is made to the website.
- j. The Health & Safety audit did not have any high-priority actions. Many of the actions can be quickly responded to. The report was very complimentary of the robust procedures in place.
- k. The school has appointed a F/T Science teacher. The new staff member suffered a family bereavement on his first day and has been granted a leave of absence and is now expected to take up post after half-term.

A TA member of staff has resigned to pursue a career in mental health.

- l. In discussing future premises projects, the Headteacher presented plans for development of the outside areas to further improve the learning environment. The school is proposing to use the school's surplus to develop the outside play and recreation area to include a space for Forest School learning activities and outdoor social and recreation areas, including a new climbing structure. Although the existing outside play furniture passed a Health & safety inspection, the equipment was installed over 12 years ago and is showing signs of wear and damage and it would be better to replace it before it reaches a state of no longer being fit for purpose. A member of staff has also completed Forest School training and it is planned to redesign some of the outside area to deliver Forest School biology and science activities. Initial quotes for all the outside area work have come in at round £120K, including removal of existing equipment and all ground preparation. Governors suggested that there should also be consideration given to providing some access to the outside area to local community groups.

The IMHS Charity Trust are involved in applying for a £120K match-funding bid for the redevelopment. Governors discussed how if the contractors additional claim submitted for the CIF project is resolved favourably, this would also release some additional funds that can be applied to student experiences and educational priorities.

The SLT also propose to use some of the surplus to fund an end of year residential experience.

6. Safeguarding:

- a. LT said that Covid risk assessments have all been updated as per the most recent Government advice and staff are clear about the changes. Staff have also been reminded on the safety measures required for students both in school and when out in the community.

Throughout the pandemic, case management meetings involving the EP and SaLT have continuously updated student risk assessments, as many of the students are vulnerable with regards to their health needs.

- b. The school's Police officer has provided valuable support and information on incidents in the community that may affect students at the school. LT said that parents are sometimes hesitant to accept support due to issues that have happened in the past and their concerns that they may be referred to social care. Staff take time to explain to parents that the support they provide is not a punitive measure and they are not judging and the support is more about providing early help. LT provided details of a case of a student with very low attendance and challenging behaviour when he is in school. The school had tried to arrange a meeting with his mother but was continuously put off with excuses. LT decided to visit the family with 20-minutes notice and to break any tension, she took along the school's python snake. This helped to develop dialogue for LT to be invited inside the home, where LT explained that the school are there to support families when discussing concerns about students and how the student can be helped to reintegrate back school life. The home visit was also useful in providing an insight of the student's home environment and understanding on why he may be centred in a certain way.

- c. The My-Concern platform has now been firmly embedded in the school and has become an everyday tool for staff.

An example of how the system had been instrumental in securing mental health support for a student, as the school was able to provide the Care, Education & Treatment Review (CETR) Panel with much detailed information and history about the student. An early review has now been arranged to ensure that the funding attached to the student reflects his support needs.

The school has supported the mother of a student with challenging behaviour, which has for many years been assessed as just below the threshold for social care support, even though the student has been physically abusive towards her. The school has managed to arrange a safeguarding plan and social worker support for the student, which will also allow the mother to access support.

Following a case of a student who was physically abusive towards a member of staff last term, LT was taking the student home to meet with his mother, when the student jumped out of the car. The Police were then called to escort the student home. The student has been acting more calmer this term.

LT provided details of another student who has been exhibiting mental health issues. During a review meeting last week, the student set off the fire alarm, which is one of his signs that he is not managing. This then led on to issues for other students who have sensory issues who were triggered by the fire alarm. The CAMHS worker is going to recommend one-to-one support and a bespoke care package for the student.

Governors discussed the good work of the staff and the intimate way they work with parents and other professionals.

- d. All staff safeguarding training is up to date, including agency staff. The school utilises the safeguarding related training modules available on The Key for both permanent and temporary staff and the expectation is that all training must be completed by everyone, even if they say they have completed the training somewhere else.

7. Finance Update:

- a. Governors received the redacted (IMHS only) November T4 management accounts.

- b. KB advised that the projected outturn has been significantly revised down from £250K to £11K surplus. The main reason for this is that the income projections for SEN funding are now based on current student numbers and were previously based on forecasts. The early indication for the December Management Accounts shows a £44K surplus.
Staff costs are a bit over in December due to Covid related absences requiring additional Agency staff spend.
In response to questions on the increase in Premises costs in November compared to other months, KB advised that this is due to additional costs for the temporary accommodation during the CIF project.
- c. Governors noted that the external auditors gave a clean audit of the Trust.
- d. In response to questions on the change in the monthly accruals practice, KB said that year-end accounts will only record accruals over £5K. For suppliers who invoice quarterly or six-monthly, this will even up during the end of year budget preparation. The change in accruals practice provides for a more efficient accounting process in terms of speed in producing the Management Accounts. JW said that this is common practice and has been done in conjunction with the auditors. The previous accrual limit for the Trust was £250.
Governors discussed how a few transactions just below £5K could make the difference between reporting a surplus or a deficit, given that the current forecast outturn is £11K. Although this may only make a difference to the year in which the new practice is implemented, it would make a material difference to the LGB on whether they end the year in surplus or deficit, when there is only a narrow margin between the two. Governors suggested that the year-end accounts are treated slightly differently on the position of accruals if it appears that a deficit will be recorded.

8. Policies & Documents:

- a. Added in error (the policies listed on the Agenda had already been approved at the previous meeting).

9. Chair's Action:

- a. None.

10. LGB Development Plan:

- a. Governors noted the availability of NGA online training.

11. Any other Business:

- a. JW advised that the Trust will receive a visit from a SMRA in February 2022. The report should be available for the March meeting.
- b. Forward Agenda
 - Projects to allocate spend of surplus funds
 - SMRA's Report (March)

12. Date of the next meeting:

- 14 March

13. Any Confidential Items:

- a. None

The meeting closed at 19:05

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Chair date

Decisions

Agreed: The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 November 2021 were agreed as a true record.

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Actions

Action 210913/01: Annual declaration of Business Interest forms to be submitted. (AJ, JM, HA)