

**SCARCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Minutes of the meeting of the Local Governing Board**  
**Held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 at 5.30pm**

Present:	Paul Edwards (Headteacher) David Rowsell (Chair) Gillian Marshall Michelle Smith	Phil Cooke Sam Healy Jonny Crawshaw
In Attendance:	Jenny Holton (Deputy Headteacher) Ian Wiggins (Chair of Trustees) Martyn Sibley (Vice Chair of Trustees) Eliza Fergusson (Governance Support Officer – Clerk to Governors)	

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions and Membership</b> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</b> Apologies were received with consent from Emma Mackenzie Hogg. There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>The Headteacher reported that following a parent governor election process Daniel Staples was the new parent elected governor.</p> <p><b>A governor asked if there was the potential to take on the other parent governor who stood for election as a co-opted governor.</b></p> <p><b>Action:</b> Chair to look at the possibility of co-opting another parent subject to the parent / non parent ratio and the LGB skills requirements.</p> <p>Cllr Crawshaw declared an interest in the Medical Policy.</p> <p>The Chair of Trustees recorded that his children attend the school and the Chair of Governors is his Father in Law.</p>	Chair
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the Local Governing Board Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b> The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting and were approved.</p> <p>Mr Cooke made governors aware that he was happy to continue as Vice Chair but would appreciate the opportunity to co-vice chair with another governor interested in the role.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b> Action1: the Code of Conduct was included on the agenda. Action 2: a Safeguarding update was given at Curriculum Committee. Action 3: It was confirmed that governors had read part 1 and part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Action 4: It was confirmed that governor visits were either completed or booked in. The Chair met with the Deputy Headteacher on curriculum. The Chair suggested that it would be useful Ofsted preparation for governors to speak with groups of pupils about their learning in a casual way.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Headteacher to arrange a governor pupil voice session for January 2022.</p> <p>The Chair thanked governors for their helpful work on link meetings. Action 5: the clerk had clarified the MAT training requirements.</p>	HT

5.

### Merger

The Chair of Trustees thanked governors for the questions provided and explained that they fell into different themes so provided the background on the merger, procedure, process and what the MAT has delivered.

The Chair of Trustees explained that the merger conversation started when SYMAT approached South Bank eighteen months ago. The decision was taken to have a very open process and a notice was sent to parents, governors and the wider community. There were lots of conversations between boards, at trustee level and three governance evenings to talk about the merger. Conversation focused on the values, culture and ethos to ensure that trustees have a similar viewpoint on the purpose of MATs and complementary aims. The Merger Working Group met fortnightly and there were strategy away days.

Ms Smith joined the meeting at 5.50pm.

There were lots of reasons for the proposed merger including economy of scale and political direction of travel towards larger scale MATs. The Chair of Trustees felt that a successful MAT is one with a close tie to their community & commonality between schools and engaging with a local MAT to grow was a more attractive opportunity than a national Trust. The key elements in taking the decision are; 1. Does this improve things for pupils in the community, 2. Does this improve things for staff with more opportunities for development and training, 3. Does it breach any red lines; items the Trust Board have identified as important during consultation. Protecting the interest of secular schools as a non-church MAT and a sense of how leadership will look are critical for trustees.

Mr Healy joined the meeting at 5:54pm.

The Chair of Trustees was aware that there wasn't a clear definition of how things would be by design when out to consultation and did not want to present an entirely fixed model to enable the consultation to be a proper conversation to be reflected going forward. If the merger goes ahead it would be for September 2022.

**A governor asked what the decision was for agreeing to go into merger discussions.** The Chair of Trustees explained that the MAT has a growth strategy to grow to approximately 12 schools in the next 3-5yrs to be able to deliver the services the MAT would like to offer. From early conversations there was a sense that there was alignment with values, valuing individuality of schools, enabling school improvement to be driven from within schools and a geographical connection.

**A governor asked if as part of due diligence the Trust looked at similar scale mergers to support assessment of the benefits of merging.** The Chair of Trustees confirmed it had, SYMAT approached SB and it was felt it was worth taking the opportunity to explore what that would look like. Lots of conversations were had including with the Regional School Commissioners office. Values are the most important thing and mergers that fail are linked to a clash in culture so it has been important to spend time ensuring values match. In some cases mergers are more of a takeover and SB have been clear that a more genuine merger is wanted. There aren't a significant number of similar examples to learn from and it has been fed back to the RSC that there is work to do to support MATs better in this process.

**A governor was concerned over how the merger discussion was presented as the arguments for the merger are the same as for when the MAT was formed and recycling that narrative has led to cynicism. As the larger MAT why was it not on SBMAT's agenda to approach SYMAT and does this**

**suggest SB were on the back foot.** The Chair of Trustees did not think the Trust had been on the back foot and wouldn't have proactively approached due to the church element of the Trust structure. When approached by SYMAT the secular/church element was one of the first queries when discussing governance arrangements for respecting church schools but not letting it dominate decision making. The Vice Chair of Trustees suggested that the recycling of wording from the MAT formation makes sense regarding the ethos of schools working together. As the sector has grown smaller trusts tend not to be as effective as larger ones due to economies of scale and capacity.

**A governor explained that the need to expand was raised by governors opposed to the conversion to SBMAT. Governors have seen some of the inner workings of the MAT but externally people who were worried about the conversion have not seen any change and the school community would not be able to identify any benefits for the teaching in the school. There is a need to be able to articulate clear messages to the school communities.** The Chair of Trustees explained that there has been a low MAT contribution and finances have been spent on area of greatest need but there is a conversation to be had on finances going forward. There are lots of examples on how the school has benefitted but the Trust has not been explicit in publicising the benefits of the MAT. The Chair of Trustees did not think it was fair to suggest that MAT hasn't done anything for its schools.

The Chair of Trustees confirmed that a political change is not the driving motivation, the growth strategy has been in place for a number of years to get to an ideal size that would allow for a few extra resources within the trust which would benefit schools significantly such as; estate resources to deliver more effective management across the properties and release Headteacher capacity, EAL, SEN and Safeguarding support. The central services currently focus on compliance requirements but have delivered better procurement deals which could be maximised further. The trust feel it is important to protect individuality and not take away too much from schools. If the merger does not progress there is work to do to drive the benefits of being a group of six schools.

**A governor suggested the Trust Board review literature published at the time of the MAT formation to clarify what will be different this time. A group of 10-12 schools has always been seen as an ideal.**

**A governor noted that parents are unlikely to be interested in the MAT central benefits but would focus on the benefits to their children's time in the school. Parents would likely struggle to identify benefits to their child's education from the MAT but see positives from individual members of staff and the school.**

The Chair of Trustees noted that he was not at the Trust at the time of the conversion noting that the Scheme of Delegation which did not lead to the desired benefits and aims should be reviewed. The Chair of Trustees felt that it was right that the focus of parents is to have a strong relationship with their school and its community. Spending money on the PR of the MAT in place of funding schools was not seen as a priority.

**A governor suggested that it would not be expensive to share what the MAT has done and also to be open about where the MAT can improve and an acknowledgement it is a different time and that some of the promises haven't been met and why.**

The Headteacher explained that SLT operate in a way that puts school first, the MAT is seen as a machine which operates in the background which is different to how the MAT was initially sold. The school has benefitted from funding through the MAT but would still have received some funding from the local authority. The Chair of Trustees noted that a lot of the work that Scarcroft needed

had not been done when it was an LA school and funding was accessible as a MAT school. The School Condition Allocation funding is based on the size of the trust and is not to be allocated on a per pupil basis but on area of greatest need. The building needs were identified through a trust commissioned conditions survey and addressed. This is a positive story across the MAT that funding is directed towards the greatest need. The MAT has been proactive and it is not guaranteed that the LA would have addressed the building needs.

**A governor noted that as governors they have not heard this narrative and it would be minimal cost to communicate to governors and staff. If communication is not fixed it would be difficult to get people on board.** The Chair of Trustees did not feel that the MAT communication is bad and he tries to write round to all Chairs after trust meetings and there are weekly Headteacher meetings with the Trust Principal. Support has been provided through the School Condition Allocation for building works and school to school Reading support from Knavesmire.

The Deputy Headteacher noted that staff did not feel supported in this work and the results were achieved by the Year 6 teachers in school. Staff are concerned about the same promises being given when they saw no change from the first conversion. concerns of staff can't be addressed without this detail.

**A governor noted a positive that one of the best teachers in school wouldn't have been in post without the MAT.**

The Deputy Headteacher understood not wanting to go into fine detail during consultation but the main concerns of staff can't be addressed without this detail. The Deputy Headteacher felt that an Estates Manager would help them and the Headteacher to focus on school improvement and teaching and learning. Other MATs in the area are delivering lots of benefits for staff such as training and school improvement teams that also improve things for pupils. It would be beneficial for staff to hear of the benefits. The Chair of Trustees explained that this can be delivered but two things would need to change in order to deliver that. One is how the senior leadership operates giving the example of the possibility of a Trust Attendance Officer which didn't go ahead due to a lack of unity across schools. The other item would be to be more prescriptive on the management information systems, there are currently three systems in place across the six schools. There are ways to simplify and become more efficient either through merger or as SBMAT.

**A governor asked if the two trusts as separate legal entities would merge and become a third.** The Chair of Trustees explained that as SYMAT is a mixed MAT the SB schools would join their legal structure. Making a new MAT doubles the cost as every school is joining a new structure and would be a waste of taxpayer money.

**A governor asked for assurance that staff T&Cs would stay the same in the third legal entity.** The Chair of Trustees explained that he is not an HR specialist but through due diligence the T&C's were broadly aligned with some of SYMAT's TAs on slightly worse conditions and these would be raised to meet SBMAT standards. There is a formal trade union agreement in place with SBMAT to ensure protections remain in place. **A governor suggested that the staff T&C's should be a red line and staff must not be placed into worse employment conditions.** The Chair of Trustees agreed.

**A governor questioned if there is a need to merge with another MAT to push forward improvements.** The Chair of Trustees confirmed that the MAT doesn't need to merge in order to realise some of the actions to improve but that is not to say that merger is a bad idea and would allow for greater scale and opportunities.

	<p><b>A governor asked if the feeling in SYMAT is the same as the Chair of Trustees views.</b> The Chair of Trustees confirmed that SYMAT’s approach is broadly the same as SB in looking at what would enable schools to deliver school improvement, staff development and quality of experience for the children.</p> <p><b>A governor asked what the MAT is doing better already.</b> The Chair of Trustees reported that procurement is done better at SB with significant savings made but SYMAT do centralised IT provision better and both are having similar conversations about estates. There would be complementary learns.</p> <p>The Headteacher noted that the school is not anti-merger and he and staff love the school and have worked hard to get good relationships with families but there is concern over mistrust due to a gap in communications.</p> <p><b>A governor noted that being part of the LA group was beneficial and the school is paying more to the MAT than they had to the LA. Communication is an underlying aspect that the Trust Board needs to be aware of and there is concern over the merger being for the benefit of the MAT workers rather than the recipients of the service. It would helpful to set out the benefits for pupils and the school community if the MAT is going to be successful with the merger and selling the benefits. The conversion to SB was a painful process that has just about healed and there is concern over re-opening old wounds. The MAT needs to be very clear about what is being done and why if proceeding.</b></p> <p>The Chair of Trustees highlighted that these points are important to know.</p> <p>The Chair of Trustees noted that if the merger goes ahead it needs to be a success for the community of schools and if not merging there is lots to be done including looking at the Scheme of Delegation and best use of resources to deliver what the MAT would like to including succeeding on the Trust Pupil Premium Pledge.</p> <p><b>A governor asked if it would be better to do that reform under new leadership first then seek a merger.</b> The Chair of Trustees accepted this challenge but the timings are not aligned and leadership is part of the merger and SB planning.</p> <p>If agreed to progress the application would be submitted to the Schools Commissioner which then goes to the Schools Advisory Board. The decision will be made by trustees and there would be transparent discussions with all papers going to both boards.</p> <p><b>A governor asked if there would be a secret ballot or vote with show of hands suggesting that it would be appropriate to do a secret ballot to support trustees in making an unpressured decision.</b> The Chair of Trustees confirmed that this would be agreed at Trust Board.</p> <p>Governors thanked the Chair of Trustees and Vice Chair of Trustees for attending.</p> <p>The Deputy Headteacher, Chair of Trustees and Vice Chair of Trustees left the meeting at 7.02pm.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Headteacher’s Report (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>The Headteacher advised governors of the behaviour numbers and confirmed there had been no homophobic, racist or sexist incidents.</p> <p>The Headteacher attended a fair access meeting and the school has taken on a non-verbal autistic child. They spend a lot of time in the Nest and it is likely he will move to a specialist provision but the pupil is from overseas and in need of statutory assessment.</p>	

	<p>Performance management took an “improve not prove” approach.</p> <p>Educational visits, lots of extracurricular workshops and activities are taking place. There was a pupil led assembly on climate action and have applied to do the Eco Schools Award with those pupils leading.</p> <p>Cllr Crawshaw met with Police officers on antisocial behaviour in the local area and suggested there is a possible piece of work on educating parents and children on antisocial behaviour. Cllr Crawshaw asked if a police officer visit could be scheduled. The Headteacher confirmed that he would be happy with that and he had been in contact with a PCSO who had been in to speak with Years 5 and 6 about bullying behaviour.</p> <p>The Headteacher reported that a recently employed Teaching Assistant had resigned due to health concerns and NYCC HR had provided useful support.</p> <p>The Headteacher tabled a Pupil Voice update.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Update on School Place Planning (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>Strategic work around place planning is underway and the open evening went well. A governor noted that the school video was very good.</p> <p>A governor noted reluctance to revert back from a two form entry and asked if there had been any progress with discussing catchments with Knavesmire. The Headteacher explained that there is a common pattern of older families moving into what is an expensive housing. Governors noted the conflict of interest within MAT schools.</p> <p>A governor noted that the financial benefit of reducing to a 1.5 form entry is not significant as would still need to fund two classrooms. There is a possible conversation to be had about reducing to one form entry with overflow needing to go elsewhere. There is also the possibility that other schools will be having the same issues and could benefit from other schools downsizing if keep a two form entry. The Headteacher noted the lack of Teaching Assistants but would not want to recruit if there will be a reduction in intake. Governors suggested keeping staffing lean until a decision is taken.</p> <p>A governor asked if the Nest provision would attract families to Scarcroft. The Headteacher confirmed it would but possibly not enough. Reducing numbers is a city wide issue so may not be solvable by redrawing catchment lines with local schools.</p> <p>Governors asked for the Trust Board to be aware of future discussions around pupil numbers.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Learning for Life Survey (PSHE) (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Staff Survey (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Annual Family Survey (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Financial Reporting</b></p> <p>There was no update to report.</p>	
12.	<p><b>School Improvement Plan (SIP) (previously distributed)</b></p> <p>There were no questions on the SIP update.</p>	

13.	<p><b>Policy Review (previously distributed)</b>  <u>Medical Needs Policy</u></p> <p><b>A governor noted that this is a significant responsibility and asked if there is an appropriate level of insurance in place.</b> The Headteacher assured governors that insurance was in place as needed and CD was responsible for putting together the list of pupils and their needs.</p> <p><b>Resolution:</b> Governors approved the Medical Needs Policy.</p>	
14.	<p><b>Committee Reports (previously distributed)</b>  There were no questions.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Link Governors (previously distributed)</b>  Addressed earlier in the agenda.</p>	
16.	<p><b>Governor Training (previously distributed)</b>  The Vice Chair advised governors to check the matrix and address any gaps.</p>	
17.	<p><b>Any Other Urgent Business</b></p> <p>FOSS: Governors noted that the FOSS event created a good community atmosphere and recorded thanks to FOSS for their fundraising and to the teachers for attending.</p> <p>MAT: A governor was surprised that the MAT had not invested in communications and felt that there should be acknowledgement that the MAT hasn't done what was hoped it would.</p> <p><b>A governor was concerned that the MAT are looking to expand without sharing information about what they've done or not done.</b> The MAT set up assuming that all schools would be forced to academise, the aim was to remain as independent as possible and the MAT now cannot deliver the benefits because it was set up to be independent. There is nothing to gain from merging and the estate and SEN offering should be in place to already to attract schools. It appears to be a MAT for schools that didn't want to be in a MAT. The Chair felt that there is the opportunity for reform to be a MAT others want to join.</p>	
18.	<p><b>Future Meeting Dates</b>  3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022</p>	

The meeting ended at 7.37pm

**Approved at LGB on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022**

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Signed: David Rowsell (Chair of Governors)

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Date

**Action Plan from the meeting of the Local Governing Board  
held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 at 5.30pm**

	ACTION	ITEM REF	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
1.	Look at the possibility of co-opting another parent subject to the parent / non parent ratio and the LGB skills requirements.	2	Chair	Jan 2022
2.	Headteacher to arrange a governor pupil voice session for January 2022.	4	Headteacher	Jan 2022

**Agenda Item – LGB: Safeguarding Update**