Exeter Learning Academy Trust
Creating our future together

St Thomas Primary School
Local Governing Board

Minutes of the Local Governing Board meeting for St Thomas Primary School held virtually on Wednesday 18th January 2023 at 6.00pm.

Governors Present:	Martin Bell (MB), Jenny Downing (JD), Chris Edwards (CE), Chair Dan Jenkins (DJ), Acting Headteacher	Alice Evans (AE), Georgia Martin (GM), Jill Noakes (JN), Martin Rich (MR),
Other Participants:	Rachel Shaw (RS), CEO, (joined at item 5) Kim Palmer (KP), Governance Professional.	

Item	Details of Discussion	Decision or Action
1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Consent** CE welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked governors for their flexibility in the short notice change to a virtual meeting due to weather conditions. Apologies were received from Tamara Al-Khalili and Carolyn Rowe. Governors **consented** to these absences.	
2.	**Declarations of Interest** MB declared that his partner was now a teaching assistant at the school. No other declarations of interest in respect to items on the agenda were made. MB agreed to update his record of interests on Governor Hub.	**Action:** MB update pecuniary interests
3.	**Local Governing Board (LGB) Matters** Governing Body Membership – Governors noted the staff governor vacancy following the resignations of Emily Woolls on 31.12.22. Governors noted that JD's term of office was due to end on 19.3.23. DJ advised the position had been advertised to staff and there had been interest from one staff member. Governors asked whether it was required to have one qualified teacher and one other staff member as representation, KP advised that this was at the discretion of the LGB and there was no formal requirement. Governors discussed and noted the value of staff governors and **agreed** that there was no requirement for representatives from different staff groups at the present time. JD advised she was prepared to continue in her role if no other staff governors were forthcoming. Governor Hub Registration – MR noted that his registration to Governor Hub was outstanding. CE advised governors that all governor information would be placed on Governor Hub and would no longer be listed on Teams. Code of Conduct – CE noted that not all governors had yet signed this on Governor Hub and asked for all to complete this as soon as possible.	**Decision:** No requirement for different staff group members **Action:** MR register for Governor Hub **Action:** All sign Code of Conduct
4.	**Minutes of the previous meeting 16th November 2022** Matters Arising • Skills Audit - CE noted this was pending a new version being presented. • Arbor – CE noted this was pending but in view of governors being able to access attendance data from an alternative source this was now felt to be less relevant. Governors agreed to record this action as no longer required.	

	• General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Courses – CE advised that information regarding who had completed this was with the Premises Manager and requested governors to complete this course as soon as possible if not already done. Governors noted that the invite had come via email and the course title was not immediately obvious in the email heading. • Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) – CE reminded governors to record they had read this on Governor Hub if not already completed. Review / Approval of Minutes – Governors **approved** the minutes of 16.11.22.	**Action:** All complete GDPR training if not done **Action:** All confirm read KCSiE
5.	**Headteacher's Report** CE advised governors of the recent Trust Away Day on 9.1.23 with the focus on informing governors of the information presented to staff at the beginning of the year regarding diversity, inclusion and belonging. CE noted that information regarding the school profiles within the Trust were given which showed St Thomas as one of the smaller schools within the Trust with 8.3 full time equivalent staff members and pupil numbers of 194 at the time of the presentation. CE highlighted that the school population showed 29% as pupil premium (PP) children compare to the national average of 22.5% of pupils, the number of pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) as 19% in the school, national average being 15%, the number of pupils for whom English was an additional language (EAL) as 30% in the school compared with the national average of 19.5% and pupils registered as from an ethnic minority to be 34%, national average being 34.8%. CE highlighted the importance of ensuring the school met the range of needs for the pupils and that the school population was significantly different to the other schools within the Trust. DJ highlighted that the use of social media by parents had been very powerful in the recruitment of pupils from these groups as the school had a very strong reputation and was noted to be very effective in the support given, often being the destination of choice for these pupils. CE noted the revised presentation format of the Headteachers report which was previously circulated and available on Governor Hub. DJ highlighted that the school had held face to face Christmas events, a pupil residential and were now running a programme of extra-curricular clubs. DJ noted the support received to the school from RS and Sharon Tarr (ST), School Improvement Lead. DJ advised that 29 pupils had left in the summer, 23 pupils had joined reception and children had joined the school in other year groups bringing the current number on roll (NOR) to 198 and the school was full in five of the seven classes, spaces only remaining in years five and reception. Governors noted the new attendance policy was in place and three families with low attendance had been visited at home for a welfare check. Governors noted that the school continued to work with families to support attendance however one family had been presented with court fines of £370 for pupil non-attendance. DJ highlighted a significant drop in attendance for staff and pupils before Christmas due to illness which included chicken pox, Strep A, scarlet fever and flu. Governors noted the Low-Level Concern Safeguarding Policy and that the school had made one referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) due to safeguarding concerns. DJ reported that the school had received positive feedback regarding the recent external visits for maths and English. There had been a high uptake of staff, 79%, for training from the National College and whole staff training regarding Passive Intervention and Prevention strategies was given in January to support all staff in intervening appropriately in behavioural issues. Governors asked why, given all staff were required to undertake training regarding KCSiE, the uptake for training was not 100%, DJ advised there was a "glitch" in the National College system in recording	

training and he was aware of one staff member who had completed the training, but this had not shown on the National College training record. DJ advised that one staff member had dyslexia, so the training had been provided by DJ on a face-to-face basis to allow the staff member to access this.

DJ advised that support had been received from staff at First Federation Trust which would total three days during the year for both maths and English to support staff to tailor schemes of work to the pupils at the school. SEND co-ordinator (SENDCo) support was being provided by the SENDCo from Ide who provided St Thomas with 13 hours per week however was currently providing more hours to ensure that all pupils' needs were met. Staff were receiving regular training regarding the "Read, Write Inc" intervention.

DJ highlighted that St Thomas was one of the few schools in Devon which did not issue fines following a ten-session period of unauthorised absence. DJ advised he had liaised with the education welfare officer (EWO) regarding this, and a letter was being drafted to send to parents when the need arose.

RS joined the meeting.

Governors noted the increased use of the supply budget due to staff sickness; DJ advised the school had a preferred agency and supply staff. DJ reported there was a clear process regarding staff absence which required the staff member to contact DJ personally via telephone on the morning of the absence.

DJ advised that, due to failing health and safety requirements, new dining tables had been ordered at a cost of £7,900 and the old ones would be removed at a small cost per table.

Governors noted that the school lighting remained poor which had been discussed with the Chief Finance Officer and was now scheduled to be replaced before the end of the summer holidays with LED lighting and sensors. RS advised that funding had been received from central government for sustainable environment work which would be used across the Trust.

DJ reported that educational psychologists were no longer working in schools. Governors noted the safeguarding audit had been submitted in November 2022. DJ advised that the school had been contacted by the Devon Ukrainian Association and, following all safeguarding checks being successfully completed, six pupils were now receiving one-to-one support with English via this group.

Governors noted that the secondment post of Deputy Headteacher had been filled and the new staff member would start after half term but was hoping to attend for occasional days ahead of this. DJ advised their role would focus on curriculum development, staff training and leadership support.

Governors asked whether there was any cover in the Trust for the educational psychology (EP) service, RS advised that assessments for an education and healthcare plan (EHCP) could only be completed with EP input however some schools had previously bought in additional EP time, which had now been stopped due to the need for EPs to address the backlog of EHCP assessments pending. RS noted that schools could purchase EP time privately which had been investigated by the Trust, but EP staff were very hard to find however there may be a possibility of linking with another Trust who had this service. Governors asked what support was available for pupils in the meantime, RS advised that schools continued to provide support, DJ noted the positive reputation of the school for supporting pupils with SEND and highlighted the financial impact of this provision on the school's budget. JD advised that external referrals continued to be made as required however there were long waiting times for many of these services.

	DJ highlighted the points from the school development plan (SDP) and advised the updated version was previously circulated and was available on Governor Hub. • SEND – strong focus on pupils being appropriately supported to remain with their class and make progress in line with their peers. • Child led playtimes via the OPAL initiative. • Subject leads to monitor and develop the wider curriculum. • Increase the number of pupils who achieve age related expectations in combined scores for all three areas - English, maths and writing. • Relational support plans and SEND support plans all in place and easily accessible to all staff via paper copies to ensure consistent support. • All staff had received a professional growth meeting and a second meeting for all staff had been booked. • Weekly meetings for all teaching assistants in place and well supported. • SEND priority was noted in all staff meetings, learning walks and book looks. • Number of incidents at lunchtimes had reduced, thought to be due to the increased range of resources. Governors noted the OPAL working group were currently arranging risk assessment training for staff. • Subject leader reports show improved knowledge, recall and skills. Trust wide curriculum development days and trials of online schemes of work were in place. Governors noted this would be a focus of the Deputy Headteacher to ensure schemes appropriately met the children's needs. • Clear monitoring and the whole school had "widget" access. The SENDCo was also reviewing the use of space and resources within school. Governors asked why the rate of playtime incidents had reduced, DJ advised that following the audit associated with the OPAL scheme a series of inventions had been put in place quickly which had a positive impact, especially that of increased staff interaction with the higher need pupils during playtime. Governors noted that girls' football was being encouraged with a potential Trust wide event and a school kit. DJ advised that quotes were being obtained with a view to start development of the outside space to provide a range of play areas for the children. Governors noted the previously circulated report from Ellie Ralls regarding safeguarding and the attached action plan which noted an increase in the number of safeguarding concerns. DJ advised that the school had an increased rigour within the monitoring process and staff had received further training regarding the reporting and understanding of safeguarding issues which had contributed to the increased level of incidents recorded. DJ advised the S175 safeguarding audit had been completed and that increasing school attendance remained a priority. DJ highlighted that the current school attendance was 92% which was a slight increase to previous levels. DJ reported he had met with the EWO to discuss the point at which the first letter regarding attendance was triggered, this was currently at 90% attendance and an increase to 92% was being considered. Attendance incentives included the class attendance panda and the introduction of fining parents for non-attendance. DJ advised that progress had been made in respect to the accessibility plan and quotes for new lighting were being obtained and new wayfinding boards were in place. Governors noted that actions had been completed from the last audit and a repeat audit would be undertaken in February. Governors asked whether the advice leaflet for people visiting the school had been completed, DJ advised that this was in progress and would be available on the school website very soon. Governors recommended for this accessibility guide to be promoted to the school community when published.	**Action:** Promote accessibility guide
6.	**Attendance Update**	

	Governors noted this was discussed within the Headteachers report under item 5.	
7.	**Safeguarding Update** Governors noted that safeguarding and the safeguarding action plan was discussed within the Headteachers report under item 5.	
8.	**Accessibility Plan Progress Update** Governors noted this was discussed within the Headteachers report under item 5. Governors asked if a copy of the low-level concern policy could be forwarded to governors, DJ agreed to do this.	**Action:** DJ forward policy to governors
9.	**Update on OPAL Initiative** Governors noted this was discussed within the Headteachers report under item 5.	
10.	**Staff and Pupil Wellbeing** Staff Wellbeing & Workload Survey – Governors asked whether the staff survey had closed, RS advised that 45 responses had been received across the Trust, last time 83 were received so the survey would be forwarded to staff once more prior to the results being collated. Governors noted that there had been ten responses from staff at St Thomas, MB advised he would highlight the survey to staff during his upcoming wellbeing visit to school. DJ advised that the situation of the school having an acting headteacher for a significant time had been unsettling for staff, RS advised she was due to meet with the Headteacher very soon and noted the importance of the school being able to make plans for the coming year. RS reported the headteacher had felt very supported by the school and Trust and highlighted the significant developments that had continued under the leadership of the acting headteacher. Governors noted that pupil wellbeing had been discussed within the Headteachers report in item 5.	
11.	**Governor Monitoring** Wellbeing / Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Visit – Governors noted that MB had scheduled this visit for 20.1.23. DJ advised that two roof panels had been replaced in the EYFS area, but another had been broken. Safeguarding Visit Report – CE reported that CR and himself had visited the school in November 2022 and the report had been previously circulated and was available on Governor Hub. Maths Visit Planning – Governors noted the importance of reviewing this area, JN **agreed** to undertake this visit during the Spring term. DJ advised Nick Luxton was maths subject lead.	**Action:** JN arrange maths visit
12.	**Policy Review** Website Update – Governors noted that the SEND policy was on the website and DJ advised the Supporting Children with Medical Needs (SCMN) policy would be uploaded shortly. Anti-Bullying Policy – Governors asked if this could be placed in the new format, RS confirmed this but noted the policy required further review to update terminology.	**Action:** DJ upload SCMN

	Governors noted that the Behaviour Policy would require review due to recently updated terminology and strategies. DJ advised the behaviour policy was currently being reviewed by school staff. RS **agreed** to review the antibullying policy and behaviour policy prior to DJ review and distribution to governors for approval. Jigsaw PSHE Policy – Governors asked whether the policy presented was the latest version, DJ advised the policy matched the teaching in school but may not be the latest version from Jigsaw. Governors asked whether the policy reflected the recent changes to this topic area, DJ advised he would check with the company regarding their most updated policy. Governors noted that names required updating within the policy and a second document was referred to but not presented with the policy. Online Safety Policy – DJ advised that online safety was covered within the recent audit and pupils had received appropriate information and parent guides were also available. Governors noted that peer on peer terminology required updating and the statement on page 14 regarding the use of smart devices. Governors highlighted the policy stated parents would receive the acceptable use policy yearly, but this hadn't been the experience of the parent governors. DJ **agreed** to update the policy and governors **agreed** to approve via email. Governors noted the importance of ensuring the correct policies were shown on the school website.	**Action:** RS / DJ to review policies and DJ to send **Action:** DJ check for updated PSHE policy **Action:** DJ update Online Safety Policy **Action:** Policy approval via email
13.	**Links with Parents and Community** DJ reported that the Friends Association was increasing its membership and had events planned to include a disco and quiz night. AE reported that parents who had attended the year 6 residential information session had found it very useful and were appreciative of the opportunity to pay for the trip in instalments over a length of time.	
14.	**Governor Training** No feedback on courses attended or requests for future training were made. Governors noted they had updated the training record on Governor Hub as appropriate. CE reminded governors of the need to complete the GDPR training.	
15.	**Communication with Trust Board** Governors noted the recent Away Day training and the value of this. CE highlighted the possibility of varying the event timings to support those with daytime commitments. CE advised of the Chair's Forum meeting on 23.2.23 and invited any comments.	
16.	**Any Other Business** CE thanked DJ for the reports and advised he and DJ would discuss these further and he would feedback any additional comments to governors.	
17.	**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 8th March 2023, 6.00pm at school.	

Meeting closed 7.55pm.