

St John Chrysostom Federation Governing Body Meeting Minutes

School: St John Chrysostom Federation

Quorum: 6 (met at this meeting – 50% of governors in post)

Chair: Miranda Hall

Clerk: David Pearce

Date of meeting: 21 March 2023

Venue: Online

Attendance

Name	Governor type	'End of Term of Office' date	(P)resent / (Ap)ologies / (A)bsent
Miranda Hall	Local Authority	18/12/24	P
Gareth Elswood	Exec. Headteacher (EHT)	<i>ex officio</i>	P
Tayo Adebowale	Foundation (DBoE appointed)	20/06/25	P
Joanne Cleaver	Staff	18/12/24	P
Sandra Palmer **	Foundation (PCC appointed)	18/12/24	P
Rosie Mason	Co-opted	07/12/25	P
Imogen Durant	Co-opted	14/03/26	P
Simon Taylor *	Co-opted	14/03/26	P
Sam McVaigh	Co-opted	09/01/25	P
Syed Murtuza Baker *	Parent (St C)	18/12/24	P
Mohammad Zaman ***	Parent (St J)	18/12/24	P
Anna Simpson	Co-opted	07/12/25	Ap

* joined the meeting during item 4

** left the meeting during item 6

*** joined the meeting during item 6

Others present

Name	Role
Anne Burke	Federation Business Manager
David Pearce	Clerk, One Education

Agenda Items

1	Welcome & Apologies		
The Chair welcomed everyone to the online GB meeting.			
Apologies were received and accepted from Anna Simpson.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

2	Declaration of interests		
There were no other interests expressed by the governors in regards to any of the items raised on the agenda.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

3	Minutes of the previous meeting 30.11.22 and matters arising		
The minutes of the last meeting 30.11.22 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. A copy will be signed for retention on file.			
<u>Matters arising</u>			
Page 4. The Capital working group meeting will be held in the summer term.			
Page 5. Incorporate further governor aspects within the SDPs.			
The GB Chair and the EHT will progress this action in the summer term. Subsequently, the new SDPs for 2023/24 will incorporate agreed governance additions under Leadership & Management.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of last meeting approved 	GB	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with EHT to incorporate further governor aspects within the SDPs 	Chair / EHT	Summer 2023

4	Committee meeting minutes		
<u>26.01.23 Finance, Premises and Personnel (FPP)</u>			
Governors received and noted the minutes.			
Governors noted that all meeting papers were available in Governor Hub in the relevant committee meeting folder.			
The (newly appointed) committee chair thanked the FBM and the EHT for the strong and stable financial position at both schools. The committee chair had no areas of concern to raise with governors. The committee chair will meet with the EHT next week.			
Governors ratified the P9 budget monitoring reports for both schools.			
Governors ratified the Cashflow reports for both schools.			
Governors ratified the SFVS for both schools.			
Action: the clerk will circulate both SFVS to governors.			
<u>01.02.23 C&S</u>			
Governors received and noted the minutes.			
There were no questions or issues raised.			
* <i>Syed Baker joined the meeting</i>			
* <i>Simon Taylor joined the meeting</i>			
<u>Academies Working Group (AWG) meetings</u>			

10.02.23 AWG meeting

Governors received and noted the minutes.
There were no questions or issues raised.

Governors approved the minutes.

07.03.23 Governor Q&A session

Governors received and noted the draft minutes.
There were no questions or issues raised.

Governors approved the minutes.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• P9 budget monitoring reports ratified for both schools	GB	
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cashflow reports ratified for both schools	GB	
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SFVS ratified for both schools	GB	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Circulate both schools' SFVS to all governors	Clerk	Mar 2023
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10.02.23 AWG meeting minutes approved	GB	
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 07.03.23 Governor Q&A session minutes approved	GB	

5 Decisions relating to MAT options

The Chair introduced the agenda item and took time to remind governors of the background, process and activities that have taken place until now.

The Chair referenced the information from the two meetings:

10.02.23 AWG

07.03.23 Governor Q&A

The Chair explained that item 5.2 would be deferred due to recent information relating to changes in leadership and governance at the MATs identified.

5.1 Decision in principle to start the process of joining an existing MAT

The Chair invited the EHT to reflect on what has been done so far.

Governors have had the opportunity to explore the reasons and rationale for exploring MAT options in response to last year's government white paper. The recent Q&A session had provided a good opportunity, outside the GB meeting, to ask any questions and/or raise any concerns. There is enough information for governors to be able to reach a decision this evening.

The EHT, and other governors, thanked the AWG for all of the work completed over last several months.

Q. Can the Federation set up its own Trust?

This was considered. However, the direction is for schools to join and therefore grow existing MATs – those MATs should be on a trajectory for at least 7,500 pupils or have at least 10 schools. Approval to join a MAT needs to be given by the Regional Schools Commissioner. It is no longer possible, for example, for a single school to convert to be a standalone academy (SAT) such as Trinity High School.

The Diocese has published its strategy document and its preferred option is for CoE schools to join an existing CoE MAT.

A governor observed that the meeting with the Vantage Academy Trust (VA) CEO might have been better if it had been less of a “tell” session and more of a Q&A session. It would be good if there was an opportunity to consider an existing MAT that was locally focused.

A governor noted that a Trust will also want to complete their own due diligence in relation to any school looking to join them. Likewise, the Federation would also want to complete its own due diligence as part of any decision to potentially join a MAT. For example, the levels of autonomy; alignment on culture, ethos and values; as well as aspects such as financial stability.

The governor noted that, at the engagement session with VA, he had sensed that VA had identified a need to revisit its current organisation structure including local leadership. VA has tended to take on low performing schools that need turning around. This would not be the case with the Federation which has two good schools with strong leadership and staff.

The Chair noted this is not about compromising. The decision is about what is best for the Federation’s pupils and staff.

Q. In terms of the current constraints around academisation – is this why some MATs with primary schools also have high schools in order to boost pupil numbers?

The constraints are as defined in the government white paper; as well as the guidance from the Diocese that a school joins an existing MAT. These have come about through analysis of how existing SATs and MATs are performing, across different sizes of MAT (i.e. ranges of how many academies are within a MAT). The smaller trusts were set up before the current constraints were established.

Q. Is there any guidance on a maximum size of either pupils or schools?
No.

[As an example, United Learning Trust currently has around 99 schools]

The Federation is likely to be looking at the two MATs previously discussed and on the previously circulated list of CoE MATs.

A governor noted it is important for the GB to remember that it is not about closing down any options. Politically, any future government would be unlikely to reverse the long-term direction of schools joining, and thereby growing, existing MATs.

There has been a robust process to review the list of CoE MATs across the Greater Manchester area.

Q. Will the Federation establish some form of checklist to use when assessing whether we would join a MAT?

Yes, a full list of questions across all aspects would be compiled and worked through. This would be done further down the road in the process. This needs to be on the right terms for the Federation if it decides to progress to the next stage.

Q. Would it be helpful to prepare a briefing paper as a future GB agenda item?

Yes. This would take input from all governors.

Q. In future, will all schools need to academise?

The EHT explained that is the premise even though the government white paper was withdrawn.

In his professional opinion, over the next 5-10-15-20 years this will be the strategic direction. Once a school academises it can't go back to being an LA maintained school.

Q. So, if the Federation takes any decision too late it may find that there is less choice?
Correct. Catholic schools have no choice; they have been directed to join existing CATs.

The Chair noted, as discussed previously, there is a sense that if a decision is taken sooner the Federation will be more in control of converting on its own terms and whilst there is capacity available. LA capacity to support schools is likely to look quite different in two or three years' time.

A governor noted that if schools leave it too long to decide, they may not be able to find a good cultural fit in an existing MAT.

A governor noted that academies can bid for types of additional funding that is not available to maintained schools.

Existing MATs have varied models of structure and operation.

Q. Are the two MATs identified the only two being considered?
Correct. A lot of work has been done that started with a long list of MATs, culminating with this shortlist of two MATs. The MAT needs to be local; fits within the Diocese guidance; and has the Diocese principles within its (Trust) Articles of Association.

The governor noted that, in their view, VA has a closer social demographic alignment to the Federation's schools.

A governor noted that there are MATs in the list that the AWG has already discounted. If the GB reaches its decision later rather than sooner, it risks finding itself in a position where it is forced to join a previously discounted MAT.

Vote

The Chair invited governors to vote on the "Decision in principle to start the process of joining an existing MAT".

Governors voted unanimously in favour to - in principle start the process of joining an existing MAT.

5.2 Decision on preferred MAT

The Chair explained that VA is in the process of appointing a new CEO. Once the new CEO has been officially appointed, a meeting will be arranged to follow-up where governors can explore a pre-defined list of questions with the new VA CEO.

St James and Emmanuel Academy Trust (SJE) is currently in the process of establishing a four-year strategic plan, including information relevant to any school considering joining their Trust.

On this basis, the Chair proposed that further fact finding and engagement meetings will be arranged with VA, and with SJE, in the summer term.

Therefore, no decision on a preferred MAT can be taken at this time.

Governors agreed to defer the decision on preferred MAT.

Action: the Chair will meet with the EHT to agree a plan for early communications to all key stakeholders.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision in principle to start the process of joining an existing MAT approved 	GB	
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on preferred MAT deferred 	GB	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree plan for communications to all key stakeholders 	Chair / EHT	Apr 2023

6 Sustainability and climate change (S&CC)

The vice chair reminded governors that MCC encourages all GBs to include S&CC as a standing agenda item in order for schools to keep governors up to date.

Governors took time to discuss how S&CC would be discussed at future meetings.

Area	Committee
Estates	FPP
Learning	C&S

*** Sandra Palmer left the meeting*

The GB Chair noted it will be good to ask potential MAT partners for their input on how they are approaching S&CC.

A governor noted it would be good to hear from another local school as to what they are doing in terms of S&CC.

Governors agreed that S&CC specifics will be added to GB, FPP or S&C agendas depending on the topic.

**** Mohammad Zaman joined the meeting*

The EHT highlighted that a Heat Decarbonisation Plan report, for each school, had been included with the meeting papers for governors.

For curriculum, both schools are learning about Rights Respecting Schools.

Q. Could governors see some of the work that children have been doing, at the next face to face GB meeting in June?

Yes, that will be arranged.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange display of work being done by children looking at Rights Respecting Schools 	EHT	27 Jun 23

7 EHT Report

The EHT presented his report and the following points were raised / highlighted in discussion.

Strike action

There have been two consecutive strike days last week. The first day led to both schools closing, however, the schools were able to offer a partial opening of three year groups in the most recent strike day leading to 180 pupils attending each school. Only NEU union members were on strike.

Q. Does the school anticipate any further strike action?

Not at this time.

A governor noted that unions of support staff are about to ballot their members about strike action, in May. Any decisions on strike action would not take place before the autumn term.

Earthquake

Pupils and staff raised their concerns about the vast communities affected by the earthquake in Syria and Turkey. Each school held a non-uniform day to raise money for the Red Cross appeal for this area and raised over £4,000. This is a generous amount from our families and the federation is proud to have raised so much money for this worthy cause.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DIE)

The school is currently doing some work on DEI.

DEI is about making sure that every single person is celebrated. Part of DEI is getting the language right.

There are nine protected characteristics set out in The Equality Act 2010 which are some of the key elements within DEI. However, DEI also extends beyond to cover anyone else who does not fall into these categories.

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

There will be a need to appoint a link governor for DEI. Governors noted the information in the appendix.

QA visits

Governors received and noted the QA reports for both schools.

Both schools have completed a one-day Quality Assurance visit. QA visits are arranged by the Local Authority to provide external quality assurance for different aspects of school provision. Governors welcomed the positive visit reports.

A governor noted the predicted KS2 results St C for 2023.

The EHT explained that, for St C, the school is not predicting to achieve the national average for R/W/M the first time in many years.

This was discussed in detail at the February C&S meeting:

“The school acknowledges these results are not acceptable. It is a challenging cohort including high numbers of pupils with SEND. This is not about the quality of teaching.”

“The school predicts its results, in the summer, will be lower than usual. All Y6 pupils are making

good progress; their progress is thoroughly tracked and monitored. The school is focused on all of its children achieving their best, however, some of the Y6 pupils will not achieve ARE.”

Predictions for May 2023 KS2 exams

Subject	National average 2022	St C predictions	St J predictions
Reading	76%	65%	75%
Writing	70%	65%	70%
Maths	73%	65%	75%

Governors welcomed the QA reports and thanked all staff involved.

Behaviour and Attendance

Whole school attendance is 95.9% (St J) and 94.9% (St C).

Persistent Absence is 17.7% (St J) and 19.2% (St C).

There were no behaviour concerns to raise with governors.

Behaviour and Attitudes, as judged by each school, is good (St J) or outstanding (St C).

Budgets

Governors noted the indicative budgets for 2023/24 for both schools, which may change subject to pupils on roll. Draft budgets will be presented at the Finance meetings in the summer term.

Risk Protection Insurance (RPI)

Schools currently pay annually for commercial business insurance (Employer Liability and Third-Party Liability) through the LA. Following a review, it is proposed that the schools join the national RPI arrangement. There will financial savings of around £8,000 at each school on this basis.

Governors approved the new RPI arrangements.

Health & Safety

St J

The playground entrances had a number of uneven / trip hazards identified and this has been resolved with a new top coat of tarmac to the pupil gate entrance areas. A new Asbestos survey is due for St J.

Action: include Asbestos survey St J as agenda item at next FPP meeting

Staffing

Both schools continue to have all teaching vacancies filled for qualified teacher posts at this time. An AHT KS2 lead has been recruited internally, for September.

The school is currently recruiting for a SENCo for September 2023. Interviews are taking place soon.

Coronation of King Charles III on 6 May 2023

The school will be hosting a coronation celebration event on the day. It is a national event and

important that pupils experience and remember it. Governors will be invited to attend.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New RPI arrangements approved 	GB	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asbestos survey as FPP agenda item 	EHT / Clerk	27 Apr 23

8	Governing Body housekeeping		
Governors agreed to defer this item to the next GB meeting.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

9	Instrument of Government		
Governors received and noted the Instrument of Government (IoG).			
Governors confirmed there were no changes needed to the IoG.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

10	School calendar and term dates 2023/24		
Governors received and noted the proposed school term dates for 2023/24.			
There were no questions or issues raised.			
Governors approved the school term dates 2023/24.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School term dates 2023/24 approved 	GB	

11	Policies		
<u>Appraisal Policy</u>			
Governors received and noted the policy.			
The EHT explained that the policy appendices have been streamlined following an action at the Pay committee. The policy is in place and in use.			
Governors approved the Appraisal policy.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal policy approved 	GB	

12	Any other business		
The GB Chair thanked governors for their continued time and commitment to the Federation which is very much appreciated.			
Confidential Part 2			

The remainder of this item is confidential and recorded as a separate appendix to these minutes not for release to the public.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

Date and time of next meeting:

Tuesday 27 June 2023 at 6.00pm at St John's

Action List

Agenda item	Action	Owner	Timescale
3	Work with EHT to incorporate further governor aspects within the SDPs	Chair / EHT	Summer 2023
4	Circulate both SFVS to all governors	Clerk	Mar 2023
5	Agree plan for communications to all key stakeholders	Chair / EHT	Apr 2023
6	Arrange display of work being done by children looking at Rights Respecting Schools	EHT	27 Jun 23
7	Asbestos survey as FPP agenda item	EHT / Clerk	27 Apr 23