



Directors' Note for Portfolio Groups

Portfolio title: Pilton Bluecoat Ethos Group and Local Governing Body

Date of meeting: Friday 21st October 2022, 1.30pm

Attended by: Caroline Preston, Dan Polak, Julien Morton, Sam Crocker, Verity Goss (clerk)

Brief overview of discussion

Welcome and apologies

CP welcomes all to the meeting. Apologies received and accepted from Zoe Charlton. Ian Thomas (CEO) had originally been intending to attend this meeting, but had sent apologies.

ETHOS

MAT Governance

DP explained the difference between an academy and a maintained school, and the ethos of TEAM as a small MAT. DP explained the specific issues of small schools within North Devon, and the benefits of working together to implement the curriculum. The huge demands on schools sometimes forced them into collaboration. Pilton Bluecoat was a reasonable size school with a range of expertise, but staff still benefited from the expertise across the trust.

Pilton Infants' School governors had voted to start the academization process, but this had been delayed by the building work, which was being done by Devon County Council. The aim of TEAM had not been to grow to a very big MAT – DP explained the difficulties that could be encountered in bigger trusts. Each trust was very different – even within Devon.

The government white paper had been released, but there was still some uncertainty around it. It was encouraging all schools to work together in strong partnerships. DCC for the first time was charging schools for school leadership support – more maintained schools were now choosing to get this support from MATs. There was no official guidance on how MATs should go. A due diligence process was required when a school joined a MAT – TEAM was at the stage of schools approaching the trust to find out more. The white paper had stated that trusts should be ten schools, or 7,500 children. There were currently six schools in TEAM, with two in a management partnership. Directions on growth from the government were on a national level – there was no local context.

What were the challenges of being part of an academy? DP stated it was much easier to manage if all schools did the same thing, but individual context was needed. TEAM was sensitive of schools opting in and out of different aspect – for example Curriculum Maestro was better suited to some schools than others. **Was the authority structure vertical?** DP explained that the CEO was the line manager for the heads of schools, and explained the difference between a head of school and a headteacher. DP felt there were many teachers who made good heads of school that might not have the skills for the whole headteacher role (eg finance). This was another benefit of being in a MAT. DP explained how finances worked within TEAM.

Was there a plan for which schools would join TEAM to make the ten schools? DP stated that TEAM had a different growth strategy than other trusts – at no point had they made the initial contact with another school, they had always been contacted by the school first. TEAM considered how like the existing schools the prospective school was – Pilton Bluecoat was the anomaly – other schools in TEAM were village schools, and High Bickington, Witheridge and Beaford especially were very similar in character. Horwood and Newton Tracey had a lot in common with existing schools in the MAT. Trustees were currently committed to not joining with a secondary school. There were arguments for joining a secondary school, including the large amount of purchasing power. TEAM was a specialist primary MAT, and felt it would be best to continue to focus on that specialism.

Local governors discussed potential vulnerabilities in trustees when the CEO changed.

School Values

DP stated that these were very well lived – last half term the school had discussed service to others. Pilton Bluecoat was a church school, but Christian values were used that applied to everyone. Teachers talked in collective worship about how these applied. There was a display being designed to make the values more visible. **What was the point of having values?** DP explained they were used to have a common narrative while talking to children, and enabling a consistent conversation. **Can school pick any values?** Schools could pick any values, but best practice was to consult with the children to find out what was important to them. British values were statutory. Some of the values talked about were to be aspired towards.

MAIN BUSINESS MEETING

Register of Business Interests

No relevant interests declared.

Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed as accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes

None.

Correspondence

None received.

Reports

Head of School report - updated Trust structure

Report had been distributed.

Pupil premium – children in receipt of Pupil Premium were not evenly distributed across the year, Y6 had twice as many as any other year. It would affect funding next year when current Y6 left, but the school did spend additional to the rest of the budget in line with the amount of pupil premium received.

Attendance was much improved – aim was for 96%. Subgroups were broadly in line with whole school attendance. No exclusions – DP stated these would only happen if there was a physical assault on another child. There had not been any exclusions the previous year, but had been a few years ago – a reaction of children coming back from the pandemic.

DP explained what funding was available when support was needed. **How was support given for children who needed additional safeguarding support?** Pilton Bluecoat had two pastoral workers who picked up a lot of this support – they were part of external meetings where needed and supported children. There was also a central TEAM support worker who supported the other schools in the trust. DP described the support the school had in place with families – there was now much less support available from external agencies. **How was this affecting the school?** DP stated that he saw it as a core role of the school – it was a last line of defence when other services were not in place. DP explained how he was supported within TEAM.

How was the extra 1:1 TA working in year three? DP explained that there was significant needs in this cohort. One child was waiting on an EHCP – realistically it was likely to be a two year wait. Staff had received training in Little Wandle phonics, which was the scheme used by Pilton Infants. All children had been assessed – those needing intervention had consistent input with how they learnt phonics in KS1.

Housepoints – one of the issues with merits was that they lost their value to children over time. Currently the school was trialling housepoints – this moved away from the individual. DP wanted to have children's input on whether they carried on with housepoints. Merits had more tendency to be uneven between children. Staff also used rewards linked to the school values.

Community links – Pathfield buddies had restarted, with Pilton Bluecoat children reading with students at Pathfield school. Children from both schools benefits from building these links. The school garden was being redone – there was a volunteer from the community that came in every lunchtime, which was a great benefit to children that needed the quieter time.

New vicar – currently very busy following their appointment. He would be doing the Christmas service at school.

PE funding - DP explained that Opal was a program that helped to manage playtimes, which was very successful at Beaford. The school also wanted a running track, which could be partly funded through PE grant.

Monitoring and Accountability

Safeguarding - CPOMS, Trust Systems, Online Safety

DP explained the use of CPOMS – it was helpful to form a whole picture of a child, as well as having supporting evidence in place if needed.

DP explained the use of Walkthrus – it took existing research and explained what can be done to apply that research. Walkthrus were part of the school improvement plan. DP explained the use of lesson box to record lessons. It would be good for governors to come in and see how teachers were using it, and what it looked like in practice. CPD library was being created – a collection of common experiences everyone could draw from.

Policies for approval

Attendance policy – question on point six, low key award for 100% attendance. DP stated that this was not done at Pilton Bluecoat – governors discussed how circumstances could mean a child had no chance of 100% attendance, or where parents were impacting attendance rather than the child.

Homework policy – agreed. Local governor stated that they had heard some parents raise they were fed up of the same grid of reading tasks – DP to look at.

AOB

Matters brought forward by the Chair

None.

Dates of next meeting

To be confirmed.