



**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the EPA Directing Board  
held at Bartholomew School on Thursday 20 October 2016 at 7pm**

Present: Frances Bartlett (FB), James Bird (JB), Tony Booer (AKB), Anne Carter (AC), Mike Foster (MF), Andy Hamilton, CEO (ASH), Sarah Kerswell (SK), Mike Lawes, COO (ML), Jane Osborne (JO), Pete Reynolds (PR) (VICE CHAIR), Michael Ryan (MR)

In attendance: Beth Bedford (BVB) Company Secretary, Kit Howells (KH), Minutes Clerk

*The meeting was quorate.*

**59/16 Item 1: Present, Apologies, Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items**

Apologies received from Paddy Coulter (PC) (CHAIR), and Jenny Faulkner (JF), and accepted. Hilary Emery (HE) was absent.

PR took the Chair in the absence of PC.

Declaration of Interests: JB works for Oxford Brookes University Education Department.

**60/16 Item 2: Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 July 2016 - for accuracy**

The minutes had previously been distributed, were agreed and were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

**Item 3: Matters Arising**

**61/16 Item 3.1 Note on Board appointment criteria and skills gaps**

Paper previously circulated in response to DB request. The Board *agreed* the content, which will ensure nominees meet the essential and desirable criteria required but with the clear caveat which will ensure the Board is not straitjacketed in its choice and is thus able to appoint for specific skills requirements or strengths if needed.

62/16 The Directing Board has two vacancies: one for a Diocese appointed Director and one for the Eynsham Community Primary nominated Director. PR will discuss the latter with ECPS Headteacher and Chair.  
*Action: PR discuss with ECPS Head and Chair*

**63/16 Item 3.2 Chairs Group update**

JO reported on the meeting of this Group (which comprises Chairs and CEO), which this time had focused on drawing up a CEO Job Description (*See Item 8 Minute 82/1*)6. Other topics discussed are also on this Agenda.

**64/16 Item 3.3 Glossary of Acronyms**

A Glossary is on GovernorHub. Directors to suggest others to BVB for inclusion if appropriate.

**65/16 Item 3.4 MAT expansion**

The Confidential Minutes of EPA Expansion Task Group meeting held on 26 September 2016 had been previously distributed, and ASH highlighted the work being done to gather information and investigate options in relation to advantageous expansion of the MAT. Positive local discussions are being held. Involvement of the local Diocese is key to these. ASH will meet with the Regional Schools Commissioner in the second half of this Term. The Group had asked the CEO and COO to continue to actively explore all options for expansion and will meet again on 8 December with a view to making clear recommendations to the January DB meeting.

*Action: MAT Expansion Group to make recommendations to the January DB meeting*

1 Chair's signature..... date.....



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## 66/16 Item 3.5 Safeguarding Reports update

SK reported that, whilst some schools may have points for development, she has the assurance of all Headteachers that they are compliant.

## 67/16 Item 3.6 Terms of Reference for EPA Committees – Standards and Finance & Resources

Previously distributed. *Approved.* *Action: JO and MR to note for their Committees*

## Reports

### 68/16 Item 4: EPA Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) - Update from Primary Director

SK briefed the Board orally on the work of the SLG (all EPA Headteachers), which she leads as the EPA's Primary Director, and on her work with JB (School Improvement Officer) since the previous DB meeting, as follows:

- Safeguarding assurance continues and is reported at Minute 66/16 above.
- The Primary Schools' websites will all be compliant by October half term; the new EPA Admin Officer's role encompasses responsibility for ongoing checking to ensure they remain compliant.
- The Strategic Academy Leadership Team (SALT), comprising CEO, COO, SK (Primary Education Lead – PEL), JB (SIO) and BVB (Company Secretary) meets every Thursday morning for 45 minutes, to consider strategy issues and direct and implement necessary actions.
- The Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) comprising EPA Schools' Headteachers continues to meet regularly; its recent work includes sharing best practice for Ofsted readiness, planning further training for Middle Leaders to be run by JB and Marilyn Trigg, and having an excellent Performance Management presentation from EPA HR Adviser Jane Watret after which discussions were held about options for working together to standardise the Schools' processes, and improving the quality of targets set. The aim is to have a unified system for the Primary Schools by next year, which will conclude with the Schools' Pay Panel reports feeding into the DB via LGBs in a more consistent way.
- JB is working on standardising the approach to Pupil Progress meetings across the MAT.
- EPA MAT Headteachers will not attend the national Headteachers Conference this year but will have an EPA 2-day conference instead.
- SK has been discussing possible EPA expansion with local Primary Schools (*see also Minute 65/16*).

### 69/16 Item 5: CEO's Report

Previously circulated. ASH highlighted the main points.

#### 70/16 Item 5.1: Standards in EPA Academies

ASH highlighted the outstanding academic results at Bartholomew for 2016 for which the Board congratulated the School. He also highlighted the standards at each of the Primary schools, noting that three Schools now have Task Groups established to address their level of standards and areas of significant levels of weakness. He drew attention to the need to improve Mathematics standards across the EPA Primaries and to improve Writing in some.

Further discussion held under Minutes 80/16 and 81/16 (Item 7: School Improvement) and Minute 87/16 (Item 10: Board oversight of LGBs) and Standards Committee report (Item 6.2).

#### 71/16 Item 5.2: EPA Organisational Audit & Consequences

ASH had undertaken a full audit of the EPA's organisational development in early 2016, which had led to areas of priority work and production of the Partnership Improvement Plan (PIP), including his work on succession planning, accountability frameworks and structural development. ASH is



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working directly with Primary Heads to provide challenge and support and will work with LGBs on governance improvements. SK and JB are working with Primary Schools to improve standards including the establishment and running of Task Groups and other support. Common procedures and processes, eg SEFs, SDPs, have been established with more being discussed.

## 72/16 Item 5.3: Partnership Improvement Plan 2015-18 (PIP) Progress

Areas of concentration this year are on accountability frameworks establishment and greater working with LGBs to ensure understanding of their accountability, as well as the establishment of Central Services and the essential structures and systems which are required.

## 73/16 Item 5.4: EPA Structures and Systems

ML has created organograms illustrating EPA systems and leadership structures and ASH will circulate these to the DB and LGBs for information. *Action: ASH to circulate to DB and LGBs*

## 74/16 Item 5.5: Strategic Academy Leadership Team (SALT)

SK had introduced the concept of SALT under Minute 68/16 (Item 4). ASH explained the SALT's place in the EPA structure and noted the correlation of the relationship of the SALT with the DB with a Senior Leadership Team of a School with its Governing Body. This is the body which will implement strategy, devolve action to the Schools and hold them to account, and is the essential driver for EPA development, improvement and sustainability.

## 75/16 Item 5.6: Policies and Procedures

ASH is working with EPA staff to draw up a definitive and updated list of EPA policies. The EPA put all HR policies in place when the EPA came into existence and these now need review by Jane Watret. ML will undertake review of EPA finance policies. JB and the Senior Leadership Group are working on EPA curriculum policies. ASH will circulate final EPA Policy list to the DB before the 19 January DB meeting. It will then be possible to see where there are gaps and requirements for additional policies. *Action: ASH to circulate Policy list to DB before 19 Jan DB meeting*

The DB discussed the need to ensure Policies are up to date, but noted the infrequency of DB meetings makes it difficult to formally approve them in a timely fashion. The DB *agreed* that, should any existing Policy become out of date, it will continue to be applicable while formal review is taking place and any revisions are made, and until the revised policy is approved by the DB. It was also *agreed* that the EPA/LGBs of Schools can work to an externally approved formal model Policy (ie Local Authority - OCC - model) if a policy is required to be put in place quickly that does not already exist, while awaiting DB approval. It is accepted that the DB would be interpreted as and stand in place of, references to the LA in OCC model policies. It may also become possible to approve Policies out of session by email feedback. *Action: ASH to inform all EPA Schools/Admin*

Q: Does the EPA have a priority list of Policies, eg Safeguarding policies, to which regular attention is given? A: Yes, and these are also currently being reviewed by ML and Jane Watret.

## 76/16 Item 5.7: Central Services update

Gradually Central Services are being put in place according to the agreed expansion plan: Primary Executive Lead (PEL) appointed, Chief Operating Officer role established (ML instead of CFO), increased time to 3 days pw for School Improvement Officer role (JB), as well as appointment of an EPA Admin Officer (Catherine Barker) and additional finance admin support. There are two outstanding posts to be appointed this year, for one day pw of Site Leadership and 1 day pw of high level strategic ICT leadership. HR Adviser had already been in place (Jane Watret). These services are in place for all EPA schools but ASH highlighted the need for the schools' LGBs to understand their continuing accountability and autonomy.

3 Chair's signature..... date.....



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## 77/16 Item 5.8: Website Compliance

The EPA Website is now approaching finalisation; ML briefed the DB and tabled screenshots to illustrate progress on the site, including the inclusion of all statutorily required information under the Governance section, including reporting structures, appointments, DB and Members lists, individual Schemes of Delegation and Terms of Reference of Committees. Work is now being undertaken to ensure compliance in Policies, EPA-wide and for individual Schools in the EPA. There is also a section covering support and training materials, both external and internal.

The DB was pleased to note the difference that additional resourcing has made so quickly to streamlining and compliance in the EPA.

## Committee reports

### 78/16 Item 6.1: Finance & Resources Committee: Meeting held 11 October 2016

Minutes previously circulated.

Concern about the impending Government Apprenticeship Levy was expressed. ML advised that the latest guidance states that the EPA will be required to demonstrate working towards employing apprentices, rather than being expected to have 8 in place by April. 2017. There may be genuine value in employing apprentices in the EPA but the required resourcing currently appears prohibitive. It is not yet known what penalties might be imposed for not taking apprentices.

On recommendation of the Committee and ML, the Directing Board *approved* the Financial Controls & Administration Policy for 2016-17. *Action: ML for Website/GovernorHub*

Directors were concerned that the Minutes of LGB Finance/Resources Committees are not being regularly uploaded to the GovernorHub for review by this Committee. BVB will ensure that all clerks who take these Minutes are reminded to send her Minutes for upload.

*Action: BVB to remind LGB Finance/Resources Clerks to regularly forward their Minutes*

ML advised that the Auditors had commenced work on the annual accounts in early September and would be back into the EPA in early November. Accountants are finalising the 2015-16 outcomes and ML will keep Directors updated should any issues arise. *Action: ML*

The Accounts are due to be finalised before end December and it was *agreed* to delegate approval of the 2015-16 Accounts to this Committee. A meeting had been arranged for this purpose, to which all Directors are invited to ensure a quorum of the Board, on 13 December at 5 pm, to review and approve the final Accounts. *Action: All Directors to note and let BVB know if attending*

### 79/16 Item 6.2 Standards Committee: Meeting held 17 October

Minutes previously circulated. Most discussion had focused on School Improvement, covered elsewhere in this Agenda (see Items 7 and 10). The Committee had reviewed all EPA Schools' data and confirmed that the EPA is justified in putting 3 Task Groups in 3 of the Schools to work with Headteachers and LGBs to improve standards. Directors emphasised the importance of the CEO ensuring that the EPA maintains timely and informative communication with the LGB Chairs.

### 80/16 Item 7: School Improvement

JB tabled EPA Primary School Improvement Overview for October 2016, and briefed Directors on the focused approach to key priorities for improvement for each School, linked to its outcomes data and from which the schools' SEFs have been drawn up based on their own assessments of current status. Progress scores for each School in Reading, Writing and Maths, against National

4 Chair's signature..... date.....



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percentiles, were noted. EPA judgements based on the outcomes and SEFs were noted and discussed in depth. Two schools require particular focus and the judgements will be shared with SLG and then with LGBs. PR thanked SK and JB for responding to his particular request for this detailed information with key priorities and RAG-rating so that it is clear where the schools are in their improvement and so that the DB has clear understanding of the risks and remedies.

Q: Can this pictorial representation of the snapshot status of each school be provided to Directing Board every Term in order to be able to compare and keep close track of progress?

A: It can be provided after every Assessment Point.

*Action: JB*

It is possible to provide an illustrated comparison of the current snapshot with one from six months' ago and this will be provided to Directors.

*Action: JB*

The Task Groups established at the three Primaries will be closely reviewing progress every six weeks and reporting back to DB via SK and JB.

Q: How can Leadership & Management be judged as Good if Outcomes and Teaching, Learning & Assessment are not? Is there something about a School that would set it aside as different in terms of having better capacity to improve?

Q: It is also important to have target dates for reaching a certain level of improvement, and how will Directors know that this predicted target date is likely to be met? Timeframes for expected move from Red to Amber must be in place so that Directors can be assured of progress.

A: There is ongoing internal tracking via the 3 annual Assessment Points and a data dashboard will be brought to the DB for review each time and will ensure that there is full understanding of the status of each of the EPA schools. Timeframes have been agreed and Task Groups are in place in 3 schools which have tight schedules for improvement; alongside the EPA structure now in place from the SALT through SLG, LGBs and DB, this will ensure that regular review takes place and targets not met will be addressed robustly with governors being challenged to be more effective if required. Our definitions of 'rapidly improving', 'improving' and 'failing' are being clarified currently. Directors were reminded that almost all staffing in two Primary schools had changed within a year, which had naturally slowed the pace of improvement in those schools.

Directors *agreed* that LGBs must be reminded and be clear about their responsibility and accountability (see Item 10), via the CEO. The DB will hold the LGBs to account, but without intervention unless absolutely essential. Ofsted will need to be assured that the EPA understands the issues, and is taking, and has the capacity to take, necessary action where appropriate. This will be recognised by the work of the 3 Task Groups which have been established and ASH has a programme of work with all Headteachers and LGBs to ensure readiness for Inspection.

81/16 The DB agreed with the Secondary School self-evaluation that it is Outstanding across the board in all the areas by which the Primaries had been judged (including Sixth Form, not Early Years) and the DB again commended Bartholomew School for its 2016 results.

82/16 It was *agreed* that JB will present a half hour session on Primary School data prior to the next DB meeting, with Secondary School data sessions being held prior to the following DB meeting.

*Action: JB / BVB for next and following DB meetings*

### 83/16 Item 8: CEO Job Description

Draft previously circulated. Following discussion of reporting structure, and with proviso to include a one-year review date and date of DB approval, as well as amendment to clarify that the EPA CEO should report to the DB Chair, the Job Description was *approved as a working draft pending the end of year review*.

*Actions: ASH finalise; BVB for Item for DB Agenda Autumn 2017*



**Item 9: Standing Items**

**84/16 Item 9.1: Safeguarding & Prevent Duty**

Nothing further to report (covered under Item 4 above). The EPA is compliant. ASH drew attention to the current national debate on implementation of the Prevent Duty in respect of human rights.

**85/16 Item 9.2: New LGB Governors for DB appointment - None.**

**86/16 Item 9.3: Health & Safety**

Following discussion, it was agreed that this should be a Standing Item on the Agenda of the EPA DB Finance & Resources Committee to reflect the overarching policy of the EPA. *Action: BVB/MR* This whilst recognising that each EPA School has responsibility for its own Health & Safety and the Committee will be alerted to any issues via the Schools' Finance Committee Minutes if not by direct communication. By this route there will be report to the DB of any issues arising. This is the same method of reporting as for Safeguarding, and serious HR issues. LGB Chairs will be reminded that any serious H&S issues must be reported to the EPA immediately. *Action: ASH*

**87/16 Item 10: Board Oversight of Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) – how to progress**

Following discussion at Items 4, 5.1, 6.2 and 7 above, it was *agreed* as follows:

- that each Primary School LGB should be made aware of SK/JB's review outcome for that School and ASH will ensure that the LGB understands its responsibility to address the key priorities and challenge the Headteacher accordingly and that the DB will expect to see evidenced improvement.
- that in future the EPA Officers and DB will ensure appropriate respectful communication with LGBs with regard to EPA decisions and implementation of improvement.
- that standardisation of governance procedures and documentation should be implemented to ensure all Chairs fully understand the formal requirements of necessity to challenge the Schools and evidence improvement. KH has prepared standard document templates with notes which JO will discuss with the LGB Chairs. *Action: JO with LGB Chairs*
- that ASH will clarify the reporting structure and protocols with Chairs of LGBs and remind them that all Committee Minutes are required to be sent to BVB for EPA DB Committees overview. He will also consider best process mechanisms for doing so and make recommendations for any changes to reporting mechanisms to the DB. *Action: ASH attend an LGB meeting at each School; Action: ASH to recommend any changes to reporting process mechanisms where necessary*

The DB will then have enhanced confidence that the LGBs are monitoring the performance of the Schools through oversight of the LGBs' Minutes, Committee Minutes, the work of SK with Headteachers and JB with teachers and of ASH's work with the Headteachers.

**88/16 Item 11: Items of Urgency (Standing Item) - None.**

**89/16 Item 12: Date of Next Meeting: 19 January, 7 pm, at Bartholomew School.**

**[Upcoming Committee meeting dates**

Audit Committee: 19 January 2017, 6 pm (immediately prior to the DP meeting at 7 pm that day)

Standards Committee: 11 January 2017, 5 pm, at Bartholomew School, Eynsham

Finance & Resources Committee: Tuesday 13 December, 5 pm, at Bartholomew School, Eynsham].

*The business having been concluded, the meeting ended at 8.30pm*

*Kh/28.10.16*