



**Morley Memorial Primary School
Governing Body Strategy Morning
31st January 2018 at 9.15am
Venue: Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge**

Governors in attendance: Nicky Odgers (Governing Body Chair – NO); Nikki Brown (Head Teacher – NB); Melissa Ward (MW); Ruth Kershner (RK); Shareta Passingham (SP); Caroline Louth (CL); Helena Jopling (HJ); Rachel Williams (RW); and Sarah Smalley (SS).

Also attending: Alison Lawrence (clerk)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed those attending.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jonathan Gorrie (JG) and Philip Colligan (PC).

3. Appointment of two potential new governors

Statements for two candidates for the governor vacancies had been previously circulated amongst the governors.

Richard Lambert (RL): The Chair and SS had met RL, an ex-professor of Chemistry at the University. He had experience on finance and facilities committees and could sit on either the Resources or Learning Committees. Governors agreed to offer him the position.

Anton Alexandroff (AA): The Chair and SS had met AA, a medic from Russia who ran his own business. He was enthusiastic and a parent at the school. Governors felt it would be useful to have someone with his experience of a different educational background sit on the governing body. Governors agreed to offer him the position.

4. Four-year plan

The “Vision and strategic planning overview” document was circulated prior to the meeting.

The GB discussed principles behind the draft Four Year Strategic plan which had been written by NB. Key points included:

- The aim of the strategic plan was to bring the vision to life.
- It was important for the plan to focus on all areas highlighted in the vision, not just on raising attainment / improving data.
- It was important to have a clear idea of where the school was heading. This could be achieved by identifying clear goals for what the school wanted to have achieved at the end of a four-year period.
- These goals may need to change over time to take account of changing contexts (e.g. different government policy, finances etc).
- The plan needed to have identified broad approaches to achieve these goals.
- It was important to have a vision that excited and inspired people.
- The plan also needed to have identified KPIs which would help governors to understand whether the school was on track to achieve its goals.

Governors discussed one aspect of the strategic plan ("To establish new systems to develop, recruit & retain a high-performing team") in greater depth to unpick what long-term goals might look like and the difference between goals and strategies to achieve these goals.

Possible long-term goals.

By 2021, Morley will have:

- introduced a programme of specialist teaching assistant teams for English, maths, and Personal Social Emotional Development (PSED)
- an established system of internal sabbaticals (developing teachers' expertise)
- reviewed and implemented a new staffing structure that reflects the needs of the school and that has sufficient flexibility to achieve the targets for that particular year

Possible strategies / broad approaches to achieving these possible long-term goals included:

- Reviewing how the school plans its budgets.
- Head to recommend different staffing structures to the RC for consideration.
- School to modelling different budget scenarios to allow the head to see the impact of different staffing structures.

It was agreed that the draft Four Year Strategic Plan should be brought back to the next FGB. It would be helpful for long-term goals to have been identified for each of the six key areas within the vision statement. NB and RK to meet once NB has revised the document in advance of the plan being presented to the FGB.

NB asked the Chair to send her the format in which she would like to see the four-year plan.

5. OFSTED preparation

The OFSTED preparation plan had previously been circulated amongst the governors. The objectives from this discussion were to:

- understand the OFSTED process; and

- consider some key questions OFSTED may ask governors.

The Chair explained that OFSTED typically calls the school to give it notice of an inspection the following day. OFSTED usually spend between 30-45 minutes with governors and prior to that the inspectors will have looked at the school's website and at the Analyse School Performance data. They also give parents a link to a questionnaire to obtain parents' views about the school.

NB explained that the school is expecting a one-day inspection this time.

Governors spent 10 minutes or so running through the key questions they might be asked by OFSTED. The Chair reiterated that governors need to show they are confident they know what they are talking about e.g. headline data, trends etc since OFSTED will pick up on any uncertainties.

6. Multi-academy trusts (MATs)

The aim of the discussion was:

- to understand the context of why the governors should consider academisation;
- to ensure governors understand the differences between a local authority-maintained school, a stand-alone academy and a multi-academy trust (MAT); and
- to consider initial first impressions of the advantages and disadvantages of being a local authority-maintained school, a stand-alone academy or being part of a MAT.

Governors were asked to complete a short quiz on academies.

The Chair explained that it is still current government policy that all schools will become academies. All secondary schools in Cambridgeshire have already converted to academies and some governing bodies are choosing academisation for primary schools. Governors need to make an informed decision.

Discussion highlighted that the school already works in partnership with lots of different alliances and cluster schools, for example, through CASA (Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Teaching School Alliance), cluster school moderation, subject leader cluster work, peer-to-peer head teacher reviews, sharing data, working with KITE developing CPD models, partnerships with the University (e.g. teacher training) and the Local Authority.

Governors discussed three possible options:

1. forge stronger (but informal) links/alliances with other schools
2. join a MAT
3. set up a MAT

(The option to set up as a stand-alone academy was not discussed as the Department of Education is no longer supporting this.)

1. Forge stronger links/alliances with other schools (but not join a MAT)

What would Morley be giving up?

- possible problems in finding a MAT of our choice at a later stage

What would Morley gain?

- can forge links with various partners and fewer/no constraints
- our own destiny
- control of our own budget, including any surpluses

Under what circumstances would this be the best option for the school?

- Can take a “wait and see” approach
- stability in education

Risks:

- Local authority shrinking
- Benefits and advice from MAT
- Loss of opportunities for staff development and career progression
- Depends on consensus (or not) of parents, community and staff

2. Join a MAT

What would Morley be giving up?

- Autonomy on vision – would be set by the trustees
- Local authority safety net and support
- Identity
- Democratic accountability
- Loss of community focus
- Loss of parental involvement
- Loss of financial decision-making control

What would Morley gain?

- More flexibility over timings, curriculum (at least in theory)
- Access to expertise

Under what circumstances would this be the best option for the school?

- If post-OFSTED the school is put in “requires improvement” grade
- If the Local Authority can no longer support local schools
- If something was offered that would genuinely offer something to the school or children that Morley can’t currently do for itself

Risks:

- Staff retention and recruitment

3. Set up a MAT

What would Morley be giving up?

- Support from the Local Authority
- Time and effort
- Possible appeal to local parents

What would Morley gain?

- Greater control
- Economies gained from larger number of schools
- Sharing knowledge and resources
- Access to good quality staff

Under what circumstances would this be the best option for the school?

- Morley would have to be outstanding (?)
- Leadership who were keen and had the right skills
- Enough schools who would want to join the MAT
- Leaders have capacity to do this
- If a group of schools we were aligned with regarding our vision and values wanted to do it and share the workload

Risks:

- Distracted and performance reduced
- Could lose our uniqueness
- Overwhelming and could be chaotic in the early stages
- No financial gain
- Staff leave due to uncertainty
- Inequalities within group could lead to finances/resources being diverted

Discussion highlighted that governors were not currently convinced that the advantages of joining a MAT would out-weigh the disadvantages. However, this would necessarily always be the case as circumstances change and so the issue should be re-visited in a year's time. It was suggested that perhaps one governor should have responsibility for keeping an eye on the issue.

The meeting concluded at 12.40pm.

	Forge stronger links with other schools	Join a MAT	Set up a MAT
What would Morley be giving up?	Possible problems in finding a MAT of our choice at a later stage	Autonomy on vision – would be set by the trustees Local authority safety net and support Identity Democratic accountability Loss of community focus Loss of parental involvement Loss of financial decision-making control	Support from the Local Authority Time and effort Possible appeal to local parents
What would Morley gain?	Can forge links with various partners and fewer/no constraints Our own destiny Control of our own budget, including any surpluses	More flexibility over timings, curriculum (at least in theory) Access to expertise	Greater control Economies gained from larger number of schools Sharing knowledge and resources Access to good quality staff
Under what circumstances would this be the best option for the school?	Can take a “wait and see” approach Stability in education	If post-OFSTED the school is given a “requires improvement” grade If the Local Authority can no longer support local schools If something was offered that would genuinely offer something to the school or children that Morley can’t currently do for itself	Morley would have to be outstanding (?) Leadership who were keen and had the right skills Enough schools who would want to join the MAT Leaders have capacity to do this If a group of schools we were aligned with regarding our vision and values wanted to do it and share the workload
Risks	Local authority shrinking Benefits and advice from MAT Loss of opportunities for staff development and career progression Depends on consensus (or not) of parents, community and staff	Staff retention and recruitment	Distracted and performance reduced Could lose our uniqueness Overwhelming No financial gain Staff leave due to uncertainty Inequalities within group could lead to finances/resources being diverted