



**St Brendan's Catholic Sixth Form College
Board of Governors**

OPEN – MINUTES

In Person Meeting Held On: Friday 14 February 2025

D-Building Room D2/D3 at 09:00– 15:10hrs

Governors Present: Svetlana Bajic-Raymond [Chair of Governors], Margaret Abazie-Humprey, Roger Bridgeman, Antonia Corrigan, James Creamer, Marian Curran [Principal], Sr Margaret Harlock MBE, Michelle Hazelwood, Doug Jennings, Melaine Jonik, Paul Ryan, Aaron Skinner, Peter Turner, Iain Turri [R], [14]

Apologies: Gareth Beynon, Mark O'Sullivan, [2]

Absent without Apology: Risha Hussain [1]

Attending: Nicholas Ogborne [Co-opted Committee Member – observing], Kevin Hunt [Co-opted Committee Member – observing], Deborah Redwood [Co-opted Committee Member – observing], Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional], Alexandra Moruzzi [Vice Principal, Student Experience Progression], Stephen Clayson [Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality and Innovation], Shane Blackshaw [Executive Director, Finance]

Quorum Present: 14/17 [includes required minimum of 4 Foundation Governors]

Note – [R] – remote attendance in MS Office Teams

Circulation: All Governors, Governance Professional, Principalship, & [College Website after signature if declared OPEN].

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	ACTION
Welcome	Welcome: Svetlana Bajic-Raymond welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.	
Bill Watkin - SFCA Updates for Governors Advantages and disadvantages of Academisation Implications for current governors in terms of being in a MAT and the role of Trustees Empty MATs Curriculum Reform	BW gave a presentation. Q – Is the academisation process different for a Catholic College? It is relatively recent that it has been possible to protect the Catholic Nature of a Catholic college in becoming an academy. Governors have a responsibility to the Diocese that another college does not. Q – Are we alone in these challenges compared to other countries? No, there are issues everywhere – we have strengths and weaknesses like most places. Q – Are MATs to be based around geography, or are there other ways to organise MATs – could we work with Catholic colleges from further afield? The original theory was that schools should be within relatively easy reach. There are now some very large MATs with regional hubs. There is a need to be making a difference to the local area and Diocese. There is a belief that we are more likely to make a difference if we can communicate in person more easily. Q – Is it true that Local Governors would have less autonomy? The trust board will be appointed on the basis if the skills that are required. Most Trusts will have a very strategic trust board and a Local Governing Board, which will have limited powers, based on a scheme of delegation agreed by the Trust. The trust choose which functions and powers to delegate to the Local Governors. Q – What is the position of a stand-alone academy? The college board tends to become the trust board, and there are no other institutions in the trust. Q – Who would appoint the trustees? Likely to be the Bishop, in the case of foundation governors. For a sixth form college, becoming an academy, would allow them potentially to be pushed into a MAT without having the choice. There was a discussion around the issue of having a loan, and whether this would prevent the college academizing. There was further discussion around the changes to the board. Currently St Brendan’s is a corporation, and an academy trust is a company. These two companies merge – both close and one is re-opened. We legally cannot have two different set of governance running the same company. BW talked through what would happen in a federation arrangement.	
Discussion – Academisation	In an ideal world, where would you like St Brendan’s to be in the future? - Feel that we are in a strong position, we are not struggling, could be leading in some way. - Unclear about why – what would be the benefits to the college, and to other schools that we might join in a MAT – can we	

	support primary or secondary schools? Need to be really clear about the benefits. - Clarified that it is no longer possible to become a single academy trust, but can become an empty MAT - Academies are on an equal financial footing, and we can do nothing. We would need clear reasons to change. - Noted the pressure from the Diocese. - Can see no advantage to joining in a MAT with primaries. - If we cannot go outside of the region, can we form a MAT with only sixth form colleges? For Catholic sixth forms, that would require the consent of each Bishop. This has not gone ahead, due to issues with land and acquisition and who the land will belong to. - Need to consider what we want to achieve and represent – create a set of criteria / principles to drive decisions, including strategic objectives. - There are significant financial advantages to becoming an academy. There is a need to understand the advantages and differentials in terms of funding and pay – for example in recruitment of staff. - Retaining autonomy is important. - Financial stability is key and we would need to establish the best way to achieve this. - One of the quickest ways to achieve funding efficiencies is through economies of scale. These are less easy to achieve with different phases (primary, secondary, sixth form). - NO shared positives from his experience: support from central services has been very positive, drive for common standards and shared methodology and good practice, resources can be shared across schools, staff have more opportunities for progression. Where there are vertical groups, clusters of same phase schools have been created. - The advantages of a trust were further noted. - Can a MAT move staff around different schools? Not usually without consent – it will depend on contracts, but it can be done. - It was noted that there is a MAT that already exists without us, that the Diocese would like us to join. It might be possible to join with the secondary schools. - We need to consider the educational value first and foremost. - As a college we have a lot to offer the Diocese, and all of the schools in the Diocese. If we are limited to one MAT, we are limiting what we can offer. - Would it be beneficial to us to have that relationship with secondary schools, in terms of recruitment. - If we join a secondary school with sixth form, would we end up competing internally? The sustainability of a small school	
--	--	--

	sixth form might then come into question. A trust would be responsible for that. - There are no other 16-19 Catholic providers in the area. SBR read a letter from the Diocese regarding the Bishop's vision for Catholic education in the Diocese and an updated timeline. The latest date for conversion to join the MAT (Newman Catholic Education Trust) is April 2026. There is also a meeting with CES in March, and the CES are looking to find a solution. Governors are being asked to follow the will of the Bishop, and agree to join an existing MAT, which currently consists of four primary schools. Questions: - What can we influence? - Can we request an extension to the timeline / our decision? - What happens if we say no? - Is there flexibility in terms of which MAT - Is the empty MAT an option? (need a timeline for more institutions joining) - What are the strategic positives and benefits to joining Newman? - What is the Diocese driver for this? - What are the risks to the college to joining the MAT? - Can we make our own proposal? We have done this and offered a number of options. LS & SBR to create a google form for additional questions.	LS/SBR
Estate Development (Inc sustainability & Security)	SBk gave a presentation. Financial update – SBk discussed the proposed pay rise 3.5% from September to March, than an additional 2% from April. This will cost an additional £126k over and above what was budgeted for. This can be partially funded through savings from the strike days and the transport contract, and we anticipate some funding assistance. Q – Will we have full funding for the 3.5% from September? No, the figure is broadly the average of the two rises. Would like to work on the assumption that this will be implemented in March, provided that there are not large discrepancies in the funding, and when the figures are circulated (hopefully mid-March), we can confirm. Unison are currently negotiating with regard to support staff, and this is likely to be the same.	

	Governors approved the proposed pay award (3.5% from September to March backdated, additional 2% from April) in principle – proposed MC, seconded PR – approved unanimously.	
	Lunch Break	
Estate Development (Inc sustainability & Security)	Q – with the site development, will we remove space that might be needed in future? There is an estates strategy, and MC talked through the potential solutions. There is a need to think strategically. There are also some issues around linking buildings and VAT/planning implications. Q – Is there still a plan to have rugby pitches? That was the plan, but the running costs would make this unfeasible and the area is not large enough for a full-size pitch. MC noted that there are temporary buildings that can be used flexibly, to increase teaching space for shorter time periods of needed.	
What we are working on in Teaching, Learning & Assessment	VHa gave a presentation. Q – Will the student voice referred to, and the mocks etc, be tied to outcomes in the discussion at TCQ? Yes, this data is still being compiled and validated. VHa talked through some of the difficulties in presenting reports compared to knowledge of the students. It would be useful to have an update on outcomes for the Board meeting on 26 March. Q - Is there also feedback from students on how they feel they are doing? Yes, there are key moments in each term to allow students to reflect. We will now introduce a standardised form to allow us to check the student level of confidence and judge where to add extra resource.	
Lesson Visits	Governors were allocated individual lesson visits. <i>AS left the meeting</i>	
IT and Governors' Needs	DH gave a presentation. Q – Have we looked at NCSC guidance? This is linked into cyber essentials. They have released a governance element with 16 questions. Q – Would it help to put college data into AWS Amazon Warehouse Storage (cloud) encrypted files? It is the access we provide that is more of an issue.	

	Q – Do we do PENetration testing? We last did this 3 years ago, but have finding to do this again this year. Q – What is the most risky college activity? Users are both the first line of defence and the greatest risk. DH gave an example of a password having been guessed. The majority of issues are external attacks. Q – How are staff trained on this? Staff did complete a module on National College, which needs to be reinstated and refreshed – DH would like this to be yearly. Q – In terms of governors’ own devices, what is the minimum that is expected? An operating system supported by Microsoft ideally, with all of the latest updates provided. A firewall and a functioning anti-virus product. Q – Could out of date devices be a risk? Yes This could be an issue with academisation, and standardisation. Q – Would it be possible to provide governors with devices? This is possible, but would need to be funded – this is not currently in the college budget. Strategy drives funding decisions, including those around IT and the estates. Discussion around the possibility of a software solution. For issues with difficulty switching to the St Brendan’s account, different browsers can be used, or different profiles within a browser. It would be useful for DH to know what devices governors are using. Decisions need to be driven by strategy and risk assessment – is the risk more around the accessing and storage of documents, or the accessing of the system. There was a discussion around the risk assessment. The overall risk register needs to be refined and streamlined, and then certain risks can be looked at in more detail. SBR/DH/LS to liaise with regard to information to be collected from governors regarding their devices, so that DH can provide information to governors re requirements.	
Other Business	SBR thanked SC for all of his work and contribution to the college and governance. SC thanked the governors.	
Minutes Agreed	Minutes Approved: Wednesday 26 March 2025 Signature _____ Chair of Governors	