

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL CLERKING SERVICES

**The Cluster Board of St Charles, St Richard's, St Thomas More and St Vincent's Voluntary Catholic Primary Academies**

Minutes of a meeting of Cluster Board 2  
held at St Mary's College on Thursday 24 March 2022 at 2.00pm

PRESENT: Mrs E Childs; Miss L Harkin; Dr S James; Mr M Pickering; Mr S Prince

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs E Cook (Head of School, St Richard's); Mr M Coyle (Chaplaincy Co-ordinator); Mrs P Donnelly (Head of School, St Vincent's); Mrs E Griffin (DSL, St Richard's); Mrs M Longman (DSL, St Charles); Mrs M Ryan (Executive Headteacher, Cluster 1); Mr G Shaw (Head of School, St Thomas More); Miss L Stansfield (DSL, St Thomas More); Mrs S Woodmansey (Head of School, St Charles)

GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL: Tony Hammond, Independent Professional Clerking Services

90 OPENING PRAYER. Mrs Ryan led members in prayer.

91 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR.

RESOLVED: that Mr Pickering be elected as chair for the meeting.

92 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS. Mrs Childs declared that she would be participating in the St Mary's College School Direct training programme from September.

Mrs Ryan confirmed that she now had oversight of safeguarding for the Trust and had decided that it would be useful for designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) to attend, to support heads of school in answering any questions on safeguarding data.

93 APOLOGIES. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Bell (DSL, St Vincent's) and Mrs Siedle (Executive Headteacher, Cluster 2).

94 MEMBERSHIP. Introductions were made and new members welcomed to the Cluster Board.

95 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

96 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES. There were no matters arising.

97 CHAPLAINCY UPDATE. The report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Mr Coyle drew attention to key points, as follows:-

- There had been a significant amount of activity since the last report.

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- Sharepoint was being used effectively and was a helpful legacy of lockdown.
- The Team was grateful for the patience of academy leaders whilst there had been reduced chaplaincy hours and remote working.
- The singing day and Mission days had gone well and there had been positive feedback.
- The Mini Vinnies and junior chaplaincy teams were working well.
- The churches now had a display boards showing the academies' Feast Day activities. The Chaplaincy Team were creating resources and pupils would be encouraged to produce content for the display boards.
- Holy Week resources were being finalised for Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Academies would be able to use these on separate days or combine them to form a Holy-Week-in-a-Day celebration.
- Adoration would be taking place next week and resources had been distributed.
- Cluster 1 headteachers had expressed a preference for having both Travelling Crosses and Lent-in-a-Bag, and had offered to help manage the two, including support in putting the Lent bags together. If Cluster 2 schools could also help, it might be possible to have both. It had been suggested that each academy could have one cross that travelled from classroom to classroom.
- The possibility of employing a Chaplaincy Team apprentice was being considered.
- Scripture storytelling bags were now available.
- The dates of Be Spirited days had been set.
- The Team hoped to sustain all of its work, but this would be a challenge.

Mrs Ryan paid tribute to the excellent support the Chaplaincy Team provided for the Trust's pupils and staff.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there was an open invitation to all parish priests to engage with the academies' chaplaincy events and activities.

Mr Coyle was thanked for his presentation and left the meeting.

98 COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES. Copies of reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Mrs Ryan confirmed that the report template had been modified to include the following:-

- A breakdown of behaviour by category.
- The name of the staff member with responsibility for looked after children.
- Safeguarding policies.
- Website checklist.

Heads of school were each asked to highlight a small number of key issues.

### **St Charles VC Primary Academy**

Mrs Woodmansey drew attention to the following:-

- Two child protection referrals had resulted in no further action. One child had left the Academy and the DSL had worked closely with the receiving school's DSL. The other

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- child no longer had any agency involvement but had weekly check-ins with the DSL.
- The 17 emotional behaviour incidents were linked to issues outside of school. There were regular check-ins and outside agency involvement.
  - One child (who had come to the Academy via Fair Access) was on a part-time timetable due to high needs. The School was working with the Local Authority and the child might be placed in a special school.
  - There were currently 40 persistent absentees, which was a reduction of 13 since the last report. A number of pupils admitted via Fair Access did not attend because of distance between home and school.

Members asked about the ongoing dialogue with Advotalk and Mrs Longman confirmed that Adotalk was an advocacy agency that worked with individuals or families to give them a voice. Agency staff came into the Academy each week to speak to the staff member with responsibility for looked after children.

Mrs Woodmansey was asked to share the British Values presentation that had been delivered in March.

Members noted that two of the three racist behaviour incidents had been unsubstantiated and Mrs Woodmansey informed them that the incidents had related to a child's reference to an historic incident.

### **St Richard's VC Primary Academy**

Mrs Griffin drew attention to the following:-

- The child protection referral had led to a Section 47 enquiry that had resulted in a child protection plan.
- 7 children had child protection plans, six of which related to emotional abuse, and there were currently 16 children in need. The numbers were high and fluctuating.
- There had been no Early Help referrals, but 11 children were currently being supported through Early Help.
- The DSL had identified families who might benefit from Early Help support but were resistant. They were invited to weekly coffee mornings/foodbank sessions to build relationships. Early Help and Child Dynamix had been invited in to provide drop-in sessions.
- The ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) was supporting 50 children each week, including daily check-ins. The children were assessed before and after ELSA intervention to measure the impact.

Mrs Cook confirmed that the ELSA and DSL had been running the Lunchtime Retreat club, which supported self-esteem and anger management and had impacted positively on behaviour. Mrs Griffin informed members that the club was attended by children from all year-groups and that the children supported one another.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the two staff members running the club were getting to know the children really well.

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Members asked about the Compassion Crew and Mrs Cook confirmed that these were children who embodied the Academy's ST@R values. They were excellent role models, who supported/befriended other children.

In response to a question, Mrs Griffin confirmed that Child Dynamix was a local children's centre that provided a range of services for families.

Mrs Cook was asked about persistent absence and she confirmed that in each case there was a context. She informed members that the ELSA was working with the families and there were strategies in place.

### **St Thomas More VC Primary Academy**

Mr Shaw drew attention to the following:-

- The three children in need were close to needing child protection plans and took up a significant amount of DSL time. There was an established cycle of parents engaging whilst their children were on child protection plans and engaging less when they reverted to children in need – leading them to return to child protection plans.
- There had been three racist behaviour incidents, including some highly offensive language. One of the children was a member of a family that had escaped from domestic abuse and had complex needs. The Academy was working with agencies and Women's Aid to support the child in building positive relationships, which had resulted in some improvement.
- COVID-19 had significantly impacted on attendance and a number families had taken holidays during term-time. The Academy followed the Trust Attendance Policy, including the use of fixed-penalty notices. Members of the Attendance Team regularly reviewed attendance data and targeted families as necessary.

Members noted that there were three looked after and two previously looked after children and asked what training had been undertaken by the staff member with responsibility for looked after children. Mr Shaw confirmed that there had been extensive training, including training through the Virtual School and the national online safeguarding provision.

### **St Vincent's VC Primary Academy**

Mrs Donnelly drew attention to the following:-

- There were some children who moved between child protection plan and child in need, as at St Thomas More.
- The Section 47 enquiry had not resulted in a child protection plan. The enquiry had resulted from staff vigilance and tenacity.
- The number of Operation Encompass notifications remained high. Staff training in relation to domestic violence was regularly refreshed.

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- There had been a number of safeguarding incidents linked to school fencing. This had now been screened and pupils reported feeling safer as a result.
- The overgrown former garden area had been cleared and was to be turned into a sensory garden.
- There had been a high number of physical behaviour incidents on the playground. Equipment removed during the pandemic had been reinstated and playground space was being extended, which should lead to improvement.
- The ELSA was supporting 38 children. A high proportion of children had emotional needs and some of these were extreme. The Academy's response to such needs was a strength.
- The number of persistent absentees was high and Academy staff continued to work hard to build relationships with the families. A number of fixed-penalty notices had been issued and in all but two cases (children returning to home countries) there had been improvement.
- Documents missing from the website would be uploaded this week.

Members noted that there had been extensive safeguarding training for staff, which demonstrated that safeguarding was a high priority. Members asked how the training was planned and Mrs Donnelly confirmed that the Academy used the Trust planner and supplemented this with training based on current City or Academy-specific issues. She informed members that staff training was closely monitored to ensure all staff were up to date.

Mrs Ryan informed members that, in response to Local Authority safeguarding reviews, the academies had produced action-plans and she was monitoring their implementation. She confirmed that there was real rigour within the Trust and that there were open conversations between the DSLs.

99 ACADEMY WEBSITES. It was noted that compliance checks were now incorporated in the Committee Reports and Updates. It was pointed out that there was a need for consistency in terms of which policies were on academy websites and which were on the Trust site (and signposted on academy sites).

100 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING. It was noted that the next meeting had been arranged to take place on Thursday 16 June 2022 at 2.00pm.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

101 CHAPLAINCY SUPPORT AT ST THOMAS MORE (minute 84 refers). Mrs Ryan informed members that the Academy's chaplaincy hours had now been restored.

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signature of Chair