

# HUNSLET CARR EXTRAORDINARY GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 5pm.

**PRESENT:** Sarah Gardner (Chair) Martin Lumb (Headteacher)  
Cllr Paul Wray Lindsey Kemp  
Claire Davidson Jon Hairsine (via Zoom)  
ElisAlicia Whitfield Matt Woodcock

**IN ATTENDANCE:** - Julie Hunter, Clerk – Governor Support Service  
- Joanna Roberts – Assistant Headteacher (via Zoom)  
- Charlie Sharpe – Assistant Headteacher (via Zoom)  
- Donna Bedlow – SENCO (via Zoom)  
- Hayley Stewart – SBM (via Zoom)  
- Andy Hinchcliffe – NEU Rep (via Zoom)

## 1.00 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.01 Apologies were received and accepted from Ian Cunningham and Lammie Ameyoua.

## 2.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.01 Declarations were received from John Hairsine as a trustee of the MAT, and Paul Wray as a Local Authority Councillor.

2.02 The Chair informed governors that they had no preferred direction regarding potentially joining the MAT prior to today's discussion.

## 3.00 READING MATERIALS

3.01 The following reading materials had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting:

- Schools' views on the perceived benefits and obstacles to joining a multi-academy trust – Source = DfE Resource
- Multi-academy trusts (MATs): Pros and Cons – Source = Governors Hub
- Cockburn MAT's Scheme of Delegation – Source = Cockburn MAT
- Things Governors should consider when thinking of joining a MAT – Source = NPQEL course work of Martin Lumb
- Cockburn MAT Pros / Cons – Source = Martin Lumb
- <https://www.cockburnmat.org/> - Source = Cockburn MAT

3.02 Cllr Wray expressed concerns regarding the bias of the documents circulated to governors, eg, in relation to references to the top slice taken by the local authority versus the MAT.

## 4.00 DISCUSSION

4.01 The Headteacher explained that following the extraordinary meeting held in November 2022; the governors requested that a range of opportunities be explored for the school to grow. Leeds City Council had not taken up our offers of support to other schools, therefore the opportunities and practicalities that would be present if we decided to join the Cockburn MAT were been explored.

## ACTION

- 4.02 Cockburn MAT have now made an official proposal to join the academy trust at some point in the 2024-25 academic year. The start of this process was a meeting at Cockburn, followed by at least one and possibly more extraordinary meetings of the Full Governing board. Governors would need to minute that they agree to begin the official process of joining the MAT. If these official actions could be carried out before the end of the summer term, the proposal would be that Hunslet Carr Primary would support other primary schools within the MAT from September 2024.
- 4.03 It was understood that school would not be asked to change anything unless something is no longer working. All staff would TUPE transfer straight over to Cockburn, as well as a guarantee of no redundancies or restructuring.
- 4.04 Currently the LA take about 10% of our budget as a top slice. The MAT would only take between 3 and 4%.
- 4.05 If the decision was made to proceed, the next steps would be for senior leaders to a meet at Cockburn, (date and time to be confirmed), to discuss the possibility of joining and present questions from governors (to be provided in advance), so that they can be answered during that meeting. This would be followed by a consultation process with staff and parents and also due diligence by the MAT, this would take between 6-9 months during which either party could decide not to proceed. If a decision was taken not to proceed during this process the converter grant would have to be returned and the Dfe would question this decision.
- 4.06 The question for the Governing Board is whether to officially apply to join the Cockburn MAT and in doing so instruct the Headteacher, Martin Lumb to send the application form to the DfE before June 7<sup>th</sup>. June 7<sup>th</sup> is the final date the school can apply to the DfE to become an academy before the Government remove the £25k converter grant.

4.07 Pros and Cons were reviewed by governors.

Pros	Cons
Wider Impact on South Leeds	Capacity
Staff Training and Retention	Perception
Stability within HCPS	Time Frame
School to School Improvement	Staff Concerns
HR, Legal and Finance	LA Concerns
ICT and Central Resources	Linked to other schools
HCPS would keep more funding	
Ofsted would return in 4 years' time	
The MAT is financially strong	
No Change to Name or Uniform	
No Change to Governing Board	
School Improvement through MAT	
Cockburn MAT would help complete the paperwork process	

- 4.08 Governors considered the following:
- Creating a culture supportive of sustained improvement:
    - Ambitious vision underpinned by shared values; enacted through a high-trust culture
    - A coherent but responsive strategy with clarity on core team and school-based roles
    - Alignment around shared practices which support improvement
  - Key considerations when contemplating joining a multi-school organisation:
    - Culture
    - Core Values
    - Sustained Improvement Strategy
    - Alignment or Autonomy
- 4.09 Cllr Wray pointed out that schemes of delegation can be changed and that the MAT would 'manage' the school whereas the local authority do not. Cllr Wray expressed concerns that school would lose its autonomy. The Chair stated that the school may have changes enforced on them whether they are part of a MAT or remain with the local authority and the school would have to respond. ~~however the Chair had no concerns regarding this.~~ The Headteacher explained that two members of Hunslet Carr governing body would be on the Trust Board and there would also be the same representation from Middleton Primary and Haigh Road Primary. This would give primary schools a voice. It was noted that there was no veto option.
- 4.10 **Q:** MATs can often be more corporate, and less child centered, how is this MAT different and does it align with our school vision?  
**A:** The Headteacher reassured governors that this proposal would not have been put forward to governors as a consideration if the vision of the MAT did not align with Hunslet Carr. The Headteacher had visited other schools in the MAT and the approach they had experienced was in line with Hunslet Carr, for example, in terms of dealing with dysregulated children. The Headteacher had met with the CEO who had expressed wanting the best for the children of South Leeds and focussing on the success of pupils and not focussing on statistics or numbers. The visit to Middleton Primary had been positive and there was a consistency through Primary to Secondary in the MAT. It was noted that Cockburn MAT was also focussed on children not being permanently excluded.
- 4.11 **Q:** Through consistency is good, does the impetus for this come from the secondary school or from the primary school and will there be a 'meshing' in this?  
**A:** Middleton Primary joined 5 years ago and there is now an opportunity for primary schools to join together as part of the MAT with a long-term goal of collaboration and mutual learning between primary and secondary school. There has already been some curriculum collaboration where the primary maths hub were teaching secondary school what to do in Y7. The Y5-Y8 partnership was already being worked on to enable the transition to be smoother to Cockburn schools.

- 4.12 It was noted that at the present time Hunslet Carr do not have any influence with subsequent secondary schools and as most secondary schools are now academies, this could be the only way we have any influence on the secondary school.
- 4.13 J Hairsine, trustee at the MAT explained that Cockburn's focus is on knowing the children and helping them believe in themselves. It does not have a military approach which may have been the experience of other MATs. Great potential for improvements to be made at primary level with a good primary leader involved to support this side of the MAT. JH urged governors to support the SLT in their recommendation as Hunslet Carr leaders had the knowledge regarding the proposal to recommend it.
- 4.14 Concerns were raised that the proposal from the MAT was influenced by the offer of the grant. However, this could also be seen as a positive as it would be Hunslet Carr who would lose the financial support to join the MAT as a single school. The £25k grant for a single school to join a MAT would be paid into our budget and ring fenced to pay for conversion costs, however this will be phased out after 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This money pays for legal fees and due diligence and Cockburn do not want us to lose out on this financial support. If the application is not submitted by 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024 Hunslet Carr would not get the grant.
- 4.15 **Q:** If there was not financial pressure from Dfe, would the offer from Cockburn still have been made?  
**A:** The MAT doesn't lose the money, the financial impact would be on Hunslet Carr as we wouldn't receive the grant to pay for the conversion.
- 4.16 **Q:** If we are going to make a decision that is beneficial to Hunslet Carr, why not now, why wait 6 months?  
**A:** The Headteacher explained that three quarters of our children already move on to Cockburn secondary school and Hunslet Carr want to be more involved in the projects which support this transition. The MAT want Hunslet Carr because we are a good school however the benefits would be mutual.
- 4.17 The Headteacher explained that by joining the MAT the MAT gets a good school to add to their other primary schools however Hunslet Carr will benefit from the support of the MAT, eg, professional challenge from other SLT's in the MAT, peer to peer review and deep dives to include the primary schools if we join. We would also benefit from HR support which would reduce significant costs incurred by Fusion HR. Cllr Wray explained that any cost savings would go towards education, school finances would be improved, however if this is a factor any financial analysis should be thorough. Governors felt that finances were ultimately not a deciding factor as the benefits for the children were the most important thing. Other benefits would be in relation to school improvement and support from the MAT attendance team. As most of our children choose to go to Cockburn secondary we would be becoming part of the 'family' by joining which would be

positive.

4.18 Something that stood out was how different it felt for families who have a child in primary and a child in secondary school within the MAT. This offered consistency and continuity as the Trust would support the family regardless of which school within the MAT their children attended.

4.19 The SLT in attendance via Zoom offered their opinions on joining the MAT.

- [SLT1GS\\_\(AHT\)](#) felt that they could see the benefit from both sides and lean more towards the MAT due to the local authority support reducing. They felt that the meetings with the MAT had been positive focussing on giving children a better chance. Hunslet Carr is already a good school so there was no urgent need to change.
- [SLT2JR\\_\(AHT\)](#) feels passionate about Hunslet Carr and wouldn't want to risk losing schools identify. The visit to Middleton had been positive as the MAT hadn't enforced any changes on them and it was good that any potential changes would be a collaboration. They felt the relationship between primary and secondary school as part of the MAT family would offer consistency. They felt the bigger picture was important, ie, improving our school and helping to improve other schools.
- [DB\\_\(SLT3ENGO\)](#) said they had no great push to join the MAT but had been reassured about joining. They felt they wanted to retain relationships with family and did have some concerns re any future changes to align with the MAT. They were open minded and hoped that joining the MAT would bring about more opportunities for staff in training and progression.
- [AH\\_\(NEU\\_Rep\)SLT4](#) said that eventually school would be forced down this direction and so the opportunity to choose the right academy was good. They felt that the offer from Cockburn was a good one and would benefit the children.
- [HS\\_\(SBM\)SLT5](#) had no strong view however could see the benefits for both options. Their main priority was to keep hold of our strong vision.
- [EAW\\_SLT6](#) explained that they didn't like change however changes would have to be made at some point and could also come about in changes to the SLT or governing body. They had a good feeling from Cockburn and felt that the change could be positive in the best interests of the children.

4.19.1 The Headteacher thanked staff for their honest opinions and their trust in being able to share these.

4.20 The Headteacher recommended the proposal from the MAT to

governors as they felt it was the best option for Hunslet Carr at this time. They reiterated that they had been with Hunslet Carr for 14 years and would not recommend this proposal unless it was positive. The Headteacher and the Chair felt opportunity to choose the Trust we want to join is invaluable. The Headteacher reminded governors that:

- Cockburn MAT shares our vision
- meeting the Trust team had been positive
- visits to the schools had been positive
- the Trust had kept their promises to Middleton Primary over the last 5 years
- the Trust is child centered
- the MAT offers the same support as Hunslet Carr
- joining the MAT would present more opportunities for the SLT and middle leaders

- 4.21 It was noted that joining the MAT would not offer preferential recruitment options for staff.
- 4.22 It was felt that joining the MAT should be done at the right time for the right reasons with equitable benefit as once joined school could not leave the Trust.
- 4.23 It was noted that none of the SLT were against joining the MAT and that the vision between Hunslet Carr and Cockburn was aligned. This was an opportunity to work together to achieve what we can't achieve alone. It was also noted that the Headteacher was motivated to work together with other schools.
- 4.24 Governors had confidence in the Headteacher and the SLT and that they should trust the judgement of the SLT regarding this proposal as the best fit with the right MAT, along with the positive experience of Middleton Primary. A vote took place and due to a tie of votes it was agreed not to make a decision at this point.
- 4.25 **Resolved:**
- to take more time to consider the proposal from Cockburn.
- 4.26 The Chair would send an email asking for questions and concerns regarding the proposal to establish what reassurances governors and the SLT require. **CHAIR**
- 4.27 Another meeting to be arranged in 2 weeks to discuss the proposal further. **CHAIR**

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.30pm