



**MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY FULL GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2019 18:00
ROOM 2, MAIN BLOCK, ST IVO SCHOOL**

Present:

Julie Bloor	Philip Speer
Dan Coulson	Jon Read
Carol Darnell	Adrian Smith
Charles Glanville	Anthony Ward
Sam Griffin	Elaine Warriner
Claire Lynn	Duncan Woodall
Mark Newstead	
Frank Newton	

Non-Governors Present:

Mike Craig
Ingrid Morrison
Emillie Newell
(Minutes)

Apologies:

Judith Barnes
Martin McMahon
Richard Potter

In attendance:

Benedick Ashmore-Short – Executive Director Education
Adam Goldstein – Executive Director of Operations
Hywel Jones – Deputy Director of Education for Cambridgeshire
Libby Nicholas - CEO
Tomas Thurogood-Hyde – Head of Governance and Legal

	Discussion and Actions Agreed	By Whom
1.0	Apologies and consent to absence	
	Apologies received from Mrs Barnes, Community Governor, Dr McMahon, Parent Governor and Mr Potter, Parent Governor. Governors consented to these absences.	
2.0	Declarations of Interest	
	None.	

3.0	Due Diligence	
	<p>Mr Newstead spoke of the thorough and thought out processes undertaken since the board selected Astrea as their preferred partner on 18 July 2018.</p> <p>Following the decision in principle to join Astrea a number of actions have been carried out: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents have been made aware of the plan. 2. Astrea led the due diligence process – to assess the possible risks involved for them in taking on St Ivo School. It was for Astrea’s Trust board to decide whether the idea should be pursued further. 3. Department for Education to agree to the decision and sign off. 4. St Ivo School board of governors to agree and make a final decision to join Astrea. <p>The preparation of all legal documentation relating to finances and premises is currently in hand ahead of a final sign off. Mr Newstead apologised to the board for not reporting back whether the carry forward would be protected; from an educational and operational perspective there has been nothing to suggest that during the process that Astrea is not right for the school, in fact St Ivo already feels a part of the Astrea trust with staff attending Astrea training sessions and meetings since September 2018 – all of which has been free of charge for St Ivo – all services accessed would cost somewhere in the region of £100,000.</p>	
3.1	<p>Due Diligence Report – Astrea</p> <p>Astrea colleagues joined the meeting at 18:28.</p> <p>Mr Newstead referred to Astrea’s due diligence report circulated governors; a full version of this report will be submitted to the Astrea Trust Board. Mr Newton advised that the report reflects what he recognises as St Ivo School with Mr Griffin adding that the report did not include any surprises.</p> <p>Mr Newstead opened the meeting to questions from the governing board.</p> <p><i>Challenge: Mrs Bloor made reference to curriculum led finance planning and impact on staffing if a school is over budget and whether reassurance can be given that there will not be any redundancies following transfer?</i></p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that Astrea has a 100% track record of not making redundancies – staffing is only cut through natural changes. Redundancies are only made where the Principal deems is necessary. Ms Nicholas explained that the curriculum led financial planning is a useful tool and uses a national benchmark as a guide, Principals of local Astrea schools have been introduced to this.</p> <p>Mr Read enquired as to where Astrea can see potential savings in St Ivo?</p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that the Astrea Leadership Development programme would cost over £50,000 – these inset costs are free to St Ivo; further savings can be made with procurement through the re-tendering of contracts. The range of courses available to students should offered for educational reasons not financial reasons with a re-focus on the depth and breadth of subjects available – decisions should be educationally motivated.</p>	

Challenge: Mr Speer questioned as how Astrea will outcomes for students, in particular, how will the grade 4s in English become Grade 5s?

Mr Ashmore-Short advised that the biggest challenge facing St Ivo is the Progress 8 score. Support is already in place for all Head of Departments and further support aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning will be in place. Current exam boards used will also be reviewed, support will be provided by Mr Jones. The board were made aware of the “phenomenal” progress that has been made in English at Cottenham Village College and as such the very same practices will be used at St Ivo in order to move the English department forward.

Mr Jones made reference to raising expectations of students by raising the bar of difficulty in years 7, 8 and 9.

Challenge: Mr Smith questioned Astrea as to where St Ivo School ranks within the Astrea strand theory, as the due diligence report presented suggests that everything is fine but does not highlight Astrea’s ambition or aspirations for the school.

Mr Ashmore-Short advised that the trust’s core business is to get the best outcomes possible; St Ivo should be an outstanding school. Four St Ivo staff members have enrolled on Astrea’s leadership development programme and are therefore already taking advantages of the opportunities that are available to them to support school improvement.

Challenge: Mr Smith asked if the education plan is in the due diligence document?

An education planning model is not available; however, Mr Griffin advised that having worked alongside Astrea strategic changes have been implemented. A learning and development plan is in place and this document is owned by the Principal and the SLT.

Mr Ashmore-Short advised that Ebacc entries over the next three years needs to increase to 70%; in order to achieve this Year 9 students are being advised to take a modern foreign language – at present students are not equitable to their peers in other schools having not opted for a language at GCSE. Dr Craig advised that quality thinking from Astrea has steered St Ivo in the right direction, this prompted staff into action and has also given them a sense of confidence. Interviews with students as part of year 9 into 10 options process has found students to be accepting of the idea.

Challenge: Mr Glanville commented that one question parents will have is how much money is the trust taking from the school?

Ms Nicholas advised that filings for Astrea are public documents and can be viewed; however, savings are huge in MATs as many services are provided centrally. Mr Goldstein advised that on transfer Astrea will circulate a letter to all parents to outline what the trust will do and in addition to this, Ms Nicholas advised that she writes in a bi-annual newsletter and intends to produce one specifically for St Ivo School.

Mrs Warriner advised that she is in contact with a number of year 6 parents and they are very interested in the St Ivo/Astrea developments and enquired if it would be possible for the newsletter to also include year 6 parents’?

Mr Griffin advised that having met with Primary Heads earlier in the day they are also keen to learn more and Astrea colleagues have agreed to join Primary Heads at their next meeting. Mr Goldstein also advised that Astrea will also attend prospective parents’ evenings. Ms Nicholas commented that Astrea want to attend such events to be visible to the children.

	<p>ACTION: Astrea communications to extend to year 6 parents’ at the local primary schools.</p> <p>Challenge from Mr Newton: With regards to the recent growth within the “Cambridgeshire Hub” is the trust considering action under Section 100b of the Articles i.e. the setting up of a Regional Board?</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding the existing arrangements within Astrea and the link trustee for Cambridgeshire Professor Gregory. Mr Newstead advised that he agreed that the idea of a Cambridgeshire Hub in the future could be taken forward in a strategic way, bringing all Chairs of LECCs together. Mr Gregory is also a key link to universities. The meeting then discussed a current void with non-academic career routes with Mr Jones referring to the changing nature of apprenticeships and vocational studies. Mr Newstead acknowledged that at present current systems are failing apprentices and working in a hub may support this initiative. Ms Nicholas acknowledged that there is so much potential in this area and ring fenced government funding for this.</p> <p>Challenge: Mrs Lynn questioned as to how much impact Astrea has had on the St Neots schools?</p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that there has been an immediate positive impact on both Longsands and Ernulf for student outcomes following in depth reviews of teaching and learning. Ambitious changes are underway for the benefit of students. Ms Nicholas advised that Astrea ensure highest aspirations for students without impacting negatively on staff well being.</p> <p>Mr Smith made reference to the quality of premises having an impact on improving outcomes for students. Ms Nicholas advised that Astrea resources are put into teaching “great teachers equal great outcomes”.</p>	
3.2	<p>Finances</p> <p>Mr Speer referred to the St Ivo’s current reserves and on behalf of the governing board was enquiring as to whether the reserves would still be available to us post transfer should the funds needed to be accessed?</p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that Astrea have an equitable approach to funds available to all of their schools and the variations in funding that all schools bring on joining is noted. When a member school requires funding, applications should be made for capital expenditure. Mr Griffin commented that membership of a MAT will mean usual expenses that tip the school budget into deficit will reduce, for example the LA contribution will no longer be taken.</p> <p>Challenge: Mr Glanville enquired as to whether there is any time limit for St Ivo to use the reserve brought forward for example “within the academic year”.</p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that there are no time limits, Astrea will look at the reasons for the request – the need of students will always come first.</p> <p>Premises</p> <p>The board discussed the five year plan in place for premises, the due diligence report makes reference to the poor electrics within school.</p>	

	<p>Mr Smith asked if Astrea will commit to property investments, this led on to discuss a current CIF bid for the electrics within the school. Mr Goldstein advised that post transfer there is still enough time to make one more bid if this one is unsuccessful.</p> <p>Approach to ACL</p> <p>Ms Nicholas advised that the Adult Community learning service provided is hugely valuable and is similar to the situation at Cottenham Village College. With the most extensive adult learning available at St Ivo there is need to develop this further through marketing. The due diligence process did identify issues with site access and adult learners coming in to contact with students during the day.</p> <p>Mr Smith questioned whether Astrea will talk to local businesses to assist with building relationships to support apprenticeships together with the promotion of fundraising for education.</p> <p>Mr Thurogood-Hyde advised that at a local and national level an innovation group will take the strategy of fundraising forward, this fits into the Astrea promise to enrich and individual school strategies.</p> <p>Mr Griffin reminded the board of the energy and positivity Astrea have brought to the St Ivo and the exciting times that lie ahead.</p> <p>Astrea colleagues were thanked for their time and left the meeting at 19:30.</p>	
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Discussion by full governors only</p>	
	<p>Mr Newstead agreed with Mr Griffin's concluding statement and added that Astrea appear to be the right cultural fit for St Ivo, not only this all staff responded well to the announcement that Astrea were the preferred partner.</p> <p>Mr Newton commented that from a due diligence point of view having attended the TUPE meeting every aspect is fine and nothing untoward has been covering during the period of due diligence.</p> <p>Mr Speer added that the accounts for Astrea do not indicate that there are any problems and funds are used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Mr Glanville informed the board that Astrea do not pay any of their leaders more than seven times the salary of an NQT.</p> <p>To date, St Ivo staff have already benefitted a great deal from the planned partnership taking advantage of training opportunities and meetings available. The email system was transferred over to Astrea during December; Mr Ward advised that assistance was always available during the Christmas break to solve any issues that arose.</p> <p>Dr Craig advised that the last three/four years of the schools journey has been challenging at times and there is now a change of direction; Astrea has a positive mind set and are in close contact with national decision makers in education. Miss Morrison added that SLT members high spoke highly of Astrea on return from meetings and training sessions.</p> <p>Mr Woodall asked if a decision has been made regarding LECC membership; Mr Griffin the outcome of this selection process was not to be discussed prior to this meeting in order not to influence the decision made by full governors.</p>	

	<p>Mr Newstead will speak with each governor individually.</p> <p>Delegation</p> <p>The board agreed that any governor available at short notice to sign documentation relating to the transfer will be contacted.</p> <p>Mr Smith advised that he would like re-assurance regarding building improvements and a plan by Astrea to be made available in a document. Mr Griffin advised that he will liaise with Ms Nicholas to formulate a premises plan.</p> <p>Mr Newstead proposed that a vote is taken on whether the board agree to St Ivo School joining Astrea Academy Trust. This was seconded by Mr Newton.</p> <p>All governors were in favour.</p> <p>Decision: St Ivo School to join Astrea Academy Trust.</p> <p>The above decision is subject to a value for money benefit statement from Ms Nicholas outlining to parents what the school will get out of their contribution to joining Astrea.</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed at 20:00.</p>	