

30. Methodist Independent Schools Trust

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Resolutions	See below.

Summary of content

Subject and aims	Report on the Methodist Schools Safeguarding Review and Audit (SSRA). Report on the successor project to World AIMS. Approval of the proposed change in legal structure for MIST and the action to implement it. Appointment of MIST Trustees and Governors to three Methodist Independent Associated Schools.
Background context and relevant documents (with function)	The Conference is responsible for approving changes in the legal structure of MIST. The Conference is responsible for the appointment of MIST Trustees and Governors to the schools named in the resolutions.

A. *Methodist Schools Safeguarding Review and Audit (SSRA)*

1. Background

The Methodist Independent Schools Trust's (MIST) response to "*Courage, Cost and Hope*" the report on the Past Cases Review (PCR) conducted between 2012–2015 was a determination to consider seriously how a similar process could be adopted within the independent schools group and in addition develop a process that would strengthen current safeguarding arrangements in the schools. It was agreed to run two parallel processes, a non-recent cases review and an audit to assess the current safeguarding practice.

In March 2016 MIST appointed an independent project board to oversee the review and audit process.

2. Process

The Board initially agreed the arrangements for the audit and review pilot and how reports would be made to the Board. In June 2016 the Board received the report on the pilot visits and as a result changes were made to the non-recent cases review documentation. Further reports on the progress of the review and audit were made in August and October with draft reports presented to the Board in November 2016.

The final and full report was published to MIST Trustees and Schools in early February and key aspects of the report presented to Heads, Chairs of Governors and Trustees at a Training Day held on 9 February 2017. A summary report is now available for schools and others interested in the outcomes and recommendations; please contact scommins@methodisteducation.co.uk if you wish to receive a copy of the summary report.

3. Audit of current child protection and safeguarding arrangements in schools

The work of the audit team has been impressive and MIST has benefited from the breadth of experience and knowledge team members brought to the process. The audit tool used by the team was structured in line with the Department for Education Guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSiE). The key areas that were examined were: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); Site and Security; a Safeguarding Ethos; Child Protection and Safeguarding Training; Nominated or Named Governor; Policies and Procedures; Safer Recruitment; Other Services. Under these headings 60 criteria were assessed and rated either red (not in place or evidenced), amber (partially in place/under development) or green (in place and evidenced).

Across 18 schools (including one in Wales which is not subject to KCSiE as in England), 1,080 ratings were generated. Of these less than 3% were rated red and about 75% rated green. So, overall there is a strong platform of performance on which to build. The audit report highlighted many areas of good practice and also areas in which MIST and/or the schools can work together to support better practice. Schools were given immediate feedback on their ratings and since each visit the schools have given priority attention to turning red ratings amber or green and amber ratings green.

4. Non-recent cases review

The non-recent cases review was a separate process to the audit but carried out in parallel. The first stage of this review was for schools to provide information on the state of the school's records, including how they are stored and if there have been any particular issues around records being damaged or destroyed. They were also asked to provide information on the process used to search through the records. Finally, they needed to explain how the identified non-recent cases were reviewed.

During their visits the auditors discussed with the Head the process used by each school to identify non-recent cases and in several cases made additional suggestions which are now being followed up. When this process is completed it is reasonable to assume that the information that would be required by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is as available as it is possible to achieve. It is however impossible to make a judgement as to whether all non-recent cases have been identified. It is almost certain that some cases were unreported at the time and would therefore not be mentioned in records. Of those where records were made (and retained) it may be reasonable to assume the most serious have been identified.

5. Safeguarding culture

It is difficult to overstate the significance of organisational culture to the overall experience of being a member of the school community, whether that is as a pupil, a parent, a staff member or a governor. When there is a positive culture, and what is achieved is a positive, inclusive, mutually respectful and safeguarding aware organisation, the experience of being part of that organisation is a positive one and children are more likely to be appropriately safeguarded.

By contrast, the opposite is true, where there is the absence of appropriate infrastructure and culture of vigilance in both recruitment and ongoing supervision, they will also lack the processes and culture where whistleblowing is encouraged. In those instances the possibility of abuse or inappropriate behaviour being a feature of school life is increased. A significant number of recent inquiries into institutional child sexual abuse in the UK cited organisational culture as a key contributory factor, whilst a proportion of perpetrators interviewed as part of research into organisational abuse stated that the culture of the organisation in which they offended did not proactively promote child welfare.

The detailed findings of the audit give very important data to inform an assessment of how

robust and embedded the safeguarding culture is within the schools. The auditors were greatly impressed by the overall commitment of staff and governors they met to ensuring there was a strong safeguarding ethos in the schools. They reported that in some aspects they saw practice better than they had observed in other (non-MIST) settings. In terms of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) many of the schools could already be described as operating to a gold standard (one of the aspirations identified by MIST at the start of this process). Once all the schools have completed their follow-up actions there will be a strong foundation to continue the journey to excellence.

However, it cannot be stressed enough that it is easy to slip into complacency once a process like this has been completed with a satisfactory conclusion; so the SSRA Project Board confirmed a number of recommendations for MIST and the schools to take further action.

6. SSRA's recommendations to MIST (and the schools):

- (1) MIST should adopt a more proactive leadership role around safeguarding within MIST schools. This will include implementing all eight recommendations from the audit report that make reference to MIST developing specific Trust-wide policies/guidance or taking action to promote best practice across the schools.*
- (2) MIST continues to develop the support it offers schools to enable them to implement all of the audit recommendations that relate to school level actions. In addition, it will disseminate the guidance relating to references and close relationships at work that have been written in response to issues raised from the audit visits.*
- (3) MIST to ensure that the follow-up process regarding non-recent cases is completed and that all schools are aware of lessons to be learnt.*
- (4) MIST should strengthen its support and accountability processes in relation to the schools and safeguarding. In particular, it should: require all schools for which it is responsible to submit a report to MIST in Autumn 2017 that will evidence how red and amber ratings have been turned green; and organise an annual visit, for the next two years, by a child protection expert to each school where they have responsibility. This visit to be primarily focused on support but also to meet the Chair of Governors and the Safeguarding Governor to ensure that oversight of safeguarding at governance level is as robust as possible.*

MIST formally received and accepted the report's findings and recommendations at their meeting on 22 March 2017. The officers are now working with the schools in order to implement the recommendations of the report.

B. Successor project for World AIMS

After 15 years of working closely with All We Can (formerly MRDF), the World AIMS project has been reviewed and, following a School Coordinators Conference addressed by Dr Daleep Mukarji is being recast as G2L AIMS (Global to Local Action In Methodist Schools). This will build on established global partnerships in the schools and embrace a wider range of partnerships with organisations such as All We Can, Christian Aid, Edukid and others bringing sustainable opportunities for education and participation of pupils in many citizenship and social justice projects at home and overseas. MIST will sponsor annual conferences for teachers and students in order to share information and develop opportunities for our schools in challenging areas both on our doorstep and further afield.

C. Bringing the work of MIST, MAST and the Wesley Trust together

In 2012 one recommendation of the Education Commission, approved by the Conference, was that Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) and Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST) should combine by 2017. Public policy has developed so that the need for a multi-academy trust is now evident and the Wesley Trust is being launched within an organisational arrangement that

brings together the Wesley Trust, MIST and MAST, in a coordinated way through the purview of one committee. It is proposed that this committee is appointed by the Council and called the Methodist Schools Committee (MSC). This proposal is more fully described elsewhere.

These arrangements have been energetically developed not simply to fulfil the Conference resolution but principally because ever closer working together to mutual advantage, celebrating our differences as well as learning from one another, springs naturally out of engagement with the Methodist ethos that permeates all our schools.

In diverse ways, therefore, MIST corporately and its schools will add significantly to the public benefit that each of the MIST schools currently makes (and for which each school is accountable each year to MIST itself).

MIST has committed to providing significant seed-corn funding to enable the Wesley Trust to be staffed and established. The MIST office at Methodist Church House has also committed itself to a reorganisation that will better equip it to support the Trusts and to provide a properly joined up account to the proposed Methodist Schools Committee (MSC). This single executive and administration team, coordinated by the General Secretary of MIST, will ensure efficient resourcing, support and leadership across the Trusts and focus on achieving benefits through collaboration and mutually supportive activity.

D. MIST legal structure

Changes to the legal structure of MIST are reported on elsewhere in the Agenda (see agenda item 31).

E. Appointment of Trustees

Trustees of MIST are appointed by the Conference, normally for a three year term. Nominations are made by the Trust, Chairs of Governors and the Methodist Council.

Under the Schemes relating to the administration of Ashville College, Kingswood School and Rydal Penrhos School, the Conference is responsible for the appointment of certain governors to their governing bodies. Governors are nominated by the governing bodies and/or MIST and are initially appointed for a period of three years in the cases of Ashville College and Rydal Penrhos, and an initial term of four years in the case of Kingswood School. They may be re-appointed for a further period.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

Methodist Independent Schools Trust

- 30/1. The Conference received the Report.**
- 30/2. The Conference noted the work being undertaken by Methodist Independent Schools Trust to engage with and support the establishment of the Wesley Trust and to work with Methodist Academies and Schools Trust to enhance educational opportunities for pupils in the Methodist ethos.**
- 30/3. The Conference adopted the re-nomination by the Trustees of Ms Margaret Faulkner as Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020.**
- 30/4. The Conference adopted the nomination by the Trustees of Mrs Lorna Cocking as a Chair of Governors Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020.**

Ashville College

- 30/5. The Conference adopted the nomination by the Governors for the appointment of Mr Simon Donkin, as Governor of Ashville College, for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020.**
- 30/6. The Conference adopted the re-nominations by the Governors for the appointment of David Ewart, Jamie Search, Jennifer Smith and Peter Whiteley for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020.**

Kingswood School

- 30/7. The Conference adopted the re-nominations by the Governors for the appointment of Mr Paul Baines, Mr Simon Crowther, Mr Robert Joliffe, Mrs Katie Pillinger, Mr Robert Sandry and Mr Tim Westbrook for a period of one year concluding 31 August 2018.**

Rydal Penrhos School

- 30/8. The Conference adopted the re-nomination by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust of Mr Ralph Dransfield as Governor of Rydal Penrhos School for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020.**
- 30/9. The Conference appointed the Revd Dr John C A Barrett as Chair of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust from 1 September 2017.**

Reasoned statements

Methodist Independent Schools Trust

The Revd Dr John C A Barrett

John Barrett has held a number of appointments related to Methodist education, including Chaplain at Westminster College, Oxford, Chaplain at Kingswood School, Bath, Head of Kent College, Pembury and Head of The Leys, Cambridge, followed by a period serving the Methodist Church in Singapore as founding Principal of the Anglo-Chinese International School, Singapore. Dr Barrett chaired the World Methodist Council Education Committee for ten years, and from 2006-11 was Chair of the WMC Executive Committee. He chaired the Education Commission, which reported to the 2012 Conference and for the past six years has been a Governor of Kingswood School, chairing its Education and Pastoral Committee. He has been a MIST Trustee for two years.

Mrs Lorna Cocking

Lorna is Chair of Governors at Kent College, Canterbury. She is also Chair of AGBIS (Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools) and thus sits as a member of the Independent Schools Council.

Ashville College

Mr Simon Donkin

Simon Donkin attended Ashville from 1984-1990, and from 1 July will become the President of the Ashvillian Society – the President is an ex-officio Governor of Ashville College. Simon is a Chartered member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, a Member of the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management, as well as a nationally registered Occupational Health and Safety Consultant and Fire Risk Assessor. He is also actively involved in the civic community of his home town, Wetherby, and is a former Town Councillor.