



'Believe you can'

28th January 2020

## **ESFA report - A response from the Board of Governors**

Further to the recent report published by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Governors wish to assure parents and members of The Olive Tree Primary School community that the Trust has taken immediate steps to address matters raised following the ESFA's inspection.

As an Outstanding school we are committed to working with the ESFA to ensure that the procedural points raised are addressed and we can continue to deliver the excellent education that our parents and pupils expect from us. Our financial position is strong and we carry healthy reserves to secure our school's future.

However, it is important to ensure parents and the community have an accurate picture of the matters raised. Some matters have been inaccurately reported and a fair account has not been portrayed. Furthermore, Governors are concerned with the negative portrayal of our Chair in some media reports and a formal complaint will be raised with the publishers.

Governors are confident that Mr Chohan has been entirely proper and has always had the best interests of the school and pupils at heart in the execution of his duties, as do all Governors.

We must also make clear that no private educational technology events were held on the school's premises. As a Trust we have challenged the use of the term 'private edtech event' as we consider this to be misleading. In actuality, the Trust engages with educationalists nationally and internationally to share best practice on various aspects of education, not just technology. Such activities are part of our academy trust operation and not external to it. Our school has always been able to demonstrate the benefits that our pupils have enjoyed with technology being a key component of our curriculum delivery. By networking with other schools, our staff are able to discuss best practice whilst also having the opportunity to up-skill.

To be clear, the payment for the Chair's accommodation at an educational event (also attended by the previous Headteacher) was paid in error by the school and the Chair was unaware as the hotel had been provided with his payment details upon check-in. This amount has been recouped in full.

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**trust peace fairness respect equality compassion**

Governors are also satisfied that the remuneration Mr Chohan received as part of his work over 4 days was entirely reasonable and in the best interests of the academy trust. However, Governors do accept that the specific procedure within its constitution for such remuneration was not followed and have taken professional advice to ensure this does not happen again.

It has been incorrectly suggested in media reports that Mr Chohan used his position as Chair to secure the appointment of new Governors or consultants at the school for those who he was friends with or related to. The appointment of new Governors and consultants has always been done with Governors involvement and in a transparent way.

Additionally, Mr Chohan was not involved in the recruitment process relating to the appointment of his spouse to a leadership position. Rather, the Vice-Chair of Governors provided board oversight to this appointment along with a parent governor, two external school leaders and the Principal.

Governors have been proactive in commissioning a governance review well before the ESFA inspections and had already begun making improvements to Governance in order to be compliant with ESFA guidelines.

Working with the ESFA, the Board has sought external advice to address all concerns and will continue to work closely with the ESFA to meet the terms of the financial notice to improve.

No structural changes have been deemed necessary to our Board of Governors, however, we are working with Academy Ambassadors to attract additional expertise to the Board. The Board continues to have confidence in Mr Chohan to act as our Chair.

On behalf of The Board of Governors  
The Olive Tree Primary School