

The Active Learning Trust

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST
*held on Thursday 10th May 2018
at The Lansdowne Club, London***

MINUTES

Directors Present: Ms L. Adams Mr D. Bateson OBE
Mr J. Beswick Mr A. Boddison
Mr C. Bush Mrs J. Cutchey
Mr G. Hely Hutchinson Mr M. Kerr
Ms M. Lloyd Mr G. Peile

Members Present: Mr R. Dool

Officers Present: Mr D. Hilton Mrs K. Jarvis
Mr C. Paskell Ms M. Toft

Also Present: Mrs S. Pritchard (Exec Head of Earith & Kingsfield Primary Schools)
Mrs B. Surtees (Exec Head of Chesterton & Isle of Ely Primary Schools)

36. WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ms Adams welcomed all present and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mrs Capron, Mr Staite and Mrs Steel.

No new declarations of interest were declared.

37. REPORT & PRESENTATIONS:

Directors confirmed that they had reviewed the Headteacher Reports that Mrs Pritchard and Mrs Surtees had provided prior to the meeting. Both were asked to highlight areas of particular note:

Chesterton Primary School

Mrs Surtees highlighted the financial position at Chesterton, and explained that the in-year variances could be attributed to key projects such as Pop-Up Literacy and improving the outdoor area, plus additional staff training, particularly NQT and SLA. It was noted that some of the additional spend had been off-set by the retention of SEN funding and receipt of additional pupil premium funding.

Work continues to improve attendance at Chesterton. The school has subscribed to Cambridgeshire County Council's Education Welfare provision, which is starting to have an effect. Term time holidays are not authorised, and penalty notices are issued, which have an

adverse effect on attendance data. Unfortunately, the school had an extremely high proportion of students absent on census day due to a norovirus outbreak.

Mrs Surtees explained that Chesterton work closely with the charity Place 2 Be and have increased the core provision to two days per week. Recent changes in guidance for mental health are being accommodated, and impact data is being collated to ensure the school can provide evidence of impact.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- The deprivation indicator, and how it is reached, was explained.
- The curriculum is being considered following a recent external review of behaviour to ensure challenge, avoid complacency in learning and keep standards high.
- Mobility is high at Chesterton due to university families and social housing families that stay in the area short term. This does impact on standards and attendance.
- Governors challenge rigorously.
- Chesterton are working hard to address parental perception that there is poor behaviour in school through parents' forum and meetings. Support for children with challenging behaviour is in place, with one classroom being designated to address issues.
- No increase in bullying or racial incidents has been noticed since the announcement of Brexit. There is an increase of behavioural issues from younger children that can be perceived by parents as bullying. This is being addressed by staff and Place 2 Be.
- All teaching assistants have impact on learning and/or behaviour so that their support is maximised.
- The current model employed by Chesterton, including a non-teaching SENCO, is probably not sustainable long-term. It can continue for the next year as two NQTs have been employed, however if funding is stretched as expected alternative options may be necessary.

Isle of Ely Primary School

Mrs Surtees highlighted the financial position at the Isle of Ely Primary School (Ely), and explained that the variances are due to 1:1 support being required to support a child with an EHCP who transferred from another school, higher than anticipated PPA costs, an increase in provision of Place 2 Be, investment in Forest School and additional staff training costs. However, teaching staff costs are lower than budgeted.

There have been five fixed term exclusions at Ely this year, and the SENCO is supporting five boys full-time in provision referred to as 'The Garden'.

Mrs Surtees spoke about recruitment – Ely currently has two vacancies for September and is working with Teach First to employ teachers who can be trained. Next year will see Ely with three NQTs and two Teach First teachers.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- The variance table within the finance section needs adjusting. The variance is due to increased cleaning costs.
- Ely is already engaging well with parents, who are supportive. There are plans to extend this to include engagement with the local community to promote the school for when the local housing estate becomes full. Trustees were reminded that Ely was built as a 3 form entry, but is currently a 2 form entry.
- The number of children registered on the child protection register was explained. Not all cases are referred, but a log entry is made of any concerns so that a picture can be built if issues arise. The number of children currently working with social care is low.

- There is a possibility that funding for outside areas can be accessed from a charitable grant. Details will be sent to schools.
- Ely are considering extending their nursery provision, which is very successful and profitable, and already full for September. A business plan will be put together to increase the number of places and potentially change the age range to include 2 year olds.

Earith Primary School

Mrs Pritchard explained that whilst she was new to the Trust in September (with Kingsfield), she was not new to Earith, having been head there for two years. She expressed gratitude to the Trust for allowing Earith access to ALT services from September, despite not joining until January, as it had eased transition immensely. Earith was last inspected in July 2016, and given a 'good' rating. Staffing is fairly stable, and Mrs Pritchard is confident in the leadership of the head of school.

Due to small numbers on roll – 83 students – there are only three classes at Earith, and the head of school has a teaching commitment. The low numbers mean that each child equates to a large percentage for data, eg of the 12 current Year 6 children, 4 children (33%) are unlikely to reach national expectations. There is shared teaching in each area and mixed key stages across the school.

Attendance is an issue at Earith due to a mobility of Gypsy Roma families, and financial issues are of those expected for a small school. Sharing an executive head with Kingsfield has helped make the school financially viable.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- Trustees spoke of their recent visit to Earith and commended the relationship between Mrs Pritchard and the head of school. There is a clear division of responsibility.
- Mrs Pritchard confirmed that the PAN for Earith is 20, but this hasn't been reached for many years. 11 students have confirmed for September 2018. Due to mixed classes the junior class is large with 31 students.

Kingsfield Primary School

Mrs Pritchard explained some of the issues she had encountered on joining Kingsfield in September. The teaching & learning needed to be moved on quickly. Some staff have left, which has allowed recruitment at a more appropriate level. There is now a robust monitoring system in place, and phase meetings and book reviews take place. Mrs Pritchard gave Trustees an understanding of the staffing issues she faced but noted that two assistant heads have been appointed for September who will bring differing skills and experience to Kingsfield. Four NQTs have been appointed, and will join Kingsfield from 1st July.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- Trustees were pleased to hear that poor teaching was being addressed and some colleagues are being supported by Mr Baker from the central team to improve teaching and learning. Changes in deployment mean that, from September, staff will work in areas that will allow them to play to their strengths.
- Trustees acknowledged that Mrs Pritchard has brought a different level of challenge to Kingsfield, and has a positive working relationship with Cromwell Community College which has been nurtured, and has therefore improved transition work, leading to greater awareness and collaboration for both primary and secondary staff. This has been particularly evident with enthusiastic young teachers, and is already thought to be impacting on the quality of teaching and progress. Maths, Science, Humanities, English & Writing and Design Technology have all benefited.

- Mrs Pritchard added a personal note that she had found the Principal of Cromwell very supportive.
- Mrs Pritchard echoed the views of Mrs Surtees regarding the number of children on the Child Protection Register. Logs of concern that are kept are not always referred on, but they do help to create a bigger picture. Kingsfield have a Family Care Manager in place who attends complex strategy meetings, and is supported by a Pastoral Support Worker who mainly works to support children.

Ms Adams thanked Mrs Pritchard and Mrs Surtees for attending and for their reports.

Mrs Pritchard and Mrs Surtees left the meeting at this point.

Trustees continued discussion about the presentations they had heard. It was felt that there is a lot to be positive about at Kingsfield, it had received substantial support from ALT. The relationship with Cromwell is strong. Earith has a tough set-up, but Mr Peile is confident that it will work within the three school model.

Ms Adams informed the Board that she had approached Trustees to take on specific roles for the Board, and asked that other Trustees support the appointments. Mr Hely Hutchinson has agreed to become Safeguarding Lead, Mr Boddison has agreed to become lead for SEND and Mr Bush will take an overview of disadvantaged students for the Board.

Trustees agreed that the appointments should be approved.

38. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 22nd February 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2018 were accepted as a true record, with two amendments needed:

Item 22: Mrs Cutchey, and not Mr Rowe is Chair of Governors at Grove Primary School.

Item27: Para 4: Should read Mr Bateson, not Mr Beswick

MATTERS ARISING

Item 28: Trustee Visits: Due to a low availability for the Trustee visits to North Suffolk planned for June, Ms Adams proposed that these be deferred until the Autumn Term so that they could be positive and meaningful. ***This was agreed.***

39. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Directors were asked to note that the Finance & Audit committee and the Remuneration & Personnel committee did not meet on 22nd February 2018. However, since the last meeting, members of the Remuneration & Personnel committee had approved an action relating to an uplift in pay for support staff to bring ALT in line with the National Pay Award recommendations.

40. CHAIR'S ACTIONS

Ms Adams stated that there were no Chair's Actions to report since the last meeting.

41. SAFEGUARDING

Ms Toft took Trustees through her report explaining that changes to the Trust Safeguarding Policy were required to meet the new statutory guidance that comes into force in September 2018. The policy builds on the previous version and once approved, will be

published for schools to implement (supported by their own procedures). Ms Toft highlighted the following:

- From September, all schools will use a software package to record issues so that the Trust has a common approach to recording and monitoring. The package is called MyConcern.
- A Trust Mental Health group has been established to gather good practise and look at the way school curriculums teach young people to keep safe and manage risk. It will also seek pupil views from across the Trust.
- The policy links with Prevent.
- Support for Designated Safeguarding Leads, through supervision, will be established in all schools and there will be a designated Board Member.
- The policy now includes reference to works with local multiagency partners, early detection for children 'missing in education', Children in Need Plans, Domestic Abuse, child sexual exploitation, a more rigorous approach to mental health, positive handling, transgender students, private fostering, the role of the DSL, and gives a checklist for governors.
- The Trust will still commission external reviews and the Trust Compliance Officer will undertake checks of Single Central Records in schools.

It was suggested that a support network could be established within the Trust for DSLs. This was agreed as a good idea, and Ms Toft will initiate this, initially with groups already in place.

It was suggested that the Trust should appoint mental first aiders, as mentioned in the recent Green Paper on mental health. It was agreed that this should be considered and kept under review for if it becomes statutory.

There was discussion around who should be the mental health lead in schools, bearing in mind that it must be a senior leader, or someone with access to SLT. It was agreed to await responses in the planned review and direct schools where it was felt necessary.

It was noted that all schools keep a register of young carers.

Trustees thanked the Director of Professional Development for her report, noted its content and the work being carried out across the Trust to support schools. Trustees approved the updated policy in view of the new national guidance that will become statutory from September 2018.

42. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report circulated prior to the meeting, and Mr Peile highlighted the following:

- Mr Andy Redman will be taking on a role relating to school to school support, offering support in all three hubs.
- Recruitment has commenced to replace Mrs Lucy Wedderburn, who has resigned from the role of Finance Manager.
- A new role is being created to support estates and premises management.
- Statutory information relating to gender pay gap reporting has been produced and submitted.
- With the retirement of Mr Clive Bush, the Trust needs to reflect on secondary school support. Senior secondary colleagues are meeting the senior central team to bring forward their ideas on how the secondary agenda can be delivered effectively at the next senior leaders' conference.

At this point in the meeting Ms Adams spoke about Mr Bush's enormous contribution and commitment to the Trust. She added her personal thanks and gratitude, and was pleased to report that he will be remaining as a Trustee. Mr Bush responded by saying that it had been, and remains, a huge privilege to be part of the *"amazing experience that is the Active Learning Trust. A legacy to be proud of"*.

Mr Peile continued with his report:

- Grove Primary School has finally received a HMI visit, which went extremely well. A positive letter has been received, which will be forwarded to Trustees. Mr Peile thanked Ms Cutchey for her input and support, and confirmed that Mr David Hilton will continue to chair the AIG meetings. Mr Peile informed Trustees that he has written to the RSC and asked that she reconsider the warning notice issued in light of the 2017 report.
- Headteacher reports for Littleport and Cromwell have been included as these schools are currently without a local governing body.
- Attention was drawn to the risk register written to support the Post 19 provision approved for Highfield Ely Academy given this project is a pilot for 2 years and has to be self financing.
- Mr Peile was able to report that ALT has been shortlisted for the new school planned for Lakenheath.
- Progress on the new school in Ipswich is slow as Ipswich Town Council are yet to grant planning permission for the build. An April 2019 start to the project is anticipated with a 2020 opening at its earliest
- ALT has received confirmation of a £90k grant to support schools that join with a RI rating. .
- Mr Peile asked that the Board approve plans to ask schools to bid for part of the £97,898 awarded to ALT under the healthy pupils allocation to support specific projects.
- There is likely to be a new Schools Accountability Tool Kit for September 2018.
- Trustees were asked to approve the policies relating to GDPR. Mr Paskell asked that these be approved along the same lines as the Financial Controls Manual, and the Board made aware of updates as they arise. It was noted that there are some gaps in the Document Retention Policy that the Trust Compliance Manager will be asked to address. In response to a question, Mr Paskell stated that there should be no liability issues for removing data from files. Mr Peile added that the Trust will follow legislative guidance.
- Mr Peile asked that Trustees approve the implementation of Trust Awards for Resilient Learners. Trophies and vouchers will be provided to each school.
- A formal relationship has been established with ASL to support CPD at all levels across the Trust. This was warmly greeted, with comments that it was good to see early vision coming to fruition and that the Trust CPD offer is known to be an attractive offer for colleagues. A positive meeting has also taken place with the Princes Teaching Institute and school colleagues are to be offered the opportunity to work with Cambridge academics in Maths, Science, MFL and History.
- A whole-Trust professional development day has been arranged for teachers for 5th September 2018. Two high quality speakers have been secured and the day will also include workshops with staff interaction.
- Mr Peile informed Trustees that the application to become a teaching school submitted by Neale-Wade Academy has not been approved. It is not known why this is the case, but it is known that another school in Fenland has also not been approved. Trustees expressed their disappointment.

The Board noted the content of Mr Peile's report.

Trustees approved the plans to ask schools to bid on specific projects for the healthy pupils grant.

Trustees approved the GDPR related policies for Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Photography and Document Retention.

Trustees approved the introduction of the Trust Awards for Resilient Learners.

43. THE MORAL PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST

Mr Peile took Trustees through the content of his report that had been circulated prior to the meeting on the Moral Purpose of the Trust and how its vision, aims and values can be brought to life in the work of the Trust.

Trustees debated the issues contained in the report and how the Trust, its aims, vision and values still reflect how the Board and schools operate. It was agreed that these should be more than just about targets and progress, although Mrs Cutchey stated that the HMI who recently visited Grove was clear that whilst in the past LAs supported in an advisory role, MATS are accountable. As part of the discussions, the board questioned whether ALT should consider strengthening its aims to include a more robust stance on standards. As part of the discussion, it was noted that ALT now has a reputation for excellence in Arts. All agreed that the moral purpose is a critical key in any organisation and underpins education culture. It is vital that spokespeople (eg governors and heads) are able to articulate what drives this within ALT. It was felt that a unique selling point should come from this work that makes ALT stand out from others. As part of the discussion it was noted that Mr Peile would discuss with heads how the Trust might set an aspiration for standards, noting this includes progress, as a way of signalling our determination to see pupils succeed.

Mr Peile was thanked for his report and work to date. The Board asked that the vision, aims and values be kept under review, and taking Trustee comments into account, report back at a later date on proposed changes.

44. FINANCE UPDATE

Trustees confirmed that they had read the content of Mr Paskell's report on finances across the Trust. Questions and comments included:

- The position at Pakefield remains difficult – the head is aware and measures are in place as the current structure is unsustainable.
- Budgets are currently being considered in schools, with support from the Trust Finance Manager. Some schools will need to take action if funding for the next few years is as expected.
- All schools are expected to present a balanced budget next year, but some will be unable to retain this going forward on the current models. Radical changes need to be considered, which will be discussed with heads at the June conference.
- Following a successful MDIF bid, Mr Paskell is working with ASCL on integrated curriculum and financial planning, which will involve looking closely at staffing structures and curriculum models.
- Trustees are clear that it is their role to support schools with any changes that are needed.

Directors thanked Mr Paskell for his report and noted its content.

45. LITTLEPORT BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Trustees were reminded that they are currently responsible for monitoring the budget for the Littleport Campus. Mr Paskell took Trustees through his report that had been previously circulated, with no questions being raised.

Directors thanked Mr Paskell for his report and noted its content.

46. ICT STRATEGY

Mr Peile expanded on his report on progress on the ICT strategy to date, including feedback on a recently attended strategy meeting with Apple. He explained that, following an audit by IT colleagues from Cromwell & Neale-Wade, it is clear that major investment is required to ensure provision in schools is brought to standard, which may use capital allocation. There are opportunities to unlock huge potential by overhauling the curriculum and the way in which ICT is used in schools. Mr Hilton echoed that the most urgent requirement is for updating hardware. Trustees will be updated as work progresses.

Directors thanked the Mr Peile for his report and noted its content.

47. HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE

Trustees confirmed that they had read the report on health & safety prior to the meeting. They were pleased to note the improvement to the Handsam RAG ratings. Checks are being carried out in schools, and audits have been completed at every site. Particular reference was made of an incident at Kingsfield Primary School, and Trustees were pleased to note that this had been handled efficiently and appropriately.

Directors thanked the CEO for his report and noted its content.

48. RISK REGISTER

Trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the Trust Risk Register that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Mr Peile made reference to areas that had changed since the last report – in particular the addition of a risk relating to the potential publication of an ESFA list and the actions taken to ensure ALT did not appear on the list. He reminded directors that the Risk Register is reviewed every six weeks by the Senior Leadership Team.

Directors recognised the updates to the central Risk Register, and the counter measures being applied to mitigate the risks listed.

49. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Mr Peile asked the board to approve Mrs Cutchey to remain Chair of Governors for Grove Primary School and Westwood Primary School should the new governance arrangements be approved. This will help with stability at both schools. ***This was agreed.***

Mr Paskell explained that a new master funding agreement may be needed.

Directors agreed that the Chief Executive be delegated responsibility for signing off a new agreement if required.

Mr Paskell informed Trustees that ALT will be subject to an ICO audit on 15th October.

50. NEXT DATES

Ms Adams referred Trustees to the proposed meeting dates for the next academic year. It was agreed that these should be added into the Trust calendar.

11th Oct 2018
13th Dec 2018
14th Feb 2019

16th May 2019

11th July 2019

Trustees were informed that the Littleport Campus will be celebrating one year, and holding an official opening ceremony, on Friday 7th September. All are invited to attend.