



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD

Held on Thursday 13 July 2023, 4pm, via video conferencing

- Present:** Jeremy Beswick
Miles Cole
Jackie Cutchey
Vic Daniels (Chair)
Fran Hargrove
Lynsey Holzer (CEO and Accounting Officer)
Toni Kittle (for minutes 1 - 37)
Ngoc Nguyen
Steve Purdy (for all except minute 3)
- In attendance:** Stewart Harper (Governance Consultant)
Karl Jackson (Deputy Chief Executive Officer)
Karen Jarvis (Head of Corporate Services)
Clive Paskell (Director of Finance)

Welcome, Introduction and Apologies for Absence

1. Welcome was extended to all present, and in particular to Toni Kittle, Ngoc Nguyen and Claire Heald (in her absence) who had recently joined the Board, nominated by the Members, and to Steve Purdy who was being considered for co-option as a Trustee.

Apologies for absence were received from Claire Heald, Ben Stickley and Peter Dabrowa.

Thanks were expressed to Clive Paskell, who was retiring from the Trust on 31 August 2023.

Declaration of Interest

2. There were none.

Co-option of a new Trustee

3. The Board received the CV for Steve Purdy, who was proposed for co-option to the Board.

RESOLVED: to co-opt Steve Purdy to the Trust Board


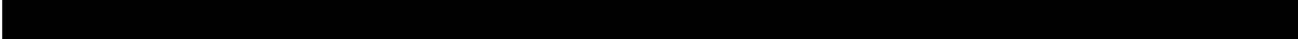

Minutes of the last meeting

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 were approved without amendment

Matters Arising

5. There were no matters arising which did not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

CEO Report

6. The Board received a report from the CEO on progress within the Trust.
7. By way of introduction, the CEO felt that the Executive (and through them, the Board) was now much clearer on the key challenges, strengths and weaknesses in individual schools than they had been when the CEO took up her role in January 2023. Furthermore, it was noted, Schools had been very open to change and challenge during the course of the year.
8. The Trust was coming to the end of the second term of the recovery plan put in place by the CEO, and in the majority of areas the necessary actions were completed and significant progress had been made.
9. A trustee noted that Termination Warning Notices had been received regarding Gusford Community Primary School and Hillside Primary School, whereas these were rated as 'Medium Risk' in the CEO's report. The CEO noted that the Notices had been anticipated. In the case of Gusford, Ofsted had considered (as part of in-year monitoring) that the School was making significant progress and that it was this monitoring visit that had led to the assessment of 'Medium Risk'. The CEO felt that Hillside remained a risk but that further work was being undertaken to strengthen the School.
10. 
11. 
12. 
13. In respect of Chesterton there had been change. An appointment of a substantive Headteacher had been made, and whilst the successful applicant had served as interim previously this process had been rigorous and externally-facing. Behaviour was improving in the school and there had been a raising of expectations in this regard. Standards were being raised too, and a number of staff had decided to leave the School as a result. Given the small size of the School, this had led to a proportionately large churn.
14. A trustee asked whether these schools were now fully staffed, and the Deputy CEO noted some vacancies in Chesterton in particular, including a Deputy Headteacher for which the new Headteacher would be involved in recruitment. However, it was noted that there was sufficient leadership capacity within the School.
15. A trustee noted the meeting of the Standards Committee earlier in the week, and the intention to recruit a Data Manager who would assist the Executive in the collation and assurance of key data. The Deputy CEO noted the appointee would take up post on 31 July 2023.

16. A trustee asked whether the outcomes from SATS earlier in the week had changed the risk assessment in any schools. The Deputy CEO noted that the overall position was as expected, with some good performance in some schools and more mixed performance elsewhere. It was noted that the Standards Committee would meet in the last week of August, to review these data and the results from public examinations, and that all trustees would be invited. In the meantime, actions would be taken in those schools where the outcomes felt particularly short.
17. A trustee noted the importance of analysis on where students fell short of expected standards, or reached the standards in two subjects rather than three, as so many nationally had only missed the standards by one or two marks. This would allow a more graduated response rather than a binary 'pass/fail' approach.
18. Returning to the CEO's report, the Chair noted that he and the CEO were putting pressure on the DfE to accelerate the pace of transfer in the interests of students and staff.
19. In respect of Burrowmoor, the Chair noted weekly safeguarding monitoring and asked the form in which this took. The CEO noted that this was the case for all vulnerable schools, and that the Safeguarding Lead took a sample of cases and how they were being dealt with. In the case of Burrowmoor, progress was good in this area.
20. In respect of Neal Wade, the Chair noted the role of the attendance consultant. The CEO reported on the actions taken as a result of the consultant's advice, and that the consultant was working at a range of schools within the Trust, and that the work to improve attendance was having a small (but sometimes slow) audit.
21. In respect of Chesterton, the CEO noted that the Principal of another school within the Trust had been appointed as Chair of the LGB. It was intended that this would be a short-term appointment whilst the Trust could develop others within the LGB to take this on.
22. In respect of Safeguarding, the Chair asked whether the types of safeguarding concerns in the School marked RED would be in an Ofsted category – no.
23. A governor noted that a number of tables within the CEO's report would benefit from a colour-coded key. This would be introduced for the next report.

Action: CEO to add a key to the next report

24. A governor asked about the implementation of Blue Sky and the CEO noted that this had been raised with leaders at the recent conference. There was, at present, a considerable variance in the approach and the Trust would be fairly directive in setting objectives, in the first instance.

Safeguarding

25. The Board noted that much of the content of the Safeguarding Report had been discussed by the Standards Committee earlier in the week.

26.



27.



[REDACTED]

28. [REDACTED]

29. In respect of the Single Central Record, a further deep dive would be carried out in the coming weeks. This would remain a key focus in the coming year.

30. Finally, trustees noted that refresher training on Safeguarding would be rolled out (for them, and for local governors) in September 2023.

Action: CEO

ESFA / DfE Update

31. The letter from the ESFA of 6 July 2023 was noted.

32. The Chair noted that two Termination Warning Notices had been received during the course of the week, which had been circulated to trustees. These related to Gusford Community Primary School and Hillside Primary School. The Chair intended a response to these be drafted shortly, and that the views of trustees taken into account as part of this.

33. The Chair noted that the DfE were supportive of the Trust, and were willing to allow the Trust a little time to resolve the situation provided they were able to demonstrate the capacity to achieve rapid improvement.

34. He contrasted this with LECA and Burrowmoor where the best interests of the students and the schools were served by them leaving the Trust. The Chair and CEO both felt that Gusford and Hillside would be best served by remaining within the Active Learning Trust.

35. The CEO was asked whether she felt that the Schools could be improved if they remained within the Trust, and she believed they did. The DfE would wish to see evidence of the improvement in the Board's responsibilities and composition, and of the systems and processes put into the schools.

36. The CEO felt that the changes at Gusford were more secure than at Hillside, but that in both cases changes had been significant. She outlined the support and improvements in both, but that the changes in Hillside were more structural in nature and would be more difficult to prove improvement to the DfE.

37. The Chair and the CEO would draft a response to both Notices, and these would be circulated to trustees for comment, though it was noted that the turnaround for response would be tight.

ACTION: Chair and CEO

Financial Planning

38. [REDACTED]

39. [REDACTED]

40. The Director of Finance noted the pay award for teaching staff of 6.5%, announced earlier in the day, and the additional funding that had been announced. This would be included within the 2023/24 budget.
41. It was noted that a new Director of Finance had been appointed, who would join over the summer on a part-time basis and full-time from October 2023. A period of handover with the outgoing Director of Finance had been agreed.
42. It was noted that support from SAAF was ongoing and would lead to changes in processes within the Finance Team. It was noted that the report from the SRMA would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

Action: Agenda

43. It was noted that the budget for 2023/24 would be presented to a meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee on Friday 21 July, and to a Trust Board meeting for approval on 3 August 2023.

Capital Plan

44. The Trust Board noted that this would be presented to the first meeting of the Trust Board in 2023/24.

Action: Agenda

Risk Register

45. The Trust Board received the Risk Register in its current form.
46. It was noted that the likelihood and impact of a number of risks was significant. Further work would be undertaken over the summer period to review these risks, and to refine the approach to risk management more widely. It was agreed that major risks had been identified and were being mitigated against, but that more work would be necessary to bring them inside a risk appetite.
47. A trustee suggested that an additional column be added to show trajectory of the risk over time.

Action: CEO to refine and develop the risk management approach over the summer period

Committees

48. The Board noted that the Standards Committee had met earlier in the week, but that minutes had not been produced in time for circulation. The Chair of that Committee gave an overview of the matters discussed, many of which had featured earlier in the Board's agenda.
49. The Board noted that the Finance & Resources Committee had met on 5 July 2023, and received the minutes. The Chair of the Board, in the absence of the Chair of the Committee, gave a brief overview of matters discussed, many of which had featured in the Board's discussions.
50. The Board noted that the Audit & Risk Committee had also met on 5 July 2023, and received the minutes of that meeting. The Board noted that the Trust was reviewing its approach to internal audit to provide greater external support than would be the case by the appointment of a single firm.
51. The Board received draft terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Committee.

RESOLVED: to approve the draft Terms of Reference

Governance

52. The Board noted progress against the action plan, and the boost provided to the Trust Board from additional members.
53. The Board received a proposed Induction Plan for trustees. It was agreed that this would need to be kept under review. New trustees were asked to feed back on their experience.

RESOLVED to approve the Induction Plan

54. The Board received proposed compositions for its Committees. It was noted that that the Chair had been given delegated authority to make these appointments on an interim basis and that, therefore, these new members had been able to join recent meetings of the respective committees.

RESOLVED to approve the composition of committees for 2023/24

55. The Board noted a proposed revised to establishing and maintaining its register of interests. It noted that this had been developed in conjunction with the Trust's auditors.

RESOLVED: to adopt the new approach

Any other business

56. A trustees asked for an update on the staff survey, and the CEO noted that this had closed the previous day with a response rate of 80% which was welcomed. Analysis of the responses, and actions, would be presented to the Finance & Resources Committee at a future meeting.

Date of next meeting

57. The next meeting would be held on 3 August 2023, at 11.30am, for the purposes of approving the 2023/24 budget.
58. A trustee noted that whilst all meetings of the Board and its committees had moved online in 2020 as a result of the pandemic there might be a benefit to returning to physical meeting, as these were felt more effective.
59. The Chair noted the challenge of location, for himself and some others, although he recognised the benefits and the sentiment behind the proposal. A suggestion was made of a hybrid approach where some meetings were held in person, and others online.
60. It was agreed that the Governance Consultant should seek colleagues' views when drafting the schedule of business.

ACTION: Governance Consultant