



The Active Learning Trust
ACTIVE LEARNERS • ACTIVE LEADERS • ACTIVE CITIZENS

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST
held on Thursday 10th February 2022
1pm via online Video-link**

MINUTES

Trustees & Members
Present:

Ms L. Adams
Mr S. Chamberlain (CEO)
Mr R. Dool (Chair)
Mr A. Singh
Ms S. Myers

Mr J. Beswick
Mr C. Bush
Ms M. Lloyd
Mr B. Stickley
Ms R. Weaver BEM

Officers Present:

Mr C. D’Cunha
Ms E. Hammond
Mr C. Paskell

Mr D. Hilton
Mrs K. Jarvis

Invited Guests:

Mrs N. Brooks

THE KEY DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING ARE SUMMARISED BELOW	
DECISION	Appoint Mrs Lucetta Crosskill as Chair of the LGB at NWA
DECISION	Appoint Mr Mark Straw as Chair of the LGB at HPS
RECOMMENDATION	none

MINUTES

Mr Dool opened the meeting by welcoming all present, and explaining that part of agenda item 7.2 on Trust Data would be taken out of order to allow for a presentation from Mrs Nicola Brooks.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, NOTICE & QUORUM

1.1. Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mrs Cutchey, Mr Kerr and Mrs Quinn.

1.2. Apologies were accepted.

1.3 Mr Singh, Ms Myers and Mr Stickley were warmly welcomed to their first Board meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1. No new interests were declared for items on the agenda

2.2. Mrs Jarvis reported declaration forms had been received from all but new members – and these are in the process of being collated.

7.2. TRUST DATA SYSTEMS MANAGER PRESENTATION

Mr Chamberlain introduced Mrs Nicola Brooks, the Trust's Data and Systems Manager. Mrs Brooks is leading a project to develop a comprehensive database, which would allow enhanced diagnostic reporting. Mr Chamberlain added that this is an exciting area of development for the Trust, that encompasses TEAMS Management and TEAMS governance.

Mrs Brooks gave an informative presentation that explained the concept of a Data Warehouse, that draws data flows from numerous resources to provide a comprehensive, live position for each school within the Trust, and summarises data to allow for comparisons against other Trust schools and national data. She explained that this will be an expansion on the current system, with data being gleaned from sources such as SIMS and Ofsted. Future aims include building an advanced and expansive warehouse to include finance and HR data. Mrs Brooks finished her presentation by informing Trustees that, although the vast majority of work can be done in-house, there may be a need to buy-in minimal consultancy expertise. She added that the work is currently at proof of concept stage.

Mr Beswick stated that he is aware of the difference a well-managed data warehouse can make, and that to have this available is a huge management tool. He applauded the decision to produce this in-house.

Mr Singh also praised the decision to build the system in-house but cautioned that there is also a need for expertise to support and advice. He asked how Mrs Brooks intended to retain levels of simplicity and consistency. Mrs Brooks replied that the project will be scoped out carefully, with consultancy being brought in when required to steer elements to ensure consistency.

Mr Stickley asked if consideration had been given to updating the Management Information System and how this could impact the project. Mrs Brooks replied that she is aware of other MIS available and how the majority work with currently available data warehouse systems.

She stated her belief that this is part of the reason that the system should be built in-house so that an extra level of freedom can be added to suit ALT needs. She added that she is part of networking groups that allow exploration of latest systems.

Ms Myers welcomed the 360 approach and the potential to gain support from other Trusts. She offered to initiate connections with other Trusts and professionals working in this area. Mrs Brooks expressed her thanks and welcomed the introductions, adding that she is very willing to work with others in order to meet the Trust objectives.

Mrs Brooks went on to outline the TEAMS governance project she is working on. She explained that the current TEAMS has multiple tenancies which has limitations, and TEAMS is not being harnessed to strengthen communication. Naming conventions are being considered, with an end goal of all logging into the same TEAM structure and the creation of a one-stop digital workplace. Mrs Brooks informed Trustees that there are external providers and she is in the process of reviewing a number of vendors alongside considering in-house capacity.

Mr Beswick stated that, in his experience, people are keen but need 'encouragement' to move away from what they are familiar and comfortable with. He added that training and a willingness to adapt are key.

Mr Stickley stated that moving to one tenancy would remove some of the issues. He asked if there would be merit in considering this. Mrs Brooks agreed, adding that part of the plan is to move all schools to same tenancy which would develop into an 'intranet' style model with an enhanced platform. She added that she would be very happy to look at how other Trusts have developed this. Mr Chamberlain confirmed that ALT have been moving towards a single tenancy for some time. Although there have been issues between the Suffolk and Cambridgeshire systems, this remains the overall aim.

Mr Dool thanked Mrs Brooks for attending and for updating Trustees on the projects. He assured her of the support of the Board to ensure success.

3. LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES

3.1 Approval of Chairs of Local Governing Bodies

Trustees were asked to consider the appointment of new chairs for the LGBs of Neale-Wade Academy and Hillside Primary School. Personal bios had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Ms Lloyd asked if there is a support mechanism for new chairs. Mr Chamberlain outlined the support in place, which includes he and Mr Dool meeting new chairs, termly Chairs briefings and regular contact. The Education Team are also deployed to support. Mr Dool added that he will be supporting the new chair at Hillside Primary School as part of his responsibilities/ specific interest for schools in the Ipswich area.

Mr Chamberlain replied that the Assistance Director of Education, who is an experienced Chair of Governors, has agreed to support. Ms Lloyd stated that the best support for any Chair is a good clerk - all agreed, with Mr Chamberlain informing Trustees that the Trust is in the process of recruiting a clerk to work across several Trust schools, with an emphasis on understanding MATS.

Following due consideration, it was agreed that Mrs Lucetta Crosskill be appointed as Chair of the Local Governing Body for Neale-Wade Academy, and Mr Mark Straw be appointed as Chair to Hillside Primary School.

3.2 Update on Local Governing Body Membership

The report circulated prior to the meeting noted the significant improvement in LGB membership. Mr Dool thanked those involved in moving this forward.

Earith Primary School and IEBs were discussed. Mr Chamberlain explained that IEBs are now retaining governors and using IEB meetings to model good practice in readiness for when LGBs are reinstated. He stated that, despite considerable attempts, it has proven difficult to recruit. He added that Helen Cassady, Assistant Director of Education, is working as a governor in another Trust as part of a programme to strengthen the ALT governance model.

Ms Weaver suggested approaching the local parish council for Earith. Mr Chamberlain explained the role of an IEB for the benefit of new Trustees.

Trustees noted the work undertaken to strengthen membership of Local Governing Bodies, and how new governors are supported.

4. CHAIR'S ACTION

4.1. Urgent Actions

Mr Dool informed Trustees that he had undertaken not undertaken any Chair's Actions since the last meeting.

4.2. Verbal report on school visits

Mr Dool reported on his recent visits to:

Neale-Wade Academy. Mr Horn reported that he appreciates the central team support. He understands the need to rebuild the leadership team. Mr Dool said that he found the environment slightly sterile, but felt that Mr Horn understands the issues he is facing and the school is moving in the right direction. Mr Chamberlain reported that, since Mr Dool's visit, Neale-Wade have invested in artwork. He added his view that the school is progressing with on-going work.

Kingsfield Primary School. Mr Dool reported that his visit to Kingsfield was a joy. The headteacher was enthusiastic and the work being done is brilliant. However, the physical environment of the school is poor and needs input. Mr Chamberlain reported that quotes are being obtained to improve the school buildings – the outside wall is to be re-rendered and new carpets will be laid at half term.

Mr Dool informed Trustees that he would be visiting Ipswich schools next and invited others that wished to join him to let Mrs Jarvis know.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9th DECEMBER 2021

5.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2021 were accepted as a true record, with one technical correction being required:

- Item 5 Chair's Action: remove the word "undertaken" – which had been duplicated.

5.2. Matters Arising & Action Points

Mr Stickley queried the process reported for approving the Annual Accounts. He and Mrs Jarvis agreed to discuss outside of the meeting.

6. BOARD COMMITTEES

6.1. Trustees noted the minutes of the Finance committee held on 9th December 2021 and received verbal feedback on the meeting held on the morning of 10th February 2022. Mr Dool informed Trustees that school budgets are reported on at every meeting and other areas such as capital spend are regularly reviewed.

6.2. Trustees noted the minutes of the Audit committee held on 9th December 2021 and received verbal feedback on the meeting held on the morning of 10th February 2022. Mr Beswick stated that the appointment of a Head of Internal Audit allowed a higher level of forensic detail and Mrs Driver is a key contributor to the committee. The two audits reported on were websites and policies and the validity of census data.

6.3. Trustees noted the minutes of the Quality of Education committee meeting held on 13th January 2022. For the benefit of new Trustees, Mr Bush explained that this is a relatively new committee. Mr Chamberlain reported that he and Mr Bush had met to work on a pilot for links between Trustees and the Trust Strategic Plan. They felt this was a useful exercise that considered options for a clear structure that is evidence based and would give a realistic and forensic way forward. Mr Chamberlain agreed to update the links to include new Trustees.

Mr Chamberlain informed Trustees that he had been invited to sit on a small group to consider DfE regulatory processes for schools and academies. Part of the discussion will consider whether the DfE and ESFA should merge, and the future role of the RSC. He will update Trustees at each meeting.

6.4. Trustees noted the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 13th January 2022.

Mr Dool reminded Trustees that the Finance Committee and the Quality of Education Committee are seeking to appoint chairs.

7. CEO's REPORT

7.1. Trustees confirmed they had received and reviewed the CEO report prior to the meeting. Mr Chamberlain took Trustees through his report, highlighting the following:

Section 1: Attendance & COVID-19 cases since January 2021

- Latest figures on staff and pupil positive cases presented.
- Pupil absence is lower than other trusts – Persistent absence has been increasing steadily and a whole-Trust strategy is being considered. Ms Myers stated that early intervention is key and successful case studies are worth reviewing. Mr Chamberlain agreed, informing Trustees that systems and processes are being reviewed with the aim of producing a toolkit as all schools approach currently PA differently. He added that schools monitor PA well.
- Non-covid absences being explored with Ms Hammond speaking to heads about ensuring consistency in authorised/non-authorised absences and sickness absence rates.

Section 2: Strategic Plan: Academy Leadership Changes

LECA: Lauren Phillips has been appointed as Principal at LECA. A new deputy head has been appointed internally. Staffing absence is high for various reasons. AIG meetings are showing improvement and Mr Chamberlain is confident that the school is moving in the right direction.

GUSFORD: there is a new leadership structure in place, and the school is moving forward under a new interim head. There has been significant change in the early days. The Chair of Governors is happy with progress to date.

BURROWMOOR: known to be on the RSC radar. There is progress on addressing leadership concerns. Mrs Kate Coates will be working with the school, without disrupting Kingsfield Primary School as she has expertise in the skill sets required at Burrowmoor. The IEB continues to be chaired by a member of the education team.

ALBERT PYE: Mr Chamberlain shared a letter of resignation from Mrs Mel Mills (who will be retiring at the end of the academic year) that highlighted the good work and relationship with the central Trust. The low pupil intake numbers at Ravensmere are a concern.

Section 3: Strategic Plan: Associate Leader Programme

- Assists with succession planning and retention.
- Now an accredited programme that builds on the success of the Talent & Capacity Register.
- There is a formalised brokering process.
- Mr Chamberlain explained that there are plans to build this to include support staff.
- Mr Bush asked about the quality assurance process for the people deployed and if there is a programme plan. In response, Mr Hilton explained the role of the broker, and the check points introduced to ensure all is on track and to measure impact. He added that there is a clearly agreed plan and timetable that listed expected outcomes, which is revisited throughout.
- Mr Chamberlain stated that the Early Careers Programme is going well, but there is a significant mentoring commitment which means capacity and workload are an issue in some cases. This is being monitored carefully.
- There are 31 participants on the NPQ programme. The teacher development has the potential to be extremely powerful

Section 4: Central Staff Update

New colleagues have been appointed:

- Sarah Ramshall-Smith has joined the central admin team.
- Robyn Jones has joined the central finance team.
- Christine Hopwood will be joining as Marketing Manager in March.

Section 5: Strategic Plan: Safeguarding

- Mr Chamberlain reported that the first ALT Safeguarding Conference is scheduled for 31st March. It will be an 'in-person' event and will take place at a venue in Bury St Edmunds. Safeguarding awards will be presented and the concept of Safeguarding Champions (pupils) will be introduced by the Safeguarding Alliance.
- There remains a need for greater consistency around schools' use of MyConcern. Mrs Young is working on training staff.
- Attendance strategies are being built into overall safeguarding strategy. Mrs Myers invited colleagues to visit areas of best practice that she can provide access to.
- Mr Hilton reported that safeguarding reviews and sharing of best practice are helping schools and connections are being made.

Section 6: ICT Strategy Update

Mr Chamberlain updated Trustees on progress. Referring to Mrs Brooks' presentation and other areas of ICT, he reported his confidence that the Trust is moving closer to the aims of the overall strategy.

Section 7: Buildings & Estate Updates: Carr Street & Peile Centre

Mr Chamberlain reported that he has written to the Ipswich MP to request support for the delay on the decision around the future of the Carr Street project. An initial delay of one year is expected to be announced by Ipswich LA. The land has been purchased by the borough council and extended delays may force them to consider options.

Work is on track for the Peile Centre to open at Chantry Academy just after Easter 2022. Students with mainstream difficulties have already been accepted on roll.

Section 8: Strategic Plan: School Improvement – Ofsted Readiness

Mr Hilton reported that Mr Tim Bristow has undertaken work with colleagues who lead securely good schools with a view to driving them to the next stage. His latest input was to build the capacity of leadership teams – there is no set formula and the work is driven by the needs of each school.

Section 9: Grants Awards Updates

Mr Chamberlain reported that Mrs Driver continues good work to secure grants for schools. £17,519 has been secured this year.

7.2. Data Dashboard Summary

Mr Chamberlain spoke about the overall picture of schools within the Trust, referring to the dashboard summaries that had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting.

Mr Stickley stated that he liked the Data Dashboard wheels, and asked what the judgements are based on. Mr Chamberlain explained the assessment process, which is based on the rounded judgements of colleagues that lead these areas and the views of the executive team collective. He gave examples of how these are evidence and report based.

Trustees noted the content of Mr Chamberlain’s comprehensive report and thanked him for its detail.

8. EXCLUSION DATA

Mrs Jarvis referred to a summary report on the number and type of exclusions that have been issued by schools across the Trust since the start of the academic year and the work undertaken by the Central Team to support schools, pupils and families. Four permanent exclusions have been issued. The reasons for the exclusions, and why there were issued as a last resort, were explored. Mrs Jarvis explained that this is one area that will be included in the Data Warehouse in future with more detailed information being pulled through from school sources.

In response to a question from Mr Beswick, Mrs Jarvis explained what constitutes a physical assault that may result in an exclusion. Mr Dool asked that the data be provided to the Safeguarding Committee for further discussion.

Trustees noted the date provided and that the support provided by the Central Team is appreciated by schools.

9. POLICIES AND STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

9.1. Policies

It was noted that there were no policies to ratify at this meeting

9.2. Information Governance Report

Trustees noted the content of the report from the Trust’s Data Protection Officer and noted the work being undertaken in this area across all schools. It was noted that the number of SAR requests seem to be rising. In response to a question from Mr Bush, Mr Chamberlain explained that the vast majority of freedom of information requests are received from members of the Press.

Ms Weaver noted that the number of data breaches has gone down. Mr Chamberlain agreed, adding that data breaches to date have all been the result of human error. He stated that none have reached the threshold for reportable breaches.

9.3. Annual Meeting Planner

Mr Dool explained that he had asked for an annual planner to be produced to show which areas should be reported on and are planned for each meeting throughout the year. The example provided has been pre-populated, and Trustees were asked to let Mrs Jarvis and Mr Dool know if there is any area they would like adding.

10. TIMES & DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 7th April 2022, at 1pm.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- a) Ms Hammond reported on a recent tribunal involving a former employee of the Isle of Ely Primary School. There is no outcome as yet, but Mr Dool thanked all involved for their support, especially Ms Lloyd who had attended on behalf of the LGB.
- b) Ms Hammond informed Trustees that the Executive Leadership Team had agreed that it was morally correct to award support staff a pay rise for 2021 before the end of the tax year and before changes in National Insurance (rise). She reminded Trustees that the pay award would be backdated to April 2021.

Ms Hammond went on to explain that she would be looking closely at Points 1 and 2 on the pay scale as they are currently below the national living wage. A discussion took place to consider options.

- c) Mr Beswick reminded all present that Trustee school visits that have taken place in the past have been successful and beneficial. He asked all to consider whether these should be re-introduced. Mr Dool agreed that the visits were extremely valuable experiences that allowed Trustees to gain a better understanding of schools. Mr Bush also advocated the value of such visits. It was agreed that a visit schedule should be scheduled for the Summer term. Mr Dool reminded Trustees that they were very welcome to join him for his Ipswich school visits in the Spring term.



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ACTION POINTS

Agenda Item	Who?	Action	Timeline
3.2.	KJ	Consideration and dialogue with parish councils in the recruitment and engagement of school governors	As appropriate
6.3.	SC	Update Trustee links on Trust Strategy Plan	By next meeting
12c	KJ	Circulate date for Chair's Ipswich school visits	ASAP
8.	KJ	Share exclusion data with Safeguarding Committee	For next committee meeting