

PART I MINUTES

TRUST BOARD MEETING

OF

THE LEARNING ALLIANCE (TLA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES (The Board):

HELD ON MONDAY 12th JULY 2021 at 9am.

Present:

Mr D Wootton (DW) (Chair)
 Mr A Pear (AP) (Vice Chair)
 Mr R Armstrong (RA)
 Mrs S Dempsey (SD)
 Mr R McCluney (RM)
 Mrs D Sinclair (DS)
 Mrs C Thomson (CT)
 Mrs J Millward (JM)

Absent:

Dr A Greenstein (AG)
 Mr M Ashcroft (MA)

In Attendance:

Mr M Cladingbowl, CEO (MC)
 Mr D Twambley – COO (DT)
 Mrs N Phillips-Director, Finance & Governance (NP)

Headteachers in Attendance for Item 3.1 Only (9am to 9.11am)

Mr J Barlow
 Mr M Casserley
 Mrs A Hooper
 Mr P Kingdom
 Miss J Mason
 Mr J Whittaker

Clerk: Mrs C Gritton

Part 1	
1. Welcome & Apologies	Action
The Chair welcomed Trustees, executive team members and Headteachers to the meeting. Apologies were received for Trustee MA and the meeting was quorate . Apologies were also received for Headteacher Jason Fraser.	
2. Declarations of Interest	
It was noted that there were no additional declarations of interest for items of this agenda.	
3. Minutes of the previous meetings and matters arising (paper 3.0)	
3.1 On behalf of all stakeholders, the Chair thanked the Headteachers for their dedication, skill and resilience in meeting the unprecedented challenges of this academic year. The Chair reported that Headteachers have come together as a supportive family to address those challenges as an opportunity for Trust collaboration, integration and positive change. The Board supports all TLA schools, respecting their distinctiveness and collaborative work. [Headteachers left at 9.11am]	
3.2 The Minutes of the Board meeting held on 17 th May 2021 were approved and will be signed by the Chair on Governor Hub.	
4. Reports (exception) from committees	
4.1 Governance & Search – Paper 4.1 TLA report from the Governance and Search Committee – July 2021 had been uploaded to Governor Hub (GH) prior to the meeting and was received . It was noted that Governors’ Skills’ Audits had been completed and work had begun on governance KPIs. As recommended in Paper 4.1, the Board noted the actions taken by the Governance and Search Committee.	
4.2 Finance & Staffing – Paper 4.2 TLA report from the Finance and Staffing Committee – July 2021 had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received . The Minutes of the Finance and Staffing meeting, held on 15 th June 2021, had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were noted. It was reported that systems integration, reporting and standardisation are good and good	

progress has also been made on the standardisation of a number of key HR procedures. The Trust is ending the year in a very strong financial position. The 2021/2022 budget has been provisionally signed-off by the Finance and HR Committee. The Committee had sought assurance from the COO, that the budgets would be discussed and reviewed with Headteachers. **The COO reported** that the focus of the review this year has been around staffing and that key assumptions of non-pay budgets have yet to be discussed with Headteachers. In the Autumn term there will be a mapping of the schools' strategic priorities against non-pay budget and reserves each school carries forward. Most schools have a surplus of reserves so a key task for the next year will be reinvestment and whilst those funds have not been definitively allocated, the finance team is comfortable that the non-pay budgets are in-line with previous years' will not raise any immediate concerns with the Headteachers. As **recommended in Paper 4.2, the Board noted** the actions taken by the Finance and HR Committee.

4.3 Audit & Risk – **Paper 4.3 TLA report from the Audit and Risk Committee – July 2021** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was **received. The Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee, held on 29th June 2021**, had been uploaded to GH prior the meeting and were **noted. It was reported** that the Committee focus has been on the risk management framework and external review feedback will be incorporated. The Risk Register (RR) has been reviewed and has progressed significantly. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee reminded all Trustees that the obligation to review the RR sits with all Trustees. As **recommended in Paper 4.3, the Board noted** the actions of the Audit and Risk Committee.

4.4 Interim Executive Board (IEB) – **The Minutes of The Oaks Academy (TOA) IEB meetings held on 10th May and 7th June 2021**, had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **noted. It was reported** that the LGB induction meeting took place last week and the IEB are confident in the new Governors' skills and experience. Behaviour issues at the school are significantly reduced and staff can now focus on building the curriculum and developing teaching and learning. **The Chair noted** the Board's ability to rely on the IEB's continued, shadowing support of the LGB in the short-term and thanked the IEB for their work.

4.5 Local Governing Boards – **Paper 4.5 TLA report on LGB meetings** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was **received. The Summer Term LGB Meetings' Minutes of each of the TLA schools** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **noted. It was reported** that it had been a successful round of meetings, with a focus on Covid and catch-up. Other points were as follows:

- All schools had requested regular finance information and Risk Register updates – the COO noted those requests are being addressed.
- Cheshire Studio School (CSS) and Knutsford Academy (KA) have requested that the trust consider consolidation of Health and Safety contracts in order to achieve savings.
- Governors had sent thanks to their schools' staff for their hard work this year.

The Chair noted the LGB theme of mental health and wellbeing for staff and students and **reported** that the requested Health and Safety consolidation would now be under Trust consideration.

5. Update from CEO

5. Paper 5.0 CEO Update 12.07.21 had been uploaded to GH and was **received. It was reported** that:

- With the exception of CPS (being Staffordshire not Cheshire East (CE) Local Authority (LA)), primaries are currently submitting end-of-year assessment data, generated from standardised assessments and Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). This will enable CE to provide standardised, comparative data, which will be provided to the Board, together with KS4 and KS5 quality assured TAG data, as soon as available in the Autumn term.
- Progress 8 data so far, shows much the same position as last year with some improvement over time. However, 2022 Progress 8 data is anticipated to show an apparent dip. **CT reported** that the CEO is correct to anticipate a national dip in Progress 8 if there is a return to 2019 standards. However, examinations may not return to 'normal' in 2022 and national standards are the current subject of considerable Government discussions, so such a dip may not occur.
- Confidence levels in Trust schools' sex education are high although there is some work to do on the Everyone's Invited agenda; matters have been taken account of in relation to safeguarding provisions and in the Autumn term, TLA schools will be asked to carry out retrospective analysis to assess the number of sexual harassment and assault incidences.

One TLA school has been mentioned on the Everyone's Invited site and the CEO assured the Board that work continues to be done on this, across the Trust.

- 5.1 Year in review – **Slides 5.1 Year in review** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **received**. Key achievements have included the building of strong relationships and trust throughout the Trust, fostering a keen sense of ambition for TLA schools, whilst maintaining their local identities and diversities. Policies, procedures, branding and training harmonisation and systems' integrations, are progressing well. Previously under-subscribed schools have strong numbers coming through, exclusions are reducing and there are some very strong, excellent teaching practices within TLA schools, which are being developed to share across all TLA schools. **The Board asked how the Trust can ensure that new Headteacher appointments are aligned to Trust values and what mentoring and leadership training is provided. It was reported** that Headteacher appointments thus far have been internal Trust appointments, so confidence in Trust value alignment is relatively good. The CEO is providing coaching and mentoring support for the Headteacher of TOA and the Trust finance team are in a strong position to support Headteachers in finance matters. **The Board asked by what percentage exclusions rates are falling and whether exclusions' trends have been analysed, for example whether exclusion rates for SEND are reducing. It was reported** that exclusion rates, which had been high at SWS, had halved. Behaviour is being addressed and is progressing positively. There has been a small exclusions' spike at TOA but schools are working closely with the LA to find the best solutions for students at risk of exclusion. Improvements in SEND provisions are continuing as the numbers of students with SEND needs are increasing at both SWS and TOA. **The Board asked whether there have been any permanent exclusions. It was reported that** there have been permanent exclusions at TOA. The school has worked closely the LA to ensure the alternative provisions provided for excluded students are in their best interest and that they can access specialist provisions where needed. **The Board stressed the importance of not using permanent exclusions to force the LA to seek specialist provision.** The CEO assured the Board that the improving relationships between TLA schools and the LA continue to be honest and transparent. The Chair commended the hard work done by schools.
- 5.2. Strategic objectives – Trust-wide progress – **Paper 5.2 Trust progress against strategic and operational priorities** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was **received. ACTION:** 5.2a In paper 5.2 the CEO/COO will include key metrics in 'Overarching target' column and 5.2b will ensure reporting is hierarchical to ensure consistency of understanding through progressive iterations.
- 5.3. School Reviews – All **School Reviews** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **noted**.
- 5.4. School self-assessments against Strategic Objectives – **Paper 5.4 Summary of school self-assessments** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was **received**. All **School self-assessment grids** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **noted**. **The CEO reported** that in previous years, schools would be expected to use performance data to formulate assessments, but due to Covid, some data had not been available. The CEO had frank conversations with all Headteachers and Chairs of LGBs and areas for development are looking to define, refine and improve individual schools' offers and outcomes. **The Chair noted** that in general, self-assessments aligned well with Trust reviews and areas for development are as expected. [Detailed discussions are reported in Part 2]. **The CEO reported** that September refocusing and reprioritising may include further prioritisation of SEND.
- 5.5. Strategic Planning 2021-22 – **Supplementary papers – Enablers** had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were **received**. Strengths include building towards a safeguarding beacon, staff wellbeing and community and areas for continued development include the learning environment, equality and diversity and ICT.
- 5.6. Update on schools (COVID, Assessments, etc.) - Due to the current Covid dynamics, all schools had been asked to provide the CEO with a post-weekend update. Under Public Health England advice, increasing numbers of students and staff across TLA schools are currently isolating. Most TLA schools close on Friday 16th July, but some may have to close early due to rising Covid isolation cases. The CEO will keep the Board informed. Despite Covid, attendance across the Trust schools has been at, or above national student and staff figures. Planning is underway to address in advance, as far as possible, potential Autumn Covid issues, whilst balancing staff need for a summer break and the Board will be advised of any changes and updates during the summer.

CEO/COO

6. Update from COO	
<p>6. Paper 6.0 COO Update 12.07.21 had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received. It was reported that the 2021-22 budget was reviewed in detail in the Staffing and Finance Committee meeting in June. Overall budget figures, remain unchanged and were recommended to the Board for approval by the Finance and Staffing Committee and the executive. Paper 6.0 also recommended that the Board note the remaining contents of Paper 6.0. The Board noted those contents.</p> <p>6.1. Budget approval - Paper 6.1 Budget for approval 2021-22 had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received. The Board noted that TLA were using the former Cmat banking deal with Barclays, which incur fees and asked why TLA were not using KMAT former banking deal with Barclays which did not incur those fees and additionally earned interest. The COO reported that the legal identity of TLA was formerly Cmat, so Cmat banking had been retained. The fees of c.£3k are modest and not considered material against turnover, so whilst it is an area for consideration, there are no concerns. The 2021/2022 TLA Budget was unanimously approved by the Board. ACTION: COO to liaise with Headteachers regarding detail of budget</p> <p>6.2. Management accounts - Paper 6.2 Latest management accounts summary had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received. It was reported that it is an improving picture; costs have reduced, income has increased as all schools have benefited from additional supplementary Covid funding. TOA is forecast to fall below its budget due to a series of planned spending measures and decisions around senior leadership staffing, but reserves remain robust. All other schools remain on or just below budget and outturn is not dissimilar to the budget forecast position. The Chair was pleased to note that Paper 6.2 reported that the outturn is considerably in excess of the original budget forecast. ACTION: The COO will continue to update Trustees on outturn position over the summer.</p> <p>6.3. Risk Register – Paper 6.3 TLA Risk register June 2021 had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received.</p> <p>6.4. Health and Safety checklist – Paper 6.4 Health and Safety Checklist had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and was received. Schools’ Health and Safety policies have been modelled on the Trust policy and addendums added to meet individual schools’ needs. Schools have learnt from incidents and with Trust support, have worked to ensure mitigation of potential future risks. The Board noted the wide spread of reported incidents asked whether schools received Health and Safety policy inductions and are aware of the required procedures. It was reported that there remain some inconsistencies in reporting, but that they are being addressed. A Trust Health and Safety Working Party is under consideration.</p> <p>6.5. Integration update – Papers 6.5 Trust integration and 6.5a Trust integration status grid had been uploaded to GH prior to the meeting and were received. It was reported that good progress has been made on core functions. A key area for development is in ICT, for which the Trust may be eligible for capacity funding. The Board noted the progress made in Trust integration. ACTION: JM to provide the COO with contact details for cyber security company</p>	<p>COO</p> <p>COO</p> <p>COO</p> <p>COO</p> <p>JM/COO</p>
7. Strategic safeguarding update	
<p>7. It was reported that the Trust has made excellent progress in safeguarding. The Headteacher at TOA, Mr Kingdom is a skilled and experienced safeguarding lead. CPOMS software is now used across the Trust to monitor safeguarding. Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCiES) has been utilised for both training and auditing purposes and Governors reported positively on their recent SCiES training. Schools are regularly collaborating on safeguarding best-practice and knowledge.</p>	
8. Feedback from Chairs’ Forum	
<p>8. It was reported that the Chairs’ Forum has been significant in building trust in TLA throughout TLA schools. Chairs understand and support the Trust vision and are keen to work with the Trust. LGB Chairs had complimented the Scheme of Delegation and comments were constructive.</p>	
9. Feedback from Trust Board to LGBs	
<p>9. The Board’s gratitude to LGBs had been shared at their individual school meetings.</p> <p>9.1 The CSS/KA request for consolidation of their Health and Safety contracts (as referred to at item 4.5) is under Trust consideration.</p>	

10. Calendar for 2021-22	
10. The 2021/2022 meetings' schedule will be provided shortly and the first Board meeting is currently scheduled for 18 th October. ACTION: Chair/NP to consider meetings' length allocation to ensure time to cover all items.	Chair/NP
11. AOB	
11. A Trustee Away Day is planned for 13 th September 2021 with a strategic development focus.	
Date and Time of Next Meeting: Proposed 18th October 2021	
Meeting closed at 11.07am	

ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING			
AGENDA ITEM AND ACTION	By When	By Whom	Confirmed Complete
From 12th July Meeting			
5.2a In paper 5.2: Trust progress against strategic and operational priorities, CEO/COO to include key metrics in 'Overarching target' column and	September 2021	CEO/COO	
5.2b Ensure reporting is hierarchical to ensure consistency of understanding through progressive iterations.			
6.1 COO to liaise with Headteachers regarding details of budget.	ASAP	COO	
6.2 COO to continue to update Trustees on outturn position over the summer	Over Summer 2021	COO	
6.5 JM to provide the COO with contact details for cyber security company	ASAP	JM/COO	
9. Matters brought to the Board by LGBs: NP to review feedback regarding Trustee consideration and actions.	September 2021	NP	
10. Chair/NP to consider meetings' length allocation to ensure time to cover all items.	September 2021	Chair/NP	
DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Proposed 18th October 2021			