

MINUTES - Meeting of the Trust Board of The Learning Partnership

THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Held on Thursday 14 December 2023, at 1:15pm

Venue - Leighton Academy, Minshull New Road, Crewe, CW1 3PP

Trustees present:

Mr David Wootton
 Mr Bob Armstrong
 Mr John Clough
 Mr Robert McCluney
 Dr Martin Ashcroft
 Mr Simon Kidwell - *left at 3:45pm*
 Mrs Helen Ranson
 Mrs Kathy August

In attendance

Mr Dan Thomas (CEO)
 Mr David Twambley (DCEO)
 Dr Allan Howells (Director of Quality) - *left at 4:05pm*
 Mrs Eve Smith (Clerk)
 Mr Jonathan Dudley (Auditor) - *left at 2:05pm*

Apologies:

Mr Andrew Pear
 Mrs Alison Greatbanks

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Welcome and apologies</p> <p>Board members were welcomed by the Chair, it was confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were received from A. Pear and A. Greatbanks. Apologies were accepted by the board.</p> <p>2. Minutes</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting held on 5 October 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>3. Declarations and confirmations</p> <p>There were no additional declarations of interest concerning items on the agenda.</p>	
<p>4. Chair’s report – Education, Standards and Performance</p> <p>The Chair of the Committee, Mr Kidwell, provided a brief summary of the recent meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee had discussed the trust approach to school improvement, which is to know, challenge and support all schools. The focus in the first term has been on Directors of School Improvement developing relationships with school leaders and understanding the context of each school. The committee had received detailed information on the schools across the trust that are due Ofsted and had recently received inspections. Daven and Sir William Stanier had been inspected this term. The Oaks and Shavington are due inspection imminently. <p>5. Chair’s report – Finance and Staffing</p> <p>Mr Armstrong provided Trustees with an overview of the recent committee meeting. The committee had received presentations from Directors of Finance and HR and had been provided with updates on strategic priorities.</p>	

<p>The committee had ratified the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TLP Pay Policy • TLP Capability • TLP Performance Development Policy • TLP Recruitment and Selection Policy • TLP Flexible Working Policy. <p>The committee had scrutinised the period 2 numbers, outturn for 2022/23 and projections for 2023/24. The meeting that will take place in February 2024 will focus on the period 4 figures and the year-end position in more detail and there will be more information provided at the spring term trustees meeting.</p> <p>Challenge: Do the trust have a strategic plan to address their carbon footprint? Response: We are looking holistically about that and the policies and procedures around it. We also need to take student voice in to account and how we can use that effectively. We need to think about our sustainability agenda, and how we can engage with projects and looking at strategic partnerships.</p> <p>6. Chair’s report – Governance</p> <p>The key focus of the Governance Committee meeting had been governor recruitment, retention, and training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed that a whole Trust conference would be held this academic year. • Equality and diversity are of importance to ensure that there is representation from communities served. • Skills audits have been completed for each school and will inform training needs. • AH has a good oversight of the strengths and weaknesses of LGB’s and is addressing any potential issues. <p>Action: Trustees asked for information on the process for recruitment, retention, and training of governors and how succession planning is being considered.</p> <p>7. Chair’s report – Audit and Risk</p> <p>Mr McCluney updated Trustees on the recent Audit and Risk committee meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee had received a detailed updated from Auditors Jackson Stephens regarding the recent audit of The Learning for Life Partnership. It was concluded that the academy was in a good financial position as it transferred into the new trust. • The committee had also reviewed the audit of The Learning Alliance carried out by Dains Accountants; this would be discussed further under item 8. • The committee had confirmed that the Risk Register would be reviewed more frequently. • There is further work to be done on the Risk Register/risk processes to ensure that it reflects the needs of the schools. • Trustees agreed that they were satisfied with the format of the Risk Register and that it is a live document, however it was noted that there was a need to capture the trajectory of the risk and how the management of the risk is progressing over time (is it an increasing or decreasing risk). • It was noted by the committee that any items on the Risk Register that are red would be brought to Trustees. 	<p>Action: AH</p>
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<p>Response: I would agree that needs to be reviewed as a trust, it would provide us with more flexibility on how we utilise our funds. As a board there should be a strategic discussion on it.</p> <p>Action: Trustees to consider GAG pooling in greater depth at the next meeting (including case studies).</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees approved the Audit Clearance Memorandum and Trustees Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2023</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mr Dudley was thanked for his time and left the meeting at 2:05pm</i></p>	<p>Action: DTw</p>
<p>9. Chair's Report</p> <p>The Chair informed Trustees that there are regular meetings with the CEO and DCEO and there is effective communication between the Chair, Vice Chair and trust executive team.</p> <p>Following the first board meeting, the vision and values of the trust have been refined to be more coherent, Trustees had received information on the trust brand strategy prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees approved the current Vision, Mission, Values and Behaviours.</p> <p>Action: Strategic Visioning workshop to be arranged in the spring/summer term to consider potential refinements or revision for September 2024.</p> <p>Chair's Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first Chair's Forum had been held, with separate meetings running for primary and secondary chairs. Chaired by the Vice Chair of Trustees, the first meeting was successful and focused on the merger and recruitment and retention of governors. <p>Challenge: Is the documentation that is presented to LGB's being standardised to ensure consistency across the schools?</p> <p>Response: It is more standardised in primaries, for some of the secondaries and the UTC the information is more bespoke it is hard to have one standard template for these. The Directors of School Improvement are working with Heads on the information that is presented to LGB's and agendas and Headteacher reports are standardised. That is something that is work in progress, but the information that is being presented to governors is improving to ensure that it is relevant and allows LGBs to challenge effectively.</p> <p>Action: Trustees requested examples of Headteacher reports.</p> <p>Action: Director of Quality to set up a supplementary folder in Governor Hub to put examples into the folders.</p>	<p>Action: DTw/AH</p> <p>Action: AH</p> <p>Action: AH</p>

<p>Regional Directors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust leaders are building relationships Regional Directors in the northwest and the west midlands. All members of the trust board had been vetted by DfE and thought of as a strong and sustaining trust. <p>Florence McWilliams project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLA had supported a free school project in Stoke-on-Trent working with Educo Academies Trust. The project has faced many challenges and delays, TLA had been supporting the empty MAT. Questions had been raised regarding the deliverability of the project, furthermore relationships with Educo and the Florence McWilliams board have broken down and they are questioning capacity and capability of the TLP as the preferred strong trust. Costs incurred currently stand at £63,365 (salary for Exec Headteacher) <p>Trustees were asked to consider if they feel TLP should continue to competitively engage with other trusts to secure the opening of Florence McWilliam free school.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mr Kidwell left the meeting at 3:45pm</i></p> <p>Challenge: What will be the next stages of this process? Are central staff being utilised on this project when there are schools in the trust that require support?</p> <p>Resolved: We do not know the detail at the moment, there is a new chair of the academy that we have not been able to engage with. It has been a protracted process, and the chair has raised issues with capacity and performance. Central team staff have worked on this project, and we have provided them with support during the process.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the matter by Trustees, it was noted that the trust already faces significant challenges in two of its secondary schools and questioned if there was capacity to support another school. Trustees were unanimous in their opinion that TLP should cease their relationship with the Florence McWilliam’s project.</p> <p>The CEO and DCEO thanked Trustees for their input and that they would keep them informed of any further developments.</p>	
<p>10. CEO Report</p> <p>The CEO provided Trustees with an overview of his principal areas of focus during the first term of the new trust. The CEO has been focusing on outward facing activities such as trust and school growth and focus on regional and national partners.</p> <p>Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All primary schools in the trust to lower their age range to 2. The trust has been approached by the local authority to develop SEN (Special Educational Needs) units at Leighton Academy and Sir William Stanier. To develop the provision of vocational education for 14-18-year-olds using the existing model of the Studio School, creating satellite schools in Crewe. Dove Bank Primary School will join the trust in January 2024. WCLA Nursery will be open in January 2024. Ongoing discussions with the onsite pre-school at Egerton to join the trust. 	

<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a civic leader in Crewe to support children within the locality. • Development of 6th form teaching and learning project with Sir John Bruner Trust to raise attainment in Key Stage 4. <p>Trust Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust have been nominated for the for ‘MAT Leadership Team of the Year’ awards and will be attending the ceremony on 7 March 2024. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Dr Howells left the meeting at 4:05pm</i></p> <p>Challenge: Do you use a PR/marketing team? Resolved: Yes, we use a company called PLRM, they support with trust level PR, crisis management, strategic counsel etc. They are on a retainer.</p> <p>Challenge: What is the expected impact of lowering the age range and providing a nursery provision in each of the schools? Response: If I take the example of Daven, we struggle to attract parents as there is no wrap around care. The aim is to have wrap around care in all the schools which can be provided within the Nursery provision. Wrap around care is also a significant income generating scheme that can be reinvested back into the schools. There is also evidence to suggest that high quality early years provision can generate sustained and significant improvements on children’s outcomes, we would also be generating a pipeline of children that would feed into our primary schools.</p> <p>The board confirmed they are supportive of the strategic direction of the CEO’s role and how this aligns with the key strategic priorities of the trust.</p>	
<p>11.DCEO Report – Progress against Strategic Priorities</p> <p>The DCEO informed Trustees that his focus was on inward facing activities, such as progress against strategic priorities, school improvement and operational dashboards and metrics.</p> <p>The DECO gave a brief summary of Strategic School Improvement Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion - establishing a culture of continuous improvement based on knowing the trust schools through data analysis and quality assurance etc. • People systematically identifying and utilising expertise to support school improvement. • Performance defining quality education and establishing accountability frameworks to embed this. 	
<p>12.Strategic Safeguarding update</p> <p>Action: To be deferred to trustee meeting to be held on Wednesday 20 March 2024.</p>	Action/AH
<p>13. Data dashboard – School Improvement</p> <p>Trustees received data dashboards for the primary and secondary schools within the trust. The board were informed that the dashboards had been scrutinised fully at the Education, Standards and Performance Committee. Most significant issues to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 7 new headteachers across the trust all requiring additional levels of support. • Writing is a focus for all schools. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of SEND students across all schools in the trust. • KS4 results were disappointing, recruitment to 6th forms is also down on previous years. • Admissions are positive across the high schools for Year 7, there have been significant increases for Sir William Stanier and The Oaks Academy. Knutsford Academy is full in Year 7. <p>Challenge: How do you measure the current performance of schools and the impact that the School Improvement</p> <p>Response: The executive team meet every Monday morning to discuss all the schools. We RAG rate all schools across each of the service lines and there is a three weekly monitoring meeting when we look at each school in more detail. The Directors of Primary and Secondary have regular ‘keeping in touch’ meetings with senior leaders and Mike Cladingbowl carries out regular quality assurance visits.</p>	
<p>14. Data dashboard – Operational Finance, Health and Safety and risk register</p> <p>Trustees received a financial operating summary for 23/24, it was noted that financial information had been scrutinised fully at the Finance and Staffing Committee.</p> <p>Trustees also received a Health and Safety update; a Health and Safety audit had taken place across all schools during the autumn term.</p> <p>Trustees noted that all schools were found to be compliant and meeting Health and Safety guidelines.</p>	
<p>15.AOB</p> <p>The executive team were congratulated by Trustees on the successful merger of the two trusts and for being nominated in the Multi Academy Trust Association awards for ‘MAT Leadership Team of the Year.’</p> <p>The meeting closed at 4:18pm</p>	
<p>Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 20 March 2024 1:30pm-3:30pm</p>	