

PART I MINUTES

**TRUST BOARD MEETING
OF
THE LEARNING ALLIANCE (TLA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
HELD online ON MONDAY 31st January 2022 at 9am.**

Present:

Mr D. Wootton (DW) (Chair)
Mrs C. Thomson (CT)
Mr M. Ashcroft (MA)
Mr R. McCluney (RM)
Dr A. Greenstein (AG) (from 9.27am)
Mr R. McCluney (RM)

In Attendance:

Mr M. Cladingbowl, CEO (MC)
Mr D. Twambley – COO (DT)
Mr A. Howells – As of 1/2/22 TLA Director of Quality
Ms L. Takaki – HR Manager (From 10am for item 5.3)
Mr J. Whittaker – Knutsford Academy Headteacher (JW) (from 10.46am)
(For item 6.2)

Clerk: Mrs C. Gritton

Absent:

Mrs J. Millward (JM), Mr A. Pear (AP), Mr R. Armstrong (RA), Mrs S. Dempsey (SD)

Part 1

Administration	Action
<p>1. The Chair <u>welcomed</u> everybody to the meeting. <u>Apologies</u> were received and accepted from JM, AP, RA and SD and the meeting was <u>quorate</u>.</p> <p>2. It was noted that whilst the CEO is a Trustee of the Shaw Education Trust, there was no conflict of interest with regard to item 5.1 and there were no additional <u>declarations of interest</u> for items of this agenda.</p> <p>3. Paper 3.0 The <u>Minutes</u> of the Board meeting held on 13th December 2021 uploaded to Governor Hub (GH) prior to the meeting, were approved and will be signed by the Chair on GH. <u>Matters Arising</u> – The Action Log was updated as noted thereon and there were no Matters Arising.</p>	
4. Reports (Exception) from Committees	
<p>4.1 <u>Finance and Staffing</u> – Paper 4.1 Finance and Staffing Jan 2022 uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was received. In the absence of the Chair of the Finance and Staffing Committee (F&S Committee), RA, a member of the F&S Committee briefly outlined the information provided in Paper 4.1 and also reported that the F&S Committee had an informative conversation about the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, adopted by the Trust. It was reported that the F&S Committee were satisfied that the Trust Scheme of Delegation, which had been rolled out following a streamlining process, provides clarity and transparency. The F&S Committee had been assured that costs can be reduced to budgeted levels when additional Covid funding is no longer available. As recommended in Paper 4.1 the Trust Board noted its contents.</p> <p>4.2 <u>Governance and Search</u> – Paper 4.2 Governance and Search and Supplementary Paper 4.2a IEB ToR 31.01.2022 uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, were received. AH was introduced and welcomed to the Trust. Keen to ensure that efficient, consistent governance is present across the Trust, as recommended in Paper 4.2, the Trust Board approved the proposed governance review by the incoming Director of Quality and approved the amendments to the LGB and IEB Terms of Reference.</p> <p>[AG joined the meeting at 9.27am].</p>	

5. Strategic Matters

5.1 Trust Strategic Priorities – Paper 5.1 Trust Strategic Objectives 2021-2022 – 31 January 2022, Paper 5.1a Annex 1 Schematic, Paper 5.1b Annex 2 31 January 2022 and Paper 5.1c Annex 3 Project Swimlanes uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, were received.

5.1.1 **Trustees noted that** of the 15 overall Trust Strategic Priorities, the three key priorities for 2021/2022 to support the schools and Trust in achieving the Trust's vision are: 1. supporting TLA schools in school improvement, and 2. support TLA schools in extending their influence and 3. providing greater standardisation of policy and processes. **It was reported that** target setting and monitoring ensures the Trust is aware of how its schools are performing and it is the responsibility of each LGB to consider individual school teaching and learning data. Good communication and data flow are key to the Trust knowing that the LGBs are fulfilling that responsibility.

- **Trustees asked how the Trust intends to roll-out Power BI platforms.** It was reported that as part of the data collation and analysis for item 6.2 of this Agenda, the Director of Learning and Development has collaborated with the Shaw Education Trust to identify a suitable platform. Whilst the Trust has the skills and experience to maintain data dashboards, it does not currently have the skills and experience to build them, so a company will come in to carry out data gathering, build SIMS packages and provide educational dashboards above that.
- **Trustees asked whether there exist any areas of concern for which data is not able to be captured, but which are important to overall education.** It was reported that consideration has been given to how to build in qualitative reporting data and Headteachers draw on a wide range of available resources. For example, all TLA schools provide extracurricular activities and whilst it is more challenging to provide useful qualitative proxies, it is important to set targets to drive improvement, so extra curriculum participation numbers are monitored.
- **Trustees asked whether consideration has been given to what balance can be achieved between leader measures and after-the-fact data measures?** It was reported that the rag-ratings of objectives illustrates some degree of balance, providing curriculum delivery details, stakeholder engagement and logistical information, aspiring to provide a more balanced picture of the schools and highlight the culture of the schools and sites' cohesiveness. Lead measures include the analysis of mock examination results to help predict final outcomes, to inform and tailor school improvement interventions. Key to this is the rapidity with which the historical data is turned around to inform future actions.

5.1.2 **Trustees advised that** the Trust Board has trust in the Executive and as such, executive judgments may be included in data dashboards in the form of meaningful, qualitative data proxies, to further highlight information such as schools' cultures and stakeholders' views, including those of staff, parents, students and community. The CEO thanked Trustees for the helpful input and will further consider the balance of data measures going forward.

5.1.3 **Trustees approved the Strategic Plan 2021/2022 in Paper 5.1 including drafts in Annexes 1,2 and 3.**

[LK joined the meeting at 10.01am]

5.2. Reserves Deployment – Paper 5.2 Reserves Deployment and Paper 5.2a Reserves by school with commentary uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, were received. **It was reported that** the healthy reserves position across the Trust had been considered in detail by the Finance and Staffing Committee (F&S Committee), with particular regard to the Trust's approach as to how deploy those funds. **Trustees advised that** it is always important to ensure that funds, accumulated for whatever given reason, are properly deployed so as to be impactful on learning and wellbeing and that impact must be measured; building works must not affect results and where schools have unexpectedly high reserves, spending must have an intense focus on impact to ensure *rapid* improvement. It is particularly important to be able to articulate and justify high reserves' funds given the current political and media interest in the subject.

5.2.1 **The COO assured Trustees that** strategic rationales for accumulation and planned spend have been carefully considered. For example, at Black Firs Primary School (BFPS), funding would be utilised to meet Local Authority compliance with regard to capacity, whilst at Knutsford Academy (KA), investment is looking to address current and future curriculum needs and project developments are in part, informed by data such as student number predictions and student surveys asking what they need from the school, what they find problematic, what facilities they would find useful etc.

<p>5.2.2 The COO further assured Trustees that the Executive is adopting a systematic approach to ensure lessons are learnt and future deployment of funds is based on impact of current deployment, therefore agreeing in advance, how impact will be assessed and a timeframe for doing so.</p> <p>5.2.3 As recommended in paper 5.2, The Trust Board noted the approach to reserves deployment across Trust schools, and the targeted, differentiated approaches to supporting schools being adopted by the Trust Executive and shared services team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees asked what role the Trust Board has in approving capital expenditure? It was reported that the Scheme of Financial Delegation dictates that spend over £100k must go to the F&S Committee for approval and whilst spend over £50k does go to F&S Committee for input and insight of the business case and rationale, delegated authority sits with the CEO and COO. <p>5.3. <u>Wellbeing</u> – A report by LK – Paper 5.3 Wellbeing - Jan 2022 uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was received. It was reported that the Education Inspection Framework now mentions that student and staff wellbeing will be considered in inspections. The Trust has implemented the DfE Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (ESWC) and each school has their own wellbeing initiatives from which best practices can be drawn. The HR team have provided a template to enable schools to rag-rate themselves on wellbeing. Staff surveys have been carried out and results continue to be fed back to HR and AH will assist with a quality audit to help plan how to best utilise the data gathered. HR hold fortnightly KIT meetings with Headteachers and trade unions have articulated their support of the Trust approach so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees asked whether there is consistency of wellbeing approaches across Trust schools? It was reported that from the data gathered so far, there are inconsistencies; HR will consider challenging schools to evidence where they have rag-rated themselves green in certain areas. The Trust Wellbeing Policy and other policies which support wellbeing are not widely communicated, nor consistently applied and it is anticipated that working parties will help address these issues and a staff handbook is being prepared which will contain distinct messages on policies and procedures. Policies are undergoing refinement in terms of diversity and inclusion. <p>As recommended therein, Trustees noted the contents of Paper 5.3 and confirmed their support for the very important wellbeing initiatives, CT offering to provide practical advice and support going forward. Trustees thanked LK for her work and LK left the meeting at 10.40am.</p> <p>5.4. <u>Strategic safeguarding update</u> – In the absence of the Trust Safeguarding Trustee, AP, the CEO reported that the Trust safeguarding responsibility is in the process of being relocated, to allow Mr Kingdom to focus on his role at The Oaks Academy (TOA). Safeguarding visits’ programmes continue and Egerton Primary School (EPS) and Congleton High School (CHS) both recently received positive audit feedback and there are no endemic nor systematic provision issues at either school, as corroborated by the audits. ACTION: The CEO and COO will give consideration as to when it might be appropriate to provide the Board with further information about national safeguarding issues such as sexualisation and to provide assurance on recent safeguarding issues arising in schools.</p> <p>There followed a short comfort break, from 10.4am to 10.50am.</p>	CEO/COO
6. Operational Matters	
<p>6.1. <u>Schools update, including COVID</u> – Paper 6.1 Schools update 31 January 2022 uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was received. Covid continues to cause staff and student absences, but TLA schools’ figures overall are better than national averages and Trustees were encouraged by this. Formal TLA Executive reviews continue and outcomes discussed with Headteachers and Trustees were encouraged by the work done on SEND in particular. There is an expectation that secondary schools’ will have summer 2022 examinations and their results will be published this academic year and primary school assessments will take place but results will not be published. TOA and Sir William Stanier (SWS) are working towards measures which ought to be better than the last published measures of 2019.</p> <p>6.1.1 Attendance overall is better than the national averages.</p> <p>6.2. <u>School data (interim)</u> – Paper 6.2 School Performance interim report uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was received. It was reported that whilst the schematic of data flow provided to Trustees is at strategic level, it is important that Trustees have sight of the school improvement metrics and figures as provided so that working with the COO and Director of Quality, the Board can ensure that the LGBs are working effectively to follow up on school improvement data and follow-up recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees asked whether the figures provided for Cheshire Studio School (CSS) for 4+, 5+ and 7+ English and Maths were correct, at 0? It was reported that Mr Whittaker would speak to those figures shortly in the meeting. 	

- **Trustees asked for confirmation that the CEO had reported an expectation of positive performance improvement on 2019 data for all schools. It was reported that** this was correct, but that progress will be more problematic, particularly at Crewe UTC and Cheshire Studio School (CSS), as these are more dependent on the profile of the cohorts which can distort the progress scores. When comparing 2019 results and recent mocks at both TOA and SWS, there has been a measured improvement.
- **Trustees asked why the schools have waited until this point in the school year to initiate interventions such as Mission Maths, asking whether data is not strong enough pre-mock examinations to begin interventions earlier ? It was reported that** all schools have been working on attainment improvements since these students were in year 7. It can be more difficult to assess knowledge gaps in the more subjective subjects, than in for example Maths, where historically it has been proven that targeted last-minute interventions can have significant positive impacts. Schools are also looking to achieve meaningful, sustained development, over a 3-to-5-year period, together with some short-term, high impact structured interventions where appropriate, to improve attainment to ensure TLA students can get to their destinations. Mission Maths is looking to focus Maths interventions in a more cohesive and impactful way than ever before. Trustees expressed their confidence in Mission Maths.
- **Trustees asked how useful a predictor are mock examination results? It was reported that** mock examination results tend to be a more pessimistic viewpoint than actual summer examination results, which do tend to be better. Standards will be different compared to 2019 but none of this precludes TLA schools from continuing to support their students to achieve their best outcomes.

6.2.1 A report by JW. JW shared on-screen data detailing national attendance figures over the last few years. **It was reported that** pre-Covid, the national overall attendance figure sat at c.95%. The figures now sit at 87.4% overall, 85.9% at secondary schools. Covid has had more of a negative impact on the attendance of Pupil Premium (PP) and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) students than on non-PP and non-SEND students. KA and CSS data is more positive, with both PP and overall attendance being above the national average (overall being 7-8% above the national average). Persistent Absence (PA) is classed as any student attending for less than 90% of available sessions, so it can be seen why PA figures are climbing whilst national attendance sits at only 85%. Yrs7 and 8 are showing particularly positive attendance figures at KA. Nationally, there is usually lower attendance after the age of 14. CSS students start at age 14, explaining why there is no positive uplift in attendance for Yrs 7, 8 and 9 to counterbalance CSS attendance figures. With very small cohorts at CSS, a small number of absences have a large effect on attendance data, added to which is the disproportionate effect of CSS having a high number of PP students.

6.2.2 JW shared graphs showing KA and CSS Progress8 data since 2016. **It was reported that** as is the trend since 2016, KA Progress8 can be seen to have dropped in November 2021. Since then, again as is the trend, there has been a consistent rise in attainment and therefore in Progress8, which tends to continue to actual examination results. Maths in particular tends to show a meteoric rise from November to the current position today, to the actual examination results, being as high as half a grade for many students. For CSS the picture is similar, but due to smaller cohorts and their make-up, is a more complicated picture.

Trustees thanked JW for the informative report and for everything he does for the school. **Trustees noted** the encouraging rolling graphs provided and the half a grade added value for many students. Trustees also thanked JW for his work towards the recent KA Ofsted inspection, well-deserved outcome.

[JW left the meeting at 11.40am].

6.3. Finance – **Paper 6.3 Trust Management Accounts Pack P4** uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was **received. It was reported that** the latest management accounts show a positive financial position. The Trust is measured with regard to its use of one-off funding and structured drawdowns of reserves are planned as detailed at item 5.2.

6.4. Risk Register – **Paper 6.4 Risk Register – Medium Risks** uploaded to GH prior to the meeting, was **received. Trustees noted that** they had previously been aware of the risks detailed and were encouraged to note the mitigations in place.

6.5. Health and Safety – **it was reported that** there are inconsistencies in reporting, which have highlighted the need for training across the Trust, in particular with regard to near misses, what is reportable and nuances for *meaningful* data reporting. Trustees were reassured to note that the Trust Audit and Risk Committee consider the Risk Register and Health and Safety issues in detail.

7. <u>Feedback from Trust Board to LGBs</u> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AH will be undertaking a governance review over the next few weeks. Communication regarding the strategic priorities' developments to be provided to LGBs. Reserves deployment information to be provided to LGBs. 	
8. Policies	
8.1 <u>Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy</u> – It was reported that there have been no substantial changes to the Policy and it is used effectively across the Trust. Trustees unanimously approved the Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy.	
9. AOB	
Nothing to report.	
Date and Time of Next Meeting: Monday 21st March 2022 at 9am	Meeting closed at 11.48am

ACTIONS From January 2022 Meeting			
ACTION	By When	By Whom	Confirmed Complete
5.4 The CEO and COO will give consideration as to whether it might be appropriate to provide the Board with further information about national safeguarding issues such as sexualisation and to provide assurance on recent safeguarding issues arising in schools.	March meeting	CEO/COO	
From 13/12/21 Meeting			
3. The COO and SD (As Chair of the Governance and Search Committee) will discuss due process around the recommendation of the G&S Committee making a recommendation that the Trust commission an external review of governance by the end of the school year.	31/01/22	COO/SD	Complete as at 31/01/22
4.1 The COO will draw up an action plan regarding the use of reserves in excess of the 5% of GAG Trust target.	31/01/22	COO	Complete as at 31/01/22
4.3 The COO will draw up an action plan with regard to responses to LGB Matters to Raise with the Trust Board.	31/01/22	COO	Complete as at 31/01/22
4.4a In light of the Board's decision to remove the TOA IEB, the COO will refresh the Risk Register to reflect the steps taken.	31/01/22	COO	Complete as at 31/01/22
4.4b The COO and CEO will draft a paper detailing in what circumstances an IEB would be convened in the future and who will sit on that IEB. G&S Committee will be asked to review the paper, prior to Board approval.	31/01/22	CEO/COO	Complete as at 31/01/22
5.1.4 As recommended by the A&R Committee, positive communications will be prepared regarding the clean audit and good alignment of controls, for dissemination to all stakeholders.	End of term	COO/J. Routes?	Complete as at 31/01/22
5.1.5 Meeting scheduling will be reviewed to ensure a clear route for the F&S Committee to review finance audits to enable their recommendation to the Board for sign-off.	End of school year	Clerk/COO	Ongoing as at 31/01/22
5c The Chair and COO will arrange for formal accounts sign-off	31/12/21	Chair/COO	Complete as at 31/01/22

<p>7.1 The Chair will write a letter to KA to congratulate them on their Ofsted outcome. The CEO and Chair will liaise regarding recipients.</p> <p>General Agreed Action that papers will not be embedded in other papers when uploaded to GH.</p> <p>From 18th October Meeting</p> <p>4.1 The Trust Board will seek to appoint a Trustees with extensive financial knowledge and experience to support oversight and challenge in this area.</p>	End of term	Chair/CEO	Complete
<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 21st March 2022 at 9am</p>			