

## Part 1 Minutes

### Trust Board Minutes

of

### The Learning Partnership (TLP) Board of Trustees (the Board):

Held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 1:30pm.

#### Present:

Mr D. Wootton - Chair  
Mr A. Pear – Vice Chair  
Mr R. Armstrong (RA)  
Dr M. Ashcroft (MA)  
Dame K. August (KA) (Online)  
Mr J. Clough (JC)  
Mrs A. Greatbanks (AG)  
Mr S. Kidwell (SK) (Online)  
Mr R. McCluney (RM)  
Mrs H. Ranson (HR)

#### In Attendance:

Mr D. Thomas - CEO  
Mr D. Twambley - Deputy CEO/COO  
Dr A. Howells – Director of Quality  
Mr P. Kingdom –The Oaks Academy (TOA) Headteacher (PK)(Item1)

Clerk: Mrs C. Gritton

Apologies: None

## Part 1

### Administration

1. The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. There were no Apologies. The meeting was quorate.

Unless stated otherwise, all papers had been uploaded to Governor Hub (GH) prior to the meeting.

**PK provided an update on TOA** regarding its now consistent Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and significant improvements in recruitment, admissions and reputation, school site, curriculum, behaviour, literacy support, stakeholder investment and understanding of school values. Trustees thanked PK for the update and for hosting today's meeting and congratulated PK on the improvements. PK left the meeting.

There were no Declarations.

The Chair thanked those present and the Project Support Group (PSG) for their work in getting the Trust to this point; the largest trust in Cheshire and one of the largest in the North West. **The Chair noted** the significant work of the CEO and Deputy CEO over the last months and the 27 days since the merger completed.

The Chair congratulated The Director of Quality on being highly commended for governance and leading Trust governance in coming 2<sup>nd</sup> at the National Governance Association (NGA) awards. **The Director of Quality reported that** the award recognises the contributions of all the Trust's volunteer Governors, the Clerk and everyone else at the meeting.

2. **Paper 2 The Minutes of the Board meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023, were approved and will be signed by the Clerk on behalf of the Chair on GH. The Director of Quality confirmed that** all Actions in the Trust Action Log were complete. **It was confirmed that** The Trust Complaints Procedure had been amended as suggested by Trustee SK. **[ACTION BOARD: Policies approved by the Shadow Board in July 2023 will be brought back to the Board for review during 2024].**

3. There were no additional Declarations of Interest to those listed on Governor Hub (GH).

4. Governance **[ACTION: Trustees were reminded to complete their Declarations and Confirmations on GH, in particular with regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education. Governors were also reminded to log any training in their GH profiles]. It was confirmed that** DW had been unanimously approved as Chair and AP unanimously approved as Vice Chair of the TLP Board of Trustees for the academic year 2023/2024. **It was confirmed that** Trustees' Terms of Office were all up to date.

5. Terms of Reference/Terms of Office

**Paper TLP - Members terms of reference – v1.3(Sept 2023)**

**Paper** TLP - Terms of Reference – Educations, Standards and Performance – v0.3.docx

**Paper** TLP - Terms of Reference – Audit and Risk v0.1

**Paper** TLP - Terms of Reference – Finance and Staffing – v0.2.docx

**Paper** TLP - Terms of Reference – Governance – v0.1

**Paper** TLP - Terms of Reference – LGB – v0.2

**Paper** TLP - Trust Board Terms of Reference – v0.1

**The Board approved the Terms of Reference listed above. Trustees asked that** where future iterations refer to other documents, those other documents also be provided to Trustees, at the same time. (This had been done retrospectively for the Terms of Reference listed above).

## Strategic Matters

**Paper CEOR – CEO Report was received**, covering items 6 to 12 inclusive.

**6. Values Workshop** **The Board noted** the amendments made to the Trust Vision, Values and Ethos, following their recommendations at the Shadow Board meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023. It **noted that** they had been co-constructed with Trust schools. There followed, robust conversation around the Vision, Values and Ethos and **The Board, CEO and Deputy CEO agreed that [ACTION CEO/DEPUTY CEO/BOARD: the Vision, Values and Ethos will be further developed and shared for Trustee comment, to enable them to be agreed at the next Board meeting]**. The next iterations will take account of the Board’s comments with regard to being simplified, precise, and having greater emphasis placed on the Trust’s USP of being the “employer of choice”. **The CEO and Deputy CEO assured the Board that** the Behaviours will remain functionally embedded in the Trust management structure and performance management process. The behaviours, articulated through “People, Passion, Performance”, are an integral part of the Trust’s Mission, as together they will enable the Trust management to hold people to account.

**7. Trust self-assessment and first year priorities (3Ps) Papers 7.1. Trust assurance framework – self assessment executive summary and 7.2. Building strong trusts – assurance framework – 05.10.23 v2 were received.**

**Challenge: Trustees noted that the Trust proposes to use the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) framework and asked how that aligns in Ofsted terms. It was reported that** there is currently no Ofsted framework for trust inspections. However, Ofsted would likely use the DfE Quality indicators. The CST indicators are derived from the DfE indicators and offer a more accessible format that also include community engagement. The TLP Executive have utilised this model based on how that objective framework might look, by asking ‘What will Good look like and how will TLP measure that?’ The Executive recognise that the Trust must have clarity as to what to expect across all elements within the framework.

**Challenge: Trustees asked how the SEF will be managed. It was confirmed that** the SEF will be provided to the Trust Audit and Risk Committee for discussion and the Deputy CEO will carry out periodic assessments, with regard to each of the risk areas. An example was highlighted where the Trust already has good strategies in place for improving culture and wellbeing. The SEF would identify examples of pockets of excellent practice across the Trust, for example in areas such as Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). However, it would need to be mindful of the Trust schools’ unique identities, to ensure that evolution and development continues across all Trust schools.

**Challenge: Trustees asked whether the Trust intends to define outcomes and leave each school to decide the manner in which they are achieved, or dictate the manner in which each school achieves the outcomes. It was reported that** this is under review and will vary depending on the area in consideration; for example, safeguarding is addressed as a Trust approach (and this has been well-received at all Trust schools), whereas curriculum design and delivery is devolved. However, performance outcomes remain with the Trust. Headteacher meetings with executive leaders do address the matter of schools’ autonomy and will continue to do so. Where gaps in good practice are identified across the Trust, and the Executive is aware that Trust does not have either the capacity or the expertise, then the executive will commission external expertise whilst current staff are or trained or reskilled, as deemed appropriate in each circumstance.

**The Chair reported that** they were pleased with the evidence contained within the framework document and the way in which it has been built. **It was agreed that** the priorities presented are correct. **[ACTION DEPUTY CEO: will bring an updated version of the SEF to the next meeting, supported by a delivery plan and include definitions around phrases such as ‘culture of improvement’]**.

**8. Growth** Growth details were contained in the CEO Report and were **received** for information. The report highlighted the different opportunities for growth, which alongside merger/acquisition could include expansion of the current schools (i.e. increased PANs) or a widening of the school offer (e.g. nursery provision). The Deputy CEO thanked the Trust Director of Estates and Marketing, Mr Routs for his work on the Wheelock expansion project. The item was continued under Part 2.

**9. Strategic Safeguarding update Paper 9. Strategic Safeguarding Update September 2023** was received. The Trust Safeguarding Lead, Mr Pear, reported that the recent safeguarding audit had reported the Trust as being safe and secure; Trustees can be confident and comfortable about Trust safeguarding. The Board agreed to reconfirm that safeguarding is *the most important* aspect of the Trust Board's responsibilities. [ACTION AH/BOARD: The Board will undertake online safeguarding training and the Trust Finance and Staffing Committee members will complete Safer Recruitment training, to be arranged for the Board by the Director of Quality].

#### School Improvement Matters

**10. Knowing – School Profiles Paper 10 - TLP – School Profiles – October 2023** was received.

**Challenge: Trustees asked whether Headteachers have sufficient authority.** It was reported that the Executive are looking to ensure that the correct systems and processes are followed and are empowering staff to use the hierarchical model, which will seek to prevent unnecessary escalation of issues and empower Headteachers to understand their responsibilities and matters of which they are in charge. Shared services leaders are aware of where, historically, systems and processes were (sometimes unintentionally) circumnavigated and now have the authority to ensure that the correct procedures are followed, guiding staff in the right direction. This remains work in progress and will improve as the systems and processes become embedded. As a consequence of being a larger trust, there is increased monitoring and checking in place and there is positivity across the Trust about that. The Director of Quality provided tangible examples of the work being undertaken to ensure that the systems and process were being designed and built around role, rather than people.

**11. Challenging – First round of challenge visits and headline outcomes Paper 11. Challenge Meeting Agenda – Template** was received. Item reported under Part 2.

**12. Supporting – Overview of support provided to date and planned** Item reported under Part 2.

**13. Part 2 – Daven Ofsted feedback** Item reported under Part 2.

#### Operational Matters

**14. Health and Safety – RAAC The Deputy CEO reported that** there was no RAAC identified in any of the Trust schools. The Deputy CEO apologised that the Board that the nature of the investigations did not enable Trustees to be made aware of this position until the note published on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

**15. Finance Update Paper 15. Financial Overview – 2022-23 year – merged trust.** It was reported that the Finance and Staffing Committee meeting was being rescheduled for this term. It was reported that as a Trust, there is compliance with the reserves target of 5% of General Annual Grant (GAG). Two Trust schools are significantly below that target, but this is being managed. The Trust finances are robust, but there are pockets of risk, which are being managed.

**16. AOB** The Chair thanked Trustees for effective challenge and thanked the CEO and Deputy CEO for their work.

**Meeting closed at 3:59pm**

**Date and Time of Next Meeting: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 1:15pm Location Leighton Academy**