

PART ONE MINUTES

Meeting of the Trust Board of The Learning Partnership

Held on Thursday 3rd October 2024 at 9:30 am

Venue – The Oaks Academy, Buchan Grove, Crewe CW2 7NQ

Trustees present:	In attendance
Mr David Wootton CBE DL (DW)-Chair	Mr Dan Thomas (DTh)-CEO
Mr Bob Armstrong OBE (BA)	Ms Kate Baddeley (KB)-DCEO-Education
Mr John Clough (JC)	Dr Allan Howells (AH)-Director of Quality
Mr Robin McCluney (RMC)	Mr Peter Kingdom (PK)-Headteacher, The Oaks Academy-left at 10:18 am
Dr Martin Ashcroft (MA)-left at 12:00pm	Mrs Sue Pomeroy (SP)-Clerk
Dame Kathy August (KA)-left at 11:15 pm	
Mr Simon Kidwell (SK)	
Mr Andrew Pear DL (AP)	
Apologies	Apologies
Mrs Helen Ranson (HR)	Mr David Twambley (DTw)-DCEO-Operations
Mrs Alison Greatbanks (AG)	

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Presentation from Headteacher at The Oaks Academy</p> <p>PK welcomed everyone to the school, shared a presentation on screen and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He outlined the vision and values and stressed that they are “lived” and are central to the operation of the school. • The school had never received an Ofsted rating of “good” over the past 30 years until the inspection of April 2024. Students and staff now believe in the school. • Both academic and relationships and personal development are important to the school. • Values are linked to the PHSE curriculum. • Head students were introduced in recent years. • The school aims to avoid suspending/excluding pupils and has set up a “Respect” room which caters for a maximum of six pupils. • The school has twice the national average of EAL and disadvantaged pupils. • There has been an increase in the number of Looked After pupils. • Literacy levels on entry are challenging and of concern. 74% of pupils enter with a reading age below their chronological age. • Pupil numbers have increased at the school from 391 in 2018-19 to 638 in 2023-24. More parents are choosing to send their children to the school, and this had had a positive impact on the budget. • The number of suspensions has decreased significantly. • Attendance is above the national average. • Progress 8 has improved from -1.05 to 0.52. • Attainment 8 has improved from 28.5 to 35.13. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school acknowledges that it is still on a journey to further improve progress and attainment. • There are issues with recruiting Maths teachers. • The Strategic Plan for the next 5 years was shared. • The aim is to become the school of choice. There is a lot of competition from schools in Nantwich and Sandbach. • The focus for 2024-25 is to improve academic progress. • Recent and Current Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Restructure of the Senior Leadership Team. This has had a significant impact. Recruitment of curriculum leaders is a challenge and so the school has a programme to develop its own. ➤ Improving Literacy levels is a key focus, and a robust programme is in place. Pupils have made significant gains in their reading age. ➤ An AHT has responsibility for SEND and has ensured that all staff are aware of the needs of the pupils. ➤ “Thrive” provision has been established to provide a short-term behaviour intervention programme. Pupils spend up to 6 weeks in the setting and are then reintegrated into mainstream. ➤ There is a focus on vulnerable pupils, alongside meeting the needs of the most able. ➤ The DCEO (Education) is working with the school to drive improvements in attainment and progress. <p>PK then shared a video produced following the Ofsted inspection of April 2024 which resulted in a judgement of “good”. The outcome of the inspection had provided a boost to everyone associated with the school. PK thanked the Trust for their support.</p> <p>Trustees thanked PK for his presentation and congratulated him on the rapid improvements made over his three years at the school. Challenges were raised on the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession planning for the Headteacher and senior leadership roles. • More detailed analysis of pupil progress and attainment date required. • Reading levels on entry to year 7 in Crewe. • Teacher recruitment and training opportunities. <p><i>PK left the meeting at 10:18 am.</i></p> <p>2. Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone and warmly congratulated Andy Pear on his appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire, other Board members added their congratulations. The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were received and accepted from Alison Greatbanks and Helen Ranson.</p> <p>3. Declarations and confirmations</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made concerning the items on the agenda. It was confirmed that all Trustees had updated their annual declarations and confirmations.</p> <p>4. Election of Chair</p> <p>One expression of interest in the role of Chair of the Trust Board had been received from David Wootton. David Wootton was duly elected as Chair of the Trust Board for a period of one year, or until the first meeting of the Trust Board in the autumn term 2025.</p> <p>DW stated that he had appreciated the honest feedback from the 360 Chair appraisal. AH would arrange for 360 reviews for the committee chairs. ACTION</p>	<p>AH</p>
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<p>5. Election of Vice Chair</p> <p>One expression of interest in the role of Vice Chair of the Trust Board had been received from Andy Pear. Andy Pear was duly elected as Vice Chair of the Trust Board for a period of one year, or until the first meeting of the Trust Board in the autumn term 2025.</p> <p>6. Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>a. Trustees reviewed the part 1 minutes from the previous meeting held on 18th July 2024. Resolved: Trustees approved the part 1 minutes as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>b. Trustees reviewed the part 2 minutes from the previous meeting held on 18th July 2024. Resolved: Trustees approved the part 2 minutes as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>c. Matters arising There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>7. Chair's report</p> <p>Chair's action in regard to Cheshire Studio School would be covered under agenda item 10e.</p>	
<p>8. Reports from Committees</p> <p>a. Chair's report-Finance and Staffing 19.09.24</p> <p>JC referred to the paper and highlighted the changes in the budget predictions for 2024-25. At the time of the committee meeting, some financial items for period 12 had still been under review.</p> <p>Trustees noted the Chair's report and the minutes from the meeting which had been uploaded into a Supplementary Papers folder.</p>	
<p>9. Governance Matters</p> <p>a. Scheme of Delegation (amendments) Paper 9a.</p> <p>It was noted that the Scheme of Delegation is under review and that proposals would be presented to the Trust Board in due course. In the meantime, Trustees were asked to approve two amendments to the Scheme of Delegation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation from the Finance and Staffing Committee on proposed changes to authorisation processes. The changes proposed enable Headteachers to recruit like for like replacement staff without additional authorisation, as these posts form part of an approved budget, and they will only be required to seek approval for additional posts when these exceed an FTE of £30,000. • Recommendation from the Executive that the Scheme of Delegation be revised to indicate that consultation must take place with the DCEO (Education) prior to the Headteacher's decision to permanently exclude a pupil. <p>Resolved: Trustees approved the proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation. The Chair asked Trustees to note that the Scheme of Delegation is a 'living' document and changes should be expected periodically.</p> <p>b. External review of governance-action plan Paper 9b.</p> <p>Trustees noted the paper and that monitoring, and oversight of this action plan had been delegated to the Governance Committee.</p>	
<p>10. Strategic Update</p> <p>a. Trust Strategic Plan</p> <p>DTh shared the Strategic Plan which outlines the Trust's key aims for 2024-25.</p>	

<p>b. Trust Strategic Plan-term by term</p> <p>Paper 10b. details the priorities for the CEO, Education and Operations during each term. The document will be RAG rated and shared regularly with Trustees.</p> <p>c. Trust Offer</p> <p>Paper 10c. is an external facing document which sets out the Trust offer for any new schools joining TLP. A series of Service Level Agreements will follow. Trustees suggested some minor amendments to the document. DTh explained that this is a first draft and that he would review the document. ACTION</p> <p>d. Growth</p> <p>DTh explained that Paper 10d. outlines the Trust’s growth strategy. The growth targets by September 2026 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 1 – To ensure all the primary schools have nursery provision. • Target 2 – To increase the number of primary schools in the existing localities. • Target 3 – To develop the educational offer in each locality. • Target 4 – To relocate Cheshire Studio School to Crewe • Target 5 – To increase the number of secondary schools in the Trust. <p>Trustees challenged whether a period of consolidation is required to ensure school improvement priorities are achieved before considering increasing the number of schools in the Trust. They stressed that growth needs to be carefully managed so that any additional schools enhance the capacity of the Trust. DTh responded that any potential future growth would be considered carefully and tactically and would require Trust Board approval. Trustees also acknowledged that alongside a growth plan, opportunities sometime arose and were content that if this were to be the case each opportunity would be considered on its merit within the agreed framework.</p> <p>e. Cheshire Studio School</p> <p>DTh explained that Knutsford Academy had expressed a desire to operate as a single school and to offer the courses currently provided by the Cheshire Studio School within the academy. A letter had been shared with Staff at Knutsford Academy informing them of the proposal to redeploy the CSS URN to support pupils in the Crewe locality. Trustees had initially begun the consideration of a ‘satellite’ of CSS based in Crewe but given the above and the response of the DfE this concept was seen to be not viable.</p> <p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial engagement with DfE has been positive. • The Trust is awaiting pupil sufficiency data from the Local Authority to confirm the viability. • Local schools and colleges in Crewe have been supportive of the proposal. • Potential sites are being explored. • This would not be alternative provision but would provide an additional offer to the community. <p>Trustees endorsed the Trust’s approach to exploring the relocation of the Cheshire Studio School to support pupils in the Crewe locality and were assured that this item would be returned to Trustees before final decisions were made. Trustees were keen to ensure that a trust URN is not lost.</p>	<p>DTh</p>
<p>11. Educational Performance</p> <p>a. KS 4 Performance</p>	

<p>KB spoke to paper 11b.-Key Stage 4 results overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall picture shows most schools improving on their 2023 performance. • Commentary for each school is included in the report. • Paper 11b.1. provides KS4 RAG rated Headline results 2024. • Paper 11b.2 provides a KS4 detailed overview analysis of English, Maths and Combined. <p>Trustees challenged the usefulness of the KS4 table presented and requested further information on trends, national comparisons, FFT information, targets etc. They expressed concern that the decline in results at CHS had been unexpected and stated that a detailed analysis of results is required.</p> <p>ACTION: To provide a paper for ESP Committee/Trust Board outlining concerns, trends, performance against targets, FFT and action plans following 2024 results.</p> <p>KB explained that there are issues around the quality and timing of data collected by each school and that different MI systems are in place. By December 2024 the Trust will have chosen a MIS to be adopted across the Trust. Work is also required with the schools to ensure consistency in target setting. Trustees were assured that this work is in hand.</p> <p>Trustees commented that there needs to be a focus on leadership to drive up standards, not just on systems. KB responded that both aspects need to run in parallel. Plans are in place to address the recruitment of a substantive Headteacher at SWS and work is planned with the leaders at all the schools.</p> <p>b. KS5 Performance</p> <p>KB spoke to Paper 11c. and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the 2024 post-16 results represent an improving picture. • Congleton and Knutsford, which have both had post-16 as a key school development focus, have seen improvements in both A Level and Applied General average outcomes, with Knutsford particularly strengthening top grade outcomes. • Cheshire Studio School-Outcomes at A level have improved to an average grade of C- from a D in 2023, with Applied General outcomes remaining static at Merit on average. It must be remembered that cohort numbers are small. • UTC-the college had its first cohort of Year 13 T Level results. All pupils passed the qualification, with two securing merits. • There has been a significant increase in student numbers in the sixth form at Knutsford Academy for 2024-25. • Sixth form numbers have declined at Congleton High School and an analysis of student destinations has taken place. • Partnership work has taken place with Sir John Deane College and Knutsford Academy and Congleton High School are working closely together. <p>c. Primary school Performance</p> <p>Primary school performance had been discussed at the Education, Standards and Performance Committee in the summer term 2024. A RAG rated overview was provided in Paper 11c. Trustees expressed concern that the decline in results at BFPS had been unexpected and asked how the issues were being addressed by the Trust. KB explained that there had been significant concern regarding the accuracy of internal moderation of Writing at the school. She added that more frequent school improvement visits had been scheduled and that training to ensure accurate teacher assessments would take place and best practice shared.</p>	<p>KB</p>
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<p>DTh explained that the Trust is considering using different external moderators as there have been issues with Cheshire East moderators in the past.</p>	
<p>12. Education Update-Paper 12</p> <p>KB explained that a meeting had been held with Headteachers in the summer term 2024 and that following this meeting, the school improvement framework had been co-constructed. (Paper 12b. details the School Improvement Framework 2024-25.)</p> <p>Trustees challenged whether the Trust currently has the capacity to fulfil the offer to the schools. DTh explained that KB is currently filling two roles (DCEO and Director of Secondary). Senior leaders and external support would be used alongside KB to deliver the offer to the schools until a Director of Secondary was appointed. It was planned to advertise the Director Secondary role with a start date of September 2025. Trustees encouraged progress in this regard.</p> <p>Trustees requested that a business case for an earlier start for a Director of Secondary be presented to the Finance and Staffing Committee as this is an important role which needs to be filled to drive school improvement in the secondary sector. ACTION</p>	<p>DTw/DTh</p>
<p>13. Operational Matters</p> <p>a. Management Accounts</p> <p>JC informed Trustees that management accounts had not been available at the Finance and Staffing committee meeting on 19.09.24. He requested that the finance team contact the committee members to discuss the management accounts at the earliest opportunity. DTh would contact DTW to arrange this. ACTION</p> <p>b. Compliance with Academies Handbook</p> <p>Trustees noted Paper 13b which had been provided for information.</p> <p>c. Update on Ofsted changes</p> <p>Summary of changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-word overall judgements removed. • Schools will still receive gradings in the four existing sub-category areas. • Schools will be notified of an inspection on a Monday. • The pausing of inspection reports over safeguarding. • A new Inspection Framework and report card will be introduced from September 2025. <p>d. Update on latest developments from DfE</p> <p>DTh informed Trustees that due to changes in legislation around schools which receive a “double RI” judgement, the DfE is expected to relax some of its oversight around DPS and SWS. He also commented that the Trust is working hard to develop an open, honest relationship with the DfE.</p> <p>e. Safeguarding Update</p> <p>AP informed Trustees that he had scheduled a meeting with the Trust safeguarding lead and that safeguarding meetings for governors had been arranged.</p> <p>f. Link Trustee role descriptors</p> <p>Draft role descriptors had been shared in the Supplementary papers. Trustees were invited to review them and provide feedback. DW requested that the IT role descriptor be changed from IT to “Digital Champion.” and a wellbeing champion be added as per initial discussions.</p>	<p>DTh/DTw</p>

<p>Dates and times of Trust Board Meetings 2024-25:</p> <p>Thursday 12th December 2024</p> <p>Thursday 27th March 2025</p> <p>Thursday 17th July 2025</p> <p>Meetings to commence at 10:00 am and be followed by a light lunch. Venues TBC.</p> <p>Trustees were asked to reserve their diaries from 9:00 am to allow time for a presentation preceding the meeting and to block out time to 1.30pm if possible. It was further proposed that meetings in 2025-26 academic year would align with the corresponding date in 2024-25.</p>	

The meeting closed at 1:10 pm