

PART ONE MINUTES

Meeting of the Trust Board of The Learning Partnership

Held on Thursday 12th December 2024 at 9:30 am

Venue – Knutsford Academy, Westfield Drive, Knutsford.

Trustees present:	In attendance
Mr David Wootton CBE DL (DW)-Chair	Mr Dan Thomas (DTh)-CEO
Mr Andrew Pear DL (AP)	Mr David Twambley (DTw)-DCEO-Operations
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)	Mrs Karen Key (KKY)-Headteacher Knutsford Academy-attended for item 1
Mr Simon Kidwell (SK)	Mr Jon Dudley (JD)-Dains Audit Partners-attended for item 7
Dame Kathy August (KA)	Mrs Sue Pomeroy (SP)-Clerk
Apologies	Apologies
Dr Martin Ashcroft (MA)	none
Mrs Helen Ranson (HR)	
Mrs Alison Greatbanks (AG)	

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Presentation from Headteacher at Knutsford Academy</p> <p>KKY welcomed everyone to the school and shared a presentation on her first 18 months of headship at the school. She highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new senior leadership team had been established. The profile of the school in the local community had been raised. Pupil numbers had grown, and the PAN had been increased to 230 from 220. 283 first choice applications had been received for September 2025. A marketing campaign had been run for sixth form recruitment as numbers had dropped to 99. In September 2024, 166 pupils had been admitted into sixth form and over 200 applications had been received for September 2025. The approach taken by KKY had been one of evolution not revolution as there were already many areas of school which were good or outstanding. English GCSE results are the best in the county and the sixth form is in the top 25% in the country. Attendance is a strength of the school. The aim was to improve teaching and learning throughout the school as there were some areas which were outstanding. A sense of being “one school” was created through standardising breaktimes and having a single uniform across the school. Parental views have been taken more into account through regular forums and surveys. Facilities throughout school have been improved. 	

- A data driven analysis of pupil performance data took place which led to the creation of a new approach to teaching and learning, “The Knutsford Way.”
- The Knutsford Way is a standardised approach to teaching and learning which specifies the elements of each lesson. This is now embedded throughout the school and has been of particular benefit to pupils with SEND.
- Formative assessment takes place throughout each lesson and adaptive teaching is a focus for this academic year.
- Literacy is also a focus for the school with an emphasis on improving reading for those pupils whose reading age is below their chronological age and on improving oracy.
- Study skills are taught from Year 7 onwards within lesson time.
- The school has also worked to improve the quality of the homework set for pupils.
- Marking and feedback have been reviewed to ensure both a reduction in teacher workload and an improvement in the quality of feedback for students.
- Teaching and learning ambassadors-the aim is for teachers to be reflective and engaged and to share best practice. Ten ambassadors have been appointed who carry out research, present to colleagues, lead briefings and share resources.
- Next steps-the Knutsford Way is embedded across the school and the next step is to involve the Heads of Faculties to consider how the approach can be specifically adapted to within each subject.

Trustees thanked KKY for her presentation and for the focus on teaching and learning.

Challenges were raised on the following points:

- Progress 8 was average in 2024-what is the school doing to improve this?
- Ambition for the school-consider aiming to be in the top 10%.
- How to ensure that there is a clear connection between assessment and marking and feedback.
- Consider using resources from the “English Speaking Board” to further improve oracy.
- How to narrow the disadvantage attainment gap.

KKY left the meeting at 10:05 am.

The Chair noted that Trustees are confident that KKY will continue to make improvements at the school and thanked her and her staff.

Jon Dudley (Dains) arrived at 10:05 am.

2. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Trustees for their time and commitment to the Trust. He confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were received and accepted from Martin Ashcroft, Alison Greatbanks and Helen Ranson.

The Chair noted some issues with communications and apologised for the format of the agenda. He would take some items out of order to allow for more detailed discussion to take place on important strategic items earlier in the meeting. For ease of reading, the minutes would be recorded in agenda order.

3. Declarations and confirmations

There were no declarations of interest made concerning the items on the agenda.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

<p>a. Trustees reviewed the part 1 minutes from the previous meeting held on 3rd October 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 3rd October 2024. Resolved: Trustees approved the part 2 minutes as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>c. Matters arising It was confirmed that actions from the previous meeting had been addressed. There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>5. Chair's report There were no chair's actions to report at this meeting.</p>	
<p>6. Reports from Committees The Chair noted some issues with the scheduling of meetings which had led to some committees being held close to the Trust Board meeting and had not allowed enough time for written reports to be prepared. This was being addressed by the Executive team.</p> <p>a. Chair's report-Governance Committee 05.11.24-Paper 6a. JC provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee had reviewed the report and actions from the External Review of Governance (ERG). 75% of actions had been started and 50% had been completed. • The annual Trust governance conference had been scheduled for 14.06.24 and planning for this event would commence in the spring term 2025. • The EDI survey had been launched and there had been a response rate of 64%. The deadline had been extended. <p>b. Chair's report-Education 11.12.24 verbal update SK provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement is the core purpose of the work of this committee. This was the first meeting that Lise Houldsworth and Kate Baddeley had attended, and they had provided high quality information for Trustees. • The committee noted successes in the primary sector-Egerton, Wistaston Church lane and Dove Bank. Improvements in Reading and Maths were noted in Daven, along with personnel issues. • Concerns were discussed at Black Firs and Wheelock. • Secondary sector-no significant areas of concern at Knutsford Academy. Improvements at The Oaks and its successful Ofsted inspection were noted. Concerns had been raised at Congleton High School around Progress 8, SEND, Pupil Premium and falling pupil numbers. Sir William Stanier (SWS) would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 11. • Data from the secondary schools requires streamlining and a data manager is to be appointed. • There is also a need for a Director of Education (Secondary) to support school improvement at SWS. <p>Trustees challenged whether the appointment of the data manager would support the strategic and operational approach required and deliver the management information</p>	

<p>necessary for school improvement. KB responded that the MIS system would be aligned across the schools first, then the approach to data analysis would be standardised. A data manager was a critical post. It was confirmed that an external appointment would be made to the role of data manager.</p> <p>c. Audit and Risk 10.12.24-verbal update</p> <p>RM provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting had had a one item agenda to focus on scrutiny of the audit reports and annual accounts. • He explained that it had been difficult to arrange a meeting of the committee at a time which had been convenient to both Trustees and the auditors. The members of the Finance and Staffing Committee had been invited to attend the A&R meeting on 10.12.24 to provide additional scrutiny of the audit reports and accounts. RM thanked JC and BA for attending. • Louise Clark from Dains auditors had attended the meeting and had provided a detailed review of the documents and Trustees had provided robust challenge. • As the meeting was not quorate, the clerk had circulated the minutes from the meeting the following day and RM had requested that A&R Trustees review the documents from Dains along with the minutes and respond to him with any further questions. RM had held a detailed conversation with MA. • A further meeting of the A&R Committee would be arranged for January 2025 to address the remaining items of business. 	
<p>7. Financial Statements and Audit Findings Report</p> <p>a. Audit Findings Report</p> <p>JD explained that LC had reviewed the Audit Findings Report with the A&R Committee and that revisions had been made following that meeting. Financial Statements and Trustee Report for inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JD explained that there are no major changes in the format of the accounts. <p>Trustees raised challenges around the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity on how the system of internal audit fits in with the external audit process. DTw explained that the external audit process is prescribed and must meet statutory requirements. There is no prescribed format for internal audits. Some financial control areas are covered but internal audits may also look at areas such as health and safety and governance. The current internal auditors provide a good service and add value in some areas and specialists may need to be employed in other areas. This year five internal audit reports have been received with reasonable assurance. The next meeting of the A&R Committee in January 2025 would review the internal audit plans. • concern over the decline in the Trust's reserves position. DTw explained that, going forward, robust budgets would be set with each school to identify savings, build contingency and move to a "risk averse" position. • committee meetings to be scheduled in 2025-26 to allow enough time for the audit reports and accounts to be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinised prior to being approved by the Trust Board. ACTION • why the central services charge per school was not standard. DTw explained that the legacy position had been retained at the point of transfer and the charges would align next year. Additional services had been provided to those schools with legacy agreements. The Trust is providing more services centrally 	

<p>and the re-charge would be discussed at Finance and Staffing Committee on 19.12.24.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that there were no further questions on the audit reports and annual accounts and that he would sign the relevant sections in order for the accounts to be uploaded prior to the deadline of 31st December 2024.</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees approved the audit report and annual accounts, subject to the addition of the agreed land and buildings valuation for Dove Bank Primary School.</p> <p>The Chair thanked RM, JC and BA for their detailed scrutiny of the documents.</p> <p><i>JD left and the meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes for a comfort break.</i></p>	
<p>8. Reports from Link Trustees-Summary</p> <p>a. Sustainability</p> <p>MA had been unable to attend this meeting and so his report on sustainability was deferred to the next meeting.</p> <p>AP informed Trustees that his monitoring visit on safeguarding had been moved to January 2025. It was noted that safeguarding had been judged to be effective in the three recent Ofsted inspections.</p>	
<p>9. Governance Matters</p> <p>a. Articles of Association</p> <p>AH explained that the Trust is still awaiting a response from the DfE on the proposed changes to the Articles of Association. The Board noted and agreed the paper. In doing so Trustees agreed to delegate to the Chair of the Governance committee the approval of any additional revisions, necessary following the DfE response, prior to then making the Board's formal recommendation to the Trust's Members to revise the Articles.</p>	
<p>10. Strategic Update-Part 2 item</p>	
<p>11. Education Update</p> <p>a. Ofsted inspections (WCLA, UTC, SWS)</p> <p>KB provided an update:</p> <p>WCLA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ofsted report on WCLA was very positive and is now public. This was an ungraded inspection, and the overall outcome was as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The school is taking effective action to maintain the standards since last inspection.</i> The new Headteacher at the school had made significant improvements; she has had to make some difficult decisions. There has been a significant change in culture and improvements in safeguarding. The new Nurse provision is thriving. <p>The Chair would write to the Headteachers and Local Governing Boards at WCLA and Crewe UTC to congratulate them on the Ofsted reports. ACTION</p> <p>The Chair also acknowledged the work of the Trustees and executives in securing improvements at both schools.</p> <p>Schools at risk-Part 2 item</p>	

<p>12. Operational Matters</p> <p>a. Management Accounts and latest forecast</p> <p>Management accounts had been provided as part of the meeting pack. DTw would provide an update through the Finance and Staffing Committee on 19.12.24.</p>	
<p>Dates and times of Trust Board Meetings 2024-25:</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.</p>	

The meeting closed at 1:10 pm