



## Board of Trustees/Directors

MINUTES

20th May 2024

4.00pm

This meeting was held in person at Lanscove School House

**Present:** Cheryl Mathieson (Chair) Sarah Cox (SC)  
 Nicky Dunford (CEO) Paul Waterworth (PW)  
 Christopher Norman (CN) Dominic Course (DC)  
 Kate Evans (KE)  
 Christine Cottle (CC)  
 Graeme Scott (GS)

**Minutes:** Charlotte Roe (GP)

In Attendance: Matt Matthew (DCEO)

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> The meeting opened with a welcome. Apologies from Ben Thorne were accepted by the Trustees.	
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> The CEO is a Trustee for the Bearnes Education Foundation. Dominic Course is Chair of Governors at South Dartmoor Community College and a Director of DACORS Ltd. Sarah Cox is Shareholder of S Cox & Co Ltd, Shareholder of Naked Sprout, Trustee of The Fryer Welfare Trust and The Fryer Recreational Trust, Trustee of Drake's School PTFA. Graeme Scott is an employee and Executive Chairperson for educational software company, The Mario Framework. Chris Norman is Director of CANE Properties Ltd. Kate Evans is Director for Education of The Good Shepherd MAT.	
3.	<b>Any other business</b> There was no any other business recorded.	
4.	<b>Approval of meeting minutes</b> <b>4.1</b> The Trustees <b>approved</b> the Part I Minutes of the meeting from 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 as a true record. The Chair signed accordingly.	
5.	<b>Matters arising from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 not on the agenda</b> 5.9 Internal Audit discussion feedback - The DCOE had spoken to the Internal Auditors and it was felt that it was a mis-communication and they were going to speak to Sarah Cox direct. SC said that she had not had answers to her questions. DCEO said that he would contact them again. The Trustees said that some of the information in the Internal Audit report was not accurate and would like some clarification of the source. The DCEO said that he would also ask for this update. 5.10 Vision and Values update – the Director of Education (DoE) had circulated a brief written update through the Governance Professional. It was reported that the first draft was showing some changes to the Trust's current values whilst some had been retained. The two removed values, ambition and integrity, remained explicit throughout the narrative that would sit alongside each section. It was noted	DCEO

	that the next stage was to adapt the narrative around each section and further discussion was needed with Sharon Lord to consider the C of E aspects to ensure it all fitted with the Trust's ethos. It was noted that the DoE would present the final Vision and Values document at the next Board of Trustees meeting in July. The CEO reiterated that the update was still a work in progress.	
6.	<p><b>Chief Executive Officer's Report</b></p> <p>The CEO's report was circulated before the meeting. The CEO added that the discrepancies between her report and the DCEO's report in relation to due diligence was due to the timings of reports and reflected the speed that changes are currently occurring. Due to the nature of the questions, <b>PART II</b> was taken.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Trust Growth</b></p> <p>7.1 Due diligence update on the 5 schools – the DCEO had circulated documents before the meeting. The CEO said that the due diligence was different as the DCEO feedback was from a financial point whereas the CEO concentrated on the School Improvement. The Trustees asked questions under <b>PART II</b>.</p> <p>7.2 Update on the new schools who have joined – The CEO outlined the improvements that had taken place at Littleham. It was noted that the feedback from parents in the community was positive about joining The Link. The Trustees asked about the nurture provision within Littleham. The CEO said that there were 10 places available within the provision and the Trust was reviewing how best to utilise it.</p> <p>The CEO added that Wolborough and Bearnese were working well together with an Executive Head. The outcome was there was a cohesive approach which was positively supporting the children.</p> <p>Sparkwell had joined the Trust as a strong school. The Head had also taken on the role of Director of Inclusion for the Trust which was working well. A thorough review of the Inclusion provision across the Trust would be next which would likely require the Head to move into the Director of Inclusion role on a full-time basis in the future.</p> <p>7.3 Future plans – The CEO confirmed that moving forward the Regional Director would only allow the Trust to take on strong, capacity giver schools whilst work with the Jubilee and Pebblebed schools is ongoing.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Audit Committee</b></p> <p><i>No meeting in Summer 1 – next meeting 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024</i></p> <p>Chair of Committee reported that there were no additional points to add.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee</b></p> <p><b>9.1 Minutes from 13<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Chair highlighted that the main discussions of the meeting were around financial performance to date and the budgets going forward and where any savings may be made.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Remuneration Committee</b></p> <p><i>No meeting in Summer 1 – next meeting 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024</i></p> <p>The Chair of Committee said there were no pressing interim matters.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Standards &amp; Curriculum Committee</b></p> <p><b>11.1 Minutes from 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Chair of Committee added that as the committee covered many foci, there would be a two-year cycle going forward. The Chair added that the most pressing need was for an updated data monitoring system which was planned for the end of this academic year. The Chair of the Committee added that that the recent focus had highlighted an increasing number of SEND across the Trust.</p> <p><b>11.2 Local Boards</b></p> <p>There were no issues to bring to the Trustees' attention. The Chair of Committee added that the LAC process was working well, and the governors were providing</p>	

	a comprehensive and professional support. It was added that the Minutes from the LACs were also high quality.	
12.	<p><b>External Inspection Reports</b></p> <p>12.1 Tedburn St Mary (Section 5)</p> <p>12.2 Stoke Gabriel (Section 8)</p> <p>It was noted that both schools were judged as Good. The Trustees congratulated the AHs and their staff on the outcome. <i>The Trustees asked that Tedburn's approach to behaviour was shared across the Trust as OfSTED had judged it as outstanding.</i> The CEO said that this was already being facilitated. <i>The Trustees asked whether the 'other subjects' and 'some subjects' outlined in the reports were the same in both schools and could the Trust address them together as an area of development?</i> The CEO said that it was around curriculum areas for development such as humanities to ensure that they were sequenced. It was noted that the core subjects were strong now following a period of focus.</p>	
13.	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p>13.1 Update – The Chair reported that Max Thomas who was currently the Chair of Mid-Devon LAC had applied to become a Trustee for The Link Academy. His expression of interest and CV had been circulated to the Trustees before the meeting. The Chair and the Chair of S&amp;C had informally interviewed Max Thomas. The feeling was felt that MT would be a strong addition to the Board. The Trustees <b>approved</b> the recommendation to the non-Foundation Members to appoint Max Thomas as a non-Foundation Trustee to start in September 2024.</p> <p>13.2 Local Board Mid-Year Review – The GP and GS reported that overall, the feedback was positive. The Governance Professional added that changes had been made to reflect some of the suggestions that had been raised.</p> <p>13.3 Review of Strategic Safeguarding Training undertaken by Trustees on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – feedback from the Trustees had indicated that the training could have been more strategic. It had been hoped that the training would go into more detail as to how Trustees could support and challenge appropriately the DSL and what sort of evidence and analysis Trustees should be looking for. The Trustees questioned whether it was more a tick box exercise rather than an understanding of the law and strategic approach. The Chair <b>agreed</b> to provide Wolferstans with the feedback. GS <b>recommended</b> the Safeguarding Alliance for future reference.</p>	<p>GP</p> <p>Chair</p>
14.	<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <p>14.1 GS to update meeting on safeguarding across the Trust. Two documents were circulated before the meeting. <i>GS said that he had raised questions with the Director of Safeguarding around consistency</i> which had resulted in a strong tagging process being put into place which was having a positive effect. <i>The Trustees asked if the DoS visited the schools with low reporting incidences.</i> GS that confirmed the DoS did. <i>Another question that GS raised was around the level of families in trauma.</i> It was confirmed that in a couple of schools the percentage was high. The CEO advised that in these schools, the development would be a community support provision. The Trustees asked the following questions: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is the delay / barrier to providing a Trust supervision programme for DSLs?</i> Supervision was the service offered to Teachers/TAs that dealt with challenging pupils so they could discuss the issues they were having – time to offload. The cost of the external service had increased, and the service was not being used so the Trust had been considering whether it was a successful approach. GS added that the Safeguarding Alliance were advising that supervision would become mandatory. The CEO said that not all the staff took up the offer of supervision. <i>The Trustees asked whether there would be a staff member who would want to train as a supervisor.</i> The CEO said that this would be considered.</li> <li>• <i>How many pupils have been registered with the LA for EHE this year, and what were the reasons for opting out of school?</i> GS said that across the</li> </ul>	<p>CEO</p>

	<p>Trust it was 7 and shared the reasons that had been given – it was noted that all the exit documents had been completed for these children. <i>The Trustees asked in the cases of poor attendance whether the Trust could do anything more.</i> The CEO said that some of the families found engaging with schools difficult, so this meant it was hard for the school to find alternative ways to improve the attendance.</p> <p>GS added that that there had been low incidences of bullying and the 2 that had been recorded had been addressed in an appropriate way.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Health and Safety</b> 15.1 The CEO said there were no issues to report. It was noted that there was a report circulated in the F&amp;GP meeting and Trustees were invited to ask the GP if they would like a copy.</p>	
16.	<p><b>Trust Risk Register</b> SC reported that she planned to meet with the GP on the next steps.</p>	SC/GP
17.	<p><b>Strategic Plan</b> Trustees to receive update for Safeguarding and Governance The DCEO pointed out that there were 2 areas without Trustee oversight – Diocesan Liaison and Quality Assurance. Following a discussion, the Trustees agreed to leave it to the end of the year for a reassessment.</p>	Trustees
18.	<p><b>Policies for approval</b> The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval:</p> <p><b>18.1 Standards &amp; Curriculum Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School complaints policy – it was agreed that this was to be rewritten.</li> <li>• Public sector equality statement for publication – the DCEO agreed to review the policy to ensure that it reflected staff and community as well as the pupils.</li> <li>• Suspension and Exclusion – One of the Trustees confirmed that he had undertaken training in this area and the policy completely complied with the DoFE guidelines. The Trustees <b>approved</b> the Suspension and Exclusion Policy.</li> <li>• Behaviour policy – It was noted that this was a strong policy. The Trustees <b>approved</b> the Behaviour Policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>18.2 Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul> <p><b>18.3 Remuneration Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul> <p><b>18.4 Audit Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul> <p><b>18.4 Admissions Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul> <p><b>18.5 Full Board Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	DCEO
19.	<p><b>Evaluation of governance impact</b> – Principle 4: Decision making, risk and control <a href="https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en">https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en</a></p> <p>The Board ensures that its decision-making processes are evidence informed, rigorous and timely and that effective delegation, control, risk assessment and management systems are set up and monitored. There is effective reporting at all</p>	

	levels of Academy Trust governance to ensure decisions are taken at the correct level in accordance with the Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.	
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**The meeting closed at 18.22 pm**