



Board of Trustees/Directors

MINUTES

22nd May 2023

4.00pm

This meeting was held in person at Lanscove School House with the option of online participation via Microsoft 'Teams'

Present: Cheryl Mathieson (Chair)
 Nicky Dunford (CEO) Paul Waterworth (PW)
 Christopher Norman (CN) Ben Thorne (BT) (Via Teams)
 Kate Evans (KE) Dominic Course (DC)
 Graeme Scott (GS)

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

In Attendance: Matt Matthew (DCEO) For items 7.1, 9.2 and 17

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. Apologies was sent by Sarah Cox and these were accepted .	
2.	Declarations of interest The CEO is a Trustee for the Bearnas 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 and Governor at Boscastle County Primary School.	
3.	Any other business There was no other business brought forward.	
4.	Approval of meeting minutes 4.1 For approval: Part I Minutes of the meeting from 6 th February 2023 were accepted as a true record.	
5.	Matters arising from 6th February 2023 not on the agenda 5.1 It was confirmed that the First Aid policy and School Exclusion policy were approved via email following amendments. 5.2 It was confirmed that the Governor handbook was now available on Sharepoint.	
6.	Chief Executive Officer's Report The CEO report was circulated before the meeting. The CEO added that the Trust's financial position was improving due to the energy contracts being sorted out. The CEO updated the Trustees on the Catering Manager and Property Manager vacancies. The Trust were looking at an SLA with Plymouth City Council who would manage the P/L, costing, wastage and kitchen hygiene compliance. IT responsibilities had been added to the Property Manager role to make the post full time. The CEO added that she had	

	<p>spoken to the Diocese who felt they could help with finding a possible candidate. It was noted that both posts were important to be filled to support the DCEO in his job.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if any of the Trust's schools used a commercial curriculum and were they able to share with parents in line with government guidance.</i> The CEO explained that no schools did. The Jigsaw programme was used across the Trust and confirmed it was shared with parents.</p> <p><i>The Trustees noted that there had been training around managing complaints and asked if there were any changes needed to be adopted.</i> The CEO said the response to complaints needed to be more precise and therefore an appendix form had been added</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked about the falling pupil numbers and how this was being addressed and suggested whether the schools could host services such as pre/post pregnancy groups.</i> The CEO discussed several initiatives (active ongoing PR drive such as leaflet drops, mother and toddler groups/bring pre-schools into the schools) adding that the Trust was always proactive in this area. The CEO added that it was a variable profile across the Trust. In some schools it seemed that the cost of living was causing parents to re-consider whether to travel to send children to a school, however in schools, such as Widecombe, it was evident that children were attending the school from out of catchment. There was a robust discussion about the growth and retention of pupils across the Trust. It was noted that the overall number though fallen was only slight.</p> <p>It was agreed that attendance and the increase in SEND numbers would be taken to S&C for a more in depth discussion.</p>	GP
7.	<p>Trust Growth</p> <p>7.1 The Due Diligence report for Sparkwell was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees confirmed that they were happy with the level of report. <i>Following a question from the Trustees</i>, the DCEO confirmed that additional reports could sit behind the main report to allow Trustees to drill down on certain points. The Trustees noted that the report was briefer than usual, the DCEO explained that it was due to Sparkwell already being an academy.</p> <p>PART II taken</p> <p>The Wolborough C of E Nursery & Primary School Due Diligence report was still being completed with some outstanding tasks. The DCEO said that it would be ready for the next Board of Trustees' meeting. Wolborough were due to join in October 2023.</p> <p>7.2 Part II minutes from Extraordinary Board of Trustees meeting. The minutes of this meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Trustees agreed the minutes. <i>Referring to the SWOT analysis, the Trustees asked how the school could be a LA flagship even though it was in RI?</i> The CEO explained that the EIT had done several deep dives and there were some odd areas of weakness. The LA were not providing any CPD to address the weaknesses. The CEO said that she had no great worries – there were excellent teachers and the Headteacher was driven. The Associate partnership was only in early stages.</p> <p>PART II was taken</p>	
8.	<p>Audit Committee Minutes from 10th May 2023</p> <p>8.1 The minutes were circulated before the meeting. DC reported that the Audit Committee had considered tenders from three firms in the appointment process for external auditors. The Committee members had independently completed an evaluation matrix and had unanimously arrived at the same decision that Bishop Fleming be reappointed as external auditors. The Trustees agreed to recommend to the Members the appointment of Bishop Fleming as the Trust's external auditors for 3 years.</p> <p>8.2 Growth and retention of pupils – this was dealt with under item 6.</p>	
9.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee 9.1 Minutes from 24th March and 5th May 2023</p> <p>The minutes were circulated before the meeting. PART II was taken</p> <p>9.2 The DCEO announced the Trust had been successful in 5 CIF bids amounting to £1,200,000. The Trust contribution would be £288,000 which was anticipated and</p>	

	<p>budgeted for. The Trustees accepted all 5 CIF offers. The next step was for the DCEO to organise with the architects the contractors to try to get the works completed during the summer holidays. <i>The Trustees asked why the Trust had been so successful this year?</i> The CEO and DCEO explained that in the previous year they had complained about the impossible situation for the Trust. The Trust was made up of small old schools with only £5k each to maintain them. It was noted that the CIF bid outcome would now decide the capital plan spend for the remainder of the year.</p>	
10.	<p>Remuneration Committee 10.1 Minutes from 24th March 2023 The minutes were circulated before the meeting. There were no additional comments. 10.2 The updated job description for the CEO was circulated before the meeting – the Trustees agreed the job description.</p>	
11.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee 11.1 Minutes from 9th May 2023 The minutes were circulated before the meeting. KE said that the annual cycle of focus visits had nearly been completed and the biggest benefit was the connection between the local boards and the Trustees. The next step was to revise the visit notes for the local governors incorporating questions to support their visits in schools. It was agreed for the GP to work with the Director of Education to create the questions and for KE to review them to make any amendments. 11.2 Local Boards There were no main issues to bring to the meeting.</p>	GP/KE
12.	<p>External Inspection Reports 12.1 The OfSTED report from Widecombe had been circulated. Ilington school had recently been inspected. The report was in draft form. The CEO shared the outcome with the Trustees. 12.2 SIAMS – Diptford school inspection report was circulated before the meeting. It was noted that there were some actions for Local Governors which was being addressed by Sharon Lord and GP.</p>	
13.	<p>Governance 13.1 The Chair informed the Trustees that Fiona Walters had stood down and thanked her for her dedication to the Trust. There was a discussion on how to replace her with another Trustee who would be the Diocese liaison. It was noted with 2 new schools joining the Trust, there was the possibility that there could be some candidates to invite onto either the Trust board or local boards. 13.2 Local Board Review was circulated before the meeting. The CEO gave a brief overview of the changes. The Trustees agreed the proposed changes. The CEO added that the next step was to ask for an expression of interest from the existing local governors and then to ascertain the gaps ready for September 2023. 13.3 Scheme of Delegation – The Chair informed the meeting that this document was being updated by herself, CEO and the GP to capture the NGA advice and local board review. Once completed it would be circulated to Trustees for discussion and approval at the next Board of Trustee meeting. 13.4 Diversity Indicators questionnaire – The Chair addressed the meeting, outlining the background. There was a robust discussion on the merits and risks of completing the questionnaire. The GP was asked to circulate the statement from Devon Education Services for the website if the Trustees chose to not publish the Board’s diversity data. It was agreed that this would be revisited at the next meeting. 13.5 The Chair explained that she and the GP had visited all the academies across the Trust and had circulated a brief overview. The Chair highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the academies were similar and it was clear that they were part of The Link Academy Trust, but each had kept its own individual characteristics. • Academies were clean and tidy. • In some academies there was space restrictions however all the space was being used creatively. 	GP

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behaviour of the pupils was exemplary, and all engaged fully with their learning. Free staff meals were well received. The Trustees had a discussion on the merits of this benefit for the staff especially considering the cost-of-living crisis. <p>13.6 DfE's Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review – Due to time constraints this item was postponed.</p> <p>13.7 Employee Well-being and Engagement Survey – The Chair explained that to consider whether the Trust was an employer of choice the survey was sent to all the staff to ascertain why staff join and stay with the Trust. Overall, the responses were positive. The EIT and Academy Heads had reviewed the outcomes and developed a plan of action. The Workforce group had also put in place additional benefits such as salary sacrifice schemes, including one for gym membership and one for the purchase of IT equipment. The Chair informed the meeting that the Workforce Group was now looking at attrition rates and the reasons why people leave the Trust.</p>	Chair
14.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>14.1 The CEO updated the Trustees on the Part II summary of investigation following a complaint to Ofsted which the LA investigated. In this case each time there had been a complaint, there was an investigation and meeting with the parents with notes taken indicating that the matter had been resolved and parents had confirmed this. The complaint was not upheld and there had not been any further complaints.</p> <p>14.2 The Chair thanked GS for his extensive safeguarding reports. GS reported that he was meeting with the Safeguarding Lead and GP to ensure there was a cohesive interface between the local boards and Trustees. The Trustees raised questions about a safeguarding electronic system and supervision. It was noted that this was the next focus to ensure that safeguarding across the Trust remained robust and effective.</p> <p>PART II was taken</p>	
15.	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>15.1 The CEO reported that the Health and Safety Lead had completed the NEBOSH course. <i>Reviewing the H&S report circulated before the meeting, the Trustees asked how the H&S Lead was assured that the reporting was appropriate and consistent.</i> The CEO said it was through scrutinising and asking questions on the reports. <i>The Trustees asked about the email security data breaches and questioned why they were deemed low risk?</i> There was a discussion about the risk rating and asked that all staff completed the cyber security course and followed the protocol for sending emails.</p> <p>15.2 Update on site security – The CEO said that this would be completed by the property manager once in post. The DCEO just did not have the capacity to address it.</p>	
16.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>DC reported that the risk register proforma had been rewritten and sent to the schools. The Trustees were no long risk owners, this had been transferred to EIT. Trustees were now overseeing the registers.</p>	
17.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>The strategic plan was circulated before the meeting. The DCEO said that he had highlighted possible weaknesses to complete the plan. Time constraints for the Trustees seemed to be the main issue, so the DCEO questioned whether there was a way to simplify the document. It was important for the Trustee portfolio holder to come up with SMART actions throughout the year. The DCEO added that more work with connecting Trustees with the members of staff was also needed. It was noted that there was now a gap with the resignation of Fiona Walters. The Trustees discussed how to move this forward, suggesting an Away Day and Chair of Committee meeting – it was agreed for the GP to circulate some dates during June for an additional Board of Trustee meeting to work on the plan.</p>	GP
18.	<p>Policies for approval</p> <p>The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval:</p> <p>18.1 Standards & Curriculum Committee</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School complaints policy – the Trustees received the policy before the meeting. Some amendments were made, and the Trustees agreed the policy. • Public sector equality statement for publication - the Trustees received the policy before the meeting. Some amendments were made, and the Trustees agreed the policy. • Missing child policy - the Trustees received the policy before the meeting. The Trustees agreed the policy. <p>18.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>18.3 Remuneration Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct policy - the Trustees received the policy before the meeting. The Trustees agreed the policy. <p>18.4 Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>18.4 Admissions Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>18.5 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	
19.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trustees all commented that they felt they had had a chance to express their opinions freely. • IT for the Trustees joining via TEAMS was still causing problems to follow the meeting effectively. The Trustees were assured that new equipment was on order to address this issue. 	

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 6.40 PM

Dates of next meeting

17th July 2023 (General Meeting) 6.00pm

To be held in person at Landscope School Hall.

Meeting dates 2022/2023

10 July 2023