

**Board of Trustees
MINUTES**

**22nd July 2024
4.00pm**

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

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

In attendance: Matt Matthew (DCEO)

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

The meeting opened with a presentation from the DoE on the Vision and Values (V&V) of The Link Academy Trust. The DoE gave the background of the rigor behind the process to reach to the proposed Vision and Values. It was noted that there needed to be an overhaul of the V&V to reflect the changes in the Trust, though it was noted that the original V&Vs were still relevant to the Trust such as integrity, curiosity, ambition and collaboration. The process started with the Trustees' Away Day and then a long Academy Heads' Day. The Leadership team then filtered out the key elements. The staff and pupils were then consulted. Some of the original V&V was part of the proposed V&V as stakeholders felt that it was important such as curiosity and collaboration. The Church schools were also part of the consultation to ensure Christian distinctiveness was represented. The DoE added that the Diocese had had sight of the proposed V&V and were happy with the wording. *The Trustees asked questions of clarification.* The DoE said it was important that the V&V were inclusive. The Trustees discussed the proposed V&V. It was noted that the V&V purpose was to inspire the schools to reach their full potential. The DoE said that the V&V were referred to within staff meetings to ensure that they were part of the culture. *The Trustees said that integrity was essential for successful human existence and asked that it was included somewhere in the V&V.* The DoE said that integrity should be an expectation and embedded in everything that the Trust operated. *The Trustees said that there was a similar feeling around 'ambition' and felt that it should be included.* The meeting discussed this at length. *The Trustees asked if integrity and ambition could be more obviously included in the commentary – the DoE agreed to make the additions.* Subject to these small suggestions, the Trustees **agreed** the Vision and Values. The next step was to present it at the Trust Day at the beginning of September and then to be circulated more Trust wide. The Trustees asked if whether the pupils would notice the changes? The DoE said that the pupils should not be able to notice changes as the V&V reflected the Trust's current ethos. The DoE added that each school had their own V&V and the pupils should know them well. *Following a further question from the Trustees, the CEO confirmed that the pupils do understand that Trust wide V&Vs as well.*

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. There were no apologies.	
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.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes from 20th May 2024</p> <p>The Part I Minutes of the meeting were circulated with the agenda. The Part II minutes were circulated at the meeting. Both sets of Minutes were formally accepted as a true record and approved.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters arising from 20th May 2024 not on the agenda</p> <p>5.5.9 Internal Audit discussion feedback – The Chair of Audit said that this had been covered in the Audit Minutes. Westcotts had recognised the issues and had implemented actions to ensure that the service was better. DC added that as the audits were consistently clean, the audit focus would be done on a bi-annual programme to allow the time for more in-depth audits.</p> <p>5.13 The Chair had provided feedback to Wolferstans regarding the Trust level safeguarding training they had provided. The training had been disappointing in that it had been more operational rather than strategic. The Chair had asked Wolferstans if they could provide something more strategic but as yet they had not come back. The Chair will continue to follow up. The Trustees said in future a different provider would be considered, although it was recognised that training was included as part of the retainer with Wolferstans.</p> <p>5.14 The CEO reported that MAST were used for supervision and all staff had access. The Trust also bought into EAP giving the opportunity for staff to discuss any issues. The CEO added the take-up was poor. The CEO was unsure of why this was, and this needed further investigation. The Trustees said that it should be an expectation for DSLs to seek supervision to ensure that they were being supported. The CEO said that supervision used to be put into specific schools and this had also not been successful. The CEO said that the key was for management to be able to identify staff members who were struggling. <i>The Trustees asked if there were DSL meetings and suggested that supervision was intertwined into the meetings.</i> The CEO said that across the Trust there were plenty of opportunities for staff to network and develop support and questioned whether this was sufficient. The CEO added that when significant traumatic events happened then more support was made available. <i>Following a question from the Trustees,</i> it was confirmed when any staff member asked for help, then it was readily available.</p> <p>5. PART II Matters Arising</p>	
6.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report</p> <p>The report was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees asked the following questions: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referring to the coloured data graph, the Trustees asked what plans were in place to improve the areas that had been RAG rated red? The Trustees asked how could the Trust monitor progress against previous years more easily and track on a school-by-school basis?</i> The CEO said that the Trust analysed the data to understand why there was a drop. Usually, the reason was due to pupils with EHCPs; the CEO added that due to small numbers of pupils any underperforming of one pupil significantly negatively skewed the data. To counteract this, the Trust tracked each pupil, and most pupils achieved ARE or above. There was a concern about Maths; the CEO had talked to other Trusts, who were also reporting lower scores. <i>The Trustees asked why the pupils in the Trust performed below national average.</i> The CEO reiterated that it was because of the small numbers of pupils who took the tests; each pupil carried a larger percentage. The CEO added that the staff were disappointed with the results and possible reasons had been discussed. It was noted that a high proportion of the Year 6 were SEND and so this had significantly affected the outcome. The Trustees had a robust discussion about the data outcomes. <i>The Trustees asked whether the Trust was being ambitious enough for the pupils?</i> The Trustees added that for the SEND pupils then progress data was required. The Trustees said that the answer should not be about 'drilling' pupils to take the SATs but more about developing the pupils, providing them with the skills they needed to be confident pupils. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do the Trust know what the KS2 data looked like if Sparkwell, Wolborough and Littleham data was taken out?</i> The CEO said that it was available but not to hand – it was agreed to take this to S&C Committee in Autumn 1. • <i>Why was there no indicator for pupil outcomes for progress and attainment, even if simply + or – national / MAT / Devon, and whether outcomes were improving / declining over time?</i> This was an important indicator for the quality of provision at the Trust's schools. The DCEO said that once the new SIMS programme was installed fully then this could be made available and added to the data dashboard. • <i>With the changes in FTE in the IIH, would there be full time coverage for schools to call upon?</i> The CEO explained that with the planned new structure there would now be dedicated cover within the Inclusion Hub for every school. 	
7	<p>Trust Growth</p> <p>The CEO updated the Trustees on the due diligence process for Jubilee and Pebblebed Schools and Honiton Primary School.</p> <p>PART II was taken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was 0.4fte of the CEO's time to lead the four highly vulnerable schools in the Jubilee and Pebblebed federation sustainable? Could the role of CEO be achieved in 0.6fte, and was her workload and wellbeing being supported and protected?</i> The CEO assured the Trustees that it was only for half a term (Summer 2) and she had been supported by the DCEO and other staff members. The CEO said that there had not been any impact on the EIT. The CEO felt it was a positive move as it allowed her time to have a deep knowledge of the schools and the staff and make the changes within the schools. This would allow a more seamless transition when the schools joined the Trust. <p>The Chair asked the Trustees for their approval on progressing with the schools of the Jubilee and Pebblebed Federation to join the Trust with effect from 1 September 2024. The Trustees approved the proposal. The Trustees said that though they were not against the proposal they were cautious and lodged their concerns.</p>	
8.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>8.1 Update on 2023/24 plan and Trustees' designated areas - The DCEO said that they were available on the Sharepoint site. The DCEO asked each portfolio holder to develop an action plan with the staff leaders. <i>Following a question from the Trustees</i>, the DCEO confirmed that staff leaders knew that Trustees would be working with them. It was agreed that the DCEO would discuss with CC the strategic areas that required a portfolio holder.</p> <p>8.2 Workforce Strategy Group - The Chair said that the projected attrition rate for this year was down slightly on last year's figure. The majority of leavers was split evenly between teachers and HLTAs/TAs, many of whom were moving due to less stressful, higher paid jobs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do the Trust prevent staff turnover? Was there more the Trust could be doing to improve staff loyalty?</i> <p>The Chair said that this was being looked at as part of the Workforce Group's objectives. Exit interviews had been analysed to see why staff were leaving and a staff survey was planned in the Autumn term to understand why people join the Trust and what makes them stay. The Group was also regularly reviewing the benefits provided and ways in which to improve employee engagement. The Trustees said that this was a national picture. It was noted that attrition rates were discussed at length in the Remuneration Committee meeting on 19th July 2024 and reflected in the Minutes.</p>	
9.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>Risk management review for academic year (in line with Risk Management Policy) - DC thanked SC for the work on the Risk Register. The two main Trust risks were pupil numbers and academic outcomes which had been discussed at full during the meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Audit Committee</p>	

	<p>Meeting held on 13th June 2024</p> <p>Chair of the committee highlighted the risk of not having robust succession planning for the central team and the change of the internal audit programme. The GP was asked to track the progress of the Mobile Phone policy.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked what precautions the Trust have in place against a worldwide outage?</i> The DCEO confirmed that the Trust had a Cyber Security strategy in place.</p>	
11.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 19th July 2024</p> <p>Chair of the committee highlighted that budgets for next year could still not be set as pay awards and funding were unknown. He added that the DCEO and his team were working on several scenarios. The Committee had agreed 2 phases of a plan to reduce the predicted deficit.</p>	
12.	<p>Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 19th July 2024</p> <p>The Minutes were not available for the meeting. The Chair of the Committee gave a brief update of the meeting. Once the Minutes had been approved, they would be circulated to the Trustees for their information.</p>	
13.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee Meeting held on 9th July 2024</p> <p>The Minutes were not available for the meeting. The Chair of the Committee gave a brief update of the meeting. KE explained that the concern was that the Trustees were not getting the statutory information they needed, including, crucially, not yet knowing the pupil outcomes. It was added that the implementation of New Generation SIMS programme would, hopefully, rectify the issue. Once the Minutes had been approved, they would be circulated to the Trustees for their information. The Chair said there had been a range of officers attending the S&C Committee meetings which had provided an improved diverse aspect. The LAC Chairs were also bringing a positive addition to the meetings.</p> <p>Local Boards</p> <p>There were no issues drawn from the S&CC meeting – all covered within the Minutes.</p>	
14.	<p>External Inspection Reports</p> <p>14.1 The Ofsted report on Hennock Primary School was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees discussed the contents of the report and asked the following questions: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Trustees asked why there had been 5 leaders in 5 years and whether there were any underlying issues? The Trustees also asked how long Hennock had been with the Link and whether the result was a surprise to the EIT or was it expected? The Trustees asked why was this vulnerability / instability of leadership not brought to Trustees' attention before? The Trustees asked that with the comparison with Tedburn: what was the EIT learning from a second, disappointing and unexpected inspection outcome? The CEO outlined the reasons for the changes in the leadership. The CEO said that all the issues outlined in the report had been highlighted however due to time constraints, change in staff and capacity of the EIT, the response was not as robust as needed. The CEO said that when this happened in Tedburn, the outcome 18 months later was a Good with outstanding features. The CEO said that she had had robust discussions with the EIT on the outcome. The Trustees asked how it was received. The CEO said that actions had been implemented to improve standards. The Trustees asked about capacity. The CEO said that she felt that EIT had had capacity during the year to provide a better service.</i> • <i>The Trustees asked whether there could be any improvements in ensuring that issues were identified in the Trust schools before Ofsted? When was the last Learn, Support and Challenge Day at Hennock and what were the results/outcomes? The CEO explained that Learn, Support and Challenge</i> 	

	<p>Day should inform the ASIP to ensure that the actions were pertinent to the areas of development and ensure robust monitoring of the progress of the plan. The last Learn, Support and Challenge Day at Hennock had been earlier in the year but due to time constraints the follow up had not been as rigorous as it could have been.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Trustees asked where it was high due to reasons outside of the Trust's control – how do EIT ensure consistency in curriculum/teaching? It sounded like planning could be an issue rather than just phonics training being an issue from the way the report was worded? The Chair said that the Trustees had not been made aware that Hennock may have been a school of concern. The CEO said that it had come as a shock for the EIT. It was felt that under the new structure this would improve the EIT provision and processes and mitigate another unexpected OfSTED judgement.</i> <p>14.2 SIAMS: There had not been any SIAMS inspections</p>	
15.	<p>Safeguarding 15.1 CEO had updated the Trustees under the CEO report. 15.2 GS reported that the migration of the New Generation SIMS programme had delayed CPOMS implementation however it had been piloted in 4 schools and this would now be rolled out to all other schools. Training for the programme was arranged for September. It was noted that the system was robust. GS said that over the holidays the staff had been given several additional documents such as KCSiE and Prevent. Audits for all the schools who were due OfSTED or a new Academy Head had been arranged for Autumn along with the new schools. GS thanked the Safeguarding Team for their work, resulting in a strong provision.</p>	
16.	<p>Health and Safety There were no outstanding issues to report.</p>	
17.	<p>Governance 17.1 Update – The Chair to summarise any changes or appointments of Trustees and Governors - 17.1.1 The Chair explained that GS would be standing down from the S&C and Audit Committee but continue in his role as Trustee for Board of Trustees and Safeguarding. The Chair thanked GS for agreeing to stay on. The Chair confirmed that Max Thomas would be joining the Trustee Board from 1st September 2024. 17.1.2 Trustees to discuss the current Trustee Committee membership. The Chair said that she would do this via email with the Trustees. 17.1.3 The LAC Governance Structure was circulated for Trustees information. 17.2 Trustee Self Evaluation and Trustee Recruitment The Chair explained that a self-evaluation questionnaire would be circulated in September for the Trustees to complete. It was agreed that more Trustees would be advantageous and asked the Trustees let the Chair and Governance Professional know if they were aware of any possible nominations. 17.3 Chair and Vice Chair of Board of Trustees for 2024/25 nomination forms Following the General Meeting it was confirmed that Cheryl Mathieson would remain as the Chair and Ben Thorne would be Vice Chair of The Link Academy Trust for 2024/2025 17.4 Related Parties forms (Declaration of Interest) The forms were circulated to the Trustees to complete. The Trustees were reminded to return the completed forms to the Governance Professional by end of August. 17.5 Scheme of Delegation It was noted that the SoD would be reviewed once the 4 schools had joined the Trust to include any updates.</p>	Chair
18.	<p>Policies for approval The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval:</p> <p>19.1 Standards & Curriculum Committee</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Safety Policy – this policy was circulated before the meeting. It was noted it had been reviewed and recommended by the S&C Committee. The Trustees agreed the policy. • Equality and Diversity Statement - this policy was circulated before the meeting. It was noted it had been reviewed and recommended by the S&C Committee. The Trustees agreed the policy. <p>19.2 Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>19.3 Recommended by the Remuneration Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>19.4 Recommended by the Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Handling Policy - this policy was circulated before the meeting. It was noted it had been reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee. The Trustees agreed the policy. <p>19.5 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	
19.	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>Meeting dates 2024/2025 and Governance Annual Cycle of Business The meeting dates for the following academic year and the Governance Annual Cycle of Business was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees discussed the possibility of changing the Summer 2 dates around in particular the date of the Board meeting and the General meeting. However, it may be difficult due to the timing of financial information – it was agreed that the Chair would follow up on this with the DCEO to see what flexibility there was with the availability of the monthly financial information.</p>	Chair
20.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact Principle 5 – Board Effectiveness</p> <p>The Board works as an effective team, using the appropriate balance of knowledge, skills, experiences and backgrounds to make informed decisions.</p> <p>The Trustees considered they had worked effectively and had made informed decisions based on the mix of skills and experience available within the Board.</p>	

The meeting closed at 1900