

**Board of Trustees/Directors
Minutes**

**25th March 2024
4.00pm**

**Held in person at Landscope School House with the option of online participation via Microsoft
'Teams'**

Present: Cheryl Mathieson (Chair)
Nicky Dunford (CEO) Paul Waterworth (PW)
Christopher Norman (CN) Christine Cottle (CC)
Kate Evans (KE) Dominic Course (DC)
Ben Thorne (BT) (left the meeting at 5.40)

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to Christine Cottle to her first Board meeting. Introductions were made. Apologies from Graeme Scott and Sarah Cox were accepted. Ben Thorne explained that he would need to leave the meeting at 5.40 pm – this was approved by the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p>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.</p>	
3.	<p>Any other business There was no other business brought forward.</p>	
4.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes from 6th February 2024 The minutes from 6th February 2024 were accepted as a true record and approved by the Board of Trustees. The Chair signed accordingly.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters arising from 6th February 2024 not on the agenda 5.6.1 Update on the working party reviewing the Attendance Policy – The CEO confirmed that this was still being updated to ensure that the policy was in line with practice and the updated guidance. 5.18.6 The Chair confirmed that the General Admission Policies for 2025/26 were approved via email by the Board of Trustees.</p>	
6.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report 6.1 The CEO's report was circulated before the meeting. The CEO was invited to highlight any particular information. The CEO explained that a day after Farway joined the Trust under a management partnership arrangement, they were inspected by OfSTED. The CEO confirmed that she was able to share the outcome but stressed that it should be kept confidential until such time as the final report was made public. <i>Following a question from the Trustees, the CEO confirmed that it was consistent with the Trust's initial findings. The Trustees</i></p>	

	<p><i>asked what the PAN was</i>; the CEO said that current numbers were 31 with a PAN of over 70. <i>Following a question from the Trustees</i>, the CEO said that she was hoping that now parents knew the school was in a management partnership with the Link Academy Trust this would encourage more pupils to the school as had happened with Littleham. The CEO reported that OfSTED were inspecting Stoke Gabriel on 26th March 2024. <i>The Trustees asked what the judgement should be?</i> The CEO said that it should be a ‘good’ outcome however there was always the unknown. Following a question from a Trustee, the CEO confirmed it was a Section 8 inspection. The CEO said that the Trust had applied for £212,000 under the TCAF grant and the Trust was awarded £88,000.</p> <p>It was noted that this was the first CEO’s report in its new format. Trustees were asked for feedback as to whether it included the information they required. The Trustees said that they felt that it was a comprehensive, more concise report, and added that if the Trustees needed more information, they could ask.</p>	
7.	<p>Growth of Trust</p> <p>7.1 Update on the growth of the Trust – there was a section regarding this in the CEO’s report. The CEO gave a summary of the background for the benefit for the new Trustees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEO explained that the Advisory Board had directed Littleham (part of the Jubilee and Pebblebed Federations) to join the Link Academy Trust following an “Inadequate” rating at its last Ofsted investigation in May 2023. Littleham was now in a management partnership with the Trust prior to conversion. All was currently on track for Littleham to convert on 1st April 2024, subject to completion of a detailed due diligence process which was now underway. A comprehensive support plan would be in place for when the school joins. • Following a panel process, the Trust had been selected to take on the other four schools within the Jubilee and Pebblebed Federations and these were now also in a management partnership with the Trust since 14th March 2024 with a view to conversion on 1st August 2024, again subject to a detailed due diligence process. • The CEO explained how the East Devon Hub would be formed, outlining the leadership and staffing restructure. <i>The Trustees asked about the condition of the school buildings.</i> The CEO said that on the whole the schools were in good condition. • The CEO outlined the status of the other four schools. The CEO assured the Trustees that economy of scale was being considered to ensure that all the schools remained viable. The LA had produced details of catchment numbers for all the schools and had assured the Trust that all the schools were viable. It was added that the Diocese was also a strong advocate for the Trust. • Falling rolls in all four schools was a concern and it was noted that one in particular currently had only 15 pupils. <i>The Trustees asked how 15 pupils could be viable.</i> The CEO said that it was not on a standalone basis however if it joined the Trust then an economy of scale would support the budget. The CEO added that it would be hard to remain within the budget however she was confident that following the changes, parents would choose to start sending their children back into the schools. The CEO had met with the existing parents who were keen to support the Trust in attracting more children. • Honiton Primary School, which had been in a management partnership with the Trust for the last year, was also underway to join the East Devon Hub. If all went to plan, the aim was to achieve conversion in August 2024. This school was seen as a “capacity giver” to the Trust. • The CEO added that the Trust had a good reputation for looking after small schools and this ethos would continue. The Trustees agreed but said it was important for the Trust to remain viable. • <i>The Trustees asked about the deficit situation of the schools within the Jubilee and Pebblebed Federations.</i> The CEO said that as Littleham was under Academy Orders any deficit on conversion would be cleared by the LA. Any surplus in any of the other schools should be transferred to the Trust upon conversion; this had been confirmed by the Regional Director. Discussions were ongoing. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEO said that she would continue to provide the Trustees with interim updates on the growth of the Trust. <p>7.2 Due Diligence update – the CEO said the detailed due diligence process for the Jubilee and Pebblebed Schools had only just commenced but initial investigations highlighted staffing and numbers on roll as concerns to date. Trustees would be kept updated as the due diligence process progresses.</p>	
8.	<p>Vision and Values</p> <p>The CEO reported that following consultation with Trustees, Academy Heads and pupils, the EIT were currently drawing together the revised Vision and Values proposal. The proposal was to be finalised at the next Academy Heads’ meeting ready for presentation to and approval by the Board. It was agreed that the EIT would present the proposal to the Board of Trustees at its next meeting on 20th May 2024 with the aim of launching the revised Vision and Values in the new academic year.</p>	GP
9.	<p>Audit Committee</p> <p>Minutes from 29th February 2024</p> <p>Chair of Audit Committee reported that the main issue that came out of the meeting was the disappointment with the Internal Audit report around due diligence. There was concern in particular about the level of detail and accuracy included and where the information had come from – the auditors had not met with the CEO, DCEO, Chair of Trustees or any other key personnel when doing their audit. Sarah Cox had agreed to discuss it with the Internal Auditor however she was not present at the meeting to provide an update. The meeting briefly discussed this situation and agreed to wait on the feedback from Sarah Cox.</p>	SC
10.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <p>Minutes from 26th February 2024</p> <p>The minutes from the F&GP meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Chair of the F&GP Committee reported that between the minutes and the CEO report the highlights were outlined. The main discussion over the next few months was budget setting for the next academic year. BT added that there had been challenge from the Trustees to provide different scenarios depending on the government funding which was currently unknown.</p>	
11.	<p>Remuneration Committee</p> <p>PART II Minutes from 15th March 2024</p> <p>The minutes from the Remuneration meeting were circulated before the meeting. There was a PART II discussion.</p>	
12.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <p>12.1 Minutes from 19th March 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting were still waiting for approval by the Chair of the S&C Committee. The Chair of the committee (KE) reported that the new data system would be trialled in Tedburn St Mary ready to roll out across the Trust by September 2024. KE added that the annual calendar of S&C themes had been reviewed and updated to address some outstanding foci.</p> <p>12.2 Local Boards</p> <p>There were no issues that needed to come to Board of Trustees.</p>	
13.	<p>Governance</p> <p>13.1 Update – Rev Gareth was approved by the Board of Trustees as a Foundation Governor for the Moorland LAC. Rev Gareth had previously been a governor at Wolborough and had agreed to take on responsibility for the LAC of the CofE schools. The Chair reported that Max Thomas who was currently a Chair for the Mid-Devon LAC was in the process of applying to become a Trustee. The Chair also informed the meeting that Nurole, a search company the Trust had used previously, had been approached to help with a new search. However, they had quoted over £4,000 per Trustee which was considered too expensive. It had been decided that all other avenues would be exhausted first before considering using a recruitment company. The GP confirmed that the Trust was registered with Inspiring Governance and that she had contacted two ‘rotary type’ clubs who had responded however there was no-one interested. Trustees were encouraged to consider if they knew of anyone who</p>	

	<p>might be interested in joining the Trust. There was some discussion about the particular areas of experience preferred.</p> <p>13.2 Feedback on the LAC Mid-Year Review Survey. The result from the survey was circulated before the meeting. KE informed the meeting that the responses, especially the verbatim ones, had been useful for the S&C Committee to understand how the new LAC process was being received across the Trust. The GP added that there were some quick fixes that had been implemented and that at the next Governance Meeting, the Clerks and herself would be considering any further changes. It was noted that overall the feedback on the new LAC procedure was positive.</p>	
14.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>14.1 The Safeguarding report had been circulated before the meeting. It had also been discussed at the recent S&C meeting. Some questions had been raised in S&C and the Director of Safeguarding had responded which had been recorded in the S&C Minutes. It was noted that from September 2024, CPOMs would be introduced across the Trust which would provide a secure digital system for recording safeguarding matters. It would also improve consistency of recording across the Trust. <i>Following a question from the Trustees</i>, it was confirmed that all staff would be trained on how to use CPOMS appropriately during the Summer Term. The CEO added that the Director of Safeguarding had done sterling work on safeguarding across the Trust. The Trustees thanked both Alex Waterman and Graeme Scott for the significant amount of work they had done in researching the appropriate system for the Trust.</p> <p>14.2 It was noted that Wolferstans had agreed to provide training for the Trustees on the strategic aspects of safeguarding in line with KCSie guidance. The training would be held on line and the date of 25th April 2024 had been suggested. The majority of Trustees present confirmed their availability. The LAC Chairs would also be invited to join.</p>	GP
15.	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>The Health and Safety report had been circulated to F&GP. It was noted that there were no issues to report. The CEO reported that parts of the Estate Manager's role were now being covered by the H&S Officer and that another handyman would be employed to support the schools with minor maintenance. The CIF applications would be sourced externally.</p> <p>Ben Thorne left the meeting.</p>	
16.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>16.1 Board of Trustees risk register categories review – The Chair said that it had been hoped that Sarah Cox would go through the risk register with Trustees at the meeting in order to outline the process for reviewing the information provided. Trustees would then be able to take this guidance to use at the individual committee meetings. <i>The Trustees asked why the Trustees needed to review the process if the internal auditors had reviewed it.</i> It was noted that the internal auditors had advised on the set up of the register and the types of categories to be included but could not advise on the specific risks themselves. As the Trustees had overall responsibility for risk, it was noted that the Trustees should initially determine what fed the information included on the register and explore what documents were used to give the outcomes and determine how they were being treated. This would give the Trustees greater assurance of the information included in the register. Going forward, Trustees would review the risk levels and mitigations rather than be required to interrogate each risk in detail. As Sarah Cox had not been able to attend the meeting, it was agreed that this would be carried forward to the next meeting.</p> <p><i>Reviewing the Risk Register, the Trustees asked about the overall attainment and progress/KS2 and why overall it was judged as red.</i> The CEO advised that the latest data was showing a vast improvement and questioned whether the risk register was being updated accordingly. The GP noted that she would follow this up with the DCEO at their meeting. It was noted the Trustees needed to look at individual schools to get a clear picture of the data and progress. Historically pupils who did well at KS1 did not continue to do so well at KS2 and it was felt this should be interrogated further. KE added that it was hoped that the planned new SIMS data system would give a stronger analysis and a clearer understanding of these issues and any risks.</p>	

	16.2 Risk register issues from committee meetings – there were no unknown or ‘surprise’ risks being identified at Committee level.	
17.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>17.1 The Chair proposed that at each meeting an update on one area of the strategy plan would be presented. The Chair updated the meeting on the Workforce Strategy. The group had had its last meeting in January where the plan had been updated for the year. The group’s overriding objective was to make the Trust ‘an employer of choice’. This was a long-term objective which involved looking at all aspects, including recruitment, retention and employee engagement. This year the group was particularly focusing on developing a People Strategy. It was also continuing its work with the recruitment process, moving on to review job adverts both in terms of content and where they are placed to achieve the maximum reach. The group was also continuing its work last year analysing retention rates across the Trust, expanding this further to look in more detail at employee engagement and the reasons why people join the Trust, why they stay and why they leave. A staff survey was planned to inform this area. Paul Waterworth commented that under his area of Growth and Capacity the priorities were pre-schools and ensuring that the Trust was mindful when taking on any more schools. The CEO added that the Trust should not turn away schools that would bring value to the Trust however agreed that it was important to consider the stage the Trust was at in its growth plan, especially if the status of any potential schools was more complex, before making any decision. The due diligence process must be adhered to. <i>The Trustees asked whether the Trust were approaching other schools or small Trusts to join The Link Academy and the meeting agreed that this should continue. The Trustees recognised that it was more about timing and not taking on too much at one point rather than turning schools away.</i> It was agreed for Graeme Scott to give the next update at the meeting in May 2024.</p>	GS
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"> Exclusion policy - It was reported that this policy had been returned to EIT and would come back to the next S&C meeting. <p>18.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policies for approval <p>18.3 Remuneration Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disciplinary – This policy was circulated before the meeting. The Chair advised the Trustees that the policy had been reviewed by Wolferstans and that there had been small amendments made by the Remuneration Committee. However, one of the amendments had been omitted following advice from the solicitors. The Board of Trustees approved the policy. Grievance - This policy was circulated before the meeting. The Chair advised the Trustees that the policy had been reviewed by Wolferstans and that there had been small amendments made by the Remuneration Committee. The Board of Trustees approved the policy. <p>18.4 Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policies for approval <p>18.5 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policies for approval 	Chair
19.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact – Principle 3: Integrity https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en <i>The Board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture which helps achieve the Academy Trust’s charitable Objects. The Board is aware of the importance of public confidence and trust in Academy Trusts and their schools, and the Board undertakes its duties accordingly.</i> The Trustees considered that the discussions during the meeting had been at strategic level and challenging questions had been asked keeping the pupils at the centre of any decisions.</p>	Chair

The meeting ended on 5.50 pm