

Standards and Curriculum Committee (S&C)

Minutes

30th January 2024

5pm

This meeting was held on TEAMS

Present: Graeme Scott (Chair/GS)
Nicky Dunford (CEO)
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)

In attendance: Rebecca Sear (RS) - Totnes Local Board (LB) Representative

Lizzie Lethbridge (DoE) – Director of Education

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. Apologies from Kate Evans and Oliver Heathman were accepted .	
2.	Declarations of interest The CEO is a trustee of the Bearnas Education Foundation. Graeme Scott is Executive Chairperson of the Mario Framework. Kate Evans is Director for Education of the Good Shepherd Trust, Diocese of Guildford.	
3.	Any other business The Trustees agreed to recommend the new Trustee, Christine Cottle, to become the named SEND Trustee for The Link Academy Trust for Board of Trustees' approval.	
4.	Approval of last meeting minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 5 th December 2023 were accepted as a true record. The Chair agreed to sign accordingly.	
5.	Matters arising from minutes of 5th December 2023 (not on the agenda) 5.5.2.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding SEND Information • Suitability of SIMS Next Generation • Corrected data and subsequent targets • Attendance for PP and SEND, baseline information from 2022, and progress scores On the matters above the CEO reported that there was a SEND report that would be circulated to the Board of Trustees. Director of Education (DoE) updated the meeting that following a meeting with SIMS, the Trust was planning to pilot the SIMS Next Generation in one school. The DoE said that this would give the EIT and Trustees the data needed. The DoE said that the system would be in place in time for the next data drop in March 2024. 5.8.2 LAC Terms of Reference – it was confirmed that the minor amendments were made and would be circulated to the LACs	

6.	<p>Focus: Wellbeing/PHSE with a <u>LEARNING WALK</u> to evidence the practice within the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing – pupils and staff • Oversight of support for wellbeing – highlighting strengths and plans for schools where this is not yet consistent. <p>The visit notes with an update on Wellbeing/PHSE and Safeguarding from Local Advisory Committees were circulated with the agenda. The Chair of LACs were invited to address the meeting.</p> <p>Totnes RS that there were few points raised in the Totnes LAC meeting –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workload of the Academy Heads (AH). The DoE said that there was another staff survey to be circulated on workload and wellbeing. Wellbeing checks were built in Learning, Support, Challenge days. The CEO said that in-school variants such as staff sickness affected the workload on the AH however, they knew they could contact EIT for additional support. The CEO provided examples of support packages that had been put in place for individual schools. • RS reported there was a variety of positive feedback across the Totnes LAC which was outlined in the visit notes. • Risk Register – one Academy Head had raised a concern around training for the risk register. • Kate Burch – The Foundation Governor for the LAC had started which was positive. <p><i>The Chair asked whether the focus on wellbeing illustrated a proactive and preventative approach by the Trust, building resilience in pupils.</i> RS said that there was a clear indication that this was the case and that it was strong across the LAC.</p> <p><i>The Chair said that the attendance approach now seemed more consistent across the Trust and was higher than national averages.</i> The CEO said that the percentages were now stronger. She added that attendance was monitored closely by the Attendance Officer which was having a positive impact across the Trust. The CEO said that the focus was now on the number of unauthorised absences. The DoE said that across the Trust, the schools were addressing this with a therapeutic approach. <i>The Trustees asked for difference between authorised and non-authorised absences.</i> The DoE said that the schools avoided authorised absences.</p> <p>Moorland OH had sent his apologies. A question from one of the governors had been raised in the LAC meeting: - <i>“How do the Trust engage the men in those conversations around menopause, for example if there was a male AH, how would the findings of the surveys be shared so that all staff feel supported?”</i> The GP reported that the HR Manager had advised that she planned to review the survey responses, taking onboard all comments and suggestions. Thereafter the Trust would put in place training for the line manager around the subject. The HR Manager would be producing a paper summarising the results and if it was deemed necessary another survey for male staff to gauge their perspective. The HR Manager added that initially the survey was to find out from the Trust’s female employees how it affected them at work, symptoms wise and if they felt supported to talk about it with their line managers, male or female.</p>	
7.	<p>Focus: Safeguarding Audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Safeguarding Audit o Discuss the S175 Audit and have an oversight of the evidence of safeguarding within the school o Mid-year overview of Attendance <p>The visit notes from the LACs were circulated with the agenda. It was noted that across the LACs Safeguarding was strong. The main area of action was Filtering & Monitoring.</p>	

	<p>GS reported the following: -</p> <p>The Safeguarding Focus areas are: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January safeguarding issue of the month was Filtering & Monitoring (F&M) following the audit. This was a major issue for schools and stems from the Frankie Thomas case in 2018, when a 15-year-old vulnerable girl took her own life having watched inappropriate content on a school device. • F&M involved keeping children safe when using school-based technology and IT systems. Filtering - ensuring harmful sites and content are blocked. Monitoring - staying alert and identifying when a certain user accesses or searches for harmful content and intervening rapidly. <p>The CEO said the Trust-wide message was for staff to be vigilant around technology. It was noted that this was a continuous changing picture.</p>	
8.	<p>Local board reports</p> <p>8.1 The Trustees commented on the quality of the LAC Minutes and visit notes giving the Trustees a clear understanding of the schools across the Trust. The Trustees asked for their thanks to be passed onto the LACs.</p>	
9.	<p>Receive External Reports and review actions plans</p> <p>9.1 External reports – SIAMS report for Drakes was circulated before the meeting. It was commented on how strong the report was and the committee asked for the Trustees' congratulations to be passed on to the Academy Head and staff.</p> <p>9.2 Action plans from previous term to be presented to Trustees to include progression. The DoE gave a PART II verbal update on the schools who were on Tier 3 plans and outlined the progression again the action plans. <i>The Trustees asked questions around the progression, staffing structures and the curriculum. The Trustees asked the DoE to update the meeting on the latest OfSTED training for inspectors following the Ruth Perry report and asked questions of clarification.</i> The CEO said that the DoE had been working very hard and was working collaboratively with staff which was having a positive impact – the Trustees also extended their gratitude.</p>	
10.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>GS said that he was in regular touch with the DoS. GS reported the following: -</p> <p>Data Report - Autumn Term 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New columns in place for F&M checks and EHE (Elective Home Education) – data on these will be available in the Spring report • No data from one school due to a change in headship. Director of Safeguarding (DoS) had closely monitored their Behaviour Watch and all was in order. • In one school there was very high number of safeguarding (possibly including all niggles) DoS to check with the Academy Head (AH) on how CPOMS was tagged. The Devon audit was on 26.1.24. • Racist incidents (3 reported to Devon County Council and DoS) - National increase also noticed. All followed up effectively in schools. <p>The CEO reported there was one LADO incident for which the outcome was likely to be low risk and result in a training need.</p>	
11.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>The CEO said that the AHs had had training in this area, and the school risk registers were getting better across the Trust. The Terms of References had been changed to add the S&C's areas of responsibilities.</p> <p>Trustees to consider report on the following risk categories: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Education Standards and Achievement <p>It was noted that there were no issues raised and it was felt that the judgements were correct.</p>	
12.	<p>Strategic Plan - School Improvement and Safeguarding</p> <p>Trustees to update on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Improvement – Kate Evans was not present at the meeting so the update would be given at the Board of Trustees meeting on 6th February 2024. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding - GS and DoS met with representatives from CPOMS and MyConcern - two of the biggest players in the digital safeguarding industry. The Trust were investigating whether it was feasible to use the same digital system across all Link schools and provided some reasons. GS added that he was meeting with the CEO to evaluate the options and to meet again with CPOMS. 	
13.	<p>Policies</p> <p>13.1 First Aid in School – this policy was circulated before the meeting and recommended by the Trustees for Board of Trustees approval.</p> <p>13.2 Anti-Bullying – this policy was circulated before the meeting. <i>The Trustees asked under 'what is bullying' rather than saying there was no legal definition....considered to be', might it be more assertive to say something like 'At Link Academy Trust we define bullying as....' In the paragraph that says that bullying can be 'aimed at' (then lists such things as ethnicity, sexuality etc) could it say something like 'bullying could be related to someone's identity, family background, and/or protected characteristics'.</i> The Trustees agreed these changes and approved the policy.</p> <p>13.3 Attendance – this policy was circulated before the meeting. <i>The Trustees raised some questions. Paragraph 10.2 'defined as Pupil Premium' would be improved if it said 'Eligible for Pupil Premium Grant'. Page 17 Responsibilities for pupils: for primary pupils, many are not their responsibility - it's the parents' responsibility - for example, punctuality, adhering to systems for late registration, adhering to attendance contracts etc.</i> <i>p19: Responsibilities of Administrator - these sound more like those for a Home-School Link worker or attendance worker - particularly to hold attendance meetings, attend home visits, and advise HT when to issue an FPN. Is this really the role of school Admin? The Trustees agreed these changes and approved the policy.</i></p> <p>13.4 Missing Child - this policy was circulated before the meeting and recommended by the Trustees for Board of Trustees approval.</p> <p>13.5 Online Safety – The DoE advised that this policy was going back to DoS and AHs. <i>The Trustees asked for a separate section on Filtering and Monitoring. The Trustees asked questions of procedure, and it was agreed to ask the DoS to consider the wording. The Trustees discussed whether the policy was for S&C or Audit committee.</i></p> <p>13.6 Pupil Premium – this policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees made the following comments. <i>Improving day to day teaching still refers to 'levelling'. Would it be better wording such as 'ensuring accurate assessment judgements and high expectations for progress through moderation activities' was used. Page 4 reference to possible characteristics of FSM families (should this say PPG?). Please can this paragraph be changed as it reads quite stereotypically. Might it be preferable to stick with the summary sentence at the end 'Pupils entitled to Pupil Premium Grant may have complex family circumstances that could prevent them from flourishing?'</i> The Trustees agreed these changes and approved the policy.</p> <p>13.7 Parents' Code of Conduct (New policy) - this policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees made some minor amendments. The policy was recommended by the Trustees for approval at Board of Trustees.</p>	GP
14.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact – Principle 2: Leadership</p> <p>Review performance and value of meeting with Principle 2 in mind</p> <p>'The Academy Trust is led by an effective Board that provides strategic governance in line with the aims and values of the Academy Trust and engages effectively with its Members'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trustees felt that the LAC governors had a greater understanding of their role and were making a significant contribution to governance in the trust, allowing Trustees to remain more strategic. 	