The Link Academy Trust

Standards and Curriculum Committee

Part I Minutes: 15 June 2022

Please note: This meeting was held via 'Teams'

Present: Kate Evans (Chair)

Nicky Dunford (CEO) Fiona Walters (FW) Cheryl Mathieson (CM) Graeme Scott (GS)

In attendance: Cat Radford (CR) - Totnes Local Board (LB) Representative

Jo Carter (JC) - Woodleigh LB Representative

Lynda Cooper (LC) - Moorland Hub LB Representative

Sarah Clarke (SC) - Academy Trust School Improvement Lead (ATSIL)

Elaine Clarke (Clerk)

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair welcomed those in attendance to the meeting.	
	The Chair accepted apologies from Corinna Tigg who was experiencing technical difficulties joining the meeting but would join later via her mobile if possible – sanctioned.	
2.	Declarations of interest The CEO is a trustee of the Bearnes 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	
3.1	GS advised he is putting together a handbook for trustees and local board governors, including new starters, to explain who's who and what they do - including information such as the roles and pen portraits of the trustees, local boards, committees and acronyms. He asked trustees and local board chairs to send him a 'smiling' passport type photo for inclusion and also that local board chairs send him a short paragraph about their hub. He also asked local board chairs to ask their academy heads (AHs) for a short paragraph about the distinctiveness of their school. He agreed this could be copied/pasted from information already available on school websites. It is hoped that the draft handbook will be finished by the end of this term to be distributed at the	Trustees / LB Chairs LB Chairs
3.2	beginning of next. The Chair thanked GS for taking this on. The Chair advised that a response has been received from Exeter Diocese over a proposal first raised by LB chairs at the meeting of 24 November 2021 requesting a change in the terms of reference to allow the chair of a LB to be an additional member of the LB and to not necessarily have to be either a parent or community governor linked to any school. The issue was one of capacity/workload of the chair to be able to cover both roles. The Diocese response was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. The Chair felt the Diocese view was clear in that they advised that all governors have oversight of all schools within their LB in terms of governance, hence there should be no requirement for the chair to be an additional governor. She asked for any comments she could return to the Diocese. LB chairs responded strongly that they disagreed with the Diocese view and that within their LBs the parent and community governors only ever covered their own schools. The CEO advised that when originally set up the intention was for all governors within a local board to cover all schools; the parent and community governors were appointed from each school to nominally represent each school on the board. She also advised the Diocese were already permitting more parent governors per local board	

	than was preferable to the Trust's VA model, but were allowing it as the Trust felt it was important to have representation from each school community. Although unlikely to change their view she felt that the Diocese would be open to talking directly to the local board chairs about the issue. It was therefore agreed to invite Christina Mabin the Diocese Governance Advisor to speak to the local board chairs at a working party meeting.	LB Chairs / ATSIL
4.	 Approval of meeting minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 were confirmed as a true and accurate record subject to the following: Item 7. Totnes LB Report – the Chair requested a response be documented to question '- Is there an update as to when pupils would be able to move back on site at Diptford?' It was agreed that the following wording be added: 'The CEO responded that as soon as there is an update from the Schools Rebuilding Programme the she will provide an update on the next steps to the parents, staff and governors.' Item 6.6 LB Reports – Data Spreadsheets – It was agreed that the response made by the CEO to the question about how the lag due to Covid will be addressed be adjusted to say ' the focus on having no more than 20% of pupils below ARE with the remainder being at or above ARE.' 	Clerk
5.	Matters arising from minutes of 27 April 2022 not on the agenda The Chair referred the committee to the responses made on Matters Arising / Action Table which was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. Further comments and updates made during the meeting are minuted in the corresponding agenda items below. The Chair advised that the first item on the table had been covered by Item 3.2 of this agenda.	
5.1	Item 6.5 Safeguarding expertise at LB Level LB Chairs and CEO to feedback on progress towards looking at the need for / defining a role at LB level The CEO advised that she has sent a document, obtained from a Trust with which she has been working, to GS regarding what the safeguarding trustee and governors do, which she feels will be useful.	
	JC fedback that at a recent Ofsted inspection of one of her hub schools, the inspector had indicated that should a local board have a safeguarding governor in place, it was preferable that person should have had practical experience of safeguarding rather than just have obtained a paper qualification.	
	CM queried the response on the table as it had been in agreed at the last committee meeting that there should be a named safeguarding governor at local board level and this would be going back to the working party to define a role. CR responded that it had gone back to the working party which was also attended by GS. Following an in depth discussion it had been agreed that it was not appropriate to have a safeguarding role at local board level because of the lack of training and that the responsibility sat with the Trust. The working party concluded that safeguarding was everyone's responsibility, rather than naming someone in a role, and there should be robust procedures in place to ensure no issues were missed. The Chair thanked CR for clarifying this and agreed that the responsibility for safeguarding lay with the Board of Trustees.	
5.2	Item 6.10 Latest SEND Report CEO to look into committee access to Power Bi to view latest SEND data – CEO to update.	

Regarding access to Power Bi the CEO reported she has looked into this and feels there are too many issues around GDPR and the breaching of confidentiality to allow the data to be viewed by the committee and local boards.

She advised her preference would be that the committee ask Andy (Keay) for the data required and Kathryn (Thompson) – the new Attendance Officer - for attendance data to avoid the need to go into Power Bi. This was endorsed by the Chair who also felt that going through the data themselves was not appropriate for trustees, the trustees' role being to challenge the data provided and report back.

Regarding data required for governors' school visits, the CEO advised LB chairs to decide, at the working party meeting prior to the visit, the specific data required for the subsequent visit's focus and request it through SC who would email Andy or Kathryn on their behalf.

5.3 **Item 6.11 Policies**

CEO and Clerk to meet to work on updating the policies schedule – Clerk to update.

Prior to updating on the policy cycle, the CEO confirmed that the Attendance Officer has updated the Attendance Policy which will be reviewed as part of the committee policy schedule. She went on to report that she and the Clerk had met to update the committee policy schedule, and explained that the system for taking policies to academy heads (AHs) a term ahead of the committee meeting to allow time for the policies to be reviewed. It was agreed the Clerk would post the updated policy review table in the meeting documents. The Chair agreed this would be useful as it may be possible to align themed visits and the agenda cycle to the policy cycle. The Clerk advised the table was a work in progress and it was agreed it may be necessary to look at redistributing some policies going forward as this September a back log of policies will be coming to the committee. Following the recent NGA review some of the policies may also be approved at committee level rather than have to go to the Board for approval. This is to go on the agenda for the next Full Board meeting.

Clerk

5.4 Item 13.1 Governor Visits Policy / LB Away Day
LB Chairs to update on combining LB documents into a handbook to be worked on along with other LB issues at an away day.

Not yet completed – the Away Day is planned for 06 July 2022.

LB Chairs / SC

Item 15 Evaluation and governance impact – attendance data reporting
CEO to look into committee access to Power Bi to view attendance data to avoid

duplication of reporting – CEO to update. Covered in item 5.2.

5.5

5.7

5.6 Item 15 Evaluation and governance impact – agenda
KE to look at further improvements to the NGA model now being used by the committee – KE to update.

The Chair reported she had talked through her ideas to improve the agenda with the NGA auditor who had approved them informally, but the final report has yet to be received. It is hoped that in September the new themed agenda cycle will commence and that by keeping to timings the meetings will allow thinking time and become more strategic rather than mostly being about accountability and noting reports. She advised that she hoped that the themes for the agenda could be mapped to local hub and chair visits and the policy review cycle. SC advised this could be looked at during the upcoming LB Chair Away Day. Item 12 of this agenda will look at themes for the September meeting

Item 15 Evaluation and governance impact – S&CC / LB annual themes calendar
At the planned away day LB Chairs to look at a timetable for annual themes for the S&C
Committee to fit in with LB visits to schools – LB Chairs to update.

Not yet completed – the Away Day is planned for 06 July 2022.

LB Chairs / SC

6. **Local Board Reports**

Woodleigh LB Report

The report was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. An additional report of Ofsted questions, with LB responses, from the three recent Ofsted inspections at Cheriton Bishop, Yeoford and Tedburn St Mary was also available on SharePoint prior to the meeting.

JC highlighted the following:

Ofsted Inspections – it was felt that these were carried out in a supportive way
by the three inspectors. From discussion with the inspectors JC put together the
report of questions and responses mentioned above. Main themes included
progression through the school and triangulation of visits and it is hoped that this
information can contribute to the planning of the annual cycle and visit focus.

JC raised the issue that despite preparation at working parties and input from SC on questions for visits, governors who were not teachers found themselves dependent on what school leaders were reporting to them, rather than being able to assess issues for themselves, during school monitoring visits. She raised this because shortly before the Ofsted visits she had been told by the Executive Improvement Team (EIT) that following an Ofsted Preparation Day (OPD) the teaching at one of the schools required some support to improve. This had come as a shock because she had believed that, through the LB visits and leaders' reports, this had not been a concern. She had thought that the LB had a good relationship with their schools, but found herself not knowing how to deal with unexpected feedback or evaluation. She also questioned whether there was a breakdown in communication somewhere between the schools and the Trust in addressing supporting staff.

Q - The Chair asked SC and the CEO whether they recognised what JC was saying about the unexpected feedback - the quality of provision and whether schools were talking to the Trust and the EIT?

A – The CEO responded that this was not recognised; she meets with AHs weekly and at times is in constant communication with AHs experiencing difficulties. Regarding loss and changes of staff the CEO advised that ultimately, despite the Trust's efforts it was a member of staff's choice as to whether they remained with the Trust.

JC reiterated her concerns and upset that despite the best efforts of the LB governors in monitoring and believing everything was fine that might not be the case and that ultimately it was the children that were being let down.

The trustees reassured JC and responded that LB governors could only depend on the information provided to them by the leaders in the schools. The Chair advised the OPDs gave an external validation — or otherwise - of the information given to LB governors and is the purpose of these visits. This issue is something that could be learned from and it may be that more challenging, or different, questions could be asked by governors in future.

In conclusion JC said that she felt LB governors needed to be kept 'in the loop' as to how the schools are performing as per the EIT monitoring so that can be used to inform LB visits. KE and SC noted that the presence of LB Chairs at the S&C meeting, and regular discussions on the Trust's intelligence about school performance provided this insight.

The Chair asked that the LB Chairs, at the Away Day, capture the experience of the journey from LB monitoring to Ofsted validation.

LB Chairs

GS stated his appreciation of the detailed work of the EIT and the support given by the LB governors.

Q – FW questioned whether Ofsted had felt the S&C Committee was a satisfactory conduit for LB concerns.

A - JC responded that wasn't specifically asked but instead had asked how the communication between LBs and the Trust worked and had been impressed that the committee was somewhere that the LBs could lobby the Trust on certain issues.

The CEO advised that she would report on the outcomes of the inspections under item 7.

The Chair thanked JC and the Woodleigh LB governors for supporting their schools so ably throughout the three inspections.

Raleigh LB Report

CT had been unable to join the meeting. The report was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting.

Totnes LB Report

CR apologised for being unable to prepare a written report and gave a verbal report highlighting the following:

- SATs visits were covered by governors as expected.
- CR has not received any reports from governors monitoring visits from last halfterm as there has been no LB meeting this half-term
- CR has attended two EIT Learn, Support and Challenge days at LB schools. Other governors are attending at other schools. These days have proved revealing and interesting to see the EIT works and how the school responds.
- There are governor vacancies across the LB
- The LB Chairs are looking forward to the report from the NGA review

Moorland LB Report

The report was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. LC highlighted the following:

- **SATs** There was strong SATs support from LB governors. LC suggested some acknowledgement for LB governors' commitment might be appreciated.
- AH Recruitment Concern had been expressed by LB governors about the lack of involvement of LBs required in the recruitment of AHs. To address this it was proposed that a trustee representative from the interview panel could consult the LB Chair prior to an interview about any relevant local information or issues that might be of relevance. This could be seen as a courtesy to, and a voice for, the LB. This concern also linked to issues around lack of trustee 'visibility' at LB level and the communication between the two levels.

CM responded that as part of the Trust Strategic Plan recruitment is part of her portfolio. Her objectives for the next year include looking at all aspects of recruitment in detail and she agreed that LB involvement in AH recruitment can be looked at as part of this. The Chair suggested that while the Scheme of Delegations states the CEO is responsible for the appointment of an AH, the constitution of the panel is 'to be decided'. It could also be part of CMs objectives to clarify this in the SoD and to look at whether it might be appropriate to include some LB representation on the panel.

Regarding the visibility of trustees the Chair suggested that trustees could be allocated to a group of schools and for example could sit in as an observer and participant in some of the LB meetings, or attend school functions. Additionally if a trustee was visiting a school for a particular reason such as a meeting with a member of staff they could also invite a LB governor to show them round and to

CM

СМ

join them for the meeting. LB Chairs and trustees endorsed these ideas. GS advised that a similar suggestion was to be made in the handbook he is compiling. He recommended that data be kept on who was to visit each school however to ensure equal numbers of visits across the schools.

Trustees

Trustees

CR raised a query about Trust policy in developing pre-schools for all Trust schools. The CEO advised this would be covered in item 7.

The Chair thanked the LB chairs for their reports.

7. **CEO Report**

The CEO advised that in future she will submit a written report. This will cover areas within the remit of the S&C Committee, taken from the full report to be presented at the subsequent Full Board meeting. The areas to be covered will be: attendance, staffing, individual school issues in which the CEO has involvement, safeguarding, the Inclusion Hub and SEND. This will avoid overlap with the ATSIL report and duplication of work. The Chair thanked the CEO for this as it means the committee will be able to read the report and prepare questions beforehand. The Chair suggested the CEO could also be able to link the report into the some of the meeting themes. It is intended that this report, along with reports from other EIT members, will cover the themes for each meeting.

The CEO presented her verbal report as follows:

- Staffing An update on staffing has been sent to every local board and the CEO will continue to do this. There have been many staffing changes and moves. A lot of interviewing has taken place and there is still more to do. It has been found difficult to recruit experienced and senior teachers although easier to recruit early career teachers. Due to the size of most of our schools however there cannot be more than one early career teacher per school as they cannot be a subject leader, and due to capacity of the AHs.
- Trust Growth This is moving forward slowly. Wolborough have been in a management partnership with the Trust for a term. The first joint committee meeting with them will be on 05 July 2022. We are still in discussions with the Moorsway Federation although timings have dropped back due to governance issues. There is increased interest from a stand-alone school who may be coming to visit some of our schools which is to be encouraged.
- School Improvement The ATSIP is now set with three main areas of focus being oracy, visual learning and relational behaviour. Each school is developing a bespoke ASIP from the ATSIP. SC will be checking the plans at the beginning of next term.
- Ofsted Inspections have taken place at three schools in the Woodleigh LB. As these schools were previously rated 'Good', Section 8 inspections were carried out this time. While not being able to inform the committee of the outcomes of the inspections at this point, the Chair explained the system for re-inspection for 'Good/Improving', 'Remaining Good' and 'Good/Declining' schools.

The meeting moved into Part II

The meeting moved back into Part I

Q – The Chair asked whether there was any other learning for us a Trust from the Ofsted Inspections.

A – The CEO responded that the Trust has now looked in depth at phonics in every school. There were also some common themes across the inspected schools and it is most important to ensure AHs and subject /aspect leaders are coached to present with confidence and evidence their impact as leaders in the event of inspection. These are the areas we need to focus on and improve, and we need to ensure staff are implementing this.

JC advised that she had asked the Yeoford inspector for feedback on the LB. She reported he was complimentary about the way the LB was set up, how the governors went in to monitor the schools, how well knew their schools and worked well together, and how they worked well within the Trust.

Q- CM asked whether there would be a document produced for trustees to evidence follow up to the outcomes of the inspections.

A – The CEO responded that an action plan will be produced by the school following an Ofsted and the EIT will have input into this. This can come to any appropriate committee.

The Chair advised that depending on the inspection outcome, the action plan may need to be a stand-alone improvement plan - but may just feed into the risk register for the schools or into the academy improvement plans.

- Pre- School Focus – All schools have completed a survey to provide a complete picture of pre-school provision, and to allow comparison, across the Trust. There have been issues with recruiting pre-school leads with NVQ3 qualifications and who are up to Trust standards, so where possible we are looking to bring Reception classes and pre-schools into Foundation Stage Units (FSUs) so there is always a teacher overseeing the provision, for example as at Bearnes. The Trust may also offer existing staff the opportunity to train to work in pre-schools to bring all pre-schools up to the level and capacity of the current successful pre-schools. It is hoped this will be in place for September. It is preferred that these pre-school posts will be advertised internally in the first instance.

Q – The Chair asked whether in moving to an FSU, this improve the pupil to staff ratio and make recruitment less pressing?

A- The CEO responded that in moving to an FSU, recruitment might be easier as it would be seen that there would be a teacher overseeing it. To date, having NVQ3 trained leaders, some preschools have been missing the educational element. A teacher led FSU would improve expectations.

It was agreed that moving to teacher led FSUs would be advantageous to the Trust in many ways such as improving pupil numbers through feeding up from pre-school – pupils who were school ready. The difference in staff to children ratios between stand-alone pre-schools and FSU preschools and the possible need to TUPE staff was also briefly discussed but the CEO advised that the main point of looking at this focus was the need to address the inconsistent provision across the Trust. The CEO advised she hoped to work with the Local Authority in future to address any issues about having to close FSUs due to falling of preschool numbers.

Q- CR asked if there was the expectation that all schools would have a pre-school, or was the focus just on existing pre-schools.

A- The CEO responded that the focus was on improving provision in existing pre-schools however she is also looking at schools that don't have a pre-school, and why they don't, on a case by case basis. For example one school has a good pre-school nearby so there would be no benefit in also setting up one in the school.

Q – JC voiced concern for children pre-school children who attended both the pre-school and wrap around care at both ends of the day where it was available.

A – The CEO and Chair responded that sometimes this occurred but it was how parents covered childcare for their working day.

- **Safeguarding** – No outstanding issues were reported. Recent Ofsted inspections have reported our safeguarding as strong. Gemma Martin who produces our

safeguarding focus of the month bulletins and power points has been given half a day to monitor the impact and ensure the use of these resources.

- **SEND** – The Trust looking at appointing an additional SENDCo from outside the Trust to give a day of SENDCo support outside of existing staffing, to AHs who work across two schools. It is hoped this appointment could also provide some 'floating' SENDCo time across the Trust as required.

Becky Humphries from the Inclusion Hub has set up a new external partnership with the School for Inspiring Talent in Newton Abbot. Members of staff from the School for Inspiring Talent will come in to see how SEND works in a mainstream school and then provide Trust schools with CPD and support around extreme SEND and how they operate.

- **Pupil Premium** –The new ATSIP will address disadvantage in more ways than it has ever done. The CEO and other Trust leads remain part the South West Disadvantaged Forum and a group of the newer AHs are particularly focussed on disadvantaged children.

The Chair proposed outcomes for disadvantaged children and our impact on their progress as a standing agenda item - with a different focus each time related to the theme of the meeting. This was agreed by the committee.

Clerk

It was clarified by the CEO that 'disadvantaged' did not only cover children receiving Pupil Premium as there are many types of disadvantage in this region. The Chair advised however that the Trust will be measured and held to account for those that receive Pupil Premium.

The Chair thanked the CEO for her report.

8. ATSIL Report, including update on School Improvement Plans

The report was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. SC highlighted the following:

Moderation – As an update since writing the report Key Stage (KS) 1 local authority moderation had gone well at Ilsington. Reports have not yet been received from other schools. Internal moderation will be reported on at the next committee meeting as it was being carried out this term. SC advised that none of the Trust staff were trained local authority moderators at this time. Trustees agreed that having a trained moderator as part of the staff could be of value to the Trust.

The Chair explained the cycle of external KS1 and KS2 moderation for the benefit of the committee.

 Phonics Review – Ofsted has sharpened the Trust response to phonics however this was already being addressed by the Trust Action Plan which is now in the review phase. Feedback from the recent inspections will inform the Trust response further. The review is picking up many strengths in phonics across the schools but also shining a light on issues such as those not completely coming on board with the scheme.

The Phonics Bug scheme is used across the Trust with the exception of Morchard Bishop who joined the Trust after the scheme was introduced and were resourced in terms of books, with another scheme. Morchard Bishop are keen to transition to Phonics Bug however which is being supported.

The review is showing how the scheme is having an impact, and also showing that the Action Plan too is having a positive impact where phonics leads from

	vulnerable schools are learning and implementing practice from visits to other schools. From the outset the idea was for Trust schools to have some autonomy in implementing the phonics plan rather than having it dictated centrally. The review is now serving to iron out individual snags and is timely. Regarding recent Ofsted inspections one of the schools inspected had not had its phonics review - which had been booked for the following week. Had a review taken place prior to the inspection, Ofsted findings may have been different. For example, a rescheduled review and support visit to another recently inspected school had ensured staff were able to present a coherent picture of provision The EIT are now concentrating on completing the reviews with only one school classed as due for inspection left to go. The Chair thanked SC for her report.	
9.	Safeguarding Covered in item 7. CEO report	
10.	SEND and Pupil Premium Covered in item 7. CEO report	
11.	Trust Risk Register The CEO advised that the risk register is being transferred to the new Every compliance software system. The DCEO has looked at and is removing duplications in the prior existing risks. All schools have been asked to look at their individual risk registers and the DCEO will lead an AHs meeting on the subject. The Chair advised that the Trust risk register is very broad and comprises all areas of risk so for the purposes of these committee meetings it is proposed to limit the risks reviewed to areas such as quality of provision and standards and curriculum. The committee agreed to this proposal	
12. 12.1	Agenda Cycle To confirm agenda cycle for 2022-23 The Chair advised that she had no further comments regarding the themes and style of agendas as proposed in the previous meeting. She reported that Jackie Eason from the National Governance Association (NGA), who has recently reviewed Trust governance, had liked the proposed changes to the committee meeting routines and agendas however the NGA review report is yet to be seen to confirm this.	
12.2	Themes for the meeting of 14 September 2022 The Chair advised that for the September meeting there would be the following themes. As previously mentioned in this meeting the Chair advised that she would like pupil premium to be a theme within the themes already stated for meetings.	
	 Pupil Outcomes – using unvalidated data at that point. This theme will include pupil premium, SEND and gender and the COVID gap. Andy Keay will be invited to present a report on this theme to the committee. 	Chair
	 Teacher appraisal targets and AH performance management targets An overview of Academy improvement planning – which AHs are working on at the moment, to include the CPD plan which is interlinked. The Chair requested this theme be included in one of the reports to the meeting either from the CEO or SC. Alternatively Lizzie Lethbridge (LL) could be asked to report on this. 	
	 Safeguarding – on the advice of GS, as safeguarding trustee, it was agreed by the committee that a safeguarding summary should continue to appear on each agenda. 	

	 Vision, values and – for church schools - SIAMS readiness This could be included in CEO or ATSIL report, or be a separate report from most experienced officer Evaluation of risk related to quality of provision and standards and curriculum, LB reports and Matters Arising will continue to appear on each agenda. 	
	The Chair advised she would also like the policy review cycle, the committee agenda themes and the local board visit themes to fall into alignment. This could happen either by the LB themed visit happening the term before the themed committee meeting so it can be reported on at the meeting — or the themed committee meeting takes place and the themed LB visit is carried out subsequent to the meeting taking into account discussion at the preceding committee meeting. The Chair suggested that the approach should be discussed and decided upon at a working party meeting.	LB Chairs / SC
	The Chair is to email a schedule of themes for next year's committee meetings to the Clerk.	Chair
	The Chair clarified that the CEO, SC and LL needed to liaise to decide on who is best placed to report on which theme or aspect of the agenda, within their individual reports.	
13.	Evaluation of governance impact The committee reviewed the performance and value of meeting as follows:	
	 Learning from the Ofsted experience from the LB perspective as well as from the CEO and SC was very valuable. It is hoped that the committee meetings can move towards these learning conversations in addition to the accountability and reporting. 	
	 Going forward the meetings will be more channelled with the themed and layered approach which will be helpful. 	
	 It has been beneficial that this meeting had focussed on process rather than just content, and that meetings will become more strategic which is what the trustees should be doing. 	
	 Consideration should be given for future meetings to be longer to avoid time constraints for discussion. 	
14.	Dates of next meetings 14 September 2022 23 November 2022 25 January 2023 26 April 2023 14 June 2023	

The meeting finished at 19.15