



Board of Trustees
MINUTES
 10th July 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) Graeme Scott (GS)
 Dominic Course (DC)
 Ben Thorne (BT)

In attendance:

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. The apologies from Kate Evans and Sarah Cox 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. There were no further declarations of interest	
3.	Any other business <i>PW raised a concern about the websites of the Academies across the Trust. He questioned if the websites were to attract prospective parents, then acronyms should be avoided to make them more user friendly. He added that the websites should reflect the uniqueness of the Trust. PW asked that the Trustees reflect on the philosophy and the uniqueness of the Trust and how that was being conveyed to the stakeholders and potential parents/schools. PW added that he felt that the education provision was not outlined enough on the websites. The CEO said that the Academy Heads' wrote their own websites with HR checking for statutory requirements. Every school should outline their vision and values along with the Trust vision and values. The CEO agreed that the Trust's vision and values should be reviewed. The Academies were unique and individual however it was agreed that any current foci should be outlined within the websites. The quality of the websites was not given enough time due to constraints however in the next AH meeting, the CEO now planned to discuss this with them. It was suggested and agreed that there was an Away Day to research this in more depth. The Trustees noted that the large amount of work was regularly done on keeping Facebook</i>	CEO

	<p>information up to date and wondered if it could be connected to the websites. The Trustees said that the websites should not only capture the national curriculum but the additional activities/awards. It was further agreed that AHs would be asked to look at their websites and start considering improvements along with being invited to the Away Day. The Trustees said this robust approach would support the new schools with their websites when joining the Trust.</p>	Chair/ GP
4.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes from 22nd May 2023 The Part I Minutes of the meeting were approved by the Trustees The Part II Minutes of the meeting were circulated at the meeting. These minutes were approved by the Trustees The Chair signed the Minutes accordingly.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters arising from 22 May 2023 not on the agenda 5.1.13 Diversity Indicators questionnaire – The GP confirmed that she had circulated the wording if the Trustees voted to not publish their diversity indicator data to protect their identity. Examples of questionnaires had also been circulated beforehand. The Trustees had a robust discussion, and it was agreed to use the wording from Devon Education Services and not publish the data as it could identify individual Trustees/governors.</p>	GP
6.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report The CEO report was circulated before the meeting. The CEO discussed the recent Ofsted inspection outcomes across the Trust – some of the gradings were very strong. It was noted that there were actions that would be addressed with the EIT's support. <i>The Trustees discussed the learnings, barriers and the next steps. The Trustees asked challenging questions and made suggestions.</i> The Trustees were assured that any learnings would be spread across the whole Trust. The CEO updated the meeting on the growth within East Devon. One proposition was unlikely to be successful as there was a difference in opinion on the nature of the partnership between the Trust and prospective schools. <i>The Trustees asked about what an acceptable size for a Trust was to be safe.</i> The CEO said that it was 3,000 students so the Trust was still vulnerable to merger. The Trustees noted that the government terminology on what was deemed an acceptable sized Trust seemed to be changing. There was a national movement of small schools unilaterally challenging the government to keep their unique position. It was noted that the government want less trusts and so the Link Academy wanted to be a forerunner, making sure that that any mergers/growth was from choice. <i>The Trustees asked whether the lower attendance figures for December was due to mainly families going on holiday early and how could the Trust ensure that there was a consistent approach in enforcing the importance of attendance and sanctions where the message was ignored?</i> The CEO reported that Strep A, scarlet fever and Covid were prevalent across the Trust in December and so children were either being kept off with illness or parents were being cautious and keeping their children off. It was noted that Public Health England closed a school in the Trust in December due to an outbreak of Strep A/scarlet fever. The CEO pointed out the difference between the attendance figures in December and in May; the May figures were all in the high 90s. The CEO added that the Attendance Officer worked very hard with Academy Heads ensuring that parents were challenged, and appropriate sanctions were consistently used. It was noted that this was discussed at length at S&C and outlined in the Minutes. <i>The Trustees asked about the projected deficit and clarification about staffing and the supply budget.</i> The CEO reported that the original projected deficit was an overestimate which had now been reduced. The CEO outlined the savings across the Trust which had been reported in the F&GP meeting. To address the supply budget, one TA per school would receive training to progress to an HLTA contract and then would be used more effectively to cover PPA/illness as that would be part of their job description. TAs would also be uplifted to HLTA but only paid for the time they were leading the class where hours above the agreed HLTA hours are needed..</p>	

	<p><i>The Trustees asked if they were contractually obliged to do this?</i> The CEO said that if on an HLTA contract it was part of the contract that these duties were completed, when they were on a TA contract only some were expected to step up and these were those personnel that were confident to do so and had had some training. Regarding the supply budget the Academy Heads would get a £2,000 supply budget for the year– there was an expectation for academies to keep within this budget. It was noted that this was discussed fully at F&GP and outlined in the Minutes. <i>The Trustees asked about the Trust’s floating teachers.</i> The CEO said that they were being utilised fully covering more long-term temporary posts such as maternity cover but would also help out with short-term cover if available.</p>	
7	<p>Trust Growth</p> <p>7.1 CEO to provide overall update – this was discussed in Item 6.</p> <p>7.2 Wolborough due diligence was circulated before the meeting. <i>Referring to the due diligence the Trustees asked about the DBS checks and safeguarding concerns.</i> The CEO said that these would be outlined in the action plan and addressed.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if there was any change to secure funding to cover the Wolborough deficit?</i> The CEO reported that the LA would not write off any incoming deficit however it was noted that the deficit was reducing. It was not expected for the school to be in deficit the following year. There were funds that the Trust might be able to access such as TCaF and TEG. The CEO added that a staff member from Wolborough would take on the role of Income Generation Officer for the Trust once the school converted.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked a question about the pupil numbers?</i> There was a discussion around the class numbers and the staffing structure. It was noted that in each school the adult/pupil ratio was being reviewed to streamline the provision without having a negative impact on the learning of the pupils.</p>	
8.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>8.1 Update on 2022/23 plan – this was to be discussed at a standalone meeting on 11th July at Landscope School House at 4 pm.</p> <p>8.2 Workforce Strategy Group report re attrition rates – The attrition rates had been circulated before the meeting. The Chair reported that the last three years had been circulated – it was noted that HLTAs and TAs was the higher proportion of leavers over each of the last three years, with “personal/family” being given as the main reason. The attrition rate had been high last year, with many staff reassessing their priorities following Covid; recruitment was difficult last year. Indications were that attrition rates were back at usual levels this year. It was noted that in some of the schools, the number of challenging children was increasing, and this meant that staff were reassessing their job. <i>The Trustees asked about the increase of challenging children</i> – it was felt that this was the aftermath of lockdown and children not getting the vital social skills needed – it was trauma and there needed to be a national social recovery provision. <i>The Trustees asked about extra training for staff</i> – the CEO said that the Inclusion Hub were supporting the academies and it was the lack of support from the LA which was negatively impacting on the schools.</p> <p>8.3 2023/24 plan – It was noted that the 2023/24 plan was to be discussed as a standalone meeting on 11th July at Landscope School House at 4 pm by the Trustees with the DCEO.</p>	
9.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>DC reported that all the individual schools have their own risk register, owned by the AH. DC reported that he had reviewed a sample across the Trust which had subsequently generated discussions on the consistent approach across the Trust. The Trustees said that it must be reiterated that it was a working document needing regular attention by the AH. <i>Following a question from the Trustees,</i> it was confirmed that the DCEO did meet with AHs on the risk register. It was noted that getting consistency across the Trust was the goal but would need more training, guidance, and support.</p>	

	<p>The Trustees discussed the process of how the Trustees monitor the Trust risk register, and it was noted that though the risks were discussed regularly at committees and Board of Trustees, these discussions needed to be more directly linked to the register.</p>	
10.	<p>Audit Committee There had been no further meeting since 10th May 2023. DC updated the Trustees the following regarding the external auditors tendering process - It was noted that the three audit members completed the matrix separately and came to the same decision. <i>The Trustees asked if there was a maximum time the Trust could stay with one company</i> – BT said there was no maximum term due to the size of the Trust’s budget. The Audit Committee said that the tender process was taken seriously. The Chair of the Committee reported to the meeting that the appointment of Bishop Fleming LLP to provide the External Audit Service from to to cover: -</p> <p>The Internal audit provision was discussed, in particular the level of added value to the Trust, and the Chair of the Audit Committee agreed to raise the concerns of the Trust with the Auditors.</p>	
11.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 30th June 2023 The Minutes of the F&GP meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Trustees were invited to raise any questions from the Minutes. The CEO added that there had been a SRMA review, and she had met with CEO, DCEO and Chair of F&GP. The CEO shared details of the report. This had been prepared based on an earlier budget forecast and the actions that the Trust had put in place to address the budgets had subsequently been shared with the SRMA. The SRMA had agreed to amend the draft report to take account of the revised financial picture, but the final version of the report remained the same as the draft. Benchmark data from the ESFA had also been used which was skewing the figures and subsequently the SRMA report and ultimate recommendations. The recommendations were mainly around savings in staffing however the SRMA had advised that it was difficult to suggest recommendations as the Trust could demonstrate every possible saving. The Trust were now waiting for an updated report to reflect the correct position but the SRMA required approval from the ESFA to revisit the work. The Trustees agreed that if the report does not get amended then a strong protest from the Trust would be made as the ESFA would be receiving incorrect information regarding the Trust’s financial position.</p>	CEO
12.	<p>Remuneration Committee The Minutes from the Remuneration Meeting held on 30th June 2023 were Part II so were handed out at the meeting. The Trustees were given time to consider the Minutes. The CEO was invited to address the meeting. The CEO went through the proposals shared in the Remuneration Committee explaining the rationale.</p> <p>The Trustees had a lengthy robust discussion raising questions and comments and agreed all the proposals recommended by the Remuneration Committee (Part II).</p>	
13. 13.1 13.2	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee Meeting held on 21st June 2023 Chair of the S&C committee had sent her apologies. GS outlined the main business of the meeting. There were no questions.</p> <p>Local Boards There were no additional points to consider at Board level.</p>	
14.	<p>External Inspection Reports The Ofsted reports were circulated before the meeting. 14.1 Ofsted: Ilsington C of E Primary School, Otterton C of E Primary School, Drake’s C of E Primary School</p>	

	The CEO reported that Ofsted had inspected a further 2 schools recently – the reports had not been released yet. This was discussed under Item 6. 14.2 SIAMS:	
15.	Safeguarding There were no additional points to raise	
16.	Health and Safety There were no additional points to raise	
17.	Governance 17.1 Update – The Chair reported there was no change in Trustees. 17.2 Skills Audit and Trustee Recruitment The Chair outlined plans for recruitment of additional trustees and it was agreed that a skills audit would be carried out in order to determine the skills and experience required to complement those of the existing Trustees. This would then inform the recruitment process. The GP was asked to circulate the audit. 17.3 Chair and Vice Chair of Board of Trustees for 2023/24 nomination forms These had been circulated by the Governance Professional. All Trustees were requested to return their forms to the Governance Professional for the result to be announced at the General Meeting on 17 th July 2023. 17.4 Related Parties forms (Declaration of Interest) It was confirmed that the forms had been forwarded to all Trustees to update. The Trustees were reminded to return the forms by the end of August 2023. 17.3 Local Board Review – The CEO updated the Trustees on the Local Board Review. The CEO outlined the governors appointed for each hub – it was agreed that at the next meeting a small pen portrait of each of the Trustee appointed governors would be circulated for final approval. The Chair thanked the CEO and GP for their work on the review. 17.4 Scheme of Delegation The updated SoD was circulated before the meeting. The Chair informed the meeting that the SoD had been updated by herself, the CEO and the GP to reflect the changes in the Local Board review and the NGA inspection action plan. It was noted that it was a live document. The Trustees approved the changes to the document. It was further agreed that the SoD would be circulated every year in the Summer term to the Trustees for an annual approval.	GP Trustees Trustees GP GP
18.	Term Dates for 2024/25 and 2025/26 The term dates were circulated before the meeting. The Trustees approved the term dates.	GP
19.	Policies for approval The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval: 19.1 Standards & Curriculum Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff was circulated before the meeting. It was confirmed that this had been reviewed and discussed at the S&C meeting. The Board of Trustees approved the policy. Positive Handling policy was circulated before the meeting. It was confirmed that this had been reviewed and discussed at the S&C meeting. The Board of Trustees approved the policy. 19.2 Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 19.3 Recommended by the Remuneration Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redundancy policy was circulated before the meeting. It was confirmed that this had been reviewed and discussed at the Remuneration meeting. It 	

	<p>was further noted that this policy had been through the Trust’s solicitors and the Unions. The Board of Trustees approved the policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Career Teachers policy was circulated before the meeting. It was confirmed that this had been reviewed and discussed at the Remuneration meeting. The Board of Trustees approved the policy. <p>19.4 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimate Care policy – it was reported that due to unforeseen circumstances this policy was still going through the review process. It was on the next Academy Head meeting agenda to be discussed by the EIT and Academy Heads. • Risk Management Policy – The Risk Management Policy was circulated before the meeting. This had been reviewed by the Audit Committee. It was agreed that this policy needed more consideration. DC agreed to discuss the required changes with the DCEO. 	DC
19.	<p>Dates of next meetings To note the date of the General Meeting is 17th July 2023 To be held in person at Landscope School Hall with the option of TEAMS</p> <p>Meeting dates 2023/2024 and Governance Annual Cycle of Business The Governance Annual Cycle of Business with the meeting dates was circulated before the meeting. The GP advised that the cycle of business was still a work in progress and the final draft would be circulated on completion. The Trustees agreed the meeting dates for 2023/2024.</p>	
	<p>Evaluation of governance impact The Chair explained that Review performance and value of the meeting - to summarise the effectiveness of the meeting and how this will positively impact on our pupils, staff and Trust. Trustees to consider during the meeting where their understanding/decisions have had an impact and share a sentence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of discussion around the staffing structure that would ensure future growth and more equity within the Trust. 	