

**Board of Trustees
Minutes**

**6th February 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)
Kate Evans (KE) Dominic Course (DC)
Graeme Scott (GS)

Minutes: Charlotte Roe (GP)

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. The Trustees accepted apologies received from Ben Thorne and Chris Norman	
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 Part II was taken	
4.	Approval of meeting minutes from 11th December 2023 The Part I Minutes of the meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Trustees approved the Minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 11 th December 2023.	
5.	Matters arising from 11th December 2023 not on the agenda 5.7 Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2022-23 – The Chair and CEO confirmed that they had signed the Annual Report and Financial Statements and the Letter of Representation for the year ended 31 August 2023 and they had been submitted to the ESFA prior to the submission deadline. The Trustees asked for their gratitude to be passed onto the DCEO and Finance Team. 5.8 GDPR – The Chair confirmed that the Data Protection Officer followed the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) guide when rating the severity of a breach and if in doubt contacted them directly for guidance and support.	
6.	Chief Executive Officer's Report 6.1 The Attendance report from the Attendance Officer was circulated before the meeting. The CEO said that Attendance had been discussed at length at the Academy Heads Meeting, sharing good practice. The CEO said that the Academy Heads had been directed to follow the policy. It had been agreed that the Attendance Policy was going to be reviewed by a working party to ensure that the process was clear across the Trust. It was noted that the report indicated that attendance levels	

across the Trust were moving in the right direction and currently sat above the national attendance level for primary schools. In addition to the DfE Moments Matter campaign, the Attendance Officer was also doing a good job in ensuring consistency across the Trust.

The Trustees asked the following questions which had been responded to by the Trust Attendance Officer via email through the CEO.

- *How were academies using the DfE Moments Matter materials? Were there any early examples of great practice?* The CEO reported that the Moments Matter, Attendance Counts campaign materials had been shared with all schools. They should all be using the campaign logo on at least their admin and head's email signatures. A selection of materials had been produced for all schools to use in their newsletters and a piece was sent out to all schools for their newsletter at the launch of the campaign. At Ilington, an attendance section had been added to the weekly newsletter with a different focus each week. So far, punctuality and school-based anxiety and school avoidance had been covered.
- *95.83% for the Autumn Term was a good achievement, given the common illnesses that affected all schools (staff and pupils). How does this compare with the same point last year (rather than comparing with the full year)?* The CEO informed the meeting that in comparison to the 2022/23 Academic Year, for the Autumn term attendance across the Trust was up around 1.06% with some schools seeing a marked increase. There were only 4 schools across the Trust whose attendance was down and for 3 of those schools it was only a fractional decrease, the other was detailed in one of the responses to a question below. It was really encouraging to see 6 schools with an increase in attendance of over 2%.
- *How many Fixed Penalty Notices (PN) were issued for term time holidays last year, and so far, this year? What difference were these making?* From the data that was available (which does not include all of the Trust schools) the CEO had been advised by the Trust Attendance Officer, that last year the Trust issued 24 penalty notices. This year to date as a Trust, 8 penalty notices had been issued. With the Summer Term and peak holiday season still to come it was difficult to definitively answer how much of this was due to a more robust approach however, early signs were encouraging, and it was hoped that once all schools were on board with issuing PNs the Trust would continue this downward trend. As previously reported, until such time that school holidays become more affordable and in line with the prices of term time holidays, there were always going to be those that will take a hit of the cost of a fine. Overall, schools were reporting that they had seen a decrease in term time holidays and that parents were more aware that such absences would not be authorised. The Trustees said that the approach needed to be clear.
- *How many SEND pupils were on p/t timetables, for how long, and how were these absences coded?* From the data that was available (which does not include all of the Trust schools) the CEO had been advised by the Trust Attendance Officer that the Trust currently had 7 children across the Trust on a part time timetable. Children should only be on part time timetables for a maximum of 6 weeks, this could be different with SEND children but on the whole, that was the guidance. With regards to how they were coded, this was depending on the child and the situation. If the child is part time in school but at alternative provision provided by the 0-25 team, then the days/sessions they were off site would be coded as educated off site. If the child is not of statutory school age (ie. Not yet 5 or 5 but it was not yet the term following the child's 5th birthday) then they would be X coded and this would not affect their, or the Trust's attendance figures. For all other children, if it was an agreed part time timetable then it would be a C code which would affect their and the Trust's attendance.
- *Were the p/t timetables temporary and how do the Trust stand legally on them?* The CEO reported that PT timetables should always be temporary and the Trust followed the Devon guidance <https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools->

[settings/document/reduced-timetable-guidance-for-schools-in-devon/](#) Part time timetables should only ever be used for a maximum of 6 weeks unless there were exceptional circumstances or the child is not of statutory school age. *The Trustees asked what examples of circumstances that led to a child not being able to access full time timetable.* The CEO provided examples and added that therapy was also offered to find ways to ensure children returned to full time school. *The Trustees asked if there was parental resistance to unauthorised absence.* The CEO said that parents do not complain as it was expected and understood. The CEO added that it was becoming less often parents taking children out of school on holidays.

- *There has been a pleasing improvement at Ilsington – what made the difference, and what can be shared with other ‘red’ schools?* The CEO explained that Ilsington had a robust and clear strategy for dealing with attendance which was really making a difference. It was clear to see that the measures that had been implemented had had a real impact on parents and reasons for absence were genuine and most parents had adopted the ‘send them in and see how they get on’ approach rather than keeping them at home. The school regularly promoted attendance through their weekly newsletter and all absences were followed up by the Academy Head or the administrator. The AH was really on top of attendance and it showed the impact that this had.
- *What was the reason for the decline and very poor attendance at one of the schools highlighted (overall absence and persistent absence (PA))?* The school highlighted had been really unfortunate in that they had been hit by a number of illness outbreaks including Scarlet Fever, Strep A, Meningitis and Impetigo, as well as the usual stomach bugs, all of these illnesses came with ‘enforced’ periods of absence. There were also 2 school avoiders on roll with EWO involvement. The Trust Attendance Officer had been working with this school over the last academic year and the school were doing everything they could to support good attendance. Moving forward it is hoped that cases of illness would reduce, and their attendance as a whole would see an improvement. The Trust always strived to improve attendance and celebrate the successes; however it was important to remember that the Trust was made up of small schools and because of this, it only took a small number of children with poor attendance to affect the overall percentage attendance rates of schools. The GP added that in the Local Advisory Committee of this school, the Local Governors had also had a robust discussion with the Academy Head on the reasons behind the lower attendance rate.
- *What were the actions in place, or expectations for actions from leadership at one school, before they joined the Trust, to improve their very poor attendance rates?* The CEO said that the Trust’s approach was rigorous with a set of letters regularly being sent to parents as and when attendance continued to worsen. This had seemed to have a positive effect on the parents’ attitude towards attendance.

6.2 The Chair noted that there was not a detailed CEO report tabled at this meeting as the Trustees had been asked instead to provide feedback on their consideration of the content and format of the CEO report going forward. The Trustees made the following comments: -

- Whilst it was recognised that it was time consuming, it was important that certain areas such as financial matters should flow regularly to the Trustees however only highlighting changes or issues rather an in-depth account. The CEO said that when she started doing reports there were 19 headings requiring significant updates in addition to how local and national issues would affect the Trust.
- There was some responsibility for Trustees to review the local and national issues unilaterally and the CEO only expected to raise the additional points.
- *The Trustees asked if there were any areas of the report that could be delegated to other officers to encourage CPD.* The CEO said that there was and provided examples. It was also commented that the Trustee Committee

	<p>Minutes covered some of the points and so did not require to be repeated in the CEO report.</p> <p>The Trustees agreed a way forward and to trial the new report for the next meeting.</p> <p>6.3 SIAMS report for Drakes – The CEO gave an additional brief recount of the inspection. The Chair informed that she had attended the meeting at the end of the inspection and the feedback had been very positive. <i>The Trustees commented that it was very pleasing report, although the area of EDI and life in Modern Britain had been highlighted for improvement. Was this the case in other schools across the Trust / was there best practice to share to address such important aspects of provision?</i> The CEO said it was about managing a balance when the Trust was not in a multi-cultural area. It was an area to develop and options, such as linking with a city school in, say, Bristol were being considered. The Trustees commented that in a recent Ofsted report for one school, preparing pupils for modern Britain had been noted as a strength and it was agreed that any good practice would be identified to share across the Trust. The Trustees said that available books in classrooms and libraries should be reviewed to ensure that the Trust’s pupils had access to multi-cultural literature and that the stock of books was current.</p> <p>The Trustees asked for their congratulations to be passed on to the Academy Head and staff on the successful SIAMS report.</p>	
		GP
7.	<p>Growth of Trust</p> <p>Three documents outlining the growth of the Trust had been circulated before the meeting. The Trustees discussed this item under Part II.</p>	
8.	<p>Vision and Values (V&V)</p> <p>CEO informed the meeting that following the Trustees/Members Away day the vision and values document was taken to an Academy Heads’ session. It was noted that there was a strong consistency across the board on what the Trust’s V&V should look like. Academy Heads had now taken it to staff and fed back – the EIT had had a meeting and would present the final draft on V&V to the Trustees after half term.</p>	
9.	<p>Audit Committee</p> <p>There were no minutes to note as the next meeting was scheduled for 29th February 2024. DC informed the meeting that Internal Audit had been in to look at due diligence however the final report was not available yet but would be discussed at the Committee’s next meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <p>Minutes from 26th January 2024</p> <p>The draft minutes from the meeting were circulated before the meeting. The Chair (in BT’s absence) reported that the financial position was looking better than the original budget. However, as the Trust was using a new financial management programme it was agreed that more time was needed to fully embed the system to ensure the accuracy of reporting of, and thus confidence in, the financial position.</p>	
11.	<p>Remuneration Committee</p> <p>There were no minutes to note as the next meeting was scheduled for 15th March 2024</p>	
12.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <p>12.1 Minutes from 30th January 2024</p> <p>GS had chaired the meeting in KE’s absence. He commented that it was clear from all the documents the LACs’ reports were rigorous. The CEO confirmed that she would circulate the report on SEND.</p>	CEO

	<p>It was noted that the S&C committee were recommending that the new Trustee, Christine Cottle, be asked to be the named SEND Trustee for the Trust, given her relevant experience. The Board approved the recommendation. The GP agreed to discuss with Christine Cottle.</p> <p>12.2 Local Boards There were no issues needing Board of Trustees' consideration.</p>	GP
13.	<p>Governance 13.1 Update – It was noted that Dominic Course was re-elected in the AGM in January 2024. The Trust were waiting for approval from EDEN for the appointment of Christine Cottle as a Foundation Director. The GP confirmed that the paperwork had been submitted and had been chased. It was noted that the Chair, GP and CEO would be meeting to discuss further Trustee recruitment. The Board noted that the parent governor for Wolborough had now been appointed and the paperwork for the appointment of the Foundation Governor for the Moorland Hub was just being completed. 13.3 Local Advisory Committees – the Chair advised that a local skills audit had been circulated to the governors with the closing date at half term. The Chair added that the LAC mid-year review questionnaire was ready and would be circulated to Governors, Academy Heads and Trustees after half term.</p>	
14.	<p>Safeguarding 14.1 GS updated the Trustees on recent Safeguarding Audit 175a across the Trust. It was noted there were no red actions and fewer amber ratings. The main action was Filtering and Monitoring which was being robustly addressed; he provided examples. <i>The Trustees asked about the 'minor safeguarding incidents with no referral', enquiring on the reasons behind the high numbers in some schools?</i> Schools were encouraged to over report rather than under report however the DoS was working with the schools for a more consistent approach. <i>The Trustees asked about the exclusions.</i> The CEO said that the exclusion policy had been changed to reflect government guidelines. Temporary exclusions were for a minimum of three days. Every permanent exclusion had to be agreed by the CEO to ensure consistency across the Trust. The CEO explained the rationale for any exclusions. <i>The Trustees asked how the Relational Approach was supporting the children who required exclusions.</i> The CEO said that wherever possible the relational approach was used in all schools however on occasion it was not enough to support a child to keep them regulated within the school premises. 14.2 Safeguarding training for Trustees – the Chair said that Browne Jacobson offered an online course for Trustees and Governors which covered the strategic aspects of Safeguarding as required under KCSIE. Wolferstans, the Trust's employment lawyers, had also been approached to see if they could offer something similar. A final decision would be made as soon as possible.</p>	
15.	<p>Health and Safety The CEO reported that as outlined in the F&GP minutes, there was now a Trust-wide audit on finger guards to ensure that there was no repeat of the recent incident.</p>	
16.	<p>Trust Risk Register 16.1 SC outlined the monitoring process which the Audit Committee had undertaken to help Trustees understand the new risk register process. SC said that the goal was twofold – understanding what the Trustees were responsible for and confidence in the evidence feeding the risks. It was agreed that at the next meeting SC would repeat the process with the Board of Trustees' categories (outlined below) to illustrate to all the Trustees what was needed to ensure that the Trust Risk Register was effective. It was also noted that SC would be meeting with the DCEO and GP to ensure that the categories were appropriate. SC added that this was a big piece of work, and the goal was at the end of the academic year to complete it which was feasible and timely. The Trustees raised a concern that there was a disparity between the school risk registers and the Trust risk register. 16.2 Trustees to consider the Risk register report with the Trust risk categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and Reputation • Governance • Strategic 	SC/GP

	<p>As reported above (16.1) this was to be done at the next meeting. The Trustees thanked SC for her work with the register.</p> <p>16.3 Trustees to consider any Risk Register issues from Committee Meetings – it was confirmed that the committee risk register reports had been circulated within the individual meetings and there were no highlighted issues needing to come to Board of Trustees’ attention at this time.</p>	
17.	<p>Strategic Plan</p> <p>16.1 Trustees to share any issues arising from the committee meeting on their strategy plan category: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Improvement – Kate Evans – the strategy plan for School Improvement was circulated before the meeting with the Chair of S&C’s notes. KE informed the meeting that the only red was the sharing of data however she had met with EIT regularly and so this was moving forward with the strong possibility of a new data management system which would address the data gaps. • Estate Management – Chris Norman • Safeguarding – Graeme Scott – the strategy plan for Safeguarding was circulated before the meeting by GS. GS informed the meeting that the main area was the consideration of the use of a digital system across all Link schools. GS and AW had met with representatives from CPOMS and MyConcern - two of the biggest players in the digital safeguarding industry. The next step was for GS to meet with CPOMS with the CEO to discuss their provision. • Financial Strategy and Control – Ben Thorne • Workforce Strategy – Cheryl Mathieson – CM noted that the group was continuing with its longer term objective to make the Trust an employer of choice. There continued to be a focus this year on recruitment and retention with employee engagement in particular being looked at in more detail. The group was also planning to develop a People Strategy and review the performance management system to introduce an element of self assessment. • Communication and IT – Dominic Course • Growth and Capacity – Paul Waterworth reported that whilst external growth had been discussed earlier in the meeting, it had been agreed that internal growth and capacity would also be looked at, in particular making full use of the pre-school provision. The CEO confirmed that this had been discussed at the AH meeting with a 6 session programme being developed to share and improve best practice across the Trust. This would involve release of some of the staff for CPD. The GP added that in the LACs pre-school and toddler groups were a focus with one school reporting that they now had 24 toddlers attending their group which would hopefully result in more pupils joining the school. • Governance – Graeme Scott • Vision and Values – Sarah Cox 	
18.	<p>Policies for approval</p> <p>18.1 Policies aligning with the Vision and Values (V&V) of the Trust. It was noted that this would be picked up once the V&V had been set. A way forward would be agreed on how to ensure that the V&V were appropriately reflected in the Trust’s policies.</p> <p>The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval:</p> <p>18.2 Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid in Schools – this policy was circulated before the meeting following recommendation by the S&C Committee. The Trustees approved the policy. • Missing Child - this policy was circulated before the meeting following recommendation by the S&C Committee. The Trustees approved the policy. • Code of Conduct for Parents (new policy) - this policy was circulated before the meeting following recommendation by the S&C Committee. The Trustees approved the policy. <p>18.3 Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no policies for approval 	

	<p>18.4 Remuneration Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no policies for approval <p>18.5 Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no policies for approval <p>18.6 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Admission Policies for 2025/26 – The Chair advised that the policies were updated and circulated each year by the LA. They had been sent to the Trust in draft in September/October last year at which time they had been considered by the Admissions Committee. The drafts were returned to the LA who had then sent them out for consultation. The consultation period was now closed and the policies were back with the Trust for final approval. As the final policies had been received only shortly before the meeting, it was agreed that the GP would circulate them by email for approval by the Trustees. 	GP
19.	<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> <p>The Trustees reflected on the practice and how the levels of governance were defined across the Trust.</p>	

The meeting ended 1815