

Please note: This meeting was held using the online platform MS Teams. The meeting was also recorded.

**Present:** Cheryl Mathieson (CM) / (Chair)  
 Nicky Dunford (CEO)  
 Kate Evans (KE) (in part)  
 Graeme Scott (GS)

**In attendance:** Totnes Local Board (LB) Representative – Cat Radford (CR)  
 Woodleigh LB Representative – Jo Carter (JC)  
 Woodleigh LB Representative – Alice Moseley (AM) (in part)  
 Moorland Hub LB Representative – Lynda Cooper (LC)  
 Academy Trust School Improvement Lead (ATSIL) – Sarah Clarke (SC)  
 Elaine Clarke - Clerk

No	Item	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting.            The Chair accepted apologies from Fiona Walters – sanctioned.            The Chair accepted apologies from Corinna Tigg – sanctioned.            KE had sent ahead apologies for a late arrival – sanctioned.            AM had sent ahead apologies for a late arrival – sanctioned.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of interest</b></p> <p>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</p>	
3.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>None notified.</p>	
<b>For discussion and agreement</b>		
4.	<p><b>Approval of meeting minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and will be signed at the next face to face meeting subject to the following amendment proposed by the CEO and agreed by the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Item 3. ATSIL Report</b>            CEO asked for clarification around one of the main learning points from the peer MAT review with the Bridge Academy being ‘it was felt Bridge was four or five years ahead in developing their curriculum model’.</li> </ul> <p>SC clarified that the Bridge had done a substantial piece of work around their curriculum modelling that had produced a model for the next four to five years, rather than being four to five years ahead of the Link.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Appointment of new Chair</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that it had been approved by trustees that KE is to take over as committee chair, however as KE was to be late to the meeting, CM would continue as committee chair for this evening.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Matters arising from 26 January 2022 not on the agenda</b></p>	
6.1	<p><b>Item 1.2 SENDCo Cross Trust Who’s Who document</b></p> <p>It was noted that the CEO updated and circulated the document.</p>	
6.2	<p><b>Item 1.3 LB Reports – Change to Scheme of Delegation</b></p>	

6.3	<p>It was noted that changes proposed by CR and LC regarding local board chairs have been added to the Scheme of Delegation which has now gone to the Diocesan Education Office Administrator and Governance Advisor for consideration. This item will be brought back to the agenda once a response has been received.</p>	
6.4	<p><b>Item 1.4 Item 2. LB Reports – Accessibility of Policies</b></p> <p>It was noted that entire list of Trust policies is now available on SharePoint</p>	
6.5	<p><b>Item 1.5 LB Reports – Safeguarding Focus</b></p> <p><b>CEO to circulate the list of the next twelve monthly sessions once finalised.</b></p> <p>Clerk advised that the draft list has been circulated to the committee.</p>	
6.6	<p><b>Item 1.5 LB Reports – Safeguarding expertise at Local Board Level</b></p> <p><b>CEO and SC to work with Alex Waterman to look at the need for / define a role at LB level.</b></p> <p>The CEO advised that this has been discussed with the Chair. It was felt that although safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, there should be a named Safeguarding Governor at LB level to act as a double check. The LB representatives expressed concern about the lack of definition of a role, responsibilities and training for the existing named Safeguarding Governors. It was agreed that the role should be discussed with Alex Waterman at the next safeguarding working party meeting and that the CEO would consult auditors at the upcoming NLG review as to best practice.</p>	LB Chairs CEO
6.7	<p><b>Item 1.7 LB Reports – Data Spreadsheet</b></p> <p><b>CEO to request Andy Keay to send attainment data spreadsheet to Clerk for circulation.</b></p> <p>Clerk advised that data spreadsheets have been circulated. Andy Keay may be invited to future meetings to discuss the data.</p> <p><b>Q - Having looked at recent data with two of the Academy Heads (AHs) JC asked how the lag due to Covid will be addressed?</b></p> <p><b>A – The CEO responded that she has not yet looked at this in detail with Andy Keay however she has created a priority list for some of the schools. Whilst not having discussed it yet, she feels the focus should be on having no more than 20% of pupils two levels below ARE with the remainder being at <u>or above</u>* ARE level. She will also need to look at discrepancies in judgement as moderation across the Trust still needs to be carried out. Some cohorts were doing less well than others, for example years 3/4 who missed years 1/2 due to the pandemic. It should be noted though that the data is raw and still needs to be looked at in more detail.</b></p> <p><b>* It was agreed at the meeting of 15 June 2022 that the response to the question should include the underlined phrase.</b></p> <p>The committee also agreed that the effect of factors such as anxiety and well-being of pupils and families on the data cannot be quantified, and it was not straightforward to determine factors affecting children’s learning. A well-being questionnaire is to be implemented to survey parents’ and children’s opinions to inform actions for next year.</p> <p>The CEO went on to describe actions being taken to support learning including expansion of the Inclusion Hub where it is hoped to appoint a speech and language specialist and to roll out the Oracy Project across the Trust - which has had a huge impact on the pilot schools.</p> <p><b>Q - JC asked about how LB school visits and learning walks could be improved to demonstrate how children were progressing. Would it be more meaningful to go in to look at interventions or observe precision teaching rather than for example to check books and displays which she felt may not be sufficient for Ofsted should it be asked how the lag was being addressed?</b></p> <p><b>A -The CEO and Chair agreed that this should be addressed by the working party meetings with support from SC.</b></p>	
	<p><b>Item 2. LB Reports – Staff DBS renewals</b></p>	

6.8	<p><b>Clerk to feedback information from HR Officer.</b> Clerk provided information from the HR Officer re current Trust policy - being that staff DBS checks are not repeated unless there is a break in service for over three months or if new information comes to light regarding an employee. The information and policy were available on SharePoint.</p>	
6.9	<p><b>Item 5. Safeguarding</b> <b>CEO to forward safeguarding audit reports to the Committee.</b> CEO has not yet received the reports from Alex Waterman and will chase them up. <a href="#">To note that subsequent to the meeting a report was received and planner was received by the CEO and forwarded to the committee.</a></p>	CEO
6.10	<p><b>Item 6. Trust Risk Register</b> See agenda item 12 below</p>	
6.11	<p><b>Item 7. Latest SEND Report</b> <b>CEO to chase up latest SEND report for the Full Board meeting and also send it on to the Local Boards.</b> CEO advised that the report is being updated. She went on to explain the process by which Alex Waterman produces a grid to monitor individual schools SEND needs which is updated across the year. The CEO will look into committee access to Power Bi where this data is kept.</p>	CEO
6.12	<p><b>Item 8. Policies</b> <b>CEO and Clerk to work on a schedule to ensure policies go to Academy Heads meetings well ahead of Committee meetings in order to allow time to review / rewrite as necessary.</b> CEO advised that the current schedule of polices requires rearranging across the year. CEO and Clerk to meet to look at this.</p>	CEO / Clerk
6.13	<p><b>Items 8.1 Safeguarding Policy / 8.3 Curriculum Policy / 8.4 Looked After Children Policy / Missing child Policy</b> <b>To note these policies were returned to Academy Heads for full review.</b> CEO advised that these policies have not yet been reviewed due to lack of capacity of AHs who have faced an extremely challenging term due to the impact of the pandemic.</p> <p><b>Item 8.2 Attendance Policy</b> <b>CEO to add the EWO threshold to the policy then circulate by email to the Full Board for approval.</b> CEO advised this has not been done as a new Attendance Officer (AO) has been recently appointed and is completely reviewing and updating the Attendance Policy and associated documentation. The AO who is also the administrator at Otterton has already highlighted Attendance on the Otterton website and this information will be rolled out to every school website. The policy will come back to the agenda when the review has been completed.</p>	
6.14	<p>It was noted that Clerk has requested each LB to add attendance as a standing item to their agenda and to look at work standardising agendas across the Trust - JC has forwarded her LB agenda to the Clerk as an example.</p> <p><b>Item 8.7 Governor Visits Policy</b> Refer to item 13.1.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Local Board Reports</b> The Chair thanked LB Chairs for their reports. The Chair advised that a report had not been received from the Raleigh LB due to personal circumstances of the Raleigh chair.</p> <p><u>Moorland LB Report</u> The Chair invited questions on the report which was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. There being none LC highlighted the following:</p>	

-Following concerns about SENDCo capacity, governors had asked whether there was scope for SEND administrative support. The CEO advised on plans to expand the Safeguarding and SEND aspects of the central team from September to support SENDCos. Appointment of a speech and language specialist was included in the plan and an application for TCAF funding would be made to support the expansion. Additional support, for example with EHCP applications, would be provided through seconding a SEND expert from Wolborough (who are now in a management partnership with the Trust) to the Improvement and Inclusion Hub (IIH) for two days a week.

LC responded that the expansion was a positive development but queried whether there was likely to be support at a more basic level – for example typing up SEND meeting minutes and organising meetings. The CEO advised that it was difficult as such meetings were highly confidential but confirmed that the SEND expert from Wolborough would be able to help with submitting reports and documentation for funding etc.

-Subject Based Hubs – Feedback had been received from academy staff that they felt they were being pulled in too many directions and felt this to be unsustainable. The CEO advised that this had been addressed at a recent AH meeting and taken on board. It had been agreed that hubs would meet less often and named subject experts appointed so staff knew who to go to for advice and support.

-Central meal planning – frustration has been expressed at local level about the limitations to make local decisions.

- Appointment of a central maintenance person was queried. The CEO advised that unfortunately no one had yet been appointed.

(AM joined the meeting here at 5.45pm)

#### Totnes LB Report

The Chair invited questions on the report which was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. There being none CR highlighted the following:

-Is there an update as to when pupils would be able to move back on site at Diptford?

**It was agreed at the meeting of 15 June 2022 that the response to this question should be added:**

**‘The CEO responded that as soon as there is an update from the Schools Rebuilding Programme she will provide an update on the next steps to the parents, staff and governors.’**

The CEO advised she would send a summary update to CR outside the meeting.

-AH maternity cover at Diptford. CEO advised that two candidates are to be interviewed next week.

-A Stoke Gabriel governor has resigned due to workload and concern was expressed about the amount of support required of governors for schools’ SATs administration cover. It was agreed that LBs should liaise with SC by email about which and how many sessions need to be covered.

-As with Moorland LB, Totnes governors also expressed concern about SENDCo workload and queried the possibility of admin support.

-Governors would like more information about staffing and staff development for middle management to be able to better respond to Ofsted. The CEO advised looking

	<p>at the 'Work for Us' page on the Link website for information, for example on talent management and development and personnel pathways.</p> <p>-Governor feedback is that it is good to be back in school and that outside visits are taking place again.</p> <p>- How is the Trust approaching the Ukraine situation in terms of the curriculum and building children's awareness? CEO advised this was down to individual AHs.</p> <p><u>Woodleigh LB Report</u></p> <p>The Chair invited questions on the report which was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. There being none JC highlighted the following:</p> <p>-Woodleigh governors also expressed concern over SENDCo workload and wellbeing. The CEO acknowledged the issues and accepted there are a lot of children requiring attention at present. It is anticipated however, once difficulties resulting from the pandemic have been addressed there will a reduced demand on SENDCos. The Trust has to balance the need against the budget and must be circumspect about employing additional staff who may eventually not be required. Benchmarking against schools nationally the Trust has a low pupil to staff ratio. She reiterated that SENDCos do have people to go to within the Trust for advice and support. GS commented positively on the Trust's intention to make the appointment of a speech and language specialist a priority as waiting lists for external speech and language support are where bottlenecks occur. It was understood by the committee that difficulties with speech and language are often where needs originate. AM feedback that during a recent meeting the new AH at Yeoford reported taking on both a school and the SENDCo role as challenging, particularly as the school has high SEND needs. The AH had found central SEND support helpful to establish processes to address the needs but it was felt that additional support across the LB was required.</p> <p>The Chair concluded that she felt the CEO had taken on board the SEND issue and was working to address it.</p> <p>(KE arrived at this point at 18.11)</p> <p>-Fridays are being set aside for alternative provision for dysregulating children at Yeoford which it is hoped will help alleviate the SEND in the longer run. An HLTA will be taking children out of class to take part, for example, in forest school or lego therapy.</p>	
8.	<p><b>CEO Report</b></p> <p>The CEO gave a verbal report as follows:</p> <p><b>-Expanding central teams</b> – As previously mentioned during item 7, the Trust will be making a TCAF application to support the expansion of central teams. She explained that TCAF money can only be used to expand centrally in order to allow the Trust to take on more schools, but this frees up money to use elsewhere. The Executive Improvement Team (EIT) will remain but Safeguarding and SEND will split off and be added to.</p> <p>- <b>Staffing changes</b> – there are a lot of staffing changes coming up. The CEO will keep LBs updated about these. LC queried the need for LB involvement in recruitment. The CEO responded that trustees rather than LB governors are required in the appointment of AHs or senior leaders. Regarding the appointment of teachers it is at the discretion of the AH as to whether a LB governor is to be involved, it is not an absolute requirement and appropriate to need.</p>	

- **Trust growth** – Wolborough, a school in Newton Abbot with 220 pupils, is now in a management partnership with the Trust. It is similar in context to Bearnes. No conversion date is set yet due to complex land and property issues. The possibility is being considered of a new LB being formed which will include Wolborough, Bearnes and the Inclusion Hub, with its own governing board.

Three schools in the locality are close to signing a management partnership with the Trust. The Diocese are keen for the management partnership to commence as soon as possible, as the head is retiring in September. The governors are undecided but either way it is likely a management partnership will be in place by September, with a likely conversion date of February. The three schools are in a federation and will come with a governing board in place. The Trust is also in talks with another stand-alone school.

The due diligence process in taking on the new schools has been improved using new software which allows the assigning of questions to the correct people. For example questions around finance would be assigned to the Deputy CEO or questions around school improvement to the EIT. The Trust will also have to go to the Schools Organisation Group (SOG) in order to get Diocese approval before seeking approval from the Advisory Board

-**School Improvement Planning** – at a meeting the previous day it was decided to reduce the number of priorities over the next three year period. They will be specific and interlinked. The priorities agreed were oracy, visible learning and metacognition, and the relational behaviour approach. The implementation will be staggered and will feed into the Trust’s Disadvantaged Strategy where the three areas are considered to make maximum impact. The approaches will benefit all children so it is preferred that this is seen as coming from school improvement rather than disadvantaged planning. The plan will continue to be developed over this term ready to begin in September. Individual schools will then develop a bespoke plan individual to their school under the umbrella of the Trust plan. The Trust has been working with the South West Disadvantaged Forum on the approach of drilling down into every child – all children have gaps in learning.

Q -KE asked – what information from our schools led you to these priorities – was it just the Disadvantaged Strategy research nationally or was it local intelligence that was telling you these were what you needed to do?

A – The CEO responded - Oracy, because of the effectiveness and impact of the project in pilot schools across the Trust. The Trust has also been part of the South West Disadvantaged Forum working with other trusts such as the Cabot Trust in Bristol looking at disadvantaged which is a national issue that does not just affect children receiving free school meals. The Trust is trying to identify any child with a gap in their learning and work to improve it. Visible learning and metacognition were looked at with the Bridge Trust last year where it has had an impact on building resilience, learning power and other skills the children need to develop. Relational behaviour after looking at a school in Liverpool which has been turned around using this approach.

GS added that a study had shown while children could be seen to make academic progress, their development as learners could be minimal and this is where visible learning and metacognition come in to give those lifelong skills. The CEO agreed that more apparently advantaged children could lack resilience and other thinking and learning skills as their lifestyle meant everything was done for them.

Q – AM asked if there was an ideal size for the Trust?

	<p>A- CEO responded that if a school or group of schools want to join the Trust and they are a good fit there is no ceiling. Due diligence is carried out and if anything is found that might jeopardise the Trust, we would step away. Management partnership is essential so that both parties can assess the arrangement and walk away if it isn't working. There are some very large trusts of many schools but these work by breaking into hubs and it may be in the future the Link does this. Bringing in new schools brings in expertise, alongside possible problems but this makes the Trust richer. To date it is felt that none of the new schools joining have been to the detriment of the Trust.</p> <p>The committee also felt that capacity of the central teams to support any expansion was critical.</p>	
9.	<p><b>ATSIL Report, including update on School Improvement Plans</b>  SC advised much of the report has been covered by the CEO's report and made the following verbal additions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Trust Risk Dashboard – SC is to meet with KE to share this before bringing it to the committee. Phonics monitoring which is also part of the ATSIL role will also be looked at before sharing with the committee. Phonics has maintained momentum and the provision is growing.</li> <li>-The EIT have been working hard with individual schools supporting AHs with the continuing challenges presented by Covid to keep schools open this term.</li> <li>-ATSIP priorities have been a big piece of work, developing the rationale and vision for growth, and an EIT calendar is being developed to sit alongside this.</li> <li>-Ofsted preparation days (OPDs) – the EIT have been continuing OPDs but as compassionately as possible during this difficult time for AHs.</li> </ul> <p>LC thanked the EIT for the OPDs which have been well received at school level.</p> <p>The CEO advised that she was proud of the way that staff from AHs down, and LBs, have stepped up to keep schools open this term, while keeping school improvement at the forefront.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Safeguarding</b>  The Chair advised that GS has agreed to become the Safeguarding Trustee for the Trust. Looked After Children and Service Children will also be part of the role.</p> <p>The CEO advised that as mentioned previously in item 7, the Trust is looking to expand central Safeguarding and SEND provision through TCAF funding.</p>	
11.	<p><b>SEND and Pupil Premium</b>  No further issues to report</p>	
12.	<p><b>Trust Risk Register</b>  The Chair reported that the Risk Registers has been moved onto the new Every system. The Deputy CEO Matt Matthew is working with AHs on School Risk Registers, and with the Audit Committee on the Trust Risk Register to update the risks and identify risk owners. Training to use the system is in hand.</p>	
13.	<p><b>Policies to be reviewed for recommendation to the Full Board for approval</b></p>	
13.1	<p><b>Governor Visits Policy</b>  The Clerk explained LB proposals that the policy be superseded by a range of other up to date documents which were available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. It was suggested the documents could be combined as a LB handbook in place of the policy. It was agreed that the LB chairs should look at this and other local board issues</p>	

	including LB agenda standardisation and cycle of visits at an 'away day' with SC, then bring back to the committee for consideration. LB chairs to contact Sue Howard to book a room at Dartmoor Lodge to facilitate this.	LB Chairs / SC
14.	<p><b>Meeting dates 2022 /23 - draft calendar</b></p> <p>The trustees and LB chairs accepted the calendar dates as documented.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Evaluation of governance impact</b></p> <p>The Chair handed over to KE to lead this item.</p> <p>As incoming chair KE had been asked to look at how the committee could be more effective and focussed and as a result had written a proposal paper for committee meeting structure and process going forward. The paper was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. KE highlighted the following points from the proposal which were discussed by the committee:</p> <p>- Preparation and availability of papers well ahead of the meeting allowing questions to be prepared – KE explained a system for questions to be proposed and answers researched for presentation at the meeting. For example papers posted 14 days ahead, then questions by 7 days ahead. She also proposed to look at reducing duplication by having a consistent format for reports and questioned, whether the CEO, for example, needs to report to both this committee and the Full Board.</p> <p>LB chairs responded that while understanding the need for early availability of papers LB reports particularly tended to be 'live' and 'immediate' to avoid lag of information between LB and S&amp;C Committee meetings. They also suggested it would be helpful for LBs to know in advance what trustees want to know from LB visits, rather than having questions posed retrospectively.</p> <p>Unnecessary duplication of reporting was also discussed with attendance reporting and duplication of areas looked at during LB and School Improvement Team visits given as examples. Regarding attendance KE advised that attendance reporting did need to come to the agenda but was in agreement with reducing duplication. The CEO will investigate whether there could be direct access to attendance data on Power Bi which would solve this issue.</p> <p>LB chairs asked if there could be a report from the committee meetings, other than the official minutes that could be taken back to LB governors. This was noted and it was agreed to consider this at a later date.</p> <p>The committee supported the idea of allocating a time slot for each agenda item in order to keep the meeting on track timewise.</p> <p>Regarding 'any other business' – it was suggested that only items submitted to a deadline before the meeting should be discussed, unless very urgent, and discussed at the beginning of the meeting.</p> <p>- Matters Arising – KE proposed a table be used to list matters arising and for whoever has that action to complete the action details on the table which could be sent out with the meeting documents. This was supported by the committee as time saving as often the 'matters arising' item could be lengthy.</p> <p>- Agendas – KE will look at further improvements to the NGA model now being used by the committee.</p> <p>- KE advised that to address its statutory function it must address various themes across the year. She asked for comments and suggestions on the list she had</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>KE</p>



	<p>provided. CR proposed a timetable for themes to be addressed annually to fit in with LB visits to schools and will take this to the planned LB 'away day' to look at further. The committee discussed looking at attainment data on this basis.</p> <p>(AM left the meeting at this point at 19.25.)</p> <p>Other themes proposed by the committee members were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Sports Grant,</li> <li>- safeguarding and safeguarding audits,</li> <li>- the impact of actions around attendance,</li> <li>- inviting members of the EIT (for example) to speak on their areas of expertise.</li> </ul> <p>(CR left the meeting at this point at 19.33)</p> <p>In conclusion, the committee was generally in favour of the proposals. KE proposed to begin the new agenda cycle from September 2022. Some of the annual themes, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- attendance</li> <li>- curriculum development and curriculum design</li> <li>- governance</li> <li>- staff, pupil and parent surveys</li> <li>- staff CPD</li> </ul> <p>would be fitted into the calendar as well. It was also suggested that other members of the EIT (for example) be invited to speak on their areas of expertise.</p>	LB Chairs
16.	<p>Dates of next meetings 15 June 2022 17.00 to be held online</p> <p>On behalf of the committee members LC thanked CM for stepping in to chair the committee on an interim basis.</p>	

**The meeting closed at 19.35**