

Meeting of the Board of Directors 18/2019

Minutes: Monday 11 February 2019

Present: Mrs Isabel Cherrett (in the Chair)
Mr Peter Bethel
Mrs Nicky Dunford
Ms Cheryl Mathieson
Miss Tracey Cleverly
Mr Jason Hayward-Jones
Mrs Fiona Walters

In attendance: Mr Matt Matthew – Trust Business Manager

Apologies: Mr Roy Gillard
Mr Simon Niles

Welcome:

On behalf of Directors, the Chair welcomed Miss Tracey Cleverly who had been appointed as a Foundation Director with effect from 1 February 2019. The Chair reported that Mrs Jeffery had resigned from her role as Clerk and the post would be advertised as soon as possible. The Board wished to pass on their thanks to Mrs Jeffery for her time in role. Directors thanked Mrs Jeffery for her work during the autumn and also Mr Matthew and Mrs Howard who had prepared and uploaded the papers for the Board's meeting.

Declaration of Business Interests: There were no interests declared relating to the agenda items.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Board approved the minutes, Parts I and II, of the meeting held on 10 December 2018, which were signed by the Chair.

2. **Matters Arising**

2.1. Item D3 (16.2018) – July 2018 SATS

The Board received and noted the CEO's summary of 2018 SATs results; this had been discussed at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting on 30 January 2019. Progress data has been reported at individual school level, followed by Local Boards (LBs) and then to S&C committee meeting. Directors were reminded that they have access to individual school ASPs. The predictions for 2019 were shared with the Board and accuracy will be checked at the end of the curriculum year. The Greater Depth at Diptford was discussed and is of concern. The CEO explained the steps being taken by the Trust to investigate the issue.

2.2 Matters outstanding from the previous meeting and brought forward are dealt with under the CEO's report.

3. **Audit Committee**

3.1. Audit Committee minutes of 28 January 2019

Mr Bethel had chaired the meeting, which had also been attended by Mrs Cherrett and Mrs Walters, to ensure the Committee was quorate. The Board received and noted the Minutes. Mr Bethel added that the new Internal Audit Service had completed their first visit and the report was clear and provided assurance that sound systems of control were in place.

3.2. Audit Committee Constitution and Terms of Reference

The Board had deferred approval of the updated Constitution and Terms of Reference at its meeting in December. The Chair of the Board had suggested further amendments (in red), which with an additional change, was now recommended by the Audit Committee. The Board approved the updated Constitution and Terms of Reference; the Chair asked that this be made available to the External and Internal Audit Services, for information.

The Chair had also prepared a protocol for the consideration and approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, which ensured they were discussed by both the Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committees prior to presentation to the Board. This was approved and the Chair asked the Trust Business Manager to ensure that this was made available to Bishop Fleming.

3.3 Trust Data Protection Officer role

The Audit Committee had discussed the vacancy for the role of Data Protection Officer (DPO), a requirement of the General Data Protection Regulation, following Mrs Power's resignation. The Chief Executive Officer has identified an officer who could possibly take on the role and will pursue this so that a resolution is reached as soon as practicable. As a short, interim arrangement, Mrs Walters had kindly agreed to respond to any issues regarding Data Protection until an appointment was made. The Chair tasked the TBM to investigate a suitable training course for Mrs Walters.

3.4 The Board wished to thank Mrs Alex Waterman in her role as Academy Trust Safeguarding Lead and the work she had conducted to date.

4. Standards and Curriculum Committee

4.1 Standards and Curriculum minutes of 30 January 2019

The Chair thanked Mr Hayward-Jones for chairing the meeting. Miss Cleverly had agreed to take on the role of Chair and the Committee was in the process of agreeing dates for additional meetings, a need which had been raised previously. The Board noted the Minutes of 30 January 2019.

4.2 Standards and Curriculum Committee Constitution and Terms of Reference

The Board had deferred approval of the updated Constitution and Terms of Reference in December. The Chair of Directors had suggested further amendments (in red) which were discussed by the S&C Committee on 30 January 2019. The Totnes Board preferred to have a rolling representation which the wording allowed for however, the Trust Board's preference is to limit attendance to Chair or Vice Chair in order to provide continuity. In addition, the proposal that the School Improvement Lead attend as an officer had been amended so that specific officers could be invited for particular items.

The Chair referred to the recent Bishop Fleming seminar attended where the importance of the responsibility for Pupil Premium progress had been emphasised. This sits with the S&C Committee.

The Board **delegated** approval of the Online Safety policy the next S&C committee meeting.

5. Chief Executive Officer's Report

5.1 CEO's Report

The Board thanked the CEO for her informative report, which covered a range of issues. Directors noted in particular that Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids had been submitted in respect of Bearnes, Diptford, Hennock (two bids), Landscope, Tedburn St Mary and Yeoford. The outcome would be announced in March/April; the outcome of the new Nurseries Grant bid to create the Mezzanine floor at Bearnes was expected in March; if successful, the project would seek to be in place for September 2020, providing year round care for some pupils.

The Board noted the need for a project to improve Cheriton Bishop and the experience of Mr Fisher in seeking a resolution would be essential.

The CEO was reviewing staffing across all schools for September 2019 alongside the Distributed Leadership Model which was still in a pilot phase. Directors noted the summary feedback from the recent SENDCo Conference organised by the Improvement and Inclusion Hub. The Board hoped there would be an opportunity to seek further funding given the success of the IIH to date for Link schools but also others in the region.

5.2 Ofsted Findings

The Board formally noted four Ofsted visits during the current year:

- Diptford – 6 December 2018
- Stoke Gabriel – 11 December 2018
- Bearnas – 24 January 2019 – *embargoed*
- Hennock - 6 February 2019 - *embargoed*

The CEO highlighted the cumulative areas of strength and requiring improvement across the Trust.

It was noted that Harbertonford and Landscope are still expected to be inspected shortly with Tedburn and Yeoford due in the Summer term 2020 (seven terms into new Trust).

Miss Cleverly questioned the level of interrogation by Local Boards into pupil attendance as this impacted on the income per school. The CEO drew attention to the current 1st choice preferences for the nine schools and the two in Management Partnership expected in September 2019 with an overall positive picture reported. There was significant work to do, however, in respect of Drakes and Otterton.

6. Safeguarding

The Board received and noted the Safeguarding Summary sheet for the Autumn term, together with the Safeguarding Action Plan which the Safeguarding Lead had drawn up to identify priorities for the remainder of 2018-19.

7. Health & Safety, Risk Management and Risk Register

7.1 Health & Safety

The Board formally noted the reports dated 5 November 2018 and 21 January 2019 from the Health & Safety Coordinator. The Chair had agreed to be the Director on the Board taking responsibility for Health and Safety.

7.2 Risk Management and Risk Register

The Audit Committee had reviewed the Trust-wide Risk Register which required some updating to take account of changes in personnel and the number of academies. At the Committee's request, the Chair of the Board had refined the Register into a slightly different format. Directors were asked to comment on the format, highlight omissions and to challenge the Probability and Impact scores.

The Board was asked to spend time looking at whether areas were missing, such as Brexit, Competitor marketing, Data Protection breaches etc. The Board agreed the format and added that opportunities and investment for the longer term would also be helpful. In discussion, the Board agreed that a broader number range for Probability and Impact scores would be helpful in order to differentiate the scale of risk, for example from a single academy to Trust-wide risks. After discussion, it was agreed the Chair would broaden the scores from 1-10 rather than 1-3 and update the Register for general comment.

Each committee was tasked to review the Risk Register and to report back at the next meeting on 20 May 2019 at which point the Register would be sufficiently developed for the Academies to adopt the format for their individual registers. However, Academy Heads were encouraged to consider the risks which faced their individual schools, a poor Ofsted outcome and falling roll having the most impact in preparing their registers.

8. Governance

8.1 Scheme of Delegation

The Committees had been asked to review the Scheme of Delegation in the light of the departure of the Executive Principal and the operation of the scheme since its approval in December 2017 and their respective terms of reference to ensure these were aligned. An updated draft version had been deferred from the Board's meeting in December. The Board agreed the amendments, such as nomenclature, and to review it further in the autumn term to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

8.2 New Appointments

8.2.1 Director

Mr Mike Fisher, Architect and Partner of the Bailey Partnership had submitted a formal Expression of Interest and CV to join the Board. His application met the skills gap for the Board to have a Director with a background in property and was supported by two good references.

The Board approved Mr Fisher's appointment, subject to approval by the Members; he would be invited to chair the Audit Committee.

8.2.2 Foundation Governor for Totnes Local Board

An application from a candidate to be a Foundation Governor had been welcomed by the Totnes Local Board and was supported by good references. The Board decided on this occasion that they were not looking to increase the number of members on the LB and thanked him for his application.

8.3 Membership of the Board of Directors

The Trust's Articles of Association required Foundation Directors to be in the majority; with the appointment of Mr Fisher, the Foundation Directors and the Non-Foundation Directors with the CEO were in equal number. The Chair's paper asked the Board to prioritise skills sought from new Directors following the appointments of Miss Cleverly and Mr Fisher. It was agreed to seek individuals with a background in IT, Business & Risk, H&S and to ask the Diocese for support in identifying suitably qualified candidates.

9. Governance – Local Boards

The Board received recent Minutes as follows:

Newton & Teign: 2 October and 4 December 2019

The CEO confirmed that the fencing at Hennock was being reviewed and that arrangements to move from a two-class to a three-class structure were underway for September 2019.

Totnes: 4 October and 12 December 2018

4.10.18 – Joint training with Directors - the Board acknowledged its willingness to explore this further

Woodleigh: 17 October and 12 December 2018

Tedburn – the proposed Foundation Unit was dependent upon funding. The Directors were pleased to see the reference to quality applications being received for teaching staff keen to join the Link Academy Trust.

10. Policies

10.1 Admission Policies 2020-2021

Admissions Policies had been drafted in respect of all nine schools. With minor editorial amendments in each, all the Policies were **approved**.

10.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2019

The Chief Executive Officer and Trust Safeguarding Lead had updated the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to address recent changes. The Board thanked Miss Cleverly who agreed to be the named Trustee responsible for Safeguarding. With some editorial amendments, the Policy was approved with immediate effect and would next be reviewed Spring 2020.

10.3 Risk Management Policy 2019

At the Board's meeting on 10 December, 2018, the Chair had agreed to collapse the Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Strategy into a single document. This had been discussed by the Audit Committee on 28 January and with one amendment, was recommended for approval. The Board of Directors approved the Risk Management

Policy 2019 with immediate effect, subject to the Chair amending the Policy to reflect the wider range for scoring risks; it would next be reviewed by Spring term 2021.

10.4 Health and Safety Policy 2019

The Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed by the Audit Committee, taking account of changes in personnel and structure. The Board of Directors **approved** the Health and Safety Policy with immediate effect; it would next be reviewed in the Spring term 2021.

10.5 Curriculum Policy 2019

The Curriculum Policy had been reviewed by the Standards and Curriculum Committee on 30 January 2019, to take account of changes in personnel. In common with other policies, the standard phrase of 'This Policy applies to all schools within the Link Academy Trust' would replace the current heading and listing of schools; this would then cover new schools as they joined the Trust. The Board of Directors **approved** the Curriculum Policy 2019 which would next be updated in Spring term 2021.

10.6 Equal Opportunities Policy 2019

The Equal Opportunities Policy had undergone its two yearly review. The Standards and Curriculum Committee proposed no changes. The Board of Directors **approved** the updated EO Policy 2019; it would next be reviewed in Spring Term 2021.

10.7 Missing Child Policy 2019

The Standards and Curriculum Committee had undertaken the annual review of the Missing Child Policy; no principal changes were proposed. The Board of Directors **approved** the updated Missing Child Policy 2019 which would next be reviewed in Spring term 2020.

10.8 FOI Publication Scheme

The draft Publication Scheme adheres to the model scheme issued by the Information Commissioner and is recommended for approval by F&GP Committee (deferred from the Board's meeting in December 2018). The Board of Directors **approved** the FOI Publication Scheme and agreed that, as changes occur, staff were authorised to update the document, without recourse to the Board.

10.9 Special Education Needs and Disability 2019

The Trust Safeguarding and SEND Lead, Mrs Waterman, had reviewed the Policy and proposed significant amendments to the 2016 SEND Policy which had been agreed by the Local Boards. The revised document would be significantly shorter but set out clearly responsibilities and the way in which children attending schools in the Trust and their parents/carers would be supported. Subject to some editing changes, the Board of Directors **approved** the SEND Policy 2019 with immediate effect. It would next be reviewed Spring 2020.

10.10 Exclusion Policy 2019

The Exclusion Policy had been reviewed and some changes were proposed to address changes in personnel, nomenclature. At Miss Cleverly's suggestion, the CEO would insert, for the sake of clarity, how internal exclusions would be dealt with and also those affecting SEND pupils. Subject to these additions, the Board of Directors **approved** the Exclusion Policy 2019 with immediate effect; it would next be reviewed in Spring term 2021.

10.11 Early Years Foundation Stage Policy 2019

The EYFS Policy had been updated to take account of changes in structure and to future-proof it for those schools aspiring to introduce a Foundation Unit. The Board of Directors **approved** the updated EYFS Policy 2019 with immediate effect; it would next be reviewed in February 2021.

11. Other business

Mr Hayward-Jones was pleased to report that Stoke Gabriel had identified land for the Trust's first Farm School, as had been discussed at the Autumn Away Day.

Mr Bethel summarised the Totnes Rotary project for primary schools to join in building a rocket. A number of schools were already signed up and he would ensure the invitation reached the Business Manager.

Mrs Walters was pursuing the opening of the new cycle track on Dartmoor and hoped as many Link pupils as possible would be able to participate.

12. Dates of future meetings

19/2019 – 20 May 2019

20/2019 – 15 July 2019

21/2019 - 22 July 2019 (AGM)

Signed as approved copy by Chair Isabel Cherrett

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Date 20.05.19