

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date:	Thursday 9 th September	Time:	09:30 – 12:30
Location:	Teams	Clerk:	Sunita Yardley- Patel
Present:	Paul Hann – Trustee (Chair) Frances Hall – Trustee Nick Hudson – Trustee (CEO) Andrew Jones – Trustee Jan Renou – Trustee Bal Samra – Trustee Karen Bramwell – Trustee	Attendees:	Jo Dawson (National Director of Finance) Rob Pritchard (National Director of Education)
Apologies:	Ian Brookman – Trustee Peter Murray – Trustee		

	Item	Action
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>The Trust Board received apologies from Ian Brookman and Peter Murray.</p> <p>The Chair shared with trustees the positive feedback received from principals following the end of term communication to them regarding remuneration.</p> <p>The Chair outlined that in addition to the usual start of term tasks and discussions that trustees usually complete in the September meeting, this meeting will also begin considerations of the strategy review.</p> <p>Trustees were reminded to send back declarations of interest to the company secretary.</p>	

2.	<p>Minutes and matters arising</p>	
	<p>The minutes from the July Trust Board Meeting were agreed.</p> <p>The action log was agreed.</p> <p>Trustees enquired as to the inclusion of a governance review in the action plan. It was confirmed that this will be part of the strategy considerations.</p>	
3.	<p>CEO Report</p>	
	<p>The CEO presented the CEO report, highlighting high-level staff changes and conversions including the 4 London schools and the merger of Cliff Park Infant and Junior, all of which took place 1st September. The CEO also outlined that there has been a successful return to school and gave an update on new covid processes.</p> <p>Trustees asked whether the turnover of Executive Principals and Regional Directors is as expected and further asked for an update on the current Education Team given recent additions.</p> <p>The CEO outlined that the recent leavers all have specific reasons for leaving the Trust and these circumstances are unlikely to be commonplace for other members of the Education Team. The CEO outlined the new appointments to the Education Team.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the role of the trustee, and whether the impact of the role is currently being affected by a higher level of involvement and oversight from the DfE.</p> <p>The Trustees asked for more information about the TBAP charitable foundation.</p> <p>The CEO outlined that the charitable arm of TBAP is used to raise funds for the academies and it has been maintained to utilise its fundraising function. There was a discussion about the board of trustees for the foundation and whether the skills and experience could be utilised.</p>	
4.	<p>GCSE and 'A' Level Results</p>	
	<p>Trustees asked whether schools teaching GCSEs and A Levels know at this point what assessments will look like for 2021/22</p> <p>The National Director of Education responded that schools are not currently aware of the assessment process for this academic year.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the Trust's mission to be the Trust that 'makes the biggest difference' and how this is measured through both education outcomes and other data such as destinations data, enrichment opportunities and pastoral support. It was noted that there are KPIs currently in place in all of these areas in line with the current strategy and any change to areas of focus will require associated changes to KPIs.</p>	

	<p>The National Director of Education outlined the process for grade assessment and noted that results had not been altered by external moderators which suggests the process for grade allocation worked as expected.</p> <p>The National Director of Education highlighted that the gap of outcomes between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students has increased, this is because exams can favour disadvantaged pupils more than centre assessed grades. Further that post-16 grades have improved from 2019 from C+ to B, and increase in achievement is reflected nationally and destination has also improved because universities have accepted a wider range of grades than usual.</p> <p>Trustees asked whether there are indicators as to whether the results for the next academic year will be positive?</p> <p>The National Director of Education responded that there are a variety of options depending on what the assessment process will look like for this academic year.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the approach to primary education during the lockdown period has been evaluated?</p> <p>There was a discussion about the data presented in the July meeting on teacher assessments and PiXL and the work completed by the PiXL Coordinator on comparisons to national data. It was agreed that reading in early years is of particular concern, trustees agreed that there should be an update from the Director of Primary and SEND at the next School Improvement Sub-Committee.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Demographics of our student population</p>	
	<p>The National Director of Education presented the demographics of OAT's student population highlighting that there are high numbers of White British Disadvantaged students and students with SEND. It was also noted that school populations are growing with more students joining in year 7 than leaving in year 11.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the positive improvements in supporting students with SEND and the obstacles to equity across the Trust in terms of supporting students with SEND such as different LA processes and EHCP support. It was noted that there needs to be further focus on equality of opportunity across the Trust to ensure that all students are effectively supported. It was also noted that further work needs to be completed about student attendance and exclusions which will be carried out in collaboration with experts in the London AP schools.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the data is used to support students and how the resources are allocated based on schools that have a greater need for support?</p> <p>There was a discussion about how this should be considered in the strategy day, and where there should be further analysis to ascertain the specifics of regions and academies and not just top-line averages in order to develop local priorities and Trust-wide priorities.</p>	

	<p>There was a further discussion that within strategy development, standardisation versus autonomy needs to be considered and given the local contexts being so varied, principals should be supported in taking the lead on meeting the requirements of the school community.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the original purpose of the Trust and how school communities have been supported by OAT when local schools have joined the Trust. It was noted that there are several schools where school improvement strategies have improved the school which has benefitted the local community.</p> <p>The trustees agreed that the strategy review should include considerations about the purpose of the Trust and the growth strategy for the Trust. It was further noted that how technology supports the delivery of the strategy should be discussed as should the targets and monitoring for each area. It was agreed that within strategy development, peers of similar size should be used a benchmark.</p>	
6.	Finance Update 20/21 and 21/22	
	<p>The Director of Finance outlined the current financial position and decisions that need to be taken going forward. The National Director of Finance outlined that the Trust is currently in a strong reserves position which exceeds the forecast because contingencies had been reserved but not needed.</p> <p>The National Director of Finance presented some of the plans for spending going forward including IT and Estates life cycle planning and further investment in technology. There are also further plans to consolidate systems in order to free up resource for the classroom.</p> <p>The Chair of F&C noted that the financial oversight is positive and the F&C committee would now like to receive plans for the spending of excess reserves and an update on teachers pay and utility costs. This needs to be carefully monitored to ensure a continued strong financial position.</p> <p>There was a discussion about teachers pay.</p> <p>There was a discussion about fundraising, cost-saving through the utilising of brokers, reducing operating costs and collaboration with other MATS, and approval of how surplus funds are allocated. The approval of allocations will be made by the F&C and other committees will be consulted and informed as appropriate.</p> <p>It was noted that a decision to agree a proposed overspend has been delegated to the F&C committee as long as the Trust's reserves do not go below 3%. It was requested that the Chair of SIS attend the next F&C committee for the educational investment item. The approval of the financial delegation of authority document was also delegated to the F&C committee</p>	
7.	Strategic Planning	
	<p>The CEO outlined the proposed approach to the strategy review including the content of the first meeting and a timeline which outlines that the direction of travel and priorities should be drafted early in 2022.</p>	

	<p>Further to the proposal for the timeline, the CEO presented a Horizon Scanning paper. The issues noted include the national review of assessment frameworks, clarity on the role of MATs in the education sector and the need to consolidate smaller MATs.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that this is a sensible agenda for the strategy session and noted the need to consider how to limit the session to high-level discussion. The CEO was asked to consider and present high-level questions to the strategy session for trustees to consider. Trustees also asked for the previous growth strategy for the Trust to ascertain direction of travel.</p> <p>The trustees also asked that the purpose and mission of the Trust be considered in the strategy session and asked that the timeline is carefully managed to ensure opportunities for continual review.</p> <p>The National Director of Finance was asked to provide details on key financials.</p> <p>The National Director of Finance was asked to provide a briefing on operational effectiveness.</p> <p>The CEO agreed to the trustee requests and confirmed that only the board would be in attendance.</p>	
8.	Break	
9.	Governance Risk and Assurance	
	<p>The company secretary presented the following governance documentation for review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scheme of Delegation – no change ▪ Decision Making Framework – no change ▪ Trust Board Subcommittee Terms of Reference for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit and Risk Committee ▪ Finance and Capital Committee ▪ People Committee ▪ School Improvement Sub-Committee ▪ All changed to reflect quorum and casting vote decisions taken by the Trust Board ▪ LGB Terms of Reference – consecutive terms of office changed <p>Trustees asked that it be made clear that whilst governors can now serve on boards for longer, new governors should be encouraged to ensure continued high-level scrutiny. It was agreed that this would be communicated as best practice.</p> <p>All governance documentation was approved.</p> <p>The link trustees for the next 12 months were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safeguarding – Frances Hall ▪ SEND – Jan Renou ▪ GDPR – Ian Brookman 	

It was noted that trustees should discuss whether there is a need for further link trustees in the strategy meeting.

Trustees noted the letter to the accounting officer and noted that action has been taken or is underway on meeting the requirements.

The company secretary presented the following policies for approval:

- Whistleblowing
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Reserves
- Risk Management
- Early Career Teachers

Trustees asked whether there should be an independent avenue for whistleblowing that links directly to the Trust Board. The CEO responded that the process in place currently appears to work but it is worth recomunicating the whistleblowing policy to schools and reiterating the existing avenues to all staff.

The Whistleblowing Policy was approved.

The Company Secretary outlined the changes to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy with a focus on the updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 and newly published advice on sexual harassment and violence between children.

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy was approved.

The National Director of Finance outlined that the Reserves Policy has been updated to reflect the current financial position.

Trustees asked that it be stated within the policy, if not already explicit, that while the policy was to hold reserves between 3 and 5% in line with ESFA guidelines, that the Trustees have the discretion to hold reserves above this level if they consider it to be appropriate given future plans..

The Reserves Policy was approved.

The National Director of Finance outlined the Risk Policy which has been updated as a result of Mazars audit feedback. The actions of the audit will be implemented in the coming term.

The trustees asked about risk tolerance and what tolerance levels are acceptable? The National Director of Finance responded that risk tolerance is considered in the policy and on the risk registers.

The Risk Policy was approved.

The company secretary outlined the Early Career Teachers Policy which has been updated in line with statutory guidance.

	<p>Trustees asked if there is one provider for or are schools able to choose a provider? The CEO responded that the National Director of Training and Teaching is planning a paper to SIS with further information on this.</p> <p>Early Careers Teachers Policy was approved.</p>	
10.	For info	
	The SIS minutes from 12 th August 2021 were received and noted.	
11.	AOB	
	There was no AOB	
12.	Date of next meeting	
	9 th December 21	