

Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting

Date:	Thursday 28 th September	Time:	9.30 am – 1.30 pm
Location:	Suite 3 – Wesley Euston,	Clerk:	Sunita Yardley-Patel Head of Governance/CoSec

Trustees Present:		Attendees:	
Julius Weinberg	Chair	Jo Dawson	National Director of Finance and Strategy
Karen Bramwell	Trustee	Justine Kenny	National Director of People
Tom Rees	Trustee and CEO	Rob Pritchard	National Director of Education
Peter Murray	Trustee		
Janet Renou	Trustee	Apologies:	
Stuart Ross	Trustee	Tariq Syed	Trustee
Bal Sharma	Trustee	Alistair Thom	Trustee
Frances Hall	Trustee		

No.	Item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies from</p> <p>Tariq Syed Trustee Alistair Thom Trustee</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations, Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>2.1 Declaration of Interests – no new declarations</p> <p>2.2 Approval of Minutes – Minutes approved.</p> <p>2.3 Matters Arising/Action Log – Action log approved and matters arising discussed.</p>	
3.	<p>Chair update</p> <p>The chair noted that the CEO handover had been a productive and successful one and welcomed Tom Rees and Justine Kenny to the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>CEO Report</p> <p>The CEO presented the CEO report. It was outlined that the papers aim to set out how the Trust should think about longer term challenge and opportunities. The CEO outlined the national context following covid and the associated key issues across the country including attendance, behaviour, and outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students.</p> <p>Trustees asked for the CEO to present an initial assessment of where the trust is on its broader strategy and goals including key themes, to the December meeting.</p> <p>The chair noted that these discussions have started with the principals.</p>	CEO

<p>The CEO outlined that this is the first year of comparable results since 2019 following the pandemic and outlined the key headlines across the trust. It was noted that there are termination warning notices (TWNs) on two OAT schools and that these schools require high levels of support and intervention from OAT to improve at pace and deliver better outcomes.</p> <p>There is a discussion opportunity with the people committee to address the training and development of new principals and senior leaders in schools.</p> <p>The trustees asked if the schools with TWNs had had action plans submitted to the DfE in response. The NDoE responded that this has happened, and the action plans are updated half termly. SIS will monitor this at the November meeting.</p> <p>The CEO updated on the recent meetings that have taken place with the regional director for the West Midlands (Andrew Warren) regarding sustainability of school improvement in relation to warning notices.</p> <p>Trustees asked what the risk of the number of students attending RI schools increasing is and noted the threshold at which there would be significant concern.</p> <p>The CEO responded that fewer schools are expecting visits this year than last year and outlined and summarised the position of OAT schools in relation to ofsted gradings.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the impact of activities taking place to drive school improvement including whether the impact of investment in central education has been realised yet? There was a further discussion about what the reputational impact of poor gradings and TWNs can mean for school communities. Further, whether there should be tighter constraints for schools not delivering educational outcomes?</p> <p>The NDoE responded that the education structure changes have only been in place for 12 months and there have been staff leaving that have impacted the success of this. There have been numerous success stories this year with schools that were Ofsted RI now being rated Good. There was a discussion about whether the outcomes at inspections were as expected.</p> <p>The NDoF noted that the process for managing finances now is more integrated with the education team than it has been previously and outlined some key examples.</p> <p>The CEO added that historically there were more students in RI schools and that has changed this year in light of the numerous inspections. The proposed direction of travel is to develop a system that relies less on individual people and includes succession planning in-house.</p> <p>The chair noted that SIS need to monitor to schools more closely.</p> <p>Trustees asked whether there are alternatives in terms of recruitment support, i.e., IT support, development of reputation. Are the schools that are RI having more issues recruiting?</p> <p>The CEO responded that there is a large sector challenge around recruitment and retention. It was noted that looking to trusts that are doing this well would be helpful.</p> <p>The NDoP responded that there is a general problem across the sector in recruitment and all large MATs, including OAT, are currently looking at how to be more dynamic in the approach to flexible working. This will be an agenda item in the December meeting.</p>	<p>People Comm</p> <p>NDoE</p> <p>SIS</p>
--	---

	<p>The trustees asked whether overseas recruitment is viable?</p> <p>The NDoPC responded that this has been considered. The NDoE responded that this has taken place previously and been successful. It would be good to revisit this. It was noted that the SCITT is being reviewed to yield more teachers for the Trust.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the progress and relationships that have been made in the AP schools that have been with OAT for 2 years now. It was also noted that the EEF bid had been successful and that we are now piloting a scale-up of our ‘Westminster model’ to OAT schools in Stoke and in the East. It was outlined that the model being implemented in AP in terms of supporting students and managing behaviour would be beneficial across the trust. It was noted that the staff in place would need further support to do this.</p> <p>Trustees asked whether there are more opportunities to develop partnerships that would result in funding for disadvantaged students?</p> <p>It was noted that when considering new ventures, it’s worthwhile ascertaining where more funding could be secured. The NDoF responded that this has been successful previously due to effective due diligence and utilisation of strong relationships.</p> <p>The trustees asked what the mechanism by LAs is for commissioning the work that has taken place previously?</p> <p>The NDoF outlined that the success of this has been down to relationship management with the LA and feeder school principals. The CEO responded that the helpfulness of planning resource is the certainty of places.</p> <p>The NDoF agreed to circulate the Incorporation Policy with flowchart for the conversion of new schools to trustees.</p> <p>Trustees asked feasibility questions related to the due diligence process.</p> <p>There was a discussion about how trusts respond to TWNs and the need to be impact focused to achieve results.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the work taking place on enrichment and where examples of this have been evidenced.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the funding and focus of enrichment. It was agreed that enrichment activities could improve attendance if used effectively. It was agreed that there should be a focus on tracking the impact of enrichment activities and focussing on fewer, high impact activities and delivering these to a high standard.</p> <p>The CEO noted that this needs further review and monitoring and then a paper presented to the trust board in December which considers: What could enrichment look like in 5 years’ time? What do we want to ensure is an entitlement for all children? How is balance ensured in terms of resources vs outcomes?</p> <p>Trustees asked if attendance is being monitored and scrutinised by the SIS?</p> <p>The NDoE responded that this is being monitored by SIS and that the national picture for attendance is negative and there has been a big focus internally on supporting student attendance. Attendance has increased this year so far.</p>	<p>NDoF</p> <p>CEO</p>
5.	Outcomes	

	<p>The NDoE noted that the results have been scrutinised at SIS and will further be scrutinised at the next SIS.</p> <p>Primary data is primarily positive. Post-16 results were pleasing overall but the key indicator of success is destination data. Some academies could strengthen the impact being delivered.</p> <p>The NDoE outlined KS4 results. It was noted that there were some examples of schools making positive progress since 2019 but that overall, results were still low in many places and overall, below the national average.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the context of school's vs expectations and outcomes. The NDoE outlined the utilisation of the FFT and the culture of expectations in academies. It was noted that targets for academies have been increased in order to raise expectations.</p> <p>Trustees asked how well supported students with SEND are and how well SENDCos deliver support?</p> <p>The NDoE responded that there is a support infrastructure in place and there are national problems in relation to supporting students with SEND but the direction of travel in the trust is positive. There are strong screening programmes and early interventions taking place across the trust to support students with SEND.</p> <p>The CEO added that the inclusion team is making good progress with supporting SEND across the trust and the rigor in the curriculum at the AP schools is evident. The board agreed the new, more ambitious targets presented.</p> <p>The NDoE outlined the current context of behaviour across schools and the worsening context across the country.</p>	
6.	<p>CFO report</p> <p>The CFO presented the report noting that, the trust remained in a reasonably secure financial position going into 23/24. However, whilst reserves remain strong between 7 and 8%, these are low versus many of the large trusts.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the importance of maximising the impact that we have on the children who are in the trust at the moment and were open to business cases to re-invest any improved reserves position.</p> <p>It was noted that strong reserves were required to offset any mid-term risks around declining pupil numbers. In order to better manage this risk with more nimble resource planning, the IMP implementation project had commenced and was due to be completed in Spring 24 (financial planning) and Summer 24 (Curriculum Led Resource Planning)</p> <p>Trustees asked whether the land and buildings of the trust's academies are being fully utilised, particularly in terms of maximisation of surplus land. It was agreed that this would be reviewed by F&C.</p> <p>Trustees agreed, within the context of the OAT strategy development, that the financial strategy should enable both the short and long term aims of the trust. Trustees requested that academic outcome and financial performance be analysed together both at an academy level and at a trust level.</p>	<p>F&C and Board (Feb and March).</p> <p>F&C and Board (Nov and Dec).</p>
7.	<p>Governance and policies</p>	

	<p>The trustees agreed to reappoint Jan Renou as a trustee.</p> <p>Elizabeth Warren was agreed as a trustee subject to receipt of acceptable references and meeting with members.</p> <p>The chair of the people committee outlined the Trustee Recruitment Policy and the process for approval of incoming trustees. Trustees agreed that members and sponsors should be consulted in the process. This was added to the policy. It was noted that the people committee will consider recruitment going forward.</p> <p>The policy was approved.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the process for the appointment of local governors and chairs.</p>	
8.	<p>Committee minutes</p> <p>Minutes from the SIS Committee – 24.08.23 were noted.</p>	
9.	<p>Break</p>	
10a.	<p>Fundraising strategy</p> <p>The NDoF outlined the work completed in relation to fundraising and the context of the current structures in place to source grants and funding. It was noted that there are opportunities that could be further utilised to bring in extra funding through grants and the utilisation of the London schools charity foundation.</p> <p>Trustees asked what the current status of the foundation is?</p> <p>The NDoF responded that there are currently 3 appointed trustees during this transition period with the aim to recruit additional trustees over the coming months.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the foundation would be used?</p> <p>The NDoF responded that it has historically been used to generate funding from individuals but there are opportunities to expand to external partnerships that could be beneficial including corporate sponsorships and utilisation of alumni and estates.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the short-term plan to utilise what already exists with a robust strategy that focuses on clear initiatives to ensure that the Trust is prepared when funding opportunities arise.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the different kinds of funding categories and how to best target them using internal infrastructure and people already in place but better utilising cross departmental working to achieve a more joined up strategy. It was outlined that there is a need to agree core priorities to ensure a clear directive for funding requests. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for the targets to be ambitious. It was noted that there also needs to be a focus on development activities as well as fundraising.</p> <p>The local community context was considered, and trustees discussed the options for utilising local links to generate community support and fundraising including entrepreneurial principals, regional fundraisers, and local industry. It was also noted that national level opportunities are available and could be utilised as long as the benefit to the trust will be fully realised.</p>	

	<p>It was noted that there could be a flexible approach to fundraising in terms of contracting people to do this on OAT’s behalf rather than looking at employment.</p>	
10b.	<p>Strategy discussion</p> <p>The CEO presented a renewed focus on improvement of schools at pace with a need to be more ambitious for pupil outcomes.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the culture of shared resources and the perception of what good looks like across the trust. Comparisons were made to other trusts who achieve consistently higher outcomes for children, due to stronger shared curriculum models and more centralised improvement systems. A discussion took place about the balance of central prescription vs. local autonomy and some of the challenges with principals feeling that they can lose decision making power.</p> <p>The CEO outlined that academies are, and should be, valued as individual entities that operate as civic institutions within their communities. The balance of alignment vs standardisation can be shifted to support a standardised curriculum whilst still allowing schools to maintain individuality. This needs to be supported with high quality delivery; the trust needs to deliver more for students which means a focus on curriculum development, staffing etc. There needs to be careful consideration of efficient communications and messaging.</p> <p>Trustees asked how we learn from top performing trusts; understanding what other trusts do better than OAT and understanding what can be taken from those organisations would be positive; comparisons should be made with understanding of context.</p> <p>Assessment of all key data with other trusts should take place along with sharing of best practice. The definition of ‘good’ for OAT should also be agreed.</p> <p>The board agreed the proposed way forward for the delivery of the proposed strategy and agreed to support on a 121 basis where necessary.</p>	Exec
11.	<p>AOB</p> <p>The CEO announced that the NDoE will be retiring at Christmas and outlined the succession plan. The trustees thanked the NDoE for his hard work and commitment to the trust.</p> <p>The chair of people committee reminded other trustees about OAT conference attendance.</p>	
12.	<p>Dates of future meetings and close</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 14th December 2023 (London) ▪ 1st February 2024 (T&D Session) ▪ 7th March 2024 (London) ▪ 23rd May 2024 (T&D Session) ▪ 11th July 2024 (London) 	