

Board of Trustees

Wednesday 25 May 2022, 4.30pm

Staff Room, St Luke's School

Attended:

Andy Mulcock (AM) - Chair	Philip Bostock (PB) – Vice Chair
Lee Elliot Major (LEM)	Teresa Gardner (TG)
James Frampton (JF)	Lindsay Hetherington (LH)
Richard Jacobs (RJ)	Ben Manning (BM)
Moira Marder (MM)	Sarah O'Meara (SO)
Saxon Spence (SS)	Crispin Taylor (CT)
Alex Walmsley (AW)	
Tamsin Frances – Director of People & Strategy (TF)	Sue Pym – Director of Finance (SP)
Jon Lunn – Director of Education Performance (JL)	Tim Rutherford (TR) – Deputy CEO
Lorraine Mitchell – Head of Corporate Governance (LM)	

In Attendance:

Melody Floyde (MF) – Clerk to the Trust

Apologies:

None

Meeting Minutes

Item No.	Business	Action
1.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>AM welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received.</p> <p>Declarations of interest were noted, as follows: AW: Director, First Federation Trust. AW, RJ, AM, SP: Directors, Fusion School Services (Item 12)</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting and Update on Actions.</p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 16.02.22 and 30.03.22 were approved as a full and accurate record.</p> <p>All actions were recorded as complete or in progress with the following updates.</p>	

	<p>The Trust Scheme of Delegation was being updated ready for September. LM confirmed that the review was focussed on being more specific around levels of responsibility and there would be a change to the style, including breaking the document down into sections to make it more accessible to users. There would also be further work on encouraging and confirming the values that LGB's bring to the Trust, it was acknowledged that there was work to be done in this area.</p> <p>AW noted that the Scheme of Delegation had been a focus of the recent Ofsted inspection at QE. TR also noted the importance of there being appropriate Trustee involvement as there was currently lots of operational detail and requested volunteers to be part of the Working Group.</p> <p>Action: JF, PB and AM to be invited to join the Scheme of Delegation Working Group.</p> <p>MF noted that MM's videos for staff had not yet been circulated to Trustees. Action: TR to forward the link to the videos to MF for circulation.</p>	<p>LM</p> <p>TR</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None raised.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Appointments & Resignations</p> <p>The recent LGB resignations were noted and the following appointments ratified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pino Butler, Co-opted Governor, St James • Nicky Henderson, Co-opted Governor, MAP Secondary • Kerry Sumareh, Parent Governor, Lipson (subject to DBS) • Zoe Reilly, Parent Governor, Lipson (subject to DBS) • Adam Hodgess, Staff Governor, Lipson • Jessica Anscombe, Staff Governor, Lipson <p>The Trustees agreed that Pino and Nicky were both particularly positive additions. It was also noted that Lipson had four new Governors. LM confirmed that she would be attending the next Lipson LGB meeting to meet the board and talk through their requirements and how best the Trust could provide support. She noted that one of the parent governors was particularly strong.</p> <p>Action: Advise Lipson clerk that Jessica Anscombe's declaration of interest needs to show that she is employed by the Trust.</p>	<p>MF</p>

Items For Monitoring

<p>5.</p>	<p>Trust Marketing & Communications Strategy</p> <p>TF gave a presentation on the Trust's Marketing & Communication Strategy.</p> <p>Emma Darke had professionalised the marketing and communications. Press releases had increased. Website traffic had increased by 138% in terms of the number of visits, this could be due to the increasing number of schools in the Trust. Social Media visitors had also hugely increased the traffic to the website. Twitter and Linked In had been the focus to date, however Facebook was starting to increase.</p> <p>The staff hub had been set up as part of the Trust's internal communications, this was currently being reviewed but was getting increasing visits from staff.</p>	
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Emma had also dealt with emergency communications throughout the Covid pandemic. She had been working hard to increase the profile of the Trust and had done lots of work about promoting the work of schools, sharing the work and celebrating.

TF noted that the Trust did not want to spend a huge amount of money on marketing but would be focusing on sustainable growth.

The Annual Report had been good and the new 2020-21 report had been published. The Leadership Handbook and Recruitment packs had also been produced.

The current focus of work was on getting back to the “Why” – why does the Trust market and why does the Trust want to market. The overarching intention was to attract the best quality staff for students. The website needed to reflect the vision and values of the Trust. Vision and Values had been a focus of work recently, the next step was to focus on having higher standards and the clarity to grow great people.

A website project was being undertaken. The initial focus had been on the main Trust Website and schools with the most need. TF confirmed that this was a phased project with the first websites being launched in September.

The Trust’s Vision and Values needed to be lived within the schools. Internal communication was another focus and needed to be improved. There was a strong foundation in place, but robust systems were needed to avoid any poor communication.

10 years of Ted would also be an area of promotion over the next year.

RJ asked who TF categorised as the Trust’s stakeholders. TF confirmed that the Trust had very wide-ranging external stakeholders, however primarily this was the local school communities including students, parents and wider communities, such as parish councils, alongside local and national partners.

RJ noted that parents were a crucial avenue to sell the schools to. It was also important to engage with the business community as the Trust moved on to events and awards as they could contribute to these. Linking businesses to individual schools or the Trust as a whole was a good way forward. TF confirmed that the Trust had joined the Plymouth and Exeter chamber of commerce. The focus needed to be balanced to ensure the Trust was getting the fundamentals right at the same time.

SS noted the cost-of-living concerns for local families and that the number of applications for FSM had gone down. She queried if social media could be used to promote and explain to people that FSMs were available. This could be helpful publicity and was in line with the Trust’s values.

TR noted that the role of the Trust was to have the website to enable local schools to communicate information. Schools had to do this themselves and it was important not to confuse the message.

AW noted that the Trust and schools marketing strategies had different focuses. For the Trust the key stakeholders were the DfE, RSC, Diocese etc and required a different kind of messaging. TF agreed that Trust and school outcomes were different. There would be different audiences for the Trust and School Websites. Often parents were not aware that their school was part of the Trust.

	<p>AM noted that Emma Darke knew that her role was to develop the communications within school settings. TR noted that many things could only be done well locally. It was important to support schools and to enable them to do this in their individual settings.</p> <p>SOM noted that the marketing had improved phenomenally since Emma had joined the Trust. However, communication within the Trust and schools was a key risk in damaging the Trust’s reputation which did not reflect the Trust. Communication was key.</p> <p>MM agreed that specific attention was needed on communication with certain schools where there had been issues with management. SOM noted the disconnect mentioned by the LGB Chairs. The Trust had grown and it was unclear whose responsibility it was to communicate specific items. AM agreed that the relational communication and people connection was particularly valuable and it was important to be mindful of this.</p> <p>AW noted that Parent View had caught Trustees by surprise at the recent QE Ofsted inspection and queried if marketing could help with increasing awareness of this in advance. It was important to catch the risks ahead of the game. TR noted that TF had already done some work on this. QE had been a surprise as there had been challenge on community confidence.</p> <p>LM noted the role of the LGBs and them being involved in the stakeholder group. This engagement would be a focus over the coming year along with better student representation at LGBs.</p> <p>TF advised that a Trust-wide student survey would be rolled out in July. The Staff survey had also been repeated. The Exec had worked hard with the headteachers on the focus of the survey being on schools and this had increased the uptake as it was owned at school level. The Parent survey would be undertaken in the next phase.</p> <p>RJ agreed that the corporate image of the Trust needed to be separate from the image for each school, however information and guidance could be provided.</p> <p>Action: MF to circulate copy of TF’s presentation with the minutes of the meeting.</p>	<p>MF</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>The Management Accounts and Cashflow reports had been circulated ahead of the meeting. SP gave a brief update on the key points</p> <p>The position was expected to be better than predicted due to covid funding and exam credits. Cashflow was strong.</p> <p>Inflationary costs would hit from September, but the Trust was expected to outperform this year.</p> <p>Management accounts reflected Lipson joining with reserves of £3.5m.</p> <p>There was some pressure in the areas of alternate provision and SEND and how these were supported.</p> <p>AM noted that SP’s papers were very clear.</p>	

<p>7.</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>Vicky Joyce, the current Head of School at MAP Secondary, had been appointed as the new Headteacher of Isca Academy starting in September 2022. SOM and AM had supported the interview process.</p> <p>It had been a busy term so far. Ofsted inspections and exams were back. There had been lots of recruitment going on which was exciting but challenging. The work on leadership was critical and the need to invest was evident.</p> <p>LEM’s paper on Social Mobility in the South-West had given a stimulus. Leaders needed to have social justice focus and this would help the Trust to thrive.</p> <p>Over 75% staff had responded to the recent survey, further information would be shared with Trustees once this has been analysed.</p> <p>The current key priorities for the Trust were social justice, SEND and alternative provision.</p> <p>JL gave an overview of attendance. He confirmed that the dashboards were strongly scrutinised at the ISTJ Panel. Absence was hovering around the national level. Since Easter, primaries had been strong and were hitting the old national averages. Secondaries were around 87-90%, this was consistent with other Trusts. Primaries had returned to national 2019 averages quite early. Staff absences had been at their highest level and this correlated with student absence. This had been felt in the schools.</p> <p>LEM noted that DS students were more likely to be persistently absent in secondary and this was the same nationally.</p> <p>Year 11 attendance had held up well and attendance in exams had been very positive.</p> <p>There were a number of families who had struggled, this had led to diverse exam arrangements i.e. offsite provision. There were no major problems with invigilators or staffing. It was impossible to predict how well the children would do due to changes to the curriculum and grade boundaries etc. The KS1 and KS2 SATS had gone well and staff were feeling positive. However, there were no comparators and this was largely based on anecdotal evidence. AM agreed that it was important to manage expectations.</p> <p>JL noted that five secondary schools touched base, there were very low numbers of children who had not attended. The West Exe attendance officer had been working with the LA for those children who had nowhere to sit exams. BM noted that he could support in Plymouth if any space was needed for exams.</p> <p>AM queried what was next in terms of school reviews and the School Improvement Plan. JL confirmed that a review had been rearranged at West Exe this academic year. Next year’s dates had been booked for all schools. TR noted that JL’s work appeared to be triangulating with the feedback being received from the recent Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>SS asked if there was any feeling about the effect of everything that had been happening on the mental health of students. She cited negative reports in the press, for example eating disorders. TR noted that the Trust was working on being more consistent to identify those with needs in the schools. CAMHS were seeing increased applications at every level. Mental Health in Schools funding was being applied for. There had been a decrease in attendance for vulnerable groups and an increase in exclusions for serious incidents. This was also a common picture across the border.</p>	
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	<p>MM noted that she had engaged with student voice in three Trust secondary schools. There were increased challenges with mental health but students were impressed by the extra support being put in. Students knew where to go and the schools were supporting them. The Trust was energised by the challenge.</p> <p>CT noted that the national picture was dire. There had been significant investments in Devon for things like eating disorders. The aim was to recover the trajectory to 2019 levels but this would not be until the beginning of 2023. Recruitment and retention of staff was a real challenge. Virtual working had its benefits but also meant that staff were leaving. Some teams were running at 90% staffing but others were in the 60s.</p> <p>LH noted the importance of helping children to manage their anxieties with coping mechanisms. It would be useful to think about how to get the message out to schools about how to support their children with anxiety. This could connect to community hubs. MM had attended the Devon area SEND Ofsted and agreed that the situation was dire. The Trust was going to have to find the solution as many children needed lower levels of support than that provided by CAMHS. MM was thinking about what this might look like for the Trust.</p> <p>LH noted that there were people at the University who would want to engage. AM agreed it was important for the Trust to see and feel the needs. This would involve collaboration and taking the lead. There had been a recent positive meeting at ASAP looking at using family learning funds to set up a hub. TG noted that she was happy to be involved in this.</p> <p>AW noted that Ofsted had asked about QA and how the Board knew this. It was important to ensure that Trustee attendance was recorded at the panel meetings. It was also important to have back up Trustees to sit on the panels to ensure that two Trustees are always available.</p> <p>Action: Circulate the organogram mentioned in Moira’s CEO report with the minutes of the meeting.</p> <p>MM noted that central services staff were returning to work in offices. St Luke’s had accommodated staff, however there was still ongoing strategic work to look at office space. There had also been an event at Buckfast for all staff to get together.</p>	<p>MF</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Strategic Planning & Feedback from Trustee Away Day</p> <p>TF gave a presentation on the Trust’s Strategic Planning which incorporated feedback from the Trustee Away Day on 30.03.22</p> <p>How Trust’s Strategically plan was a focus and the Trust was consulting with partners. The current approach was for a one-year plan which linked planning to how the Trust behaves, whilst ensuring that schools were at the centre.</p> <p>The Trust’s job was to enable excellence and the strategic priority for the next year was to find a healthy balance across three areas. Having highest standards whilst maintaining a minimum with good systems but local excellence. This would correlate directly with the leadership’s work to build upon the good work already achieved and to maximise the employee experience. Staff wellbeing would continue to be a point of focus.</p> <p>TF noted that two future headteachers had recently been appointed and they would be developed over the next two years.</p>	

	<p>Standardised platforms for information sharing would be important. Schools must have a plan to communicate with parents.</p> <p>TF confirmed that the feedback from the Trustee away day had been incorporated into the planning.</p> <p>PB agreed that the recruitment issue was critical and that a values-based recruitment system was needed, he queried how this worked with external candidates and how we could confidently get down to individual’s values.</p> <p>MM noted that the interview process for external candidates was being developed. The Trust’s leadership concepts had been curated onto 7 pages to identify an ideal team player. The plan for senior roles was for there to be a HR representative at all interviews. The Trust had to be clear on the non-negotiables as poor appointments could be costly. It was important to be more agile with the interview process and to ensure there was enough information to make the decision. Doing as much as possible at the interview stage, and throughout the induction/probation stages could have a real impact.</p> <p>JL noted a recent example of growing great people and the Trust’s investment in coaching. As a result of this the interview process had evolved. Candidates were now coached ahead of the interview and expected to re-enact the coaching. This had led to people pulling out if it was not for them. The recruitment process for senior roles had been using external consultants to meet individually with candidates and triangulating.</p> <p>CT suggested that senior roles could be filled by bringing in Trust stakeholders to the process. In his work this had involved children.</p> <p>LEM noted the difficulties in balancing autonomy with the values of the Trust. He queried how this was managed at the same time as empowering the headteachers. AW echoed LEMs comments and noted that it was still important to have a strategic view. Scrutiny panels were useful for identifying areas for improvement.</p> <p>The Health Checks of schools would be shared at the Education Committee, also data from the staff survey. School health checks would be linked to headteachers performance management. JL noted the loss of autonomy with the targeted support and intensive care. The Trust was working on improving the challenge.</p> <p>TF noted that minimum expectations and high standards could come across as counterproductive. JL noted that the prediction of what QE would get in the recent Ofsted Inspection, using data from the dashboards had been correct. As a Trust we set ourselves high standards.</p> <p>AM commended the team for the work and targeted support at QE that had led to the positive Ofsted inspection outcome. The Trust needed to be relentless in driving through the areas identified for future change. More Trust schools were lined up for inspections, including Isca, West Exe and Whipton. TG noted the massive achievement at QE in terms of the step up from the old to new framework.</p> <p>Action: MF to circulate copy of the presentation with the minutes</p>	
9.	<p>Committee Updates</p> <p><u>Audit & Risk, 18.05.22</u></p>	MF

The Auditors had attended the meeting to present the audit plan for the year.

Health & safety was an issue and consideration was being given to having a link health and safety Trustee.

Specialist property input could be beneficial.

Growth & Development

Matford Brook was proceeding on track for completion in February 2023. The designate headteacher had been appointed and would commence in September 2022. A feasibility study was being undertaken to look at costs for providing central team accommodation at the school. There was an aspiration to locate all central services teams together. There had been positive engagements with the feeder primary schools and also Dawlish Community College whose intake would be affected. Application numbers were challenging. There would be no in-year transfers. However, the timing was good. TR noted the challenge with the reception intake but that work had been done for KS3 entry.

MM noted the vision for an East Devon Hub. She had a meeting with Simon Jupp, MP planned to talk about this further. Possibilities were constantly emerging and MM /TR were on top of these.

The implications of the white paper were acknowledged. Rationalisation was likely within the Trust sector and this was an opportunity for the Trust. MM was chairing the CEO of Trusts group and this would lead to useful conversations. AM noted that the 2030 deadline had been viewed as there being less pressure to join a MAT by some.

Education Committee 09.03.22

The flow of communication was starting to work well. The Committee was working with the scrutiny panels to identify key areas of work.

The Trust complaints process had been a recent focus following Trustees' experience of this. This was being worked on and was due for review at the next meeting. LM confirmed that the Complaints Policy has been updated and she had been looking at a different model. LM would ask PB, SOM and TG to be involved in this and would send a copy of the updated policy to them for review.

The Education Scrutiny panel was useful to identify areas of focus and to share information. Sir David Carter was very helpful and was contributing to SOM's development and trustee engagement with the panel.

There were extensive papers provided for the scrutiny panels, data was being closely scrutinised and would be detailed further in the next Education Committee.

AW queried if the panel was reliant on information coming from LGB. JL noted that this was important for the dashboards and health checks. It was a two-way street of information. LM confirmed that increasing engagement from and support to LGBs was an important part of the strategy for next year.

Chairs Governance Committee

Forward Planning would be the focus of the next meeting on 09.03.22.

	<p><u>Finance & Resources Committee</u></p> <p>The Committee had been looking at the budget and building assurance of assumptions.</p> <p>PFI was embedded and working well.</p> <p>The ASAP sports hall was a large financial risk to the Trust. The Working Group was focussing on this.</p> <p>The Board needed to look at increasing membership of the Finance & Resources Committee to ensure quoracy for all items due to the increasing number of related party transactions being approved.</p> <p>A full record is in Part B of the Minutes.</p>	
10.	<p>Feedback from LGB Chairs Group</p> <p>AM updated that this had been a listening exercise. Many of the Chairs were busy people and had not been able to join the meeting for the entire time. Several Chairs were not present and this would be a focus of attention.</p> <p>There were great visions in Plymouth for how the Trust would influence the city.</p> <p>The number of PEX panel requests were increasing and there had been increased pressure on governors to support with these. This was giving a negative view of the Trust.</p> <p>There had been some questions around the diversity of LGB boards and this was on the longer-term agenda.</p> <p>Student voice – LGBs had discussed how to actively engage with student bodies. LGBs would be asked to establish and draw out best practice. SOM noted that the school council had recently been reformed at Whipton and the intention was for them to attend a future LGB meeting. LM confirmed that the idea would be for all LGBs to have student representation in their cycle of business at certain points of the year.</p> <p>LEM left the meeting at 18:22</p> <p>RJ noted the concerns about the discontent and asked if there was any possibility for “surgeries” to be held to meet with LGBs. LM confirmed there would be further networking opportunities at the LGB event in September which would include relaunching the handbooks etc. TR also noted that the school open mornings were opportunities for informal challenge along with strength of numbers. MM noted the mixed economy in the schools. LM also noted the intention to build the talent pool in LGBs collectively.</p> <p>SOM felt that part of the problem with the disconnect was the changes to roles and expectations, these need to be embedded within the LGBs.</p>	
Items for Approval		
11.	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p><u>Collective Resourcing Policy</u> – the accompanying paper set out the reasons for the policy and the benefits to the Trust. Schools were generally in favour of the approach to collective</p>	

	<p>resourcing and wanted to work together. The Trust Collective Resourcing Policy was Approved.</p> <p><u>Trust Investment Policy</u> – SP noted that the Trust currently had £7m in cash with negligible interest. The Board must take responsibility and approve the investment policy as set out in the Articles of Association.</p> <p>The new policy sets out all key areas. There was a change in the delegated authority as the Finance & Resources Committee would oversee this and hold to account. The Committee had reviewed the proposal and agreed their appetite for risks and preferred options.</p> <p>Trustees agreed they were comfortable with the proposals. AW noted that, as a charity, the Trust was obliged to make the best use of funds and that the proposal was low risk. Approval was requested for the policy.</p> <p>LH queried if the desire for ethical investments needed to be recorded. AW confirmed that this had been discussed and that investment managers would be employed to find the best investment. Ethical investment must not be at the detriment of best investment. JF also noted that over time there were likely to be more options whilst staying within the requirements.</p> <p>RJ noted that this would also need to be reviewed at the Audit & Risk Committee going forward as it constituted a risk to the Trust.</p> <p>The Trust Investment Policy was approved.</p> <p>Action: Publish and circulate the Trust Collective Resourcing and Trust Investment Policies as per the usual process.</p> <p><u>Delegated authority for policies</u>- LM confirmed that she was working on reviewing the policy delegation schedule to reduce the number of policies being approved by Trustees where these could be reviewed elsewhere. This would need to be approved by the Board on 13.07.22. LM would also be tracking policies and would provide assurance that all policies were being updated throughout the year. This would be reviewed alongside the Scheme of Delegation.</p>	MF
12.	<p>Approval of Procurements / Related Party Transaction</p> <p><u>Print Framework</u> – a tender process had been undertaken and all suppliers had been assessed on quality & price. Five providers would sit within the Framework. This was Approved.</p> <p><u>Energy</u> – The Trust had appointed Inspire Energy as their broker. There had been two tenderers for the supply of Gas, Gazprom and Corona. The recommendation was to go with Corona as there was a supplier risk around Gazprom. This was a flex plan and SP would need a level of flexibility to work with the broker to purchase gas when the time was right. SP noted that there was a 77% increase on the current price for gas which was a £138k increase. SP requested delegated authority to work with the broker. This was Approved.</p> <p><u>Conditions Surveys</u> – The Trust had commissioned a full conditions survey of all sites. There had been two bids, Currie Brown were the preferred suppliers. They were more expensive but there was a significant difference in quality and this was the unanimous view. The Award of the contract to Currie Brown at £82k was proposed. This was Approved.</p>	

	<p>AM, RJ, AW, SP left the meeting for this item due to conflict of interest. PB Chaired the Meeting for this item.</p> <p><u>Fusion RPT</u> – Approval was sought for Fusion School Services to tender for the provision of cleaning services at additional Trust schools. TR confirmed that this had been previously approved via the Finance & Resources Committee. Following recommendations from PHP Law and the DfE School Buying Hub the Trust would benchmark pricing and quality for Fusion outside of a formal tender process. This would enable a fair and transparent procurement. Final recommendations would be presented to the Board for approval following the process.</p> <p>PB asked for assurance that this was legally acceptable. TR confirmed this. This was Approved.</p> <p>RJ left the meeting at 18:35</p>	
Any Other Business		
	<p><u>Autumn Social</u></p> <p>RJ had offered to host a social event for Trustees and Senior Leaders in the autumn. This would be on 16.09.22.</p> <p>The meeting closed at: 18:46</p> <p>Date of Next Meetings: Wednesday 13th July 2022, 9.30am – Board Meeting followed by Governance Conference</p>	

Signed by the Chair of the Board:

ARMulcah

Date: 13.07.22