

Board of Trustees

Wednesday 20 October 2021, 4.30pm
Microsoft Teams (Virtual Meeting)

Attended:

Andy Mulcock (AM) - Chair	Philip Bostock (PB) – Vice Chair
Lee Elliot Major (LEM)	
Lindsay Hetherington (LH)	Richard Jacobs (RJ)
Moira Marder (MM)	Ben Manning (BM)
Sarah O’Meara (SO)	Saxon Spence (SS)
Crispin Taylor (CT)	Alex Walmsley (AW)
Charlotte Davies – Director of Business & Operations (CD)	Sue Pym – Director of Finance (SP)
Jon Lunn – Director of Education Performance (JL)	Tim Rutherford (TR) – Deputy CEO

In Attendance:

Melody Floyd (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.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting and Update on Actions.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 07.07.21 were approved as a full and accurate record. All actions were recorded as complete.</p> <p>Tamsin Frances provided an update to confirm that, letters of introduction had been sent to local councillors with the offer of booking a tour of their local school for which there had been a good uptake. The 2020-21 Annual Report would also be sent to councillors when available.</p>	

3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None raised.</p>	
4.	<p>Appointments & Resignations</p> <p>Rob Bosworth had resigned on 15.10.21, this had been accepted by AM. AM updated that Jade Otty from Exeter College would be joining as a Trustee in due course to replace Rob.</p> <p>AM was also meeting with another potential Trustee from Plymouth on 05.11.21 who had been suggested by RJ.</p> <p><u>Trustee Appointments</u></p> <p>Ben Manning and Lindsay Hetherington were officially appointed as Trustees. The appointments would be formally ratified by the Members at their meeting on 29.11.21.</p> <p>The recent LGB appointments were noted and ratified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Dyson – All Saints • Debbie Du Preez – St James • Jo Colin – MAP • Stephen Hulme – All Saints <p>SS noted that Stephen Hulme, a local councillor, was joining the All Saints LGB which was a welcome addition. TR and MM had met with Stephen and extended thanks to SS for her idea to contact local councillors. This had led to some positive engagement. PB noted that Stephen’s skills audit showed extensive experience and skill in all areas which would appear to be unrealistic. Action: MF to raise this with the All Saints Clerk.</p> <p>The Chairs & Vice Chairs of the LGBs for 2021-22 were noted and approved.</p> <p>SOM noted that the Vice Chair of Whipton Barton was still to be confirmed as Oli Birley. He had been nominated but had been absent from the LGB meeting so this had not yet been formally agreed.</p> <p>AW noted the conflict of interest of Siobhan Meredith being Vice Chair at ASAP when she was a member of the Trust Executive. This was agreed and MF and TR would pick this up. MF would review the guidance for LGBs to ensure that it was clear that Staff Governors cannot be Chairs or Vice Chairs.</p> <p>LH joined the meeting at 4.44pm</p> <p>A round of introductions was undertaken for the benefit of BH and LH the new Trustees.</p>	<p>MF</p> <p>MF</p>
<p>Items For Monitoring</p>		
5.	<p>Chief Executive Officer’s Report</p> <p>MM gave an overview of the CEO Update that had been circulated in advance of the meeting.</p>	

It had been a positive half-term, MM paid tribute to the Headteachers and staff across the Trust who had been working tirelessly to bring back a sense of normality to the children. Dealing with challenges pragmatically and supporting one another. This half-term was an opportunity to reset and improve. There was also a focus on taking away the use of negative language in schools.

AM, MM and SP would be involved in the regional trust schools review in November. The Trust had been prioritised due to having taken on several schools recently. The review would be an opportunity to share positives and to raise what the Trust would like from the RSC moving forwards.

MM noted the strategy for disadvantaged children and the progress on this so far. MATs were working together to narrow the gap, there was a renewed optimism to do better within the Trust and to develop a network of like-minded Trusts.

Lesson six was being adopted by secondary schools across the Trust for up to 3 days per week. MM had participated in Student Voice in several schools and they had fed back positively on the extra-curricular activities available. It was important to use money and resources effectively to develop better services for students and to use resources more flexibly. There was also a renewed focus on English and Maths outcomes to help post-16 students to access level 3 courses.

A people strategy was being developed for the Trust and the trust-wide survey would help to review this.

SS noted the inspiring picture which was integral to the Trust.

SS queried if disadvantaged students were having difficulties accessing Covid vaccinations and if there was more absence than usual.

TR confirmed that Virgin Care were leading the offer of vaccinations to 12-15 year olds, there had been mixed success so far. Uptake had been between 25-50% in terms of parental consent. Nationally the press was indicating that this had not been the easiest thing to roll out, however TR was confident that the offer would be completed by Christmas. Flu vaccination uptake was slightly higher. Parents may prefer to access the walk-in centres with their children to obtain the vaccinations. TR confirmed that data was not yet available on the uptake of vaccinations and if this was any different for DS children. Schools had remained distant from the details of the programme as it was led by the health professionals. SS noted concern that DS children could be at risk of missing more school time and felt that it was important for there to be encouragement and ways to make it easier for them to get the vaccine.

SOM noted that with the arrangements for exams, where staff had been asked to collect evidence, this was increased workload for staff, particularly in secondary schools, and the Trust needed to be mindful of this.

SOM also queried if there would be more detail provided from the staff survey as it would be important to unpick the detail and to have a plan of action. TR confirmed that there was a detailed breakdown available which had previously been presented to the Education Committee. This could be made available to Trustees to review and report back. It was a very positive piece of work which would help to plan for school health in the future. There were distinct patterns between schools.

<p>The next Trust-wide survey would be launched on 25.04.22 with both staff and students and TR would be happy to take questions. AW requested that all Trustees receive a copy of the executive summary from the survey. Action: TR to provide the Executive Summary from the Staff Survey for circulation to all Trustees.</p> <p>LEM urged the Trust to undertake comparisons with other leading Trusts in the country to look at best practice. TR noted the existing formal partnerships with Cabot and Dixons Trusts who were supporting with the planning.</p> <p>RJ was supportive of extra-curricular and sporting activities within the Trust’s ethos. He queried if there was a member of the Executive responsible for this across the whole Trust. JL confirmed that Alex Evans, PE Teacher at St Luke’s, was leading on multiple-sports across the Trust and would pull together sporting and extra-curricular activities across the Trust. TR confirmed that there was currently nobody in the Executive with this remit in their job description.</p> <p>AW queried what effect, in terms of behaviour at schools, was being seen post-Covid. TR confirmed that children were engaging with everything. Comparative data would only be available this year to show the time that children were not in lessons. Anecdotally children were struggling with work and there was further work to be done on looking at behaviour. It appeared to be affecting DS children more than others. TR confirmed that comparative data across schools would be available this year.</p> <p>MM had noted, from in depth visits to schools, that there had been noticeable improvements in behaviour, but agreed that a deep dive into the data was required. The Trust wanted to work on the number of DS children receiving fixed term exclusions. However, behaviour was a strength of the Trust. Simon Weir would be reviewing the behaviour approach and looking at a more trauma informed approach. There was a large piece of strategic work to be done, however based on national averages the Trust was in a better position than others.</p> <p>TR confirmed that the next Inclusion and Social Justice panel would focus on behaviour and exclusions. More needed to be done to reduce excludable behaviour and to ultimately reduce the number of exclusions. One of the Trust schools had met the criteria to be a lead behaviour school so this had been applied for.</p> <p>AW noted the Trust-wide focus on disadvantage and that, in the past, there had been external validated data to rely on. He queried how, in the absence of the data, Trustees knew that the Trust was making the progress being described. TR noted that NR assessments in primary and common assessments were being taken by more children in secondary schools. The lack of external data was a gap and this was an area which would require considerable input.</p> <p>MM noted that NEET data was also important and that this should be zero. The data would be published in November. TR noted that post-16 providers had been very good at supporting schools with finding places for students.</p> <p>TR confirmed the importance of using national reference tests. It had been a long time since external data was provided and schools would have seen significant variations. TR also noted that, with the systematic visits to schools and JL’s work, there was good qualitative data, but that exam data was missed as a means of validating the data.</p>	<p>TR</p>
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AW noted the importance of looking externally for reassurance. TR confirmed that a request had been made to John Cabot MAT to share their assessment data. Dixons MAT had also offered to share the assessments that they use. Sparx also provides useful data in terms of completion. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Panels would provide good vehicles to achieve this.

MM confirmed the Trust's focus on attainment, literacy, numeracy and ensuring that no DS pupils were NEET. Data was available for all of these.

Performance Update

JL gave a presentation on Trust Performance, a copy of the presentation would be circulated with the minutes. **Action: MF to circulate a copy of JL's presentation with the minutes of the meeting.**

MF

There were currently 10,146 children across the Trust, which made it the largest Trust, in terms of the number of students, on the SCOMIS dashboard. There were 450+ children in sixth forms, including Lipson who would join the Trust in January 2022. The total number of staff was 1,217.

The average national attendance at primary schools was 92.4%. Trust schools had seen increases in illness since the Covid restrictions were removed, however attendance at schools had been increasing over recent weeks. The average national attendance at secondary schools was 88.0%, Trust secondaries had been showing a decreasing trend, but this had risen again in recent weeks.

Nationally, Covid absence was 1.2% in primaries and 3% in secondaries. There had been outbreaks in Trust schools. JL confirmed that the data showed children with the x code who had been sent home with Covid-related symptoms. The average had been decreasing in Trust secondaries to below national levels with just MAP secondary remaining above.

RJ noted the high proportion of female staff across the Trust. JL noted that this was common in primary schools, but was surprising in secondaries with 75% female staff. SP confirmed that this was common and in line with the national gender pay gap.

LEM noted that this tended to be more balanced at secondary level and was interesting. He would like to see how many females were in senior posts in the Trust compared to males. JL confirmed that the current breakdown was: 55% Headteachers, 54% Female Deputies, 56% Assistant Heads, 67% Trust Executive and 100% CEO. LH noted that this was a relatively positive picture compared with national averages, but that the 'leaky pipeline' for gender and other minority characteristics was an ongoing issue.

SOM noted that there were a high proportion of males in LGBs. SOM noted that the paperwork being presented was very positive, and it was good to be consistent across all LGBs. This showed a good continuity of approach and was very beneficial. MM noted thanks to Tamsin Frances for her work on this.

BM queried if the SCOMIS dashboard was accessible to Trustees. JL confirmed that it was only available to the Executive at this stage but could be made available to Trustees to view. BM confirmed that he would be interested in this.

	<p>The updated Trust structure chart was shared with Trustees and showed the wider administrative function. CD confirmed that, going forwards, Trustees would receive updates on new staff within the Exec and administrative function. PB queried MM’s request to advertise a Director of Safeguarding and where this would sit on the chart. TR noted that this would be an H Grade role and would report to the Director of Behaviour & Attendance and TR, and would work with Aimee Mitchell, Siobhan Meredith and CT. MM noted that the structure charts were live documents and would be updated as appointments were made.</p> <p>MM updated on the interview process for the ASAP Headteacher role and confirmed that Scott Horne, from West Exe, had been appointed to the temporary headteacher role for 18 months. This had been a rigorous process involving the LGB and Diocese. Trustees were also involved in the presentations. This would be a great appointment for ASAP and plans would be made to backfill Scott’s role at West Exe.</p> <p>MM also noted the intention to go through an interview process to make the Deputy Head at West Exe’s role permanent. This would be an internal advertisement and MM noted that there was currently a strong candidate in the post.</p> <p>SOM asked for an update on the Whipton Headship. MM confirmed that there was not yet a definitive plan for January and that the plan for the next two terms would be confirmed to Trustees as soon as possible. A national advert would be put out after Christmas.</p> <p>SS queried if a more limited field was being seen in education recruitment and if there was any success in setting up a Trust-wide bank. MM noted that teacher recruitment was normal, but that there were challenges in recruiting support staff. It would be interesting to see what came out in the next few months. TR confirmed that teacher training with SWTT was full and applications had already been received for next year. Nationally it would be more challenging but in the South West recruitment had been very positive. Business Support recruitment was challenging and this needed to be maintained in terms of retention and calibre.</p> <p>LH noted that nationally recruitment for ITT had dropped slightly, due to Covid, however there had been an increase towards the end of last year. On the whole ITT was looking good but retention would be interesting. Exeter University was in a similar position and LH agreed that the South West had not been hit as badly as other areas of the country.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>SP noted the positive year end and that, as the Trust scales up, a small underspend in each school could cause a large variation in the original budget. The external budget was well underway and was broadly confirming the figures.</p> <p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the Minutes.</p> <p>The Letter to the Academy Trust Accounting Officers from July was noted. SP noted the emphasis on Safeguarding and the importance directed to the external review of governance. The emphasis on cyber-crime was also noted. This was high on the priority list for the Trust and there would be a review in April 2022 once the new Head of IT was in post.</p>	

	<p>SP also drew attention to the changes in the Academy Trust Handbook that Trustees needed to be aware of.</p> <p>SP confirmed that a tender process would be undertaken for the external auditors this year.</p> <p><u>Finance & Resources Committee Update</u></p> <p>AW updated on the Finance & Resources (F&R) Committee held on 22.09.21. Assurance of budgetary oversight and control had been received. The £1m increase in surplus amounted to approximately 2% of the turnover and the intention was to run a fixed budget. The finances were well controlled and changes would be reported to the F&R committee throughout the year. AW noted that the Trust’s finance staff were highly regarded by the ESFA.</p> <p>AW noted the extremely positive internal audit review. This was comforting and there was already awareness of the issues raised.</p> <p>Procurement was an issue but there had been recent positive recruitment.</p> <p>Two known risks were the ASAP Sports Hall and PFI, these were large risks to the Trust.</p> <p>AW extended thanks to SP and the Finance Team.</p> <p>SS noted comfort in the managing of the finances. She noted that some people may be concerned about the Trust having reserves when there were financial needs in some schools. She queried what kind of prudent reserve the Trust would hope to have in the long-term. SP noted that one month’s pay had been the previous figure, but following Covid this had potentially increased to three months which would be £4.5m. SP noted that resource allocation was being reviewed closely and that sensible use of reserves for committee priorities should be utilised. AW noted that the statutory accounts said that the reserve should be one month’s pay which was £3m.</p> <p>TR noted the need to build capacity ahead of time which would need a different way of taking risk and investing ahead of schedule. SP noted that the last year had put the Trust in the position to take some sensible risks. The Trust was not alone in showing large surpluses and anecdotally other MATs were in the same position.</p> <p>RJ queried the RSC/ESFA’s view on increasing the pay for lower level staff where the Trust was struggling to recruit. TR noted that the spending review would be interesting for schools, and that schools would need to look at how they recruit and to work together. There may be a reduction in lower grade posts and an increase in higher grade posts. RJ noted that this would mean structural changes that could affect the delivery of services. RJ noted the positive position of the Trust sharing posts between schools, the scale and relationships would need to be used pragmatically. It was agreed that for non-teaching staff the Trust would need to be agile.</p>	
7.	<p>Committee Updates</p> <p><u>Growth & Development Committee</u></p> <p>PB noted the confidential nature of the matters discussed at the Growth & Development (G&D) committee on 29.09.21.</p>	

	<p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the Minutes.</p> <p><u>New School Naming process</u></p> <p>TR confirmed that the intention was to bring a shortlist of names for the new school to the Board Meeting on 08.12.21. The Executive intend to put further work into this. A number of focus groups were proposed and Trustees could be involved in these. TR noted that although there was not a huge time pressure on naming the school, it was the right time to move forward and to look at the name. If Trustees would like to be involved in the Focus Groups please contact MF. Action: MF to circulate details of the New School Naming Focus Groups to Trustees.</p>	<p>MF</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Fusion Update</p> <p>CD noted the prolonged discussions with the DfE and ESFA to secure approval for the PFI project.</p> <p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the Minutes.</p> <p>CD confirmed that Fusion staff were being paid the living wage.</p>	

Approved Draft

Items for Approval

9.	<p>Membership of Trust Committees</p> <p>The membership of Trust Committees for the academic year was discussed.</p> <p><u>Education Committee</u> BM and LH would both join the Education Committee. AM confirmed that SOM had agreed to temporarily Chair the Education Committee until a permanent Chair was elected.</p> <p><u>Scrutiny Panels</u> There was potential for an external person to Chair each Committee, but two Trustees would be needed to sit on the Panels.</p> <p>TR confirmed the proposal for two non-executive members to chair the panels. These were currently Lisa Mannall and Sir David Carter for the Education Panel, and Dan Morrow (CEO of Dartmoor MAT) + one other (still to be approached) for the Social Justice and Inclusion Panel.</p> <p>SS & LEM both agreed that this was a sensible suggestion.</p> <p>LEM and SS were both happy to sit on the Social Justice & Inclusion panel.</p> <p>SOM and LH were happy to join the Education Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Trustees agreed to go ahead with external chairs for the Panels to guide and shape them. Going forwards Trustees would provide feedback from the panels to the Education Committee.</p> <p>Action: MF to advise Tamsin Frances of agreed Trustee Members for the Scrutiny Panels.</p> <p><u>Audit & Risk Committee</u></p> <p>AW noted that a new Chair needed to be appointed at the next Audit & Risk (A&R) Committee meeting. MF also advised that a further Trustee was needed to sit on the A&R Committee to ensure quoracy was met.</p> <p>AM confirmed that there were potential options and that membership of the A&R committee would be explored outside of the meeting. AM undertook to approach RJ to ask if he would be willing to temporarily Chair the A&R Committee until a permanent Chair was appointed.</p> <p>Action: AM to speak to RJ about Chairing of the A&R Committee.</p> <p><u>Growth & Development Committee</u></p> <p>Ben Manning agreed to join the Growth & Development Committee and it was felt that it would be very beneficial to have the Plymouth input to the committee.</p> <p>CT left the meeting at 6.30pm</p>	MF
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10.	<p>Trust Policy Review Schedule 2021-22</p> <p>CD noted that the Trust Policy Review schedule had been agreed by the F&R Committee and that formal agreement was requested by the Board of Trustees to adopt the schedule going forwards.</p> <p>This Trustees agreed to adopt the Policy Review Schedule for 2021-22.</p>	
11.	<p>Governance Handbook Final Version</p> <p>The latest version of the Governance Handbook was circulated and MF confirmed that agreement of the contents and format was requested from Trustees. This was agreed.</p>	
Any Other Business		
	<p>Trustees were encouraged to book onto School Trust Open mornings. Details had been circulated by email.</p> <p>AM thanked all Trustees for attending the meeting and for their input.</p> <p>The meeting closed at: 6.44pm</p> <p>Dates of Next Meetings: Wednesday 8 December 2021, 4.30pm Wednesday 16 February 2022, 4.30pm Wednesday 30 March 2022 – Away Day Wednesday 25 May 2022, 4.30pm Wednesday 6 July 2022 – Summer Conference</p>	

Signed by the Chair of the Board:

Date: