



MINUTES OF TRUST BOARD MEETING

Date: Wednesday 7th May 2025
 Time: 10.00am
 Venue: Laurus Trust – Boardroom

Clerk: N Burgess
 Present: J Crawford, S Mellor, T Little, S McGill, G Turnpenney, M Vevers, A Gilmour, C Nevin, N Thompson, L Woolley, D Woolley, L Magrath, W Mason, R Kumar and D Kershaw

	Action	Initials
1	Trustee approval of DHS extension proposal to be sought outside of the meeting, following tender process	WM
1	Trustees to inform the clerk of any changes to their register of business interests	All
1	LFET funded salaries to be an agenda item for the Finance and Resources committee meeting	WM
1	To provide details of potential business links with regards to AI	RK
2	To update TDP to present for approval at the next Trust Board meeting	LW/MV
2	To provide any additional feedback on the TDP outside of the meeting	All

Agenda – Part 1				
Category	Item	Notes	Action	
1	Governance Arrangements	Apologies	Apologies were received and accepted from D Brown.	
		AOB items	WM requested that communication be sent to Trustees for approval outside of this meeting. There will be an extension to DHS which is fully funded by third party funding grant. The process of contractors submitting as part of the tender process is currently taking place and approval will be sought at the end of the process. Further communication will be sent to Trustees for approval in the coming weeks.	WM
		Declarations of conflicts of interest in any of the agenda items	There were no declarations of interest in any of the agenda items.	
		Compliance	The Register of Business Interests was circulated and Trustees were asked to notify the Clerk of any changes	All

			to their record.	
	Minutes of the last Trust Board meeting		<p>Minutes of the meeting held 5th February 2025 were <u>approved</u> as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p><u>Actions arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees are asked to send completed records of visits to the Clerk • Website compliance was an agenda item for the A&R committee at the March meeting • LFET funded salaries will be an agenda item for the July meeting of the F&R committee • The decision-making framework was circulated to Trustees following the last meeting 	WM
	Dear Accounting Officer letter		Trustees received the DfE letter from March 2025, regarding the closure of the EFSA, and had no further questions.	
	Artificial Intelligence		<p>MV had recently visited schools in Singapore and was able to see the use of AI in practice. DW, MV and WM have recently met to discuss the AI position in the Trust.</p> <p>There is lots to be done from a regularity perspective, and also to see how AI can be of use in the Trust. The EdTech Fundamental principles, circulated prior to the meeting, will be used to make decisions in our schools as to how we would like to engage with the use of AI. Trustees were pleased to see the work which is being done to be forward thinking.</p> <p>MV commented that schools in Singapore have been using EdTech for a number of years and have been innovative in their development to embrace AI, using a very careful and considered approach.</p> <p>A key principle for the Trust is that the more we use technology the more we need to emphasise the human. This is key in education and teachers will always be needed to teach. Technology should support and not lead, and should support the learning process. It is vital use of AI does not lead to cognitive shortcuts, and this is a huge issue to avoid for our students and pupils.</p> <p>Ethics, equality and wellness should be emphasised in an increasingly digital world, for staff and the children and young people in our schools. Wherever possible we would embrace the use of technology to reduce workload.</p>	

			<p>RK commented that there is a need to find a balance and to fundamentally equip users with the tools to embrace technology available, whilst also considering age restrictions for pupils and students.</p> <p>Working groups across the schools are currently being set up to review how we use AI, and how do we educate the students to use, and to do so safely and sensibly.</p> <p>Trustees at the A&R committee recent meeting had reviewed the AI Policy, and it was agreed there was a need to synchronise the principles with the policy. WM informed Trustees that the policy had been implemented early as a recent Microsoft update meant that staff now had access to Copilot. The policy will be updated ongoing, including through feedback from the working groups. AI will also be added to the Risk Register as a separate risk, and evolution will be monitored as an emerging risk.</p> <p>Q – In terms of EdTech and AI, is EdTech broader? A – EdTech is broader, but comes with a huge cost implication. There will always need to be a human strategy in the process to support teaching. AI is a subsection of EdTech.</p> <p>Q – Where do you want to be as a Trust in adopting? A – We would always proceed cautiously. No tech should drive but we should use it creatively to prepare the students for this emerging world.</p> <p>DW commented that the socio economic will be an issue which leaders will need to be mindful of. This is a complex issue for further ongoing discussion. It would not be the wish to create a gap, this can be controlled within the classroom, but not outside of it.</p> <p>RK informed Trustees that the majority of investment coming into the region is for AI, and that there are big companies setting up. RK confirmed he had a meeting in the coming days with an MP in terms of funding and much needed investment.</p> <p>A discussion took place around commercial investment if funding was not accessible. WM confirmed that the Trust look at charity grants available, as donations are different to investments. The Articles of Association would need to be reviewed to see if investments were permitted, as there are different rules of charitable</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

		<p>donations, as opposed to investments.</p> <p>Q – Could we input and co-develop so there is no financial investment? A – We are currently involved in talks with A Burnham, A Law and Baker Dearing Trust, who are looking for KS4/5 schools to work with to pioneer Construction, Engineering and Digital Tech. The issue is the school we are considering, LR, does not have sufficient space, and it would cost £2m to extend. There could also be opportunities for HGHS and DHS. It is proposed there should be a sleeve school in every Greater Manchester borough. A Burnham will be visiting LR in the coming months. The programme is employer led, with real life briefings, and resulting in T Level qualifications. There will also be career progression opportunities for our students. There are obvious constraints with funding, and discussions are still at very early stages.</p> <p>Q – Does the working group look at how to use and harness? A – Yes, that is part of the working group purpose.</p> <p>Q – From an Exec Team point of view, what more could the Trust Board do? A – Any contacts you have would be welcome.</p> <p>RK agreed to provide links. LM reiterated to Trustees the difficulty of the funding constraints.</p>	
	Safeguarding	MV presented an update about a safeguarding issue at one of our Trust schools on behalf of D Brown.	
	Executive Team update	<p><u>Finance</u> Finance will be covered by the strategic planning aspect of this meeting. Finances are still very challenging, which has necessitated a review of all areas to become more agile.</p> <p>The curriculum and staffing will be being reviewed across the Trust. Trustees <u>approved</u> a curriculum and staffing review, whilst noting that this subsequently may result in having to implement managing staff reductions policy in the future, and this could be at individual schools.</p> <p><u>Norris Bank</u> Norris Bank will join the Trust on 1st September 2025.</p>	

			<p>A TUPE meeting had taken place in the week prior to this meeting, and had been very positive.</p> <p>Staff and parents are very much onboard and are looking forward to joining.</p> <p>Work is now being done to facilitate the school joining, and to start building relationships, including reciprocal visits, Head of School attending HOPS meetings and staff being invited to Priestnall Sports Centre opening. The Head of School is very proactive in being fully prepared in the changes from the educational aspect, ready for September.</p>	
		Policies for approval	<p>Trustees <u>approved</u> the following policies:</p> <p>Anti-Bribery, Fraud and Corruption Policy Charging and Remissions Policy Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco and Vape policy Media Policy Minibus Use Policy Modern Slavery Policy Sickness Absence Policy SMSC (Primary) Policy</p> <p>Q – What do we do around students vaping? Suspension is a sanction, but is there anything in place to support the student to quit? A – Following a suspension the student will work with the pastoral team, and in some cases MOSAIC. Disposable vapes not being available will be a great assistance to schools.</p> <p>Q- In the Media Policy, do we provide a wider communication to staff with lines to take? A – We would not encourage our staff to answer media enquiries and equip them to respond with no comment. The Critical Incident Plan addresses crisis communication in a different manner. We would always seek advice before responding. The Media Policy is to do with crisis management, and standard operational protocols. We also equip our Reception teams with clear guidance for calls coming into our schools. Heads of School are also given clear guidance, and the relevant people briefed,</p> <p>As a Trust we also have an external consultant, where we can agree comms plans for different bodies of people.</p> <p>Trustees were reassured of the content and rigour of</p>	

			the policy. WM commented that the challenge of the policy was much appreciated, and was comfortable that all aspects were adequately covered within the policy.	
		Meeting dates	The next meeting of the Trust Board will be Wednesday 9 th July 2025, at 10.00am.	
2	Being strategic	Strategic planning for next academic year	<p>Trustees were asked to read the CST document, and associated links, prior to the meeting.</p> <p>At the strategic planning meeting last year Trustees had completed the self-evaluation framework.</p> <p>The Trust Development Plan is a 2-year plan, which is reviewed and updated ongoing. This year it is pertinent to do some horizon scanning with a pragmatic view to extend the TDP for a further one year, and to also allow the incoming CEO to contribute to the plan.</p>	

		<p>Trust Board discussion – what does our horizon scanning mean for the current Trust Development Plan</p>	<p>MV presented to Trustees an overview of DfE landscape. The mission is to break down barriers to opportunity, breaking the link between young people’s backgrounds and their success. Students should have the best start, with every child achieving and thriving, and to be equipped with the skills for opportunity and growth for their further education, and subsequent future employment.</p> <p>The mission also encompasses family security, including tackling child poverty and keeping children safe.</p> <p>There are several consultations taking place at present, including Ofsted framework, Introduction of school profiles, and Curriculum and Assessment Review.</p> <p>SEND and Inclusion is a high priority. Inclusion is a theme of all the work taking place.</p> <p>Q – Is there any proposed work around disadvantaged measures? A Sometimes there is a postcode analysis used when looking at deprivation data.</p> <p>Q – Is this from a numbers perspective, or how inclusive schools are? A – Work is being done to start hit the grey areas to ascertain if this is inclusive. We are able to start with some figures to allow for comparison.</p> <p>Q – When discussing widening inclusion, traditional education is not suitable for some students, and due to many complex reasons they don’t engage. If there are no radical changes, how will you try to change their engagement? A- There are conversations taking place at present, but we are currently unsure of the direction of movement for this aspect.</p> <p>The RISE (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence) are working to raise standards of all children in all schools across the country, as part of the Opportunity Mission. The RISE programme is newly implemented and is in development. Through targeted intervention and a universal service RISE teams will work to ensure that capacity and expertise from across the school system is used to deliver improvement. There is also a set of regional priorities, working with dioceses, LAs and Mayoral Combined Authorities.</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

			<p>Schools facing particular challenges will have a bespoke intervention plan for 12-24 months, and this can include support from LAs and MATS with a strong track record of improvement.</p> <p>Trustees thanked MV for the informative update.</p> <p>DW presented to Trustees the current Ofsted Framework review consultation.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the changes to the framework since the implementation in 1992.</p> <p>Currently there is no overall judgement, but individual judgements on Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attendance, Personal Development, and Leadership and Management.</p> <p>Following the consultation, the revised framework will be implemented. There will be a pause in school inspections from September to November 2025 to allow time to train Inspectors on the new framework.</p> <p>Following the consultation, the outcome of the review and new framework will be reviewed by Trustees at a future meeting.</p> <p>Trustees thanked DW for the informative update.</p> <p>WM updated Trustees on Finance and the current position.</p> <p>The updated finance report was circulated prior to the meeting, monthly Management accounts are published monthly for all Trustees to review. The Trust is currently predicting a small surplus at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>The increase in NI cost grant had funded around 71% of the cost, and this has resulted in a £140k shortfall.</p> <p>There are still a number of unknowns, including Teacher and Support staff pay awards and assumptions had been included, 0.5% increase to funding, 2.8% teacher pay award and 3% for support staff.</p> <p>The income statements received for February and March show that the 0.5% increase was accurate. There are also reports that the teacher pay award will be nearer to 4%, which would mean an additional £500k and support staff at 3.2% which would mean an</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

			<p>additional £40k. At this stage it is unknown when the final pay awards will be agreed. Trustees were informed that there were a number of UPS Teachers in all schools, and that the cost of pay progression is in the region of 7%. This is obviously very difficult to balance with only a 0.5% increase in funding.</p> <p>The Government has asked schools to make efficiencies to cover the increased costs. Leaders are working tirelessly and monitoring closely, including looking at curriculum plans, restructuring the Marketing and Communications team, and not replacing non-essential posts. As a Trust work will be ongoing to continue to look at efficiencies going forward, and to ensure the Trust remains sustainable going forward.</p> <p>In terms of the future, it is apparent that there is a decline in pupil numbers in Reception. This has not yet impacted the Trust primary schools, but will impact secondary schools in the future.</p> <p>Q – What is a manageable figure? A – It is difficult to identify. Last year was £0.5m so this needs to be below £1m.</p> <p>Q – The £2m deficit is assuming 4% pay award for teachers and no 0.5% increase? A – Yes exactly.</p> <p>Teacher recruitment also remains an ongoing issue.</p> <p>Q – Is there anything which can be done collectively, or is it our problem to solve? A – It is a difficult question to answer due to the unknowns. We can plan a budget but this changes weekly and it is increasingly difficult to try and plan more than one year ahead.</p> <p>Q – Are all schools in the Trust making the same efficiencies? A – Yes, we are confident that every Head of School knows what needs to be done and this is overseen with the assistance of the Exec Team. No decision is taken lightly and we do have to appoint to certain posts.</p> <p>WM is confident that the collective effort to reduce costings all integrate together. Work is ongoing and the Trust is further on than the position one year ago.</p> <p>Trustees were informed that SEND structures were</p>	
--	--	--	---	--


			<p>being reviewed trust-wide.</p> <p>NB have a comfortable level of reserves when joining the Trust, and their school building has been well maintained.</p> <p>Future growth was discussed. Although growth would help it was noted that there were limited opportunities at present. It was also noted that one form entry primary schools are not sustainable in the current climate.</p> <p>Trustees thanked WM for the update.</p> <p>LW requested Trustees thoughts on the current TDP which was circulated prior to the meeting. Trustees discussed the current themes within the plan, considering the horizon scanning done at the meeting, and should there be any change to the current plan or is it robust enough to continue for one more year.</p> <p>Theme: Unashamedly academic, Uncompromising Standards and Unapologetically aspirational: It was noted that Ofsted judgement terminology would need amending in the TDP as there will no longer be an overall judgement for schools.</p> <p>Theme: Recognised for Excellence: It was suggested to include MV secondment to RISE team in this section. Also inclusivity is included in ambition but not in what success looks like.</p> <p>Theme: Our People: To review in terms of appointments of priority, reflected in what success will look like. It is vital that the Trust is still a good place to work, despite there being less people.</p> <p>Theme: Building Trust Capability The staff cost metric does need to reduce and this will be done via recruitment and retention. To keep 80% as a benchmark Trust Reserves of 5% is not currently a realistic amount and will need to be reviewed in the future. It was agreed that 5% was aspirational, and that the plan be updated to remove the percentage figure, and replace with commitment to the Trust remaining a going concern.</p> <p>Q – As a benchmark is 80% high? A – DfE advice is 80%.</p>	
--	--	--	---	--

			<p>Following the discussions, it was agreed that the Exec Team would make the amendments to the plan, with a view to presenting the updated draft plan for approval at the next Trust Board meeting in July.</p> <p>Trustees were asked, if they had any additional comments outside of this meeting, to send to LW.</p>	<p>LW/MV</p> <p>All</p>
3	Succession planning	CEO Succession planning	<p>All members of the Executive Team left the meeting at this point, and non-exec Trustees reviewed the forthcoming application process for the recruitment of CEO.</p> <p>JJ, Trust Director of HR, attended to present the draft job specification and recruitment pack and to request Trustees comments.</p> <p>Q – The pack does not state the candidate needs to be a teacher? A – This was left out to ensure a wider, open field.</p> <p>Trustees made suggestions for additions, including that staff and pupil numbers specifically be added and an organisational chart, to ensure the scope of the role was clear.</p> <p>The advert will be placed in the week following this meeting, and will be live to the end of the month. Shortlisting will take place, and there will then be panel interviews held, and formal interviews a week later.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed their availability for the recruitment process.</p> <p>Q – Will there be executive coaching or development for this post? A – This is something which has not yet been finalised, and will be reviewed outside of this meeting.</p> <p>Following review it was agreed to add some of the information from the proposed advert into the candidate brochure.</p>	

5	Approvals	Approvals at this meeting:	Trustees approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of the meeting held 5th February 2025 • Curriculum and staffing review • Trustees approved 8 policies 	
---	-----------	----------------------------	--	--

Impact of Meeting / Key Outcomes
Trustees received the Dear Accounting Officer letter regarding the closure of the EFSA
Trustees discussed AI and EdTech implementation
Executive Team provided updates on Finance and Norris Bank Primary School joining the Trust
Trustees approved 8 policies
Trustees completed horizon scanning including DfE landscape, Ofsted consultation and finance and funding
Trust Development Plan was reviewed and will be updated for approval at the next meeting
Trustees confirmed the recruitment process for the forthcoming CEO appointment

Meeting closed at 12.10pm



T Little
 Chair of Trust Board
 09.07.2025