

MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD

Thursday 14 September 2023

6:00pm – 8:00pm

held at Chestnut Grove Academy PART I MINUTES

Attendance:		
Trustees:	Sian Mathias	Chair of Trustees
	Kate Burns	Trustee
	Jill Newey	Co-Vice Chair
	Ella Norden	Trustee
	Sarah Marshall	Co-Vice Chair
	Arjun Popat	Trustee
	Emma Simmons	Trustee
	Vacancy	Since Dec 2022
	Vacancy	Since Feb 2022
	Vacancy	Since Mar 2023
	Vacancy	Since Mar 2023
Executives:	Christian Kingsley	Co-CEO (Co-Chief Executive Officer) and Accounting Officer
	Mark Siswick	Co-CEO
	Esther Johnson	CFOO (Chief Financial Operating Officer)
Also in attendance:	Andrea Arbiter	Head of Governance
	Jehangir Byramji (withdrew at 7:30pm for Part II)	Observer and prospective trustee
	Oonagh McGirr (withdrew at 7:30pm for Part II)	Observer and prospective trustee

Bold = Apologies/Absent

Apologies: Arjun Popat

Papers issued for review:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of previous meeting and status of actions • 2023 Pupil outcomes • WLT Pupil numbers on roll at key transition points • Trust Strategic Plan • School improvement plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance report to the board – Sep23 • BMR approval – email thread • WLT Safeguarding Policy • WLT Whistleblowing Policy • Governance policies and key documents |
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1. BUSINESS		ACTION
i.	Welcome and apologies. Trustees and executives were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received in advance of the meeting and were accepted as outlined above. Special welcome was extended to Jehangir Byramji and Oonagh McGirr who joined to observe the meeting as prospective trustees.	
ii.	Appointment of Chair and co-Vice Chairs In accordance with the 2023 updates to the Governance Charter, and mindful of agreed succession planning strategies in place, nominations for the role of chair had been sought from the existing membership of the board. One nomination was received from the incumbent chair, Sian Mathias; there were no other nominations received. The nomination for chair was supported by a statement in which the nominee reflected on the successes of the past year along with their plans for the coming year and in the longer-term. The statement was provided for review by the board in advance of the meeting. [SIAN MATHIAS WITHDREW FROM THE MEETING AT THIS POINT]. The Head of Governance asked trustees to vote on the matter, and Sian Mathias was unanimously appointed as Chair of the Trust Board with immediate effect for a period of twelve months. [SIAN MATHIAS REJOINED THE MEETING AT THIS POINT]. The same process was followed for the appointment of the co-Vice-Chairs. Two nominations were received from the incumbent co-Vice-Chairs, Sarah Marshall, and Jill Newey; no other nominations were received.	

	The Chair asked trustees to vote on the matter, and Sarah Marshall and Jill Newey were unanimously appointed as co-Vice-Chairs of the Trust Board with immediate effect for a period of twelve months. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Mrs Newey and Ms Marshall for their ongoing support as co-Vice-Chairs of the Trust Board.	
iii.	Annual declaration of interests and conflicts of interest for the meeting In accordance with paragraphs 5.45 – 5.48 of the <i>2023 Academy Trust Handbook 'Register of Interests'</i>, all trustees were asked to complete the Trust's annual declaration of interests' form. Trustees understood that information disclosed would be published on the Trust website through the Register of Interests. When asked by the Chair, trustees confirmed there were no declarations of pecuniary nor non-pecuniary interests raised in relation to the meeting. The Head of Governance requested that all trustees <u>(ACTION:) complete the Annual Declaration of Interests Form as a priority and before 20/10/23.</u>	All
iv.	Register of related parties In accordance with paragraphs 5.35 – 5.44 of the <i>2023 Academy Trust Handbook 'Related party transactions'</i>, all trustees were asked to complete the Trust's Register of related parties. Trustees understood that information disclosed would be shared with the external audit partner. The Head of Governance requested that all trustees <u>(ACTION:) complete the Register of related parties as a priority and before 20/10/23.</u>	All
v.	Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions The minutes of the previous meeting held 10 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and were authorised for signature by the Chair. The Chair talked through the status of actions from the previous meeting and noted these were mostly completed or would be covered through the agenda. The Chair asked for a status update on those actions which were not yet completed. When asked about the development of job descriptions for management roles at Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, the co-CEO (MS) agreed these would be included in the Director's Report to be discussed by the Little Wandle Committee at its inaugural meeting (02/10/23). The Chair referenced discussion from the previous meeting when it was flagged by the Standards Committee that speech and language support from the local authority in Croydon was not equitable with the service provided by Wandsworth. The co-CEOs advised they investigated and established that Croydon funded	

vi.	speech and language therapy but was currently operating with vacancies. The co-CEOs gave assurance that the speech and language need at Paxton Academy was low, and gaps could be filled by the Trust in the interim. Chairs or committee actions in the period since the last meeting The action taken by the Finance & Resources Committee to approve the Budget Forecast Return (BFR) was noted and the email trail to support this was filed on record. The CFOO confirmed the BFR was lodged with the ESFA (Education Skills Funding Agency) by 31/08/23.	
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2. STRATEGIC QUESTIONS		
i.	Co-CEOs' reporting to the board a) High-quality inclusive education Trustees asked the questions: Q: What do the 2023 pupil outcomes tell us? Q: Where are the successes, and where are the areas for development and focus? The co-CEOs led trustees through a presentation about the 2023 outcomes at statutory testing points across the Trust. These were: • Early Years Foundation Stage • Year 1 phonics screening • End of Key Stage 1 • Year 4 multiplication testing • End of Key Stage 2 • Key Stage 4 GCSEs • Key Stage 5 A level and BTech Trustees were pleased to learn that outcomes across the Trust at all statutory testing points were above national average and were improved on the previous year. The co-CEOs pointed out that benchmarked data across the Trust was of particular interest in terms of identifying areas of focus and targeting Trust expertise. A trustee was interested in how outcomes were shared with school leaders and staff. Q: The benchmarked data is helpful for trustees – how is it used and shared with school leaders to help identify areas for development? <i>R: (MS) the benchmarked data is triangulated with a range of evidence to identify areas for development. Our leaders know their schools and are motivated to deliver</i>	

a high-quality provision for the children in our Trust. We take advantage of the expertise across the Trust and focus where the need is greatest.

The co-CEO (MS) highlighted that the data showed the profile of the children within the Trust; outcomes at Paxton Academy were starting to outperform those at Chesterton Primary School, although achievement at Greater Depth was stronger at Chesterton Primary School. Trustees were made aware that the outcomes at Ravenstone Primary School showed there was a need to focus on the lowest performing 20% of children.

MS

Trustees asked the co-CEO (MS) to **(ACTION:) prepare a breakdown of the 2023 primary outcomes for the Standards Committee meeting (23/11/23)** to give a better understanding of successes and areas for development.

The co-CEO (CK) presented the KS4 data and provided a narrative that the last proper assessment for progress and attainment was in 2019, pre-pandemic. Trustees were pleased to learn that GCSE outcomes were significantly increased across all subjects, particularly maths and English, and the Ebacc measure in comparison to 2019, and the school was placed in the top 20% of schools nationally. The co-CEO (CK) was delighted to tell trustees that Chestnut Grove Academy achieved outcomes which placed the English Department as the highest performing in Wandsworth.

The co-CEO (CK) talked about the KS5 outcomes in the context of the pandemic. He reminded trustees that GCSE attainment for the cohort was subject to TAGs (Teacher Assessed Grades) in 2021 which meant there was a range of contextual factors which contributed to the KS5 outcomes. Trustees were pleased to learn that the percentage of students who achieved a grade A*-A at A-level was increased. The co-CEO gave specific examples of how well teachers knew their students in that they had confidence to initiate successful re-marks of examination papers.

Trustees joined the co-CEO (CK) in celebrating the Oxbridge destinations for two students, and the high retention rate of Y11 students into the sixth form in September 2023.

The Chair summarised there was strength in the results across the Trust, with outcomes at Paxton Academy evidencing the success of investment in a rapid school improvement programme. The Chair was confident that Ravenstone Primary School was a 'good' school and there was work to be done to ensure performance was brought into line with the other schools across the Trust.

b)	School improvement at scale Trustees asked the questions: Q: What are the key improvement priorities for each school? Q: How will progress against priorities be monitored and action measured for impact by the Trust? Q: Where does specific expertise exist across the Trust and how is this being used to drive school improvement? On behalf of the board, the Chair welcomed sight of the summarised school improvement plans and said she would <u>(ACTION:) write formally to each head teacher</u> to acknowledge their hard work and dedication to the improvement programme at their respective school. The co-CEOs advised that progress against key school improvement priorities would be reported in their termly CEOs' Report to the Trust Board, and each of the Local Academy Committees would monitor progress of the improvement programmes in their respective schools. Trustees wanted to know more about the way in which talent and expertise within the Trust was identified and targeted to drive the Trust-wide school improvement strategy. The co-CEO (MS) explained that due to the size of the Trust, there was a small team of leaders on which to draw on talent and experience. He reminded trustees that up until recently he had oversight of school improvement at Paxton Academy. He said that as the Trust matured there would be a need to scale up and retain momentum to deliver an intelligent and meaningful school improvement strategy across the organisation. The co-CEO (MS) talked about the recent actions taken towards building a team which would provide consistency of approach to the delivery of high-quality inclusive education, for example, the appointment of a Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Trust lead for SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities). He said the team would be enhanced by a secondment from within the Trust to lead on school improvement, standards, and performance, and to use their expertise to support Ravenstone Primary School to prepare for inspection. Trustees sought reassurance around the robustness of succession planning into key roles to minimise potential disruption caused by secondments. The co-CEO (MS) advised succession plans were in place; the secondments were proving to be successful in terms of empowering school leaders and as a retention tool. On behalf of the Trust Board, the Chair cautioned that succession planning should be formalised to ensure there were equal opportunities for all staff in relation to career progression. Trustees agreed it was of paramount importance to put in place policy and procedure to avoid misunderstandings and potential cause for grievance	SMat
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	against the Trust. The co-CEOs were tasked to <u>(ACTION:) work with the Head of HR to formalise the secondment and career progression programme for the Trust.</u>	CK & MS
ii.	Admissions Local intelligence was shared, and it was reported that one in four Reception places were not filled in Wandsworth, and there was a general tail-off in admissions to all primary settings. A paper was shared in advance of the meeting to show pupil numbers on entry to WLT schools in Reception, Y7 and Y12 compared to the PAN (Published Admissions Number). The paper showed that all schools within the Trust were at or above capacity in each of these year groups. Trustees understood that WLT schools fared better in comparison to other schools in the borough. The co-CEOs explained that the Trust was the admissions authority but now, admissions to its schools were managed centrally by the local authority in which the school operated; admissions policies for the following academic year were reviewed by the Local Academy Committees during the autumn term prior to submission to the local authority early in the spring term. The co-CEOs said that at some point in the future and for strategic reasons, the board may decide to take control of admissions but as pupil numbers were stable it was unnecessary. Trustees were told that Paxton Academy continued to secure its position as the local school of choice. They said this was demonstrated by the significant increase in first choice applications (eight in 2022 to 30 in 2023), and there were 44 children admitted as a two-form entry to Reception in September. The co-CEO (MS) spoke about the staffing challenges associated with a growing school and provided reassurance for trustees that a plan was in place to monitor and mitigate risk and to sustain the high-quality EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) provision at Paxton Academy. The co-CEO (MS) advised that risk mitigation was included as part of the Paxton Nursery Business Plan which would be reviewed by the Finance & Resources Committee (28/09/23).	
iii.	Growth & partnerships The co-CEOs gave a verbal update on growth and partnerships. Trustees were told that agreement was given by the Governing Body of a school interested in joining WLT to seek approval from the Head Teachers' Board to move forwards with due diligence. The Chair advised she would visit the school with the co-Vice Chair and the Head of Governance in the coming week to meet with the head teacher and business manager. The co-CEOs hoped that the merger would be a smooth process with a completion target of Easter 2024. The co-CEOs talked about other opportunities for growth and advised these would be followed up as a priority.	

3. REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION:																
i.	Report from the Nominations Committee A full governance report was shared and included a summary briefing from the Nominations Committee which met 08/09/23. Trustees' attention was drawn to the following: a) Reappointments including local chairs. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, the Nominations Committee reviewed five applications for reappointment to governance roles and assessed these against attendance at meetings, participation in training and development, impact on governance strategy, and engagement and contribution to the wider Trust. The Nominations Committee reviewed reappointments against the 2023 skills audit and self-evaluation of governance. The Nominations Committee reappointed the following on a four-year term of office effective from the end of the current term: <table><tr><td>Ella Norden</td><td>Trustee</td></tr><tr><td>James Lobo</td><td>LAC (Local Academy Committee) member at Ravenstone Primary School</td></tr><tr><td>Andrea McDermott</td><td>LAC (Local Academy Committee) member at Ravenstone Primary School</td></tr></table> In accordance with the updated Terms of Reference for the Local Academy Committees, nominations were sought from each Academy Committee for the roles of chairs. Self-nominations were received from each incumbent chair with a supporting statement which reviewed the previous year in governance and which set-out the strategic focus and aims for the coming year. The Chair advised she was working with a local chair to gather further evidence to support the reappointment of two academy committee members. The Nominations Committee appointed local chairs as follows: <table><tr><td>Chestnut Grove Academy</td><td>Judi Dumont-Barter</td></tr><tr><td>Chesterton Primary School</td><td>Natalie Houalla</td></tr><tr><td>Paxton Academy</td><td>Sue Pidgeon and Judi Dumont Barter</td></tr><tr><td>Ravenstone Primary School</td><td>James Lobo</td></tr></table>	Ella Norden	Trustee	James Lobo	LAC (Local Academy Committee) member at Ravenstone Primary School	Andrea McDermott	LAC (Local Academy Committee) member at Ravenstone Primary School	Chestnut Grove Academy	Judi Dumont-Barter	Chesterton Primary School	Natalie Houalla	Paxton Academy	Sue Pidgeon and Judi Dumont Barter	Ravenstone Primary School	James Lobo	
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b)	WLT Governance Charter with committee terms of reference At its meeting held 08/09/23, the Nominations Committee reviewed the Governance Charter with the committee terms of reference and accepted the proposed changes and updates. Trustees understood that changes to the Charter were driven by the updates to the Academy Trust Handbook, the Trust's Strategic Plan, and Trust governance procedures. The Trust Board adopted the 2023/24 Governance Charter in principle and delegated final approval of the terms of reference to the relevant committee.	
c)	WLT Terms of Reference for the Local Academy Committee At its meeting held 08/09/23, the Nominations Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Local Academy Committee and accepted the proposed changes and updates. It was noted that legal advisors to the Trust carried out a detailed review of the terms of reference in summer 2023 and gave assurance they were robust, compliant, and in accordance with best practice. Trustees understood that changes to the terms of reference were driven by the updates to the 2021 model Articles of Association, feedback from governance stakeholders and head teachers, and tightened and reinforced Trust procedures. The Trust Board adopted the Terms of Reference for the Local Academy Committee.	
d)	WLT Governance Code of Conduct At its meeting held 08/09/23, the Nominations Committee reviewed the Governance Code of Conduct and accepted the proposed changes and updates. Trustees understood that changes to the Code of Conduct were driven by the updates to the Academy Trust Handbook, the Trust's Strategic Plan, and Trust governance procedures. The Trust Board adopted the 2023/24 Governance Code of Conduct.	
e)	Annual governance planner At its meeting held 08/09/23, the Nominations Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Planner in a refreshed format which highlighted statutory responsibilities and delegated responsibilities for each committee. The Trust Board adopted the planner in principle and delegated final approval of specific schemes of work to the respective committee.	

ii.	Governance development planning – priorities for 2023/24 Trustees were asked to agree the 2023/24 Governance Development Priorities proposed by the Nominations Committee. The board supported the overarching priorities as follows: 1) To continue to build collaboration between the board and the local tier both from a governance perspective and from the perspective of staff and other stakeholders. 2) In accordance with the agreed governance recruitment strategy, fill vacancies on the Trust Board with urgency to relieve the pressures on longer-standing trustees. 3) To embed the new committee structure and terms of reference with strong collaboration between Little Wandle and the Trust. The Head of Governance took an <u>(ACTION:) to translate the governance development priorities to the 2023/24 Governance Development Plan and share for review at the next meeting.</u>	AA
iii.	Governance diversity reporting The Head of Governance explained that during 2022/23 the DfE (Department for Education) released new guidance in accordance with its recognition that diversity in governance was important to increasingly reflect the communities served. She advised the DfE now encouraged schools and trusts to collect and publish diversity data about the board and any local academy committees. The Head of Governance said the diversity indicators created by the National Governance Association were used to collect data from WLT trustees and local members and information was analysed to inform the governance diversity report. Trustees’ attention was drawn to the action taken to date to increase diversity and representation in its membership. Trustees noted that diversity and representation at a local level was high (42% from Black, Asian, minority ethnic) in comparison to national data. The Head of Governance reported that every trustee responded to the survey; approximately thirty percent of local members responded. She hoped the response rate would increase in the next survey to ensure accurate representation of the local academy committees. Trustees agreed it would be useful to measure governance diversity against that of other stakeholders and hoped data collection would improve through the functionality of the new management information system. The Head of Governance advised that the Governance Diversity Report would be published on the Trust website.	

4. REVIEW AND RATIFICATION OF CENTRAL POLICY		
i.	WLT Whistleblowing Policy The CFOO (Chief Financial Operating Officer) advised that there were no changes to the Whistleblowing Policy, and it was considered by the Head of HR to be effective. The CFOO said there were minor issues in the policy to work through and this would be completed in preparation for the next academic year. The Trust Board adopted the Whistleblowing Policy with no further comment.	AA (Smar)
ii.	WLT Safeguarding Policy Trustees received and adopted the 2023 WLT Safeguarding Policy with no further comments and understood the personalised versions of the policy would be shared with the Local Academy Committees for information. A trustee challenged it was important to establish for the Trust a set of overarching safeguarding principles or statement. The Head of Governance was asked to <u>(ACTION:) to work with the link trustee for safeguarding and the Trust DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) to develop a safeguarding statement for the Trust.</u>	
5. REPORTS TO NOTE		
i.	Updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 Trustees confirmed receipt of the 2023 updates to KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) and were clear in their role and responsibilities related to safeguarding. Most trustees attended the safeguarding training for governance delivered by the Trust DSL (12/09/23), and the central training log was updated. Trustees who had not yet done so were asked to <u>(ACTION:) complete safeguarding training as a priority.</u>	AP, EN
ii.	Academy Trust Handbook 2023 Trustees confirmed receipt of the 2023 updates to the Academy Trust Handbook and acknowledged their role and responsibilities.	
iii.	Trust Strategic Plan The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was shared for information and updates to the 2023/24 milestones plotted by the central team were noted. When asked by trustees, the co-CEOs confirmed the Operational Strategic Plans were linked to the trust's main strategy.	

	Trustees were invited to give feedback directly to the co-CEOs.	
	Trustees understood the strategic plan would be shared with the Local Academy Committees later in the autumn term so that it could be used to triangulate against the respective School Development Plans.	

6. PART II		
i.	Trustee recruitment (See separate minute)	

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:	
(all meetings to be held at Chestnut Grove Academy)	
Audit & Risk / Finance & Resources	4:30pm Thursday 28 September
Chairs' Group Committee	6:00pm Wednesday 11 October
Trustees' strategy session (mini)	9:30am Friday 3 November
Pay Review Committee	8:30am Tuesday 7 November (REMOTE)
LWLSR (Little Wandle Letters & Sounds Revised) Committee	4:30pm Thursday 9 November
Standards Committee	6:00pm Thursday 23 November
Finance & Resources Committee	4:30pm Wednesday 29 November
Audit & Risk	4:30pm Wednesday 13 December
Trust Board	6:00pm Monday 18 December

Signed: 

Date: 

Summary of Actions: TRUST BOARD MEETING 14/09/23

Action No	Item No	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	1.iii	Annual declaration of interests and conflicts of interest for the meeting complete the Annual Declaration of Interests Form as a priority.	All	Before 20/10/23
2.	1.iv	Register of related parties complete the Register of related parties as priority.	All	Before 20/10/23
3.	2.i	High-quality inclusive education prepare a breakdown of the 2023 primary outcomes for the Standards Committee meeting (23/11/23)	MS	Standards Committee By 16/11/23
4.	2.ii	School improvement at scale write formally to each head teacher.	SMat	Priority
5.	2.ii	School improvement at scale work with the Head of HR to formalise the secondment and career progression programme for the Trust.	MS & CK	Autumn 2023
6.	3.ii	Governance development planning – priorities for 2023/24 translate the governance development priorities to the 2023/24 Governance Development Plan and share for review.	AA	Priority
7.	4.ii	WLT Safeguarding Policy work with the link trustee for safeguarding and the Trust DSL to develop a safeguarding statement for the Trust.	AA (SMar)	Autumn 2023
8.	5.i	Updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 complete safeguarding training as a priority.	AP, EN	Priority