



Address:
 Waterton Academy Trust
 The Grove
 Walton
 Wakefield
 WF2 6LD

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE:

12 October

TIME:

6pm

LOCATION:

Centre for Excellence, Walton
 Primary Academy

Attendees

Chair: A Goudie (*acting Chair for the meeting*)

Trustees	K Davies	J Shaw
	L Rowlinson-Brown	N Shaw

Attending: D Dickinson (*CEO*)
 L Cavell (*CESO*)

Clerk: L Clark (*Governance Officer*)

Apologies: S Bates, P Beaman, J Henson, S Johnson

ITEM	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>In the absence of the Chair, the Clerk welcomed all to the meeting and requested an acting Chair. A Goudie volunteered to act as Chair for the meeting and this was unanimously agreed. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, the first face-to-face meeting since early March 2020. It was agreed to hold the meeting as four Trustees were currently present, and note any key decisions for later ratification.</p>	
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies of absence were received and accepted from S Bates, P Beaman, J Henson.</p> <p>During the meeting S Johnson sent apologies, explaining he had been held at work due to an emergency situation.</p>	
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The standing register of declarations of interest was noted and no further declarations were made. The Clerk confirmed that the register will be updated electronically in the next few weeks for audit purposes.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th July 2021</p> <p>The minutes were available for review in advance of the meeting. Trustees confirmed they had read the minutes and there were no further questions or points raised.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>In relation to an action regarding further detail on the disparity of absence between teaching and support staff, the CEO explained that the reporting mechanism on the HR system duplicates days lost to absence where staff have multiple roles. There are no teaching staff with multiple roles, therefore the support staff absences are less accurate. The COO will be attending the spring Trust Board meeting and will provide further detail.</p> <p>A question was asked whether it is known if other Trusts have seen a higher staff absence of support staff. KD, who is CEO of a MAT, stated that there is a higher proportion of support staff absent in her Trust, and the impact of covid is having as significant an impact as ever. Trustees held a detailed discussion on staff resilience and the importance of wellbeing and mental health, and ensuring leadership is strong and supportive and staff have a range of support and access to services for wellbeing. It was noted by Trustees that there has also been a renewed focus within the commercial and business sector on staff wellbeing.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held 6th July 2021 were approved, and will be signed by the Chair.</p> <p>The Clerk will arrange for the approved minutes of meetings held virtually on Teams during 2020 and 2021 to be signed by the Chair (S Johnson).</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>5. Risk Register and Conditions of Care</p>	
<p>The CEO drew attention to the Conditions of Care set out in the report and confirmed that these continue to be met. It was noted that these remained largely unchanged apart from a slight change of wording in relation to growth, but all will be revisited alongside the strategic planning work. There had been no new significant risks added.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the report, confirmed that the Risk Register is up to date, relevant and includes effective risk management of the mitigation of risk.</p>	
<p>6. COVID Update</p>	
<p>The CEO referred to the report and provided a brief summary. Measures taken in schools are now well established, with an updated Risk Assessment and newly devised Outbreak Management Plan having been written over the summer and published on websites.</p> <p>As included in the report, there had been a number of cases reported to date. These had been managed within the guidelines. There had been an identified outbreak, with no serious illnesses. This was at Mill Dam, and was mainly linked to a residential trip. All procedures had been followed in line with risk assessments.</p> <p>A question was asked about staff uptake of the covid vaccination. The CEO explained that a survey had not been undertaken, and LRB explained that a survey can be undertaken and although staff would not be obliged to answer it may help in informing risk assessments. Trustees discussed the potential pros and cons of a survey, and also the significant outbreaks seen at local secondary schools and the impact it was having.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>7. CEO Update</p> <p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report and explained that there were currently no ongoing conversions, however some early stage conversations were taking place which are positive. The Trust are being strategically a little more proactive with a focus on Barnsley. Trustees commented positively on this approach and approved this focus.</p> <p>In response to questions regarding the timeframe of decision making, the CEO explained that this will depend on when government priorities on imposed academisation are outlined.</p> <p><i>(Neil Shaw arrived at 6:23pm – meeting is now quorate).</i></p> <p>The Trust had been involved in two Free School Presumptions for new schools in Barnsley. Around 90 applications had been made, and the Trust were in the final 3 and had received very positive feedback on the process so far, with comments that the Trust’s application had been the most child-centric. One presumption was still ongoing, with an outcome expected in the autumn term. The second had been postponed for one year due to changes in plans for the housing development which would potentially mean less children are expected to move into the area.</p> <p>An update was provided on System Leader duties – the CEO now sits on the Doncaster and Barnsley Teaching Hub Strategic Board and their governance board, and has been appointed as a Member of White Woods Primary Academy Trust.</p> <p>A KS1 SEND assessment centre is now in place at Churchfield Primary School, after an approach by Barnsley LA - it was felt to be a positive strategic move to support this request. Children will attend for a maximum of two years, after which they will either return to mainstream school or move on to specialist provision. The CEO had met with the Churchfield Chair of the ASC following some communication issues on the assessment centre, and following a detailed Q and A with governors, the ASC were satisfied and assured by the arrangements which had been put in place.</p> <p>The IT Services Manager had commenced employment with large scale projects planned in. As part of the focus on growth into Barnsley a small office has been sourced within a multi-office complex to house the IT Services Manager and the Digital Media Officer.</p> <p>Following an identified issue around pension contributions the teacher supply pool will be suspended. Teachers will remain in the schools, but will be employed by an agency and ring-fenced to Waterton schools.</p> <p>A central skeleton staff had been in place over the summer to ensure completion of key tasks such as estates works and Covid planning. The CEO recorded his thanks to the outstanding work of E Davies in the central team in covid management and that of G Waring who had joined to support the central team administration.</p> <p>An update was provided that the SLT have met to agree protocols and practices around hybrid working for the central team. There is an aim towards supporting well-being by ensuring that staff have time in offices to work with colleagues but also an</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>acknowledgement that remote working can be very successful for some team members. Trustees discussed the perception of home working and the importance of people within an organisation understanding the differing points of view and different ways of working. In response to a question the CEO confirmed that there are no instances of staff who are refusing to return to work within the workplace.</p> <p>The annual start of year INSET day was held remotely, with good feedback. This was broadcast for half a day each to the east and west hub teams.</p> <p>The Trust central team have registered all schools on the National Tutoring Programme. Schools are currently assessing need and will be matched with an offer by the end of the autumn term. There is a focus on year 6 up until Easter, in groups of 3, to maximise the use of this programme. There is possibility that staffing around this could be difficult, but work is ongoing to secure appropriate staffing is in place. The Trust propose to subsidise the cost to schools from the central budget – Trustees were in unanimous agreement of this.</p> <p>It was proposed that the Trust commit to an aim of being carbon neutral by 2030, in line with the Wakefield aim. It was felt that this was an ambitious target, but that it will be positive for children to be aware of this aim and to see their school working to care for the planet. The Trust has agreed to support the creation of a girl’s football cup competition. It will be a Barnsley based competition and Churchfield will be key leads in the organisation. Well-being tea boxes were delivered to each school funded by the Trust. Plans were made to ensure that all staff members could participate, and feedback was very positive</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for the comprehensive update and commented positively on the breadth of ongoing projects.</p>	
<p>8. Governance Officer Headline Report</p>	
<p>The Clerk (MAT Governance Officer) provided a brief summary of the report, highlighting the review of the Code of Conduct. Trustees confirmed they had read and reviewed the Code, and it was approved.</p> <p>A discussion took place around training and development for Trustees and the importance of this, and attention was drawn to the Waterton bespoke training being delivered by the School Improvement team in November for Governors and Trustees and the One Wakefield training relating to being an ‘evidence based Governor/Trustee’ – Trustees were encouraged to contact the Governance Officer to book onto these sessions.</p> <p>In response to a query it was confirmed that the Trustee induction training session is mandatory but there are no other mandatory sessions. The Clerk will re-circulate Keeping Children Safe in Education with regards to the statutory guidance relating to safeguarding.</p>	<p>clerk</p>
<p>9. CESO Main Report</p>	
<p>The CESO (Chief Education Standards Officer) was in attendance at the meeting and provided an overview of the report which included; standards, baselines, KPIs and the</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>core offer of work which the School Improvement (SI) team are delivering across Wakefield, Barnsley and further afield.</p> <p>An overview of the standards journey was provided – this is a different picture across the east and west hub, in part due to the demographics and level of need. The standards journey in the west hub shows a strong and consistent picture, and there are new Heads in place who are excellent. Lee Brigg are awaiting inspection as an Outstanding school last inspected in 2007 – SI staff are working to support staff in the school and they are in a very strong position. Trustee KD offered further support to the Trust in her capacity of CEO of another multi-academy trust as one of the schools within her trust were in the same position. A discussion was held surrounding the Ofsted framework and the increased rigour of inspections. At least three schools in the east hub are awaiting Ofsted inspections. Although there is still a school improvement journey ahead of the east hub there is support in place and collaborative working.</p> <p>Trustees were directed to the report which provided data on attainment and progress baselines. There is no national data for the second consecutive year, however a comparison was provided for reference from UK schools using the same software, and from Wakefield schools using the software. It was notable that the trust cannot be assured of the processes undertaken by these other schools, but for Waterton schools the teacher assessments are supported by practice papers or NFER tests. Nationally, 6000 schools use the software, so this is a significant data set for comparison. Y1 and Y5 benchmark data was also provided for review.</p> <p>A thorough piece of work has been carried out which tracked back to prior attainment and potential, alongside current assessments. Those children who were capable pre-pandemic are still capable and should have a target which reflects this. A focus is on ensuring children reach age related expectations (ARE). The message remains clear and positive, that this is the aim which is aspirational but achievable, and there will not be a complacency that covid disruptions will result in children not achieving their potential. The tutoring programme will support this piece of work. The CEO has met with all Heads and agreed this, but there will be challenges, notably with the three schools with a ‘requires improvement’ judgement. It was noted that during the covid pandemic there have been children who have prospered within the home learning environment and those who have faced significant challenges.</p> <p>In response to questions posed by Trustees regarding the targets and how these are sense checked, Trustees engaged in a robust discussion on ensuring targets remain aspirational but also whether these are achievable and what is the most appropriate way to set the targets. The CESO explained that when targets are set the data is reviewed from the previous key stage and this time the teacher assessments from February 2020 were used as this is a reflection of their capability from that point in time. Throughout remote teaching the SI team monitored the quality of work, and the curriculum has been reviewed since the return to school based on what is required. Questions were raised regarding the national pressure of results and whether this impacts target setting. The CESO also explained that support is targeted by the SI team and the tutoring scheme is focussed on those who are behind where they should be or those who are disadvantaged pupils.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>A wide ranging discussion took place regarding the importance of honest conversations with Headteachers; focus on behaviour including supporting schools and children where there are challenges around returning to structured learning; the challenges of persistent absenteeism particularly of disadvantaged children; the emphasis on early reading and phonics and ensuring systematic approaches are in place at all schools. It was noted that a phonics scheme is now in place and embedded at CTA and it is anticipated that national level will now be achieved.</p> <p>The CESO explained that the piece of work looking at prior attainment has connected teachers with children’s learning journeys and has been a positive exercise, and the use of aspirational language is really important for the quality of provision within the classroom. It is not yet known if standardised assessments will be suspended again. In response to a question regarding the curriculum and how this had been adapted, the CESO confirmed that there remains in place a rich and broad curriculum and this is of key importance more so than ever, as this is what the children have missed during remote learning. There has been a focus on refining the curriculum offer but this has been used as a positive to support engagement and prioritisation. The core values of the Trust is to improve standards for all children and for them to achieve their potential. During the summer term the SI team advised schools to focus on transcription in writing as that had been missing for some during remote learning and the work on this has paid dividends. Schools have seen improvements in handwriting, spellings and phonics. Overall children are happy to be back in school and are doing well.</p> <p>In relation to attendance the CESO provided a summary of the current position. Persistent absence (PA) remains a concern, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Some schools have an embedded culture of absenteeism which they are continually working to change, particularly where parents do not have a positive view of education. Safeguarding concerns were also discussed and assurance provided that clear processes are in place to address any concerns across all schools. The trust and the schools work very closely with the local authority as there are a number of families in crisis - some of which has been heightened by the pandemic. A detailed piece of work is ongoing to gain a greater understanding of what the PA figures for each school are made up of and how to effectively address these. In response to questions it was confirmed that an absence is recorded based on a cut off time, and in some cases it is that the child(ren) arrive at school but not in a punctual manner. The CESO is also shadowing the Education Welfare Officers as part of this piece of work. Consistent principles underpin attendance management in all schools, and the EWO supports to ensure that intervention and support has an impact. The team will work to establish what is working successfully in some schools to manage persistent absenteeism and build any learning into policies and procedures. A question was asked whether the attendance figures are in line with where they were three years ago before covid. The CESO confirmed that they are broadly in line, but currently PA is higher, hence the focus on this.</p> <p>As noted in the report, the SI team launched the excellence guidance documents at the whole Trust INSET day, to ensure an impact on all teaching team members. Training for Governors and Trustees will be provided, with dates included in the report. A summary of the school improvement offer was provided in the report, as</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>well as details on the system leadership work undertaken by members of the team and their professional roles beyond Waterton including lead moderator, professional development lead and accredited facilitator for a range of programmes and institutions. Trustees commented very positively on the breadth of expertise within the team. The initial teacher training programme in partnership with Leeds Trinity currently has 10 trainees in the cohort and it was commented that they are a strong cohort.</p> <p>Trustees were directed to the remainder of the report for information.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CESO for her comprehensive report and opportunity to ask questions and engage in robust discussion.</p>	
<p>10. COO Headline Report</p>	
<p>Attention was drawn to the detailed report which had been shared in advance of the meeting and included a comprehensive HR and Estates update.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the GDPR request and it was confirmed that the appropriate work had been carried out and the parties involved were satisfied with the information provided. It was confirmed that the settlement agreement was in relation to the issues which had been encountered with the implementation of the HR software.</p> <p>There were no further questions and the CEO explained that the COO will be attending the Spring Trust Board meeting as this report will be the focus of the meeting.</p>	
<p>11. CFO Headline Report</p>	
<p>The report was shared with all in advance of the meeting. An opportunity was provided for Trustees to ask questions or submit comments in relation to the report. It was noted that more detailed financial information will be presented at the upcoming AGM – the date has been confirmed as 2nd December.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the Chair receives a monthly accounts report, and that the CFO will be attending the summer Trust Board meeting which will focus on budget setting.</p> <p>The CEO reported that there has been an overspend at Mill Dam, related to the professional fees not being accounted and additional costs for new plans due to varying ground conditions. All has now been resolved. Trustee, LRB who is a parent at the school spoke highly of the building works and the transformation of the school.</p> <p>There were no further questions at present.</p>	
<p>12. Union Agreement</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an overview of the work which has been undertaken to date. There had been a recent meeting between the CEO and union representatives, with an aim towards confirming an agreement which will ensure that colleagues have appropriate representation.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>There had been further requests from the unions with regards to a financial bonus for staff and increased facilities time. Trustees discussed these requests in detail and were in unanimous agreement that neither were financially viable or appropriate and the rationale provided by the unions was not in line with the thinking of Trustees. The Trust's recognition of staff will continue and investment into wellbeing and the work of the wellbeing group is a focus. All staff had been very positive about the recent wellbeing afternoon tea, Trustees unanimously denied the requests, but commented positively on the work to date and the professional relationship with the unions.</p>	
<p>13. Strategic Plan</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief update that the draft of this has been previously shared and would be part of the report for the AGM.</p>	
<p>14. Policy Updates</p>	
<p>It was noted that these had been approved by the Hub Boards. Trustees had reviewed and there were no further questions and all policies were approved.</p>	
<p>15. Audit and Risk Committee</p>	
<p>The Governance Officer provided an overview of the rationale for the establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee comprised of Trustees to independently maintain an oversight of the Trust's financial, governance, risk management and internal control systems. Under the requirements of the Academies Handbook the Trust is not required to have a standalone committee as annual income does not exceed £50 million, but it must ensure that these responsibilities are incorporated into a relevant committee. In discussion with the CFO, CEO and Chair of the Trust Board it was agreed that it is good practice to have a dedicated committee to encourage the focus on key control mechanisms and report directly to Trustees. The Committee will also be responsible for monitoring the detail of both the external audit and internal scrutiny reviews.</p> <p>Trustees were in agreement and confirmed that meetings being held on Teams would be the most convenient approach and / or held on the same evening as a Trust Board meeting. The draft Terms of Reference were reviewed and approved.</p> <p>The Governance Officer will contact Trustees to establish membership.</p>	Clerk
<p>16. CEO/HT PM Arrangements</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a summary, explaining that there has not been a recognised set of standards to benchmark the performance management of CEOs of Trusts, such as there are for Headteachers. In conjunction with the work of the CST (Confederation of Schools Trusts) to identify the core responsibilities of CEOs a document has been prepared which will hold the CEO to account against these standards, for which the CEO will provide evidence of. A panel of Trustees will be formed, and when the panel meets there will also be agreement of bespoke standards relevant to the CEO at that particular time. An external advisor will be part of the follow up panel meeting to review against the objectives and evidence provided.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The CEO also explained that a similar process will also be conducted with Headteachers, as it had been difficult to assess performance management during 2020. This approach had been outlined to Heateachers and positive feedback received. The CEO and a member of the ASC will conduct the performance management of the Headteacher, with the CESO taking part in some where appropriate.</p> <p>Trustees agreed to the implementation of the proposed approach to the performance management of the CEO, and agreed that the Chair and one other Trustee be part of the panel.</p>	clerk
<p>17. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p>18. Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns</p>	
<p>The CEO explained that the Hubs had been asked for feedback on the reports prepared by SLT and all were in agreement that the reports were comprehensive and contained an appropriate level of detail and enabled governors to provide scrutiny and support.</p> <p>Trustees were also in agreement and spoke positively about the ‘focus’ for each meeting and the relevant member of SLT being in attendance to provide a more detailed report.</p>	
<p>16. Identification of Confidential items</p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p>22. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –</p>	
<p>Based on the approved governance schedule meetings of the Trust Board were agreed as follows; AGM Thursday 2nd December 2021 – to be held at either the Centre for Excellence or Walton school hall depending upon confirmed numbers. Tuesday 1st March 2022 – Trustees discussed the holding of some Trust Board meetings on Teams and agreed that the spring Trust Board meeting would be held on Teams.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED 8:15pm

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 12 Oct 2021

Agenda Item N ^o	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
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4	Sign all minutes of meetings held on Teams	Chair	Next mtg
8	re-circulate Keeping Children Safe in Education with regards to the statutory guidance relating to safeguarding.	Clerk	asap
15	Audit and risk committee arrangements	Clerk	asap
16	Put arrangements in place for CEO PM	Clerk	asap