



## **TRUST BOARD PEOPLE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the People Committee of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Mr S Lloyd - Chair	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Mrs L Lawson	Yes	Mrs K Williams, Clerk	Yes
Dr J Traverse	Yes		

### **Summary Matters for the Trust Board**

- a) There has been a change in format for Safeguarding Peer Reviews which are currently being led by the Director of Education. These are identifying any issues so that they can be addressed quickly.
- b) Absence continues to be high but policies are beginning to positively impact staff and student absence.

#### **17. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **18. Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**

None.

#### **19. Apologies**

All Trustees were present.

#### **20. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19-10-2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **21. Matters Arising**

##### **M7. Discuss Trustee involvement in suspensions and permanent exclusions**

e) It was acknowledged by Trustees that the number of suspensions and exclusion is a risk so we need to recognise this data by including it on Headteacher's Reports and we may need to drill down on this data for assurances. Mr Buckley added that suspension and exclusion data should be added to the Headteacher's Report as a recommendation from the Trust Board.

*Update: Complete.*

##### **g) A Trustee felt that in terms of having capacity for panels, it would be useful to include Trustees.**

The Clerk was very happy to action this as it would help build capacity for the panels needed across the Trust.

*Update: Complete.*

#### **22. Consider the Headteacher's Reports**

*Are there any areas which require a deeper delve at future meetings?* A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised that in the autumn term each year, we revise what data the Headteacher's Report contains. We have now added the number of exclusions and total days lost to suspensions.
- b) The purpose of the report is to indicate where there may be issues. Each LGC (Local Governing Committee) is required to review this report every term and they should challenge any red ratings during their meeting and decide if there are areas which need a deeper delve. The report is presented in the first LGC meeting of the term. Trustees can also request a deeper delve into any areas of interest.
- c) **A Trustee noted from the report that primary schools are doing better than the secondary schools and asked why is this.** Mr Buckley explained that all data is RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated against national benchmarks. There is a note of caution in this as small numbers in primary schools can skew data. The spreadsheet does contain a trends page which shows patterns over the last three years. We have three secondary schools which have struggled to achieve over national average in their data. We have not achieved examination success in the secondary schools although they have all improved over time even though this is at a slower pace than we would have liked. Mr Buckley advised that there are still issues with persistently absent students and transient students which does affect the exam data.
- d) **A Trustee asked about referrals to external services for students.** Mr Buckley advised that we have used referrals but the waits are too long and so the students do not receive timely support. We have used Alternative Provision but the cost of this is extremely high which is not sustainable for schools.
- e) **A Trustee asked about the impact of losing TicTac.** Mr Buckley advised that the contract for this service in Liskeard had been operated by a charitable organisation that had been given use of a building by the Trust, this charity has now decided to close and so the school will be using this facility to attract similar services but the Saltash TicTac has offered and continues to offer a good level of support for the students.
- f) **A Trustee suggested that staff attendance data would be useful to look at in a future meeting. A Trustee queried if the data shows the number of planned and unplanned absences.** Mr Buckley advised that staff attendance has been in the lowest 20% nationally. We implemented a new policy September and this has seen improvements already. We are now 2% away from national and data is improving although the culture of staff attendance is not quite where we want it yet. We are working our way through issues which have arisen and improving staff members understanding of their impact of being absent from school and improving cultures and ethos.
- g) **A Trustee referred to the schools being academically behind where they should be and queried the approaches used to improve this.** Mr Buckley advised there are two different approaches to changing this, one being a directive method which is most appropriate for schools in crisis and the other is the building capacity method. We are using the building capacity method.
- h) **A Trustee asked if there are some cohorts that will receive a substandard education for a period of time.** Mr Buckley advised that where we identify there is an issue, we address this using a capability process or some directed methods with teachers to protect the development of children.
- i) **A Trustee asked if there are any Trust wide approaches to supporting those students who are not really suitable for a mainstream setting.** Mr Buckley advised that we have tried using Alternative Provision to support but this is not financially sustainable and so we have needed to use the exclusion route. We are trying to build a case via CACE to support these students as schools are all having the same issues and the rates of exclusions continues to be high. Mr Buckley added that we are having to use suspensions and exclusions more often now to protect the education of the other students as there are few other alternatives. Mr Buckley summarised the excellent work of staff helping and supporting dysregulated students and this type of expertise is being shared with other staff during SMART day.

- j) **A Trustee referred to staff attendance and queried to what extent in the secondary schools is there a problem with burnout in staff.** Mr Buckley advised that this is not an issue but there are a few cases where there is a causal attitude towards attendance.
- k) **A Trustee suggested this is a cultural issue which can take around three years to change.** Mr Buckley advised that this can be a slow process and we are working to reiterate the need for good attendance. The absence data doesn't include planned absence such as attending a course and so is just sickness absence.

23. **Monitoring of the MAT Strategic Plan towards the Trust's objectives. Update by CEO**

- *Aim 2 Continuous progress of all staff*
- *Aim 3 Develop leadership at all levels*
- *Aim 4 Excellence in governance*

A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised that we have agreed overall principles which we want to achieve as a Trust and then we have a range of strategies which each school can use. We have milestones in place which we are reporting on which are text rich and there may be a change in the future where we move towards providing more data for Trustees.
- b) We have incremental coaching in place with a no blame culture. All staff now have incremental coaching every two to three weeks. The no blame culture is harder to measure but Mr Buckley advised that he is dealing with less office politics issues now. He is meeting with all new staff and makes it clear that we have a no blame culture and staff can contact him directly if there are any issues. We have a strong appraisal system and have 89% of staff who have had a successful appraisal process which is robustly moderated.
- c) Mr Buckley advised that in terms of statistics for the Leadership Ladders, there is only a small minority of staff are not working at expected. We have around 24-29% of staff working above expected and 5% working at 2 levels above their expected level.
- d) Mr Buckley explained we have an outstanding Governance Professional and strong structures and systems in place to keep governance on track. Governors are volunteers so it is challenging to recruit and retain governors and we have worked hard to sustain this. We now have an online SEF (Self Evaluation Framework) and this has helped governors to challenge more effectively by having more accessible data and documents. We need to keep improving the data to make it easier for governors. Mr Buckley added that he is attending all Saltash LGC meetings following comments made by Ofsted and this has been useful to help Mr Buckley understand how this LGC is operating and he has seen evidence that governance is effective. It was expected that the outcome of the Governance review will be useful later in the year.
- e) The Chair reiterated and thanked the Governance Professional for her hard work of the across the Trust.

24. **Risk Register – Review and consider and changes**

A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised that governors are monitoring the Risk Register at each meeting. It is challenging to allocate the risks to each Trust Board committee and so Trustees may choose to discuss any risks which they feel are relevant.

25. **SEF – Review and consider any changes**

A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised this version of the SEF was used during the recent Landulph Ofsted inspection and this document is now more accessible for everyone to use. Mr Buckley explained how the schools are assessing their grading.

b) This document now gives Trustees a tool to challenge Mr Buckley and it will be used during Peer Reviews.

c) **A Trustee noted how useful it will be for discussions as it is highlighting what support is needed.**

26. **HR – Consider staff absence across the Trust and initiatives to improve rates of attendance**

a) This was covered during the Headteachers' Report agenda item.

**Staff and Student Health and Well-Being – Consider student attendance and the strategies to improve attendance**

a) Mr Buckley advised we had identified that there was an issue with attendance in Saltash two years ago and we have more recently been supported by the DfE. We have reviewed the Attendance policies and processes and these have been highly commended by the DfE and their support is due to finish shortly. The new Director of Education has been reviewing how the procedures have been implemented and what is working well and what is not. Greenshaw have also been asked to support us and have reviewed Saltash attendance as well. We are nearly at a point where we can complete an attendance review across the schools.

b) We have standardised attendance letters to parents and most of the key elements of the Attendance policy is in place.

c) **A Trustee asked if attendance is a national issue and are we below national in the schools.** Mr Buckley advised that we are at or nearly at national in all three primaries and one secondary school. We are below in Liskeard and very below national at Looe. Looe is working on their new ReSet behaviour system. Once this system is embedded, we will utilise more of the available SLT capacity to further support the work being done in attendance.

d) In terms of the issue at Saltash, they are now above national but there are still issues with students not being comfortable with using the toilets. We are spending money on improving the facilities in the school but this does have an impact on attendance.

e) **A Trustee asked what is student council feedback on this.** Mr Buckley advised that students are vocal on this subject. The Looe toilets have had a refurbishment but there are now issues with vaping at the school and this makes the toilets feel threatening for others. The only way to solve this is to have single use toilets which are already in place at Liskeard and will be in Saltash after the summer building work, but this solution is a challenge for Looe.

27. **Safeguarding - Review Landulph Safeguarding Peer Review**

a) Mr Buckley advised that the use of internal safeguarding reviews have been in place. We have then also used external support which has not always identified where there have been issues. We have then fortunately had a safeguarding inspection at Liskeard by the Local Authority and using the format they used at Liskeard, we have taken this and trialled a version at Looe.

b) There were some issues found at Looe which we have addressed. We have then used the same format of review at Landulph and have also found some issues which were addressed straight away so this was a hugely valuable process. The Director of Education is now completing the safeguarding reviews and it is a robust process so we intend to eventually return to having the DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads) being involved.

c) **Trustees noted that it has been interesting seeing this model develop and how this has been used as a learning opportunity.**

28. **Review of Policies**

a) None.

29. **Guidance/instructions to LGCs**

- a) The committee reiterated the need to challenge any red areas in the Headteacher's Report especially in terms of HR, Health and Wellbeing and Safeguarding. Local Governing Committees should be selecting areas of concern or interest for deeper delves at future meetings.

30. **LGC minutes**

- a) The Clerk advised that minutes from the last round of LGCs have been circulated by email. It is useful for Trustees to read through the minutes paying particular attention to either the primary or secondary minutes depending on which group they have been allocated to. Trustees should make note of any areas which may need further discussion at a future committee meeting and advise the Clerk so she can add to the agenda.

31. **Summary Matters for the Trust Board**

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32. **Agreements made by email**

- a) None.

33. **Date of next meetings:**

17-06-2024.

The meeting closed at 7.17pm.