



## **TRUST BOARD**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held at Liskeard School & Community College on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 6 pm.

<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Mr M Aarts	Yes	Mr L Hallam, Chair of the Trust Board	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs L Lawson	Yes
Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes	Mr Toms	Yes
Mr J Crisp	Yes		

**In Attendance: Mrs J Lumbard, CFO**  
**Mrs K Williams, Clerk to Trust Board**  
**Mrs J Eason, CST Governance Reviewer**

- 1. Welcome and Evacuation Procedure**  
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2. Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**  
There were no changes to declarations.
- 3. Apologies for Absence**  
All Trustees were present.
- 4. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record and were signed.
- 5. Progress of action points and matters arising**
  - M44. Discuss Trauma Informed School Approaches**  
g) A Trustee suggested that the People Committee could review the outcomes of the health checks. Mr Buckley advised we can provide this data back to the Trust Board.  
*Update: Complete.*
  - M50. Risk Register and SEF – Review and consider**  
a) A Trustee noted that we have two red risks and the descriptor of “tolerable” and suggested that there may be the need for a discussion around risk appetite the A&R committee.  
*Update: Complete. The Chair noted that being able to react quicker to risk would be useful.*  
  
f) A Trustee noted that the Trust is slow at taking action and perhaps we need to identify where we need to take action quicker. A Trustee asked if within the strategic goals, can we have opportunities to build capacity. it was suggested that this should be an agenda item and that we are missing granular information on progress towards the aims. It should be a Trust Board discussion on tracking strategic direction. The Clerk to add to the next meeting agenda for 30-40 minutes.  
*Update: Complete.*
  - M51. Items from Chair**  
e) Vice Chair – can all Trustees consider the Vice Chair role for agreement at the next meeting.  
*Update: Mr Crisp will be Vice Chair.*

## 6. Governance Review Feedback – Jackie Eason

a) Mrs Eason advised that the review was commissioned by the Members and there should be an external review every 3-5 years. Key findings were summarised; There is not sufficient membership and educational knowledge in the Trust Board; Trustee activity is not focused on strategic delivery; some LGCs (Local Governing Committees) are doing well – Landulph and Liskeard but Looe is not as strong.

### b) Board leadership

#### Strengths

- Trustees have agreed high level vision
- Most policies used by schools are agreed at Trust level
- Trustees show care and consideration for the well-being of staff
- Dynamic Headteachers report

#### Considerations

- Revisit vision and values and strategic direction
- Attention on delivery and impact of strategic priorities

### c) Structures

#### Strengths

- The Governance professional is well organised and provides valuable support
- Members understand their role
- LGCs undertaken their roles well

#### Considerations

- Increase capacity in terms of recruitment
- Skills audit
- Training
- Hold effective quorate meetings
- Succession planning for chair and other roles
- Maintain broad and balances skill sets with knowledge in all areas particularly education

### d) Accountability

#### Strengths

- Trustees are delivering their accountability for their fiduciary duties
- Trustees are evolving a risk based approach
- Minutes of Remuneration committee evidence robust accountability
- Trustees do ask challenging questions

#### Considerations

- Trustees do not effectively hold the CEO to account for educational performance
- Need to have external assurance of internal information provided
- Hold quorate learning committee meeting to monitor the impact and effectiveness of Trust school improvement strategies
- Identify and prioritise areas for improvement
- Have sufficient skills and knowledge in education
- The challenge questions do not always have an impact

### e) Compliance and care

#### Strengths

- Act within powers
- Ensure regularity and value for money
- Conflicts of interest

#### Considerations

- Not always fully engaged
- Safeguarding, SEND and Careers roles need to be filled
- Not all statutory safeguarding training completed

f) Local governance

- The Governance Professional has worked diligently to support governance at local level
- LGCs are working well
- LGCs know their schools well

Considerations

- Some responsibilities delegated to the LGCs are duplicating Executive Leaders roles
- Link meetings are not working
- Quality of governance is variable

g) The Chair thanked Mrs Eason for her presentation and noted that there were no surprises in the outcome. **The Chair asked what her experience in terms of having a board with full time working Trustees.** Mrs Eason noted that there is nationally a higher percentage of retired Trustees. Many Trusts have moved towards having daytime meetings with Trustees who are released by their employers for Trustee duties. **A Trustee asked about skills audits.** The Clerk advised that this is something that she has sent out and she can't identify skills gaps until this is completed by all Trustees. It was discussed that the board mainly has those with corporate, finance, and risk experience but we don't have those with experience of primary or secondary education. **A Trustee asked how we recruit.** Mrs Eason advised that we should treat recruitment as seriously as a member of the executive team and the most successful way is paying for a recruitment service. The Lord Lieutenants and the RG would be worth contacting. Mrs Eason noted the board could look to have a consultancy approach which would provide support in terms of education.

h) The Chair thanked Mrs Eason for the information in her presentation. Mrs Eason advised it had been a pleasure working with everyone.

Mrs Eason left the meeting.

i) Mr Buckley advised that we have been discussing recruitment for Trustees and hopefully we might have some leads. It was agreed that committees might need to be allocated some of the key points of the governance review to discuss further. There is an action plan which goes with the outcome of the governance review. **A Trustee asked what the Members think of the outcome.** The Chair advised that the report has not been shared with them yet and they will have this as part of the documentation for the Members meeting next week.

j) The balance of the board in terms of having Trustees who are retired and those who work full time was discussed at length.

k) The Chair noted that Dr Traverse has resigned and he covered the Safeguarding and SEND Trustee roles. We therefore need to recruit to Safeguarding, SEND and Careers roles and these are compliance issues. **A Trustee asked how quickly we can recruit.** Mr Buckley advised that this could be quickly if we find the right person. The Clerk advised that we have used Inspiring Governance which has not been fruitful and funding has now stopped for governor recruitment. It was suggested that we need to use a Trustee recruitment organisation and the Clerk and the CFO will research the cost of this.

**Action: The Clerk/CFO**

l) It was suggested that the outcome of the Governance Review should be discussed before the next Trust Board meeting.

## 7. **Reports and Recommendations from Committees**

Documents has been circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

a) People and Remuneration 21-10-2024

- The governance review should be a Trust Board meeting agenda item.
- Change to Leave of Absence policy where two half days leave will be provided for staff unpaid. Mr Buckley noted we have a revision to the policy and we have to review the impact of the change. The Trust Board will be required to approve the policy. **A Trustee suggested that there**

**could be some perceived unfairness in terms of it being family orientated leave and the extra days could be abused by staff.**

- High numbers of suspensions in the Trust. The Local Authority have reviewed this and had been impressed with processes. Mr Buckley advised there are peaks of suspensions which then drop off. Mr Buckley advised that we have had a permanent exclusion overturned at Looe and we have taken time to review systems to ensure they are robust. Mr Buckley added that he has raised this with CACE to have a set of common standards but this has not moved forward yet.

b) Resources 05-11-2024

- Teaching and support staff pay awards have been agreed.
- High cost of staff absence due to the number of qualifying days for staff absence insurance but this should decrease.
- Appointments to the Trust Share Services; Head of Estates and Head of Finance. The Heads of Services and the Director of Education will attend committee meetings when required.
- Ongoing risk at Saltash and Looe.
- Sixth Form numbers are a concern due to local competition.

c) Learning and Admissions 04-11-2024

- Risk Register had minimal changes.
- Deep dive into Pupil Premium this year.
- SEND offer and Information Reports have been aligned across the Trust.
- The Disadvantaged Gap is still a concern and there is a need to improve attendance. Mr Buckley advised that at this point in the year, Trustees can instruct the CEO to review specific areas for next year. Pupil Premium is a key area. Assessment could also be another focus.

d) Audit & Risk 11-12-2024

- The meeting was held before the Trust Board meeting.

8. **Recommendation from A&R committee on draft Annual Accounts for Trust Board approval**

Documents has been circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

- a) The Trustees were presented the audited accounts by Bishop Fleming and the Audit & Risk committee recommended their approval by the Trust Board. The Trustees noted a thanks to the finance team for a clean audit.

- b) Trustees agreed to approve the Audited Annual Accounts.

9. **Update on Looe following Ofsted and progress at Saltash**

- a) Mr Buckley summarised the slides prepared for the AGM for the Members.

b) Charitable objectives

There are charitable objectives and we have detailed how we have assured they are being met.

c) Financial performance

In terms of financial performance, the Audited Annual Accounts has been agreed by the Trust Board.

d) Academic outcomes

In terms of academic outcomes, two of the primary schools are too small so data has been taken collectively and comparisons show they are in line and this is an improvement. For secondaries, Liskeard has steady improvement, Saltash dipped but now improving and Looe has declined. We are making slow progress across the secondary schools. The change in leadership at Saltash has been positive.

- e) Staff survey  
Mr Buckley apologised for not sharing the staff survey which has now been circulated. There are some indicators which can be nationally benchmarked and the only one which concerns Mr Buckley is the percentage of staff who disagree that they are consulted on changes affecting them. All staff are required to complete the survey. **A Trustee asked if they are yes/ no questions.** Mr Buckley advised they are 5 options from agree to disagree answer options and these questions are asked as part of the appraisal process.
- f) **A Trustee asked if this survey was done pre or post the Looe issue.** Mr Buckley advised this captures the issues found at Looe. **A Trustee asked if the survey reflects staff leaving.** Mr Buckley advised that we don't have a high staff turnover and where there has been an issue, this has been in a small school which impacts the data due to the small numbers of staff in the school. We have done analysis on staff turnover across the whole Trust for the Members.
- g) Trustees agreed that they should approach this by looking at the strategy first and the risk register before deciding on the key areas of focus as it was expected that staff turnover will not be an issue.
- h) Student survey  
**A Trustee asked about the student survey and sharing the outcome at the AGM.** It was suggested that the student survey should not be shared at the AGM as it is very emotive but the staff survey outcomes should be included. One third of students completed the survey but it was noted that a higher percentage of completion would yield more reliable results. **A Trustee asked if the student council are involved.** Mr Buckley advised that the student council are involved and they are tasked with asking questions of their peers in each school but the survey is more reliable way of collecting data. **A Trustee asked if the student council can meet with Trustees in a committee meeting.** Mr Buckley advised this is possible. **The Trustee felt that student voice is important for Trustees moving forward particularly in terms of bullying.** Mr Buckley suggested that Pupil Premium and bullying would be good areas of focus that the Trust Board may decide to focus on for next year.
- i) Safeguarding  
Safeguarding has been externally reviewed. Mr Buckley summarised that we have aligned safeguarding systems across the Trust and all schools are using CPOMS and this allows us to collect data for comparison.
- j) External regulation  
Mr Buckley advised that there are different levels of external reviews and we can purchase these for the schools. Mr Buckley added that Looe would be prioritised to be externally reviewed. Mr Buckley summarised the most recent Ofsted outcomes across the Trust.

10. **CEO summary of HT Reports – focus on Pupil Progress**

- a) Mr Buckley advised he has a document which will be shared after the meeting.  
**Action: Mr Buckley**
- b) Staff attendance  
In terms of staff attendance, we are improving and so staff cover costs are decreasing. **A Trustee asked if the mood of staff is now better.** Mr Buckley advised we are applying staffing policies which has improved the situation in schools.
- c) Suspensions  
The total number of days of suspension is high but we are addressing this.
- d) SEF (Self-Evaluation Framework)  
Mr Buckley advised the exam results are a worry for Headteachers. Mr Buckley has provided a summary document for Trustees which will be circulated.

**Action: Mr Buckley**

- e) The Peer Review has been completed at Saltash and the report has been amalgamated into the SEF.

11. **Safeguarding update – Kristien Carrington**

- a) Mr Carrington was not present at the meeting so this would be deferred to the People Committee meeting.

**Action: The Clerk**

12. **Review in year objectives progress in support of the strategic plan**

- a) This will be discussed at the next Trust Board meeting.

**Action: The Clerk**

13. **Risk Register – Review and consider**

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

- a) This document was discussed during the Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

14. **Management Accounts**

Documents had been circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that the management accounts will appear as an agenda item as recommended by the governance review. Mrs Lumbard advised there are no significant changes to the key metrics. We now have a revised set of budgets which include staff pay and additional grants so we have adjusted the forecasts. We are still waiting information on funding for National Insurance increases in April so we have remained prudent until we have this finer detail.

- b) **A Trustee asked if we are expecting government funding for the National Insurance increase and have we predicted what the forecast will be if they do not.** Mrs Lumbard advised that they have muted that they will fund this so we have not modelled what this would look like if they do not. Mrs Lumbard advised that information will likely be available in the new year.

- c) **A Trustee suggested that the Trust Board would benefit from having some simple graphics in the management accounts as something more visual might be useful.**

15. **Items from Chair - AGM and Members Meeting, Trustee recruitment and Resignation of JT**

- a) The Chair advised that we hold a Member's meeting during December and this is the first AGM. **A Trustee asked if it is considered an AGM if people have not been invited to submit topics.** The Chair advised it will evolve next year and it was expected that there will be feedback. It has been advertised on the website. There are no voting rights for stakeholders but there are voting rights for Members. The Chair summarised the agenda for the AGM and this is followed by the Members meeting and Trustees are invited to stay for this meeting. Mr Carrington will be attending the Members meeting. Minutes will be taken at the meeting and so it will not be recorded. The Clerk advised that there are routes for complaints should stakeholders be unhappy.

- b) Dr Traverse has resigned. The Chair advised that he will be finishing his term as Chair in May 2025.

16. **Adoption of Policies**

Documents has been circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

- a) Sexual Harassment Policy  
Premises Management  
Privacy Notice Parents and carers  
Privacy Notice Pupils  
Trustees were content to approve the policies as presented.

- b) Policy tracker

Mr Buckley advised that we have a policy tracker which details where we are not compliant.

17. **Items from this meeting for report back to LGCs**

- a) The Members commissioned a governance review. The summary findings have been communicated to the Trust Board and the report will be circulated in due course. The Trust Board

need to recruit a Safeguarding, SEND and Careers Trustee. The Trust Board is also looking to attract those with educational experience.

- b) The Trust Board have approved the Audited Annual Accounts.
- c) The AGM will be held on the 17-12-2024. It is advertised on the SMART website.
- d) The Trust Board have approved the following policies: School Exclusions and suspensions; Attendance; CEIAG; Teachers and Support Staff Pay; SEND; Uniform; Whistle Blowing; Sexual Harassment Policy; Premises Management; Privacy Notice Parents and carers and Privacy Notice Pupils this term. These are all published on the SMART website.

18. **Agreements made by email**

- a) Policy approvals during Autumn term 2024 – School Exclusions and suspensions; Attendance; CEIAG; Teachers and Support Staff Pay; SEND; Uniform and Whistle Blowing.

19. **Date of next meetings:**

31-03-2025 and 14-07-2025 at 5.30pm. Trustees want to meet in January to discuss the outcome of the governance review. It was suggested that losing the Chair of Trustee should be added to the Risk Register. We need to look at the budget for Trustee recruitment.

The meeting closed at 20.00.

<b>Action Summary</b>	
<p><b>M6. Governance Review Feedback – Jackie Eason</b>            k) The Chair noted that Dr Traverse has resigned and he covered the Safeguarding and SEND Trustee roles. We therefore need to recruit to Safeguarding, SEND and Careers roles and these are compliance issues. <b>A Trustee asked how quickly we can recruit.</b> Mr Buckley advised that this could be quickly if we find the right person. The Clerk advised that we have used Inspiring Governance which has not been fruitful and funding has now stopped for governor recruitment. It was suggested that we need to use a Trustee recruitment organisation and the Clerk and the CFO will research the cost of this.</p>	<p><b>Action: The Clerk/CFO</b></p>
<p><b>M10. CEO summary of HT Reports – focus on Pupil Progress</b>            a) Mr Buckley advised he has a document which will be shared after the meeting.   <u>d) SEF (Self-Evaluation Framework)</u>            Mr Buckley advised the exam results are a worry for Headteachers. Mr Buckley has provided a summary document for Trustees which will be circulated.</p>	<p><b>Action: Mr Buckley</b>  <b>Action: Mr Buckley</b></p>
<p><b>M11. Safeguarding update – Kristien Carrington</b>            a) Mr Carrington was not present at the meeting so this would be deferred to the People Committee meeting.</p>	<p><b>Action: The Clerk</b></p>
<p><b>M12. Review in year objectives progress in support of the strategic plan</b>            a) This will be discussed at the next Trust Board meeting.</p>	<p><b>Action: The Clerk</b></p>