



Meeting of the Academy Transformation Trust Board

Tuesday 26th March 2024

12.30 to 14.30

Venue: MS Teams

Minutes

Board members	Initial	Position	Sub Committee
Pat Beanland	PB	Chair	SOC/RC
Elaine Bonar	EB	Trustee	SOC
Tom Clark	TC	Vice-Chair	ARC/SOC
Mark Gill (until 2pm)	MG	Trustee	ARC/RC
Alistair Milne	AM	Trustee	ARC/FRC/RC
Louise Jones	LJ	Trustee	FRC/RC
Gavin Hawkins	GH	Trustee	SOC
Geoff Stokes	GS	Trustee	ARC
Attendees	Initials	Position	
Nick Weller	NW	CEO	
Mo Chatra	MC	Deputy CEO (Finance)	
Derek Trimmer	DT	Deputy CEO (Education)	
Michelle Eaves	ME	Head of Governance	
Amber Loizou	AL	Clerk	
Apologies	Initials	Position	
Joanne Dawson	JD	Trustee	FRC

Item	Detail
001	Routine Business
23/182	001.1 Welcome & apologies for absence JD had given her apologies for absence; these were <u>accepted</u> . The meeting was quorate.
23/183	001.2 Declarations of interest for this meeting There were no declarations of interest.
23/184	001.3 Minutes of the last meeting on 23rd January 2024 The minutes of the last meeting, dated 23 rd January 2024, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

23/185

001.4 **Matters arising and actions**

All actions had been completed, unless stated otherwise below -

1. **A08:** It was reported that the Trust were on track to spend 50% of the apprenticeship levy in the 2023/24 academic year; with additional teaching and Learning Support Assistant (LSA) apprenticeships being explored. An update on this expenditure would be provided at the next meeting.
2. **A10:** MG reported verbally on his recent visits to the Sixth Form provisions at SCA & TDA following discussion on feasibility at the last Board meeting. MG felt that the online provision proposed going forward would be a hard sell due to student experiences during the Covid19 pandemic, as well as current student perceptions of the provisions. However, student feedback had shown there was an appetite for joint classes and those already accessing the Sixth Forms were positively engaged. MG raised concerns on the state of the Sixth Form buildings at both sites and the need to review the quality of teaching across the board to embed consistency. Trustees noted that number on roll (NOR) at SCA were expected to increase in September 2024 (40); confirmation of NOR for TDA were still awaited but were expected to be around 25. The Chair advised that an extraordinary Board meeting had not deemed necessary due to individual Trustees being updated on the feedback above as well as the main caveat for the feasibility of the Sixth Form being mainly on student numbers. Four courses were currently being trialled as part of the new online provision proposals; these would be monitored and evaluated over the next 3-months for Trustees to decide on the future of the Sixth Forms by December 2024.
3. **A12:** The CEO reported that entry criteria, NOR and locations for both against Jo Whittaker and Garibaldi Sixth Forms had been undertaken. It was noted that both provisions had a higher entry criterion to secure a place and that many students opted to join Ashfield Sixth Form rather than travelling to Jo Whittaker and Garibaldi Sixth Form.
4. **A14:** MC confirmed that the Anti-Fraud Policy had been updated and the final version approved by Trustee via GVO.
5. **A15:** The Chair advised that consideration had been taken to hold a future Board meeting at a local academy following discussion at the last meeting. However, due to the size of the room required, as well as location and parking concerns, it was not deemed feasible to explore this at this time. It was proposed by the Chair however to hold the next Board meeting in the new Conference Room at Head Office. Trustees were advised that additional accommodate at Head Office had been secured by the Trust to increase capacity and house the Institute.
6. **A16:** The Clerk advised that she would be liaising with the Chair of FRC following the meeting to discuss the summer term meeting date.
7. **A17:** The Clerk would ensure all Trustee were invited to attend the December 2024 ARC meeting to approve the end of year account.

	<p>A01 – To book the Conference Room at Head Office for the next meeting (Clerk)</p> <p>A02 - To invite all Trustees to attend the December 2024 ARC meeting to approve the end of year accounts (Clerk)</p>
23/186	<p>Clarification and challenge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A Trustee requested that an impact report relating to the apprenticeship levy spend in 2023/24 be provided at the next meeting. This would be actioned by the CEO. A Trustee asked what evaluation framework would be used to evaluate the Sixth Form online provision which were current under trial. Trustees requested that NOR (sustainability), feedback from learners and teachers and dropout rates be included in the evaluation process. Trustees asked for confirmation of NOR for September 2024 for both the SCA & TDA Sixth Forms, as well as group sizes and the evaluation framework to be presented at the next meeting. A Trustee asked for clarification on when the 2024/25 year 11 cohorts would be required to decide on future education. They were advised that any Sixth Form / college offers for year 11 students were usually made at the start of the spring term. <i>(Trustees commented on the short timeline to pilot and evaluate the online Sixth Form provisions however, noted that a decision had to be made by Trustees by December 2024 with effect from September 2025).</i> <p>A03– Impact report relating to apprenticeship levy spend to be presented at the next meeting (NW)</p> <p>A04 - NOR for September 2024 for both the SCA & TDA Sixth Forms, as well as group sizes and the evaluation framework to be presented at the next meeting (NW)</p> <p>A05 – Trustees to make a decision on the future of Sixth Forms at SCA & TDA by end of December 2024 (PB)</p>
002	Strategic considerations
23/187	<p>002.1 CEO report</p> <p>The report had been shared prior to the meeting; the below updates were provided verbally.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Educational performance – WES continued to be problematic, with leadership unstable, behaviour a major concern and high numbers of students out of lessons. The Trust had been informed that WES would be inspected by Ofsted in the spring term. Fortunately, the Trust had successfully deferred the inspection due to the Principal’s absence and one of the Vice Principal’s being on long term sickness. Leadership support was in place via the Director of Secondary Education, the Principal at MCA and external providers (from summer term 2024). <p>It was reported that the Principal at RAV would be relocating and had agreed to take on the Principal vacancy at BEC from September 2024; a vacancy which the Trust had been unable to appoint to this term. A recruitment campaign to secure a new Principal at RAV would be launched swiftly for a September 2024 start.</p>

	<p>Visits had been completed at PHA & ICA, with both settings showing an improvement in the quality of teaching, behaviour and outcomes.</p> <p>2023/24 outcomes across the secondary academies were expected to be in line or slightly above 2022/23 outcomes. Primary outcomes in 2023/24 were expected to increase across the board.</p> <p>2. Safeguarding & SEND – 18/22 academies had now been subject to a full review across the inclusion provisions. Each academy had been RAG rated and Trust interventions had been put in place, where necessary.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for his comprehensive report.</p>
23/188	<p>Challenge and clarification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Trustee asked how long Ofsted had agreed to defer the inspection of WES. DT advised that a specific timescale had not been provided however, it was expected that the inspection would take place in the summer term 2024. DT believed the quality of teaching at WES to be strong and was optimistic that swift improvements would be made next term. He anticipated however that the current standards at WES would see them graded as ‘requires improvement’ under the Ofsted framework. 2. DT was asked to confirm that external leadership support was in place for WES; DT confirmed this was the case. 3. A Trustee noted that standards at RAV were stable and questioned if a change in leadership would affect this. The CEO acknowledge the improved standards at RAV and advised that the Trust aimed to recruit an experience Principal to maintain and further improve standards. 4. A Trustee asked when the Principal at RAV would be relocating near BEC. The CEO advised that relocation would likely be from January 2025. There would therefore be some travel involved during the autumn term 2024 which the Trust would support with. 5. A Trustee asked for clarification on why the approach to the Single Central Records (SCR) was being revitalised. DT advised that this was due to some academies having historical employment gaps in their SCR. These were now being followed up to ensure all academies were 100% compliant. 6. DT was asked to explain what the ‘Trust Core SEND offer’ was. She explained that this was an aligned offer which would include adaptive practices in lessons, consistent education health and care plan (EHCP) funding bands / support, ensuring sufficient SEND funding was being received from local authorities and ensuring quality throughout the provision. 7. A Trustee aske what attendance support was in place for academies and if there were any attendance incentives in place to improve data. DT reported that engaging hard to reach families and reintegration students back into school was the main barrier relating to attendance. Attendance data was a

	<p>national concern and a 'Wave' report had been presented at the most recent SOC meeting outlining the actions being taken by the Trust to tackle attendance, including rewards and incentives for students. Regular home visits were being undertaken by individual academies for those persistently absent students however, Trustees were advised that attendance was closely related to society issues and was not only the responsibility of educational establishments. Trustees also noted that attendance was closely related to outcomes.</p> <p>8. Following a query, Trustees were advised that 'MIS' stood for 'Management Information Systems'.</p> <p>9. A Trustee asked when a student was deemed to be persistently absence (PA). DT reported that any student with attendance below 90% was put into this category. Serious persistent absence (SPA) related to students with attendance below 50%.</p> <p>10. In response to a Trustee query on the increased number of employee relation case work across the Trust relating to whistleblowing, grievances and disciplinaries, it was reported that these cases were largely complex and mainly related to the challenges faced at WES.</p> <p>11. Following a query, Trustees were advised that the Employee Self Service enabled staff to update their personal detail directly using the online system.</p> <p>12. A Trustee asked if the School Condition Allocation (estates) was available to Trustees. They were informed that the report outlining individual projects would be shared with Trustees via GVO in due course.</p> <p>13. A Trustees queried the amount Ashfield Borough Council were allocating to SCA. NW confirmed this to be £1 million towards the playing fields improvements.</p>
23/189	<p>002.2 Catering contract A detailed report had been shared prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Trustees raised concerns about the Catering contract not being put out to tender as well as the practicality to embed the new proposed models due to Trust capacity, leadership and resources. MC highlighted that the report explained that the contract had not been put out to tender due to the risk this posed potentially in securing another provider who could not deliver high quality service, and the impact this would have on services, academy staff and students. The Trust felt that taking the contract in-house would ensure catering was improved and would enable external consultants to manage the service. He added that Chartwell had offered to run the service until August 2025 and waiver their subsidies of approx. £150k per annum. This has raised concerns relating to the professionalism and honesty of Chartwell who had previously reported working at a loss for the Trust.</p>
23/190	Clarification and challenge

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Trustee asked if members of FRC had considered the Catering proposals at their most recent meeting. The FRC Chair advised that this was not an agenda item at FRC. 2. Trustees questioned how currently Catering Managers could be affected by the proposed changes to the Catering contract. MC stated that research had been undertaken with other MATs who had used external consultants to support Catering Managers. 3. A Trustee asked who would be responsible for investing the catering assets under the new proposed models. MC advised that the Trust owned all catering assets and that condition surveys would be updated and funds ringfenced to manage repairs. 4. MC was asked if there were any insurance policy implications to consider in respect of any of the proposed models. MC confirmed that the current insurance policy would be unaffected by the changes. 5. A Trustee asked for clarification on HR procedures to take any catering staff in-house under the new model. MC informed Trustees that there would be HR implications for any Chartwell catering staff who would TUPE across to the Trust. 6. A Trustee asked why CMC had been chosen. They were informed that this was for financial analysis reasons, time constraints and to prevent the need to go to full tender.
23/191	<p>Resolution Trustees agreed to bring the catering service in-house, with support from an external catering consultant who would provide day-to-day support for managing the service.</p>
23/192	<p>002.3 Operations structure Reports relating to this item had been shared before the meeting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Estates: MC advised that option 2 was being recommended to Trustees which would see a new Regional Manager being recruited. b) Finance: Option 1 was being recommended to Trustees as it was deemed the more effective model and would be funded via savings made by changes to financial systems. c) Operations (HR): MC reported that option 1 was the preferred model by staff. This model would reduce HRAs and increase HRBPs. It would also centralise the HR apprenticeships and the HR recruitment coordinators.
23/193	<p>Clarification and challenge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Trustee asked if the Trust aimed to centralise the finance team in the future. MC confirmed this to be the case.

	<p>2. Trustees noted the £50k budget saving due to changes to financial systems used by the Trust and asked if the savings had been tested. MC stated that soft testing had been done and quotes from 5 external providers had all been in the region of £25-27k.</p> <p>3. A Trustee asked for the total central cost as a proportion of the total budget, as well as the impact on the percentage spent on teaching and support staff within academies. MC agreed to provide these figures via email following the meeting.</p> <p>4. MC confirmed that the option 1 operations (HR) model would create a £58k saving and would be effective from September 2024, following a query from a Trustee. It was noted that consultations would be held with Unions during the summer term 2024.</p> <p>5. A Trustee asked how many members of staff would be affected by the new operations (HR) model. MC advised that HRAs would be the most effected however, no redundancies were expected.</p> <p>A06 – To provide the total central cost as a proportion of the total budget, as well as the impact on the percentage spent on teaching and support staff within academies following the meeting (MC)</p>
23/194	<p>Resolution</p> <p>a) Estates: Trustees agreed the option 2 model as presented. b) Finance: Trustees agreed the option 1 model as presented. c) Operations (HR): Trustees agreed the option 1 model as presented.</p>
003.	Performance - education
23/195	<p>003.1 Feedback from SOC meeting – 6th March 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been shared before the meeting. The SOC Chair highlighted the key topics of discussion which had included pupil progress, predicted outcomes 2023/24 and recruitment. Trustees were pleased to learn that the Trust had successfully recruited three Executive Primary Principal’s this term. It was also reported that EB had now been appointed at the link Trustee for SEND; the Clerk was asked to update the Trust website accordingly.</p> <p>A07 – To update the SEND link Trustee details on the website (Clerk)</p>
23/196	<p>003.2 Shadow structure</p> <p>A report had been shared prior to the meeting. Trustees were advised that the structure would be embedded from 1st September 2024 and that subject leaders would be appointed once resources allowed.</p>
23/197	<p>Clarification and challenge</p> <p>1. A Trustee questioned if three Executive Secondary Principals were required. DT stated that this would be the ideal scenario however, recruiting high quality Principals were the main priority for those academies which were unstable. DT added that the Trust were at a time of political change and an increased focus</p>

	<p>by Ofsted on outcomes rather than the prior focus of the Curriculum / content. Outcomes in core subjects was the main focus of the Trust.</p> <p>2. A Trustee asked why there were two Science Lead vacancies within the Trust during the current situation with the difficulty of appointing Science staff. DT reported that recruitment continued to be a national challenge. It was hoped that the Trust would be able to recruit an experienced Head of Science at PHA who would be able to support Science across the Trust, going forward.</p>
004	Feedback from FRC
23/198	004.1 Latest accounts
23/199	<p>004.2 Budget 24/25 update</p> <p>Detailed reports had been shared before the meeting. MC highlighted the below key points –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period 5 had been issued and showed a forecast surplus of £547k. • Period 6 had been issued on 25.03.24 and showed a reduced forecast surplus of £365k. The report would be shared via GVO for Trustees’ information. • The Finance Team would review forecasts in period 7 which were expected to show an improved picture. • Expenditure on reactive repairs, agency / supply staff costs and energy costs were the main areas of concern. • The Trust would be reviewing the use of electricity with academies due to data showing that a third of costs were outside of school hours (between 7pm – 6am). Once addressed, this would create significant savings. • The online platform ‘Insignus’ was now being used to manage and allocate funds and returns to different accounts to maximise Trust account interest. Positive feedback had been received from other MATs using the system. <p>A08 – To upload the period 6 report to GVO for Trustees’ information (MC)</p>
23/200	<p>Clarification and challenge</p> <p>1. Trustees recalled discussions at previous meetings relating to electricity usage outside of school hours, as well as energy efficiency and asked if this has previously been addressed with academies. MC advised that there had been a significant drop in energy usage during the energy crisis however this had now gone off the academy radar and it was necessary to raise this again. Discussions would be held at the next Principal’s briefing in order to address this and ensure academies were turning off lights and computers when not in use. MC stated that the role of Caretaker’s was vital in addressing this and why the Vertas contract was important to review.</p> <p>2. A Trustee asked for an update on the boiler issues at PHA & SCA. MC stated that there had been heating issues at these academies and that there had been significant costs to address these. These had now been resolved sufficiently to prevent any future issues.</p>
23/201	004.3 First Class Finance

	MC provided Trustees with a PowerPoint presentation on this item. It was noted that First Class Finance had been introduced in November 2023 across a variety of workstreams. Progress to date had been positive, with governors feeling more assured on academy finances.
23/202	<p>004.4 Meeting on 21st March 2024</p> <p>The FRC Chair reported verbally on the meeting held on 21.03.24 and highlighted the topics of discussion as the Vertas contract, management accounts, benchmarking, HR updates, the 5-year ICT plan and equalities. The FRC were recommending the use of 'Insignus'. The minutes would be shared with Trustee via GVO for information, once available.</p> <p>A09 – FRC minutes of 21.03.24 to be shared with Trustees via GVO, once available (Clerk)</p>
23/203	<p>Resolution</p> <p>Trustees agreed to utilise 'Insignus', as recommended by FRC with due diligence.</p>
005	Risk and compliance
23/204	<p>005.1 Feedback from ARC meeting – 29 February 2024</p> <p>The minutes had been shared prior to the meeting. The ARC Chair was pleased to report that Trust reports and risk registers had improved. The ARC had also raised concerns relating to allegations of racism from 1 member of staff and would monitor this going forward.</p>
006	Matters for approval
23/205	<p>005.1 Matters for approval</p> <p>a) Policy review schedule: The CEO advised that several policies were not required for annual review by Trustees. Due to this, it was proposed to only review statutory policies annually and all other policies to be reviewed on a 3–4-year cycle.</p> <p>The below policies had been shared with Trustees for approval via GVO –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Accessibility policy c) Dignity at work policy d) First Aid policy e) Health & Safety policy f) Medical Conditions policy g) Reference policy h) Staff absence management policy i) Time off Work policy j) Conflicts of interest policy k) Financial Scheme of Delegation
23/206	<p>Clarification and challenge</p> <p>1. A Trustee noted that the Critical Incident Policy & Continuity Plan was listed for review every 4-years and questioned if this was sufficient or best practice. MC stated that it was highly unlikely that any sites or temporary</p>

	<p>accommodation would change within a 4-year period and if it did, this would be known by the policy holder who would update the policy earlier, if necessary.</p> <p>2. A Trustee asked if other critical incidents (other than closures) had been considered when establishing a 4-year policy review cycle. MC stated that arrangements were still unlikely to change within a 4-year timescale and that the policy would be followed for any critical incidents that arise. Annual meetings were held with Principal's on critical incident procedures in order to keep them informed.</p> <p>3. A Trustee asked if it was good practice for the internal policy owner to review policies annually and identify if any changes were required. The CEO and MC expected policy holders to be aware of any legislation changes within their area of expertise which could automatically result in the need to review a policy. The Trust also commissioned the services of Browne Jacobson who kept the Trust informed of such changes.</p> <p>4. Trustees noted that policies were currently uploaded and reviewed / approved via GVO. They raised concerns on the current process due to comments made by Trustees going unanswered by Trust colleagues. They also noted that not all policies needed full Board approval and could be approved at committee level. Going forward, ME, Head of Governance suggested that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies be uploaded to GVO for Trustee approval (either by full Board or committee level) and that a majority vote be sufficient in approving each policy. • Once a policy had been approved, it be made 'live' and updated on the policy review schedule and Trust website. • Any Trustee comments on policy on GVO which have gone unanswered be escalated to the policy holders Line Manager to action. • Any policies requiring minor tweaks, such as typos, to be actioned by ME. <p>Trustee supported this process going forward.</p> <p>A10 – To establish those policies approved by Trustees via GVO and make them live (ME)</p> <p>A11 – To reshare policies not yet approved by Trustee via GVO for comment / approval (ME)</p>
23/207	<p>Resolution Trustees adopted the policy review schedule and revised review dates as presented.</p> <p>A12 – To update the review dates on Trust policies, as necessary (ME)</p>
007	Any other Business
23/208	<p>007.1 Strategy Day 14th May 2024 Trustees were reminded of the Strategy Day taking place on 14.05.24 at Head Office. The Chair advised that a reminder of the outcomes of the self-evaluation that Trustees</p>

	<p>had completed would be issued prior to the meeting and Trustees would be asked to submit their suggestions on how to improve these areas.</p> <p>A13- To resend the focus topics for the strategy day to Trustees for comment ahead of the session (ME)</p>
23/209	<p>007.2 Report on Governance (information only)</p> <p>A report was shared before the meeting and was noted. Trustees supported the suggestion of creating a pool of external governors to support with suspension / exclusion hearings due to increasing demands for panels. Trustees also noted the changes to the Governance Handbook as outlined in the report.</p> <p>ME informed Trustees that the Government had ceased funding for 'Inspiring Governance' from 01.09.24. Due to this, the Trust would increase the focus on community engagement and local governor recruitment.</p>
008	Confidential items
23/210	None.

Date of the next Board meetings: 18th July 2024 @ 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Head Office

Agreed