



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

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE: 7 November 2023	TIME: 6pm	LOCATION: Centre for Excellence, Waterton Academy Trust
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Attendees

Chair:	S Johnson	
Trustees	K Davies (<i>attending virtually</i>)	J Shaw
	L Harrison	J Wathen (<i>attending virtually</i>)
	A Goudie	
Attending:	M-C Bretherton (<i>DCEO</i>)	
	D Dickinson (<i>CEO</i>)	
Clerk:	L Clark (<i>Head of Governance</i>)	
Apologies:	J Henson, P Knox (<i>CFO</i>)	

ITEM	ACTION
1. Welcome	
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. J Wathen and K Davies joined the meeting virtually on Teams and confirmed they could see and hear the attendees at the Centre for Excellence.	
2. Apologies for Absence	
Apologies of absence were received and accepted from J Henson. It was noted that P Knox (<i>CFO</i>) had been at the Centre for Excellence and was due to attend but had been called away for a family matter. Trustees sent their support.	
3. Declarations of Interest	
The standing register of declarations of interest was noted and no further declarations were made.	
4. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising	
The minutes of the meeting held on 11 th July and the minutes of the extraordinary trust board meeting held on 20 th July 2023 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.	
It was confirmed that all actions had been undertaken, or would be picked up during this meeting.	
The minutes and confidential minutes from 11 th July and 20 th July 2023 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.	
5. Safeguarding, Risk Register and Conditions of Care	
Trustees were updated that there are no qualifying safeguarding issues to report to trustees. Safeguarding is considered to be effective at Waterton, with audits currently ongoing across the trust.	

ITEM		ACTION
	<p>The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a brief summary of the committee meeting which had taken place prior to this trust board meeting. The focus of the meeting had been on risk management whereby the committee confirmed the approach to risk management as outlined by the CEO and tasked the ELT with updating the suite of documents to make them appropriate to Waterton, for review by the committee at the spring meeting.</p> <p>The CEO will ensure an action tracker of all internal scrutiny recommendations is produced to ensure the committee has full oversight of actions associated with internal scrutiny, and will continue to provide assurances to the trust board. The AGM format had been discussed and it was agreed that a summary of internal scrutiny will be provided.</p> <p>The Chair reiterated to trustees to ensure all had completed the safeguarding training update on Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (KCSIE) and to update the governance team.</p>	all
6.	CEO Headline Report	
	<p>The Chair confirmed with the board that all had read the report in advance of the meeting. The CEO provided a brief top line summary of the report. A stakeholder information pack was shared with the DfE at the Regional Advisory Board. Feedback from the DfE around the trust application was strong and the Board agreed to award an academy order to King's Oak Learning Centre (KOLC) to join Waterton. This is likely to be from September 2024. A further update will be provided to trustees in due course.</p> <p>The work regarding the new build at Charlston is progressing well. <i>A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.</i></p> <p>Given the appointment of the DCEO and other key roles, the CEO now has more capacity to take on system leader duties. Barnsley have created a CEO group which the CEO will be joining next week.</p>	
7.	Governance Headline Report	
	<p>The Head of Governance drew attention to the report and the key items for review and approval by trustees. It was highlighted that there was little change to the Governance Code of Conduct 23-24; Trust Board Terms of Reference; and Scheme of Delegation – changes were mainly formatting and graphical. The only changes were highlighted and these were as a result of benchmarking with best practice guides from the NGA/CST. An opportunity for further questions or comments was provided.</p> <p>Resolution; Trustees reviewed and approved the Governance Code of Conduct 23-24; Trust Board Terms of Reference; Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>L Harrison, Link Trustee for quality of education then provided an update to the board that she will be meeting with Jane Simpkins (Senior School Improvement Officer) looking at how the vision of the trust in terms of quality of education and a rich and relevant curriculum is embedded across all schools. A challenge from the Chair was also raised to look at the breadth of curriculum (arts, sports, humanities). The DCEO stated that the curriculum dashboard will also inform the link trustee work. Trustees thanked L Harrison for this and welcomed the scrutiny and challenge, and looked forward to a report at the next meeting.</p>	LH
8.	Standards Main Report	
	<p>The DCEO began by drawing attention to the detailed report which had been shared in advance of the meeting. The key focus of this, autumn term, trust board meeting is standards and therefore the</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>level of information provided was broader and gives a more detailed contextual picture of standards across the trust. It also included more analysis of specific pupil groups.</p> <p>A summary of key aspects and purpose of the report was provided by the DCEO. The boxes in grey within the report highlight the ‘so what’ and include details of the strategy for improvement and next steps following a detailed analysis of the outcomes at the end of 2023. The report gives trustees an insight into the quality of education (i.e., intent, implementation and impact). Attention was drawn to the Dashboard; this is a live document shared in the appendices of the report. There will be periodic changes to the RAG ratings in this document, which will be updated and shared with trustees at meetings. Context for each school is provided in the notes section, which can be utilised as key areas for trustee questioning, and allows for further triangulation with things such as behaviour and attendance. Another element to note is how the dashboard shows the overall view of the development of the wider curriculum, which ties in with the work L Harrison (Link Trustee for quality of education) is undertaking. Schools are at varying stages of implementation of this and focussed training and development is being put in place as a high priority, particularly the development of subject leadership and the work with the subject leaders’ networks.</p> <p>There are three schools where the current evaluation indicates that the school is not securely good – KMA (Kings Meadow Academy), CTA (Cherry Tree Academy) and WRA (Wrenthorpe Academy). A question was asked about CTA and how this is progressing. The DECO explained that the SI team have implemented very short-term targets with intensive support to keep momentum strong.</p> <p>Trustees commented positively on the dashboard, the information it provides and how it enables trustees to immediately see issues, emerging strengths, movement on RAG ratings, and ensures focus and scrutiny are directed to the areas of highest priority.</p> <p>Preliminary outcomes data had been shared with trustees at their July meeting, but this has now been verified and analysed further. As a whole, data relating to GLD (good level of development in early years), phonics and KS1 was strong. KS2 results were disappointing particularly in reading, however, there are some successes relating to groups of pupils. Work to unpick the gender gap of boys underachieving needs to be looked at in more detail and in discussion and questions trustees were assured that plans are in place to address this.</p> <p>More pupils in Waterton with an EHCP achieved the combined standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (17%) than pupils with an EHCP nationally. However, those without an ECHP but working with SEN support achieved lower than comparative students nationally. A priority of the Head of SEND and Inclusion will be to focus on this discrepancy and target these pupils using a range of strategies such as curriculum adaptations and how TAs are deployed.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the three schools with significantly low outcomes in 2023, each with a unique context history and trajectory. These schools continue to require intensive support to make urgent and sustained improvements to outcomes for all pupils. All three schools are part of the 2023-24 securing outcomes programme led by the school improvement team. Reading is a significant priority across the trust, and fluency development.</p> <p>Other strategies which are being worked on and implemented as part of the overall school improvement picture include a trust wide focus on TAs including how they are deployed, professional development and appraisal framework; the improvement of assessment practices; continuing to improve attendance, with targeted work at schools with lower attendance; and work to reduce suspensions.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Feedback on the report was requested, and through discussion it was highlighted that the data analysis and subsequent actions summary was extremely helpful for trustees.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding how is the progress towards these actions captured? The DCEO explained that she will map this out and provide a summary update at the spring board meeting. Different aspects are at different stages of implementation and therefore the impact will be realised at different times. Sharing of best practice and the use of excellence documents will play a critical role in success. The key areas of focussed improvement are captured within the trust development plan with timeframes.</p> <p>This report has been shared with Headteachers to provide context to their meetings with the CEO and DCEO and the work they are undertaking with the SI team as it is good for them to have a sense of what they are being held account for. Heads had commented positively on this and their understanding of the accountability of the trust for educational performance.</p> <p>A question was asked on curriculum and how each school will implement the embedding of the wider curriculum. There was a discussion on whether schools should all be supplied with a curriculum format and supported in implementing this, or whether there should be autonomy where best practice is shared rather than imposing. The importance of making the wider curriculum rich, broad, and sequenced was reiterated by L Harrison, and ensuring all children across the trust receive the same quality of education, access to opportunities and that an aspirational culture is embedded.</p> <p>There was a discussion on whether a simplified version of progress against actions could be produced to provide assurance that the strategies are working well.</p> <p>A summary of professional development for colleagues and the apprenticeship partnership with Nexus was shared, discussed, and commented very positively on, as well as the update on pre-school developments. The draft Ofsted report from Cherry Blossom Pre-school reads very well. In response to a question, it was confirmed that there is lots of potential to expand the apprenticeship partnership and deliver specialist training.</p> <p>Trustees' attention was drawn to the newly created trust Safeguarding Strategy which had been shared in advance of the meeting. K Davies, Link Trustee for Safeguarding had worked with the DCEO on this and associated action plans.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees reviewed and approved the trust Safeguarding Strategy.</p> <p>The Chair concluded with thanks to the DCEO and offered further opportunity for questions, or to contact the HoG should there be questions at a later date.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the DCEO for the report, commenting that it was extremely comprehensive and that the level of analysis and clear updates on strategies for improvement is a positive step forwards in providing assurance to the board.</p>	
<p>9. Operations Offer Headline Report</p>	
<p>The report had been shared in advance of the meeting, and an opportunity was provided for questions and further discussion on key points.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding the reserves policy and the level of reserves held and whether this was at trust or school level. The CEO provided a summary of the current reserves strategy which is based on the ESFA guidance of 8% which is c£1.5m. During the pandemic this increased slightly due to not having to pay for as many things during this period. The reserves are held at trust level, and</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>then schools can apply for pooled or profiled reserves. A further discussion was held on the culture of the trust being a collective, and how some schools in the trust are well funded compared to others, and therefore knowledge of the budgets is crucial with the ELT holding schools to account, ensuring they thrive but are working within agreed budgets. Schools with budget challenges have an intensive support plan in place and the HoF works extremely closely with headteachers and monitors forensically.</p> <p>There have been some challenges around staff absence. Attention was drawn to the data provided, which demonstrates higher absence rates for support staff than teachers. Procedures are being improved trust-wide to ensure that there is both adequate challenge and support relating to absence. This includes return to work meetings after each absence to ensure that an employee is ready and well enough to be back at work. The HR software has been improved to ensure that all schools are alerted when a trigger has been reached, and there will be a review to ensure there is not a training need for staff in terms of using the software.</p> <p>A question was asked whether there are local figures to compare against. The DCEO advised there are some national figures due to be published so these will be looked at, and a piece of work is ongoing around analysing sickness absence to spot if there are any school specific trends which may indicate wider potential issues such as leadership.</p> <p>There were no further questions.</p>	
<p>10. Policy Management / Policy Update</p>	
<p>The DCEO provided a brief summary of the rationale for the piece of work on policy management which had been undertaken to rectify legacy issues and collate all policies into a policy management matrix with clear responsibilities and timeframes for review and approval, and drew attention to the report on Teams.</p> <p>Statutory policies were clearly marked and would remain as trust board approved policies, alongside other policies which trustees agreed that they should have ownership of. In response to questions and through discussion it was highlighted that any policies which undergo substantial change, or are new policies, should also be approved by trustees. Through further questions the board agreed that the new framework provides a higher level of assurance that all statutory and legal policy requirements are met in a timely manner.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding software which can assist with scanning of policies and whether this should be considered in the future.</p> <p>Any specific comments on the policies shared were asked to be emailed to the HoG.</p> <p>Resolution; Trustees approved the policy management and approval process recommended from the ELT, which included that trustees (with input and feedback from Hub Boards) retain full approval rights for the policies/policy statements that meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies that the DfE/ESfA recommend or stipulate trustee approval, or approval by an individual trustee. • Policies in relation to governance and financial management • Policies in relation to significant areas of performance or trust KPIs • Any new, or existing policy, where the changes proposed are a notable deviation from existing trust strategy (this would be on an ad hoc basis). <p>Trustees reviewed and approved the policies which had been uploaded to Teams in advance of the meeting. This approval also included the new FMP.</p>	
<p>11. Remuneration Committee</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The Chair asked J Wathen, Chair of the Remuneration Committee, to provide a brief summary of the meeting held yesterday to the board.</p> <p>The CEO had provided a recap of the work which has been undertaken across the trust to create a consistent and robust appraisal framework, which the committee had commented very positively on. There had been a report on remuneration which the committee had discussed in detail with scrutiny and challenge to the ELT.</p> <p><i>A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.</i></p> <p>Resolution: Trustees approved the remuneration recommendations outlined within the report and as confirmed by the Remuneration Committee.</p> <p>A summary was provided on the ELT appraisal framework and confirmation that the appraisal had been undertaken by S Johnson (Chair) and L Harrison (trustee).</p> <p>The committee had proposed that given the context around the sector, and future growth plans, the board undertakes an executive remuneration review to ensure roles are evaluated appropriately.</p>	
<p>12. Chief Operations and Finance Officer Job Description</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary for newer Trustees, that the Trust had not appointed a COO when the previous COO had left the trust, and due to the appointment of a DCEO and the restructuring of CLT the workload had been reassigned. Following approval by the trust board the role had been re-evaluated using an external HR company, to that of Chief Operations and Finance Officer Job Description (COFO).</p> <p><i>A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.</i></p>	
<p>13. Draft People Strategy</p>	
<p>The CEO proposed that work is undertaken to create a ‘people strategy’ for the trust which will bring together a whole range of strands including recruitment and retention, well-being, sickness absence, personal development, etc. Trustees agreed that this would be a valuable piece of work, and agreed that it should progress and be brought to the spring board meeting.</p>	ELT
<p>14. Strategic Plan</p>	
<p>The CEO highlighted that two documents had been shared with trustees. One was a synopsis of the current position within the old format of the strategic plan. The second document was the proposed new format of the strategic plan based on the DfE ‘5 pillars of quality’ for MATs and using the trust quality descriptors. Trustees discussed the document and agreed that using the common language and framework that the DfE have published ensures the trust are clear on what they are delivering. Schools model their development plans around the framework of what they are being held accountable for, so to mirror this at trust level was agreed to be a sensible way forward.</p> <p>Trustees were unanimous that the new format is appropriate and relevant and tasked the ELT with adding further detail under each pillar for review by the board.</p>	ELT
<p>15. Opportunity, a shared experience</p>	
<p>The CEO outlined a proposal for the ELT to put together a draft Waterton offer for all the children in the trust, with consultation from schools, parents, pupils and the children’s parliament on what this should look like. Trustees discussed the importance of all pupils receiving this Waterton offer</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>regardless of which school in the trust you attend, and regardless of socio-economic background. The equality of opportunity and an aspirational environment was agreed by all to be paramount. In response to questions, the DCEO confirmed that it will be integrated into the curriculum in collaboration with headteachers in a sustainable way, and will not just be ad hoc events /trips etc. The Newstead pupils being part of the children’s parliament and attending the Hepworth event was highlighted as a recent success story.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees agreed with the proposal to begin work on Opportunity, a shared experience, for review by the board.</p>	ELT
<p>16. 10 Year Anniversary</p>	
<p>In July 2024 the Trust will be 10 years old and a working group from colleagues across the trust are meeting to put together a proposal for celebrations. The children’s parliament will also be involved. A re-branding will also be undertaken in recognition of the evolution of the trust. Trustee ideas were welcomed on the celebrations and re-branding options (a survey had been shared on the proposed graphics).</p>	
<p>17. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>- Priorities report</p> <p>The CEO had shared a draft of a short, concise update on each of the key priorities. With the trust board meeting termly, it was proposed to share this summary monthly, alongside the monthly management accounts to provide trustees with a brief update to show improvements or where there are variances, which can then be focussed on in more detail at meetings. It was highlighted that this would not be a detailed report, and would only include a short summary with graphs to give a top-level overview. Trustees discussed the report, commenting favourably on the layout, and it was agreed that this would be a valuable tool enabling trustees to concentrate on the pertinent data. Current key priorities to report on are KS2 outcomes, budgets, attendance, sickness absence and the management of supply.</p> <p>The Chair requested that this priorities report become part of the information provided for trustees.</p> <p>A question was raised about target setting for schools and were the ELT confident in the targets set for outcomes. The CEO and DCEO explained that a significant piece of work has been undertaken to review targets, and the SI team went to schools to forensically check, particularly at CTA, KMA and SKA. There has to be confidence in the target setting process, but these must be realistic targets whilst also stretching. The challenge last year was that targets were not realistically set across schools. Trustees posed questions to the ELT and discussed in detail that expectations must not be lowered, but that there is a balance between aspirational and what is achievable within cohorts. The example of WEA and how a rich and consistent curriculum had been embedded in over the past few years and where outcomes were excellent was discussed. For some schools this work is well on its way but will take longer to embed.</p> <p>A challenge was raised by trustees about how well the SI model is delivering on what is required, and the CEO responded by outlining how the quality of leadership within schools is now stronger and the work with the SI is more collaborative which in turn will realise improvements. It was agreed by the board that outcomes must improve but they were assured by the plans in place and the work which had already been undertaken this year. ‘Success is a shared experience’ was discussed by the board – a key part of which is outcomes. However, this also includes progress, distance travelled, access to opportunities, achieving the most that a particular child can, and enjoyment of school life.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>A trustee suggested that the word ‘target’ may not be the most appropriate as this implies something which is aimed for rather than taking into account the specific school/cohort, and would ‘forecast’ be more suitable. The CEO concurred.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that further work and review of targets and current data will be undertaken again at the end of term to reassess whether the targets remain appropriate.</p> <p>Other AOB which had been covered partially within the meeting (and by the Audit and Risk Committee) was the extension of the existing procurement policy up until the new legislation is in place, at which time the policy will be reviewed to incorporate this in; and an update on the IT tender which will come to the next trust board meeting for approval.</p>	
<p>17. Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns</p>	
<p>The Chairs of the Hub Boards provided a brief summary of their recent meetings and the HoG drew attention to the Hub Board draft minutes which had been shared with trustees which provided assurance to the board of the robust scrutiny and challenge.</p> <p>The west hub had challenged on supply costs and absence management, and through discussion trustees reiterated the importance of the people strategy and the impact of this.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that the parental voice is very positive and it is important that this message is shared within the community.</p>	
<p>18. Identification of Confidential items</p>	
<p>A discussion within agenda item 6, 11 and 12 was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.</p>	
<p>19. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGM - 6th December 2023 • 19th March 2024 • 16th July 2024 	

MEETING CLOSED 19:55

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 6 Nov 2023

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
5	complete the safeguarding training update on Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (KCSIE) and to update the governance team.	All	asap
7	Link Trustee for quality of education – summary report	L Harrison	Next mtg
10	Any specific comments on the policies shared were asked to be emailed to the HoG.	All	asap
13	Draft people strategy	ELT	Next mtg
14	Draft strategic plan using the DfE ‘5 pillars of quality’	ELT	Next mtg

15	Begin work on Opportunity, a shared experience, for review by the board.	ELT	Next mtg
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