



MINUTES OF TRUST BOARD MEETING

Date: Wednesday 5th February 2025
 Time: 10.00am
 Venue: Laurus Trust – Boardroom

Clerk: N Burgess
 Present: J Crawford, S McGill, G Turnpenney, S Mellor, D Woolley, A Gilmour, N Thompson, W Mason, M Vevers, D Brown, C Nevin, T Little, L Magrath and L Woolley

	Action	Initials
1	Trustees are asked to inform the Clerk of any changes to their Register of Business interests	All
2	Trustees are reminded to send their completed Record of Visits to the Clerk	All
2	Website compliance to be an agenda item for the Audit and Risk Committee	WM
2	Salaries funded by LFET to be an agenda item for Finance and Resources	WM
2	Circulate the decision-making framework to Trustees	LM

Agenda – Part 1

Category	Item	Notes	Action
1	Governance Arrangements	<p>D Brown presented PDC training to Trustees.</p> <p>Trustees will from time to time be asked to be a member of the panel of Governors and Trustees to review the permanent exclusion of a student.</p> <p>DB confirmed that the decision to permanently exclude a student was a very difficult decision to make for a Head of School, and was always a last resort.</p> <p>The decision to permanently exclude a pupil should only be taken: In response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches of the school behaviour policy, and Where allowing the student to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the students or others in the school.</p> <p>As a member of the panel reviewing the permanent exclusion it is Trustees responsibility to ensure that the decision to exclude was lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate. The Equality Act 2010 and SEND should always be taken into consideration when</p>	

		<p>reaching a decision.</p> <p>The panel should consider all information from the school, parents/carers, the student and the LA and should ask questions regarding the information in order to reach their decision.</p> <p>Q – For context please could you tell us how many PDCs there are across the Trust?</p> <p>A – In secondary schools there are probably 2 or 3 per year, but in primary there has never been one. In total there are probably around 15-20 across the Trust.</p> <p>Q – Is there a plan to standardise the PDC information report across the Trust?</p> <p>A – Yes, this is currently a piece of work which is being undertaken, and will include a full checklist for Head of Schools. There will be a standardised format which will be used in all of our schools.</p> <p>Q – Is a permanent exclusion for an individual school and not from the Trust?</p> <p>A – Yes, it is from the individual school.</p> <p>Trustees had no further questions.</p>	
	Apologies	Apologies were received and accepted from D Kershaw and R Kumar.	
	AOB items	N Thompson and S Mellor were welcomed to their first meeting as newly appointed Trustees.	
	Declarations of conflicts of interest in any of the agenda items	There were no declarations of interest in any of the agenda items.	
	Compliance	The Register of Business Interests was circulated and Trustees were asked to notify the Clerk of any changes to their record.	All
	Minutes of the last Trust Board meeting	<p>Minutes of the meeting held 4th December 2024 were <u>approved</u> as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p><u>Actions arising</u></p> <p>Safeguarding training – Trustees are reminded to complete as soon as possible</p> <p>School Performance data- is an item for this meeting</p> <p>Update on school joining the Trust – The Head of School and Deputy have started to attend HOPS meetings, staff visits are taking place, and collaborative projects on oracy and writing.</p>	

			<p>LM/WM and LW will be meeting with the Head of School and Business Manager to review finances. Pupil numbers are good and the school is oversubscribed. The Head of School has agreed to fund IT investment from the school budget.</p> <p>LM asked Trustees for their approval for Norris Bank Primary School to join the Laurus Trust from September 2025. Trustees felt they had enough information to <u>approve</u> the decision for Norris Bank to join the Trust.</p>	
		Scheme of Delegation	There were no material changes to note to the Scheme of Delegation.	
		Trust Board committee membership/succession planning	<p>Trustees reviewed the Governance structure including the Trust Board committee membership.</p> <p>It was agreed that N Thompson would join the Audit and Risk committee.</p> <p>Trustee induction was discussed, and the induction schedule was circulated prior to the meeting. NT and SM agreed to work through the new schedule and to feedback at a later date.</p>	
		Polices for approval	<p>Trustees <u>approved</u> the following policies:</p> <p>Safer Working Practice Grievance Policy Laurus Grace Referral Policy Fit to Study Policy</p>	
		Training	The Clerks are devising a method of tracking all Governor and Trustee training across the Trust. This will ensure training is completed and allow time to follow up any outstanding.	

2	Vision, Ethos and Strategy	Trust Board Committee Chair updates	<p><u>Audit and Risk</u></p> <p>A Gilmour updated on the A&R meeting which had taken place on 6th December 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual accounts were approved and signed by TL • A good high quality audit report was received – thanks were offered to WM and the Finance team • Internal controls are very good and no issues were identified • A Gilmour was appointed Chair of the committee <p><u>AGM</u></p> <p>C Nevin updated on the AGM which had taken place on 16th December 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members received the annual accounts and report for the year ending 31st August 2024 • Approved appointment of external auditors • Received Chairs report on Trust Board performance • Received updates on Trustee appointments 	
		Link Trustee roles and responsibilities	<p>Trustees reviewed the Link structure:</p> <p>Maths – A Gilmour English – C Nevin Science – R Kumar MFL – S McGill Humanities – D Kershaw CC&R – T Little Sporting Excellence – W Mason Safeguarding – T Little SEND – G Turnpenney PSHE – J Crawford CEIAG – R Kumar Primary – Vacancy</p> <p>S Mellor agreed to be appointed Link Trustee for Primary and N Thompson to be appointed Link Trustee for Sporting Excellence.</p>	

		Record of visits completed since last meeting	<p>There have been 2 records of visits completed since the last meeting:</p> <p>Maths – A Gilmour SEND – G Turnpenney</p> <p>Trustees are reminded to send their completed record of visits to the Clerk for retention.</p> <p>LW reminded Trustees that for link visits the first point of contact in the secondaries is the Trust Director. For primary LW will link with SM to handover.</p>	All
		Ensure all Trust websites are fully compliant	Website compliance is delegated to the Audit and Risk committee and will be an agenda item for the meeting on 21 st March 2025.	WM
		Confirm Spring Census completed in all schools	WM confirmed that the Spring Census had been completed and submitted for all schools in the Trust.	
		Ensure compliance with regards to each school keeping admissions and attendance registers, in accordance with regulations	LW and MV confirmed compliance with statutory attendance and admissions registers being maintained in all schools in the Trust.	

		<p>Theme: Building Trust Capacity</p> <p>Priority: Sound service and financial base allows the exploration of further opportunities</p> <p>Priority: Outstanding Governance and Leadership</p> <p>Priority: Clear and effective School Improvement Strategy</p>	<p>LM noted that the Trust Growth Strategy had originally been produced around 4 years ago. The Green Paper at the time had indicated that every school should form a Trust, or should join one, with at least 10,000 pupils or 10 schools. The Green Paper did not then become approved and the guidance was removed.</p> <p>Every Trust should have a Growth Strategy which should be reviewed. It was noted that Trustees had previously agreed that it was not planned for Laurus to grow to around 15,000 pupils and to become too big. The Trust currently has just over 9000 pupils and has 12 schools and 4 sixth forms.</p> <p>Considerations for growth within the Trust include: Alignment with the Trust vision and values, A secondary school in the LAs we already operate in, A primary school two form entry and a feeder into one of our secondary schools, No compromise to the quality of Laurus Trust education, 30 minutes driving range between all schools.</p> <p>It was noted that opportunities for growth have stabilised at present. Initially it was unknown as to the new Government direction of travel on Academies. Schools are now being asked to join a strong Trust. The Secretary of State for Education has indicated the wish to consolidate for schools to be part of Trusts.</p> <p>At the last meeting Trustees had discussed how they felt about growth. The Trust had been offered an insignificant amount of funding to take on a secondary school which was currently in special measures, but had to walk away from the opportunity due to financial capacity.</p> <p>TL and DK had met with A Law to discuss Trust Growth and also the position on Reserves. It was agreed that growth opportunities should always be considered, but not at any cost. 15,000 students would be the maximum target by 2030. AL is very keen on growth, to benefit as many children as possible, but should always be carefully considered.</p> <p>In terms of Reserves, the Trust has a Reserves Policy, which is compulsory to have, and is set by Trustees. It is a challenge to meet the policy terms of 5% of GAG being held as Reserves. The current position is much lower, and although there is a 3 year recovery plan in place, it will not reach the 5%. AL doesn't believe in</p>	
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		<p>holding high levels of reserves and believes cash balances should be made to work. AL believes that 1% is sufficient, and that LFET would consider financial assistance for bids for funding for growth or specific projects.</p> <p>LM asked Trustees if they would be happy to keep reserves at 1%, and to have to make difficult decisions ongoing?</p> <p>Q – What does 1% represent? A – This is currently £0.5m, whereas 5% would be £2.5m.</p> <p>In terms of the Management Accounts for year to date, the in-year performance is where we would wish to be, this will change as the government have removed funding which we previously received and we are yet to see the impact of the National Insurance increase. In reality there is a 0.5% rise in funding due to rolling together of various grants.</p> <p>Q – If the reserves held were 1% as opposed to the agreed 5%, would this mean we were able to call on LFET support? A – Yes, but only for the right reasons and projects.</p> <p>Q – 5% seems high, but 1% seems too low, what do the DfE say? A – There is no specific guidance, you are challenged if you have 20% reserves, but 5% seems to be the industry standard.</p> <p>Q – What about cash balances? A – The cash balances are healthy at present due to funding we are holding for specific projects. There is always the salary bill every month and associated payroll costs.</p> <p>SM raised concerns of the situation if AL were to withdraw support at any time and the reserves amount was low, whilst acknowledging the difficult decision to be made.</p> <p>Q – Is there a Trust plan if AL was no longer a donor? A – In terms of funding of specific salaries, this is done with a full funding agreement and cannot be withdrawn. We would discuss in advance any agreements coming to an end. There are also posts we would not continue with if AL support was to come to an end. We would need to review what we could</p>	
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		<p>comfortably offer.</p> <p>Currently the potential Teacher pay award is 2.8% and this is proposed to be funded by efficiencies, this would mean we may have to look at further cuts.</p> <p>Trustees enquired of a discussion in the past, where another Trust was interested in joining Laurus Trust, and was there any progress on this direction? It was noted that this was not an option at present, but an issue which may need to be revisited again in the future. Trusts may not particularly be on offer unless failing, and if this was the case the Laurus Trust do not currently have financial capacity or resources available to do so.</p> <p>Trustees felt they had sufficient information to understand the reserves position at present. SMC asked WM to document the posts which were funded by LFET for the next Finance and Resources meeting in July.</p> <p>TL asked LM to give an overview of growth opportunities at present for the benefit of Trustees. LM confirmed that the only secondary schools on offer via the DfE are failing schools, which will need significant investment to turn around. There is still some interest from primary schools, but most have been one form entry schools.</p> <p>Resource Base provision is an area of growth at present. A Resource Base is between mainstream and specialist provision. For students 50% of their time is in mainstream lessons and 50% in the Resource Base, funded by the LA. It has been agreed with Stockport LA to increase the Resource Base places at Priestnall and also to explore reopening the Resource Base at Hazel Grove High. There is also consideration being given to opening Resource Bases at other secondary schools, in negotiation with the LAs. There is also the possibility of Resource Bases at primary schools, again this is in the early stages of negotiation with the LA.</p> <p>There is also the possibility in the future, of Woodford Primary School being extended to become two form entry.</p> <p>Q – How does it work for schools who express an interest to join the Trust?</p> <p>A – There is a proforma for initial due diligence, and this would then come to the Trust Board for an initial</p>	<p>WM</p> <p>LM</p>
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			<p>decision, and a sub group of Trustees set up, to be able to proceed any further, and with caution. LM agreed to send the decision-making framework to Trustees for information.</p> <p>The initial approach tends to come from Chairs of Governors to register their interest. It was noted that a large number of secondary schools are already academies, and are part of a MAT.</p> <p>The Priestnall journey so far was discussed and the school improvement process. How will we succeed, and how does this translate into specific actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear culture of universally high expectations of staff and students • Constantly strive for excellence in every domain • Focus on the development of powerful knowledge, with an emphasis on student attainment and an emphasis on staff professional learning <p>The four stages of the process include stabilise, repair, improve and sustain.</p> <p>In September 2023 the school was at the stabilisation stage. Systems were not functioning in school and there was no strategic direction in place. The key was the calm and reassuring leadership focussing on the key priorities, including behaviour and routines, the building, external support and roles and responsibilities. Trust Directors were in school with departments in a horizontal way, and looking at curriculum and pedagogy.</p> <p>By January 2024 it was agreed by the Head of School and Executive Head that the school was coming out of the stabilisation phase. This leads to conversations with the wider SLT and underpins the priorities. It is also important to note that even if something is not listed as a priority, it does not mean it is not taking place. It is vital to review the priorities in order, and refer back to regularly.</p> <p>In the Autumn term of 2024, it was agreed the school was moving to the improvement phase, where it was possible to start to look forward and not just looking at the present. This can be difficult to articulate to the team and to move forward. It is vital that SLT are onboard and leadership becomes more proactive.</p>	
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			<p>Q – What about the academic aspect? A – The school has the highest KS2 data of the Trust secondary schools. The school was in need of repair but the academic metrics did not reflect this. In the past the good KS2 data did not translate to outcomes at KS4.</p> <p>Q – What is the biggest achievement at the school? A – At present, the shift in mindset of some staff, and also the students. Most staff are open to the opportunities for professional learning and CPD.</p> <p>Trustees were pleased to receive the update on Priestnall school and the progress made since joining the Trust.</p>	
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3	Educational performance and staff performance management	Educational performance	<p>LW drew Trustees attention to the impact of CSPS on the primary data, including EAL numbers, to clarify the percentages due to the small pupil numbers. Diversity information was included for CSPS and HGPS.</p> <p>Pupil mobility numbers were discussed. At HGPS a number of the pupils are children of NHS staff.</p> <p>GLD at Reception was reviewed, and it was noted that at HGPS that work was being done to increase the % of pupils achieving GLD.</p> <p>In September 2024 at 3-year Writing Strategy has been implemented in all primary schools, and links back to EAL and SEND. There is also an Oracy Project in the primary schools and a SEND network has been set up.</p> <p>Trustees had no further questions on the primary educational performance data presented.</p> <p>DW presented the secondary schools' data. At all schools the headline measure for 9-5, including English and Maths, was above national average.</p> <p>Q – At PRS why is the EBacc figure so low?</p> <p>A – GCSE in MFL in year 9 has not yet taken place. This will take a couple of years to reflect at the school. There has been a low uptake of languages at KS4 at the school. This therefore impacted on the EBacc entry.</p> <p>In terms of Progress 8 the national average is 0.03, and at CHHS is 0.86.</p> <p>The IDSR is a 28 page document which is compiled for each school. The purpose of the report is for the inspection team to read in advance to obtain an overview of the school. LM had requested a summary report of the data for all Trust schools. The percentage of where the schools sit in the country is the second figure contained within the data. Trustees noted that the green on the report signifies above average.</p> <p>Q – Could you turn this data into a success story to attract prospective parents and staff?</p> <p>A – It is an internal exercise only. There is a website available, called Compare Schools, and this is being increasingly being used by parents/carers. We have links to Compare Schools on our school websites.</p>	
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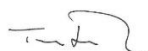
		Staff performance	<p>The Enhanced Professional Review proforma, and Appraiser guidance, were circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Appraisal process is always about the development of the teacher and the support staff. The documents have been updated to break down the pathways, this is key. A review is done at the start of the academic year, and again at a mid-way point. Staff do not require data to quantify the content, and staff work hard to meet their pathway.</p>	
4	Financial performance	Financial Oversight	<p>Management Accounts to December 2024 are in the files for Trustees to view. The in-year position is where we would expect to be at this point in the year.</p> <p>Points to note for Trustees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In real terms the funding increase is only 0.5% as lots of supplementary grants have been included in the GAG • There is a proposed 2.8% pay award for teachers, and when pay progression is factored in this could be 6% • NI costs have increased and this is not fully funded at national level, it is expected to be funded in the region of 85% but this will not be confirmed until March • Income is not fully confirmed until the end of February • On first review it is expected the gap in funding to be in the region of £3.5 – 3.75m • Curriculum plans are under close review in all schools • Looking at opportunities to increase income and also at opportunities for growth 	

		Update on cleaning contract following tender process	<p>An external consultant was used to ensure compliance for the tender process. There was a good number of responses to the invite to tender, and in the week prior to this meeting 3 companies had attended to present their proposal.</p> <p>Following a detailed consideration process it has been decided to remain with the incumbent provider. They have good quality management and processes already in our schools. Priestnall will now also be included in the contract, and any new schools ongoing.</p> <p>Trustees <u>approved</u> the decision for the cleaning contract to be awarded to TLC, following the thorough tender process.</p>	
		Capital projects approvals	<p>Capital projects would normally be for consideration by Finance and Resources, but due to the timings of the meetings have been brought to the Trust Board for approval.</p> <p>Approval is sought for further expenditure for the proposed extension at LCH and CHPS. This project is fully funded from third party funding.</p> <p>Additional tasks are required in order to progress the project to the planning stage, including site investigation surveys, planning fees, and building control fees, at a cost of £22.500 plus VAT.</p> <p>Trustees <u>approved</u> the additional expenditure to progress this project.</p>	
5	AOB	Agree the plan for Trust Board Meeting 4	The plan for Trust Board meeting 4 will be delegated to the Governance, Oversight and Standards committee.	

		Head of School at CHPS appointment	<p>Trustees were updated on the recruitment process for the Head of School at CHPS.</p> <p>School visits have taken place to visit the shortlisted candidates in their own schools. Panel interviews will be taking place at the Trust offices. There will then be a day spent at CHPS which will include a range of activities with children, staff and HOPS. A formal interview will then follow and will include Chair of AC and also Primary Link Trustee.</p> <p>It was discussed that this was a very important appointment and that, if necessary, there would be time to advertise again if there was not a successful candidate.</p>	
		Approvals at this meeting:	<p>Trustees approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norris Bank Primary School to join the Trust from 1st September 2025 4 policies – Safer Working Practice, Grievance, Laurus Grace Referral, Fit to Study Cleaning contract for all Trust schools to be awarded to TLC Additional expenditure of £22.5k to progress to planning stage for extension to LCH/CHPS 	
6	Meeting dates	Meeting dates to note:	<p>TBM4 – Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 10.00am</p> <p>TBM5 – Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 10.00am</p> <p>Please could Trustees advise the Clerk, at the earliest opportunity, if they are unable to attend a meeting.</p>	

Impact of Meeting / Key Outcomes
Trustees received PDC training
Trustees approved 4 policies
Link Trustee roles and responsibilities were reviewed and new appointments made
CFO confirmed the Spring Census had been completed in all schools
Confirmation received for compliance in statutory attendance and admissions registers
Trust growth capacity reviewed
Trustees were updated on the Priestnall journey so far
Trustees reviewed educational performance in both primary and secondary Trust schools
Appraisal process and documentation was reviewed
Trustees approved the decision to award the cleaning contract to TLC, following tender process
Trustees approved capital project for school extension costs
Head of School appointment process for CHPS was reviewed

Meeting closed at 12.00pm



T Little
Chair of Trust Board
07.05.2025

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