

The Priestley Academy Trust – Trust Board

Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 24 January 2022, at 18:00-20:00
Venue	Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Andrew Bruce (AB) Ros Garside (RG) (Chair) Abid Hussain (AH) Ashfaq Rahman (AR) Steve Wadsworth (SW)
Others in attendance	Michael Horrocks (MH) – Chief Finance Officer (CFO) Michael McCarthy (MMc) – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tracey Parry (TP) – Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Chair	Ros Garside
Clerk to Governors	Charlotte Heap – Clerk and Projects Officer
Papers Circulated	Minutes of previous meeting 13 December 2021 School Improvement Strategy CEO Report CFO Report COO Report PAT Trust Board Skills Audit Report

The meeting commenced at 18:02.

The Chair opened the meeting, and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
36/21	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received from Mathew Atkinson – Director of Learning and Achievement. The Clerk advised the meeting was quorate.	
37/21	Any other business and requests for Agenda order variations The CEO raised the Trust Board skills audit report as an item to be discussed under 47/21.	
38/21	Declarations of interest for Items on this Agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	
39/21	Minutes of the previous meeting The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 were approved as a true record subject to the amendments below. As this was a virtual meeting the minutes were not signed but agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.	Clerk (Done)
40/21	Matters arising from the Minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda Item 27/21-Resourced provisions – The CFO reported Green Lane has worked on allocating their staff along the different provisions. The CFO will calculate the effect of the staffing on the contact ratio.	CFO

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

	<p>Item 27/21-Attendance strategy – The CEO confirmed the attendance strategy has been written. The first attendance network meeting scheduled had to be postponed due to staff attendance caused by COVID-19.</p> <p>Item 27/21-Safeguarding – AH confirmed he had written a report on his safeguarding visits to each school. AH will forward the report to the Clerk for forwarding to Trustees.</p> <p>Item 29/21-CEO Report – RG noted there was a typing error on page 4, paragraph 6, the first sentence should read “AR stated the national attendance figure was 96.3% in December 2019 pre COVID-19, and 91.5% for primary schools on 6 December 2021 as the figure quoted in the CEO report is for all schools, including secondary schools.”</p> <p>Item 32/21-GDPR Training – New links to the GDPR training have been sent to Trustees who have not yet completed the training. Trustees are to contact the COO if they experience any issues accessing the training.</p> <p>Item 32/21-Health and Safety audits – The audits will be reported to the Trust Board at the next meeting to be held on 28 March 2022.</p> <p>Item 32/21-Attendance strategy – The Board noted a typing error on page 7, paragraph six, the first two sentences should read “An Administrative Assistant has been <u>appointed</u> at Westbourne Primary School. The Pupil Progress Leader vacancy at Westbourne has <u>been</u> filled by a teacher from Green Lane.”</p>	<p>AH Clerk</p> <p>Clerk (Done)</p> <p>Trustees</p> <p>COO</p>
41/21	<p>Chair’s Correspondence and Actions</p> <p>The Chair reported that the schools are temporarily closing on Wednesday afternoons because of the number of staff absences due to COVID-19. This action had to be put in place very quickly.</p> <p>The CEO reported that at the Headteachers’ meeting held on 21 January 2022, the Headteachers had asked that their thanks be passed to the Board for allowing the Wednesday afternoon closures. Two schools would not have coped and would have had to close parts of the school without this. The schools feel they are being supported by the Trust. This has been successful for the reputation of the Trust, as schools have continued with education, and this has been much appreciated.</p> <p>Ofsted reports were shared with Trustees prior to the meeting regarding two schools in North Yorkshire, one being a full inspection and one a monitoring visit.</p>	
42/21	<p>School Improvement strategy</p> <p>The CEO reported that the draft strategy document was to give Trustees a first sight of some of the strategy documents the central team are working on and to show the style of report. The school improvement strategy was the first strategy to be drafted and was the starting point. Other strategies will be available over time.</p> <p>The school improvement strategy is set out to show what will be achieved. There are six key themes for the Trust. There is five-year detail and an overview of what will be done straight away.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

	<p>The school improvement strategy document fits into the Trust improvement plan. The plan details the actions, to be carried out by whom, and led by, the resources and the impact this will have.</p> <p>Once all the strategy documents are complete, they will be looked at each year to see what will be done the following year. The other strategies being prepared include: operations, estates, digital, HR and finance.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was a Trust evaluation to inform the plans. The CEO reported that the schools have self-evaluations (SEF). The plan has been written using the knowledge around the table, looking at Ofsted and school improvement, and taking key themes from Headteachers. Ofsted targets are missing, for example for reading which is a priority, which will form a more specific school improvement plan. There is not an overall SEF as yet for the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees stated they could see the priorities, but raised that they did not know why these were the priorities for the Trust. Trustees know what the KPIs are, asking how long will it take to achieve that outcome. The CEO reported this would be difficult to capture and would be a huge strategy document. This is about what to focus on.</p> <p>The CEO has spoken to the CFO. It would be difficult to link the real indicators for each year, but a way could be found to do that, but these can change dramatically if there is too much detail in the plan.</p> <p>Trustees queried the outstanding curriculum, the school improvement visits impact and intent and asked how the curriculum is going to be developed across all the schools.</p> <p>Attendance is in the strategy, this is a key priority for the Trust and needs more development. The Trust Board wants specific actions as to what good attendance looks like. In light of the community the Trust serves, where does developing character, Oracy and reading come in to the quality of the curriculum? The CEO reported the school improvement groups begin in year one. The network meetings take place and start to bring out the detail. However, this has been difficult recently due to staff absence due to COVID-19 and making sure staff have the time. The attendance network meeting that was scheduled did not take place due to staff absence. A lot more of the detail is given in the table included in the school improvement strategy report (pages 11-17).</p> <p>What is the curriculum going to look like for the pupils in our schools and the hands-on experiences? The opportunities for the disadvantaged and pupil premium (PP). The offer may be right, but that does not mean children will receive outstanding experiences. What is the look and the feel of the teaching that brings the curriculum to life? What is that needs to be different to meet the needs of the children?</p> <p>Trustees' understanding is that it is harder to get outstanding; is beyond outstanding achievable or unrealistic?</p>	<p>CEO DoLA</p>
--	---	---------------------

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

	<p>The CEO commented that outstanding has always been a measure from Ofsted, but it is about what the Trust feels is beyond outstanding for the children. The plan is about a strong offer for the children, it is not always regarding an Ofsted judgement.</p> <p>Trustees queried other areas of the improvement strategy, such as CPD, safeguarding, raising aspirations. The Trust improvement plan will make more sense once all the individual strategies were added as the strategies are all linked together.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there were leaders in our region that could be approached for advice. The Trust is working closely with the Local Authority (LA) and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC).</p> <p>How is a regionally outstanding reputation measured? When schools are interested in joining the Trust. Where schools ask for the Trust to support their school. Where PAT schools are schools of choice in terms of staffing, how many applications are received and staff retention. The number of pupils on roll; there are a number of children who have moved but travel to school because of the offer from that school.</p> <p>The Trust has been asked to work in North Yorkshire to support the schools and give school improvement advice. The Trust is open and honest. It is about being clear as to what the Trust stands for and that reputation.</p> <p>It was agreed that the school improvement strategy would be discussed in more detail at the next School Improvement Committee meeting to be held on 28 March 2022.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CEO for the document. It was agreed the document is a draft but the discussion was useful.</p>	
43/21	<p>CEO Report Attendance</p> <p>The CEO reported there is a significant issue with staff absence due to the impact of COVID-19. Pupil attendance has also been affected. The average pupil attendance for the week commencing 17 January 2022 was 89.4%. Lilycroft and Westbourne have seen significant drops in attendance. Atlas and Green Lane have had some improvement in attendance. Attendance is comparable to the latest national figures. The attendance figure has dropped below the national average, but this will balance over time.</p> <p>The persistent absence at Margaret McMillan is 24%; staff are persisting hard with attendance. There have been some staff changes to support attendance. The Director of Learning and Achievement (DoLA) is working with the attendance lead to look at what is working in schools where persistent absence is lower.</p> <p>Is the absence all down to COVID-19? The vast majority of pupils are off due to COVID-19. If a child gets a cold they may be off for one or two days. Currently if they get a cough they are awaiting testing and staying off. Some families are not testing. There have also been some stomach bugs, but COVID-19 does include coughs and sickness, so their time off is being extended.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

	<p>The figures for staff absence have changed over the last week. The Wednesday afternoon school closure system that has been put in place has been really important. If this was not put in place the SEND 1:1 support would have had to change and the children would have struggled.</p> <p>Atlas had to close a couple of classes temporarily as the Early Years pupil teacher ratio was affected. It has been a very difficult time.</p> <p>Does something need looking at for Margaret McMillan staff and pupil absence? Are there some underlying issues?</p> <p>The pupil persistent absence needs to be focused on. The number of staff absent is currently 22. There is a large staff at Margaret McMillan, but it has been disproportionately hit. The CEO has discussed staff absence with the Headteacher and the school has pushed to make sure education is continued.</p> <p>There have been 65 staff absences across the Trust at all levels. The Trust needs to recognise what the staff have done every day. It is a challenge day by day, waiting for telephone calls to then be able to plan.</p> <p>The CEO to say thank you to staff on behalf of the Trust Board in the staff newsletter to be sent out week commencing 31 January 2022.</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Schools are seeing an increasing number of families who are struggling to put food on the table and not being able to cope due to not being in work. There has been an increase in domestic violence. Headteachers have put support in place, and have done all the right things that should be done.</p> <p>Is the staff support and training still relevant?</p> <p>If there is an issue, staff take it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the Headteacher, DoLA and CEO. Headteachers speak to the DoLA and CEO. Guidance is referred to, or the LA is referred to.</p> <p>The DSL's training does cover everything. Supervision is available to talk through all the areas. It is not the training, but the severity of the situations, so supervision will take the anxiety away.</p> <p>SW asked if there were any statistics for the Trust Board to see as there is an increase?</p> <p>The data is there, but this is extremely difficult as there are complex issues at the moment.</p> <p>The Chair agreed this was a sensitive area. There are systems to record the numbers but it is difficult as it is a sensitive issue.</p> <p>It was agreed that there are key themes to report, the most recent issues that schools need to be aware of. The number of referrals does not need to be reported to the Trust Board, different boards do different things. It was agreed the key statistics were to be reported to the School Improvement Committee to be held on 28 March 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO</p>
--	---	-----------------------

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

	<p>The CEO reported details of pupil progress will be given to the School Improvement Committee for discussion.</p>	
	<p>At present progress is hard to fact check by the DoLA and CEO. Data is hard currently as it is teacher assessment and there are staff absences. All Trusts report the same. What one teacher may say can be different to another teacher.</p> <p>Data will be presented to the next School Improvement Committee meeting to be held on 28 March 2022.</p> <p>Something about the assessment process could be brought to the Trust Board. Some of the assessment processing is currently being standardised. The Trust needs to make sure it is worth while data. Teacher assessments cannot be moderated.</p> <p>Is there anything the Board needs updating with regarding to PP? The report to the School Improvement Committee will include all the groups. The COO will make sure the data packs are correct to show what the data looked like pre-pandemic to compare the difference.</p> <p>It is a challenge, but what is being done to mitigate the challenge. The Board needs a flavour of what is happening across the Trust. Reading is a big issue. There needs to be time to respond and intervene. How is the money being used to plug the gap? What does it look like from a child's point of view? What are the teaching and learning outcomes? The CEO will send an overview to Trustees to give an idea where pupils are and the data drop dates.</p> <p>Is stakeholder feedback being gathered? A company has been agreed and questionnaires are being finalised. A data picture will be provided.</p>	<p>CEO to reconsider report headings</p> <p>CEO</p>
<p>44/21</p>	<p>CFO Report The CFO reported that since the schools reported their budgets to the ESFA in July, the budget plans have developed. Lilycroft held an extra ordinary LGB meeting on 15 December 2021 for governors to approve a revised budget. Margaret McMillan are to hold an extra ordinary LGB meeting on 25 January 2022 for governors to approve a revised budget. Atlas, Green Lane and Westbourne are going ahead with LGB meetings to be held in March 2022 to discuss their budget.</p> <p>The current unapproved in-year forecast for 2021/2022 for each school is: Atlas has an in-year surplus of £48,977; Green Lane has an in-year deficit of £61,700, but the Headteacher is working on projects; Lilycroft has an in-year deficit of £108,476; Margaret McMillan has an in-year deficit of £397,232 and Westbourne has an in-year surplus of £37,521. Central Office has an in-year surplus of £22,155. The in-year deficits for Green Lane and Margaret McMillan are not a concern as the schools are doing one-off projects and drawing down on reserves.</p> <p>The schools have put in budget plans, but for building works it is difficult to get contractors to quote if they are not going to do the work and COVID-19 is impacting on contractors. The figures are in the schools' budgets, but the project work may be pushed forward to next year.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

What is the appropriate level of reserve for the Trust and each of the schools and how is this being achieved?

The constant is one month of salary, approximately 6-7% of the General Annual Grant (GAG) plus on costs. Anything higher than 10% is too high and anything lower than 5% is too low.

Are schools being encouraged to spend reserves, and what are the reserves being spent on?

The schools are being encouraged to reduce their reserves. The CEO and DoLA are supporting schools, with support from the CFO. Headteachers are coming forward with their plans to show how it fits in with the development in their school.

The CEO reported that schools should not have an in-year surplus of more than £10,000. The reserves are to be spent on transformational ideas for the children now to make the best progress.

The schools are in line with the KPI benchmarking data; they did used to be out of sync. However, the schools do still fall below with contact ratio. Some of the pupil teacher ratio is due to COVID-19 work. If, for example, Green Lane had a contact ratio of 7.8, Green Lane would need four fewer staff. However, the figures for the specialist resourced provisions (RPs) does have an impact on the contact ratio figures.

AB asked what is being done to sort the out the under capacity in schools.

The CEO reported there is a marketing strategy, and the CEO has spoken to the Headteachers regarding their own marketing plans to fill the pupil places. There has been some positive movement at Green Lane.

Gender pay gap report

The Report is similar to last year. There are 13% male staff and 87% female staff in lower quartiles. It is not representing the lowest pay. Administration positions and Teaching and Learning Partners (TLPs) tend to be predominantly female employees.

There are additional apprentices this year. Apprentices come in at a lower rate of pay at £3.00-£4.00 an hour. Ten of the eleven apprentices are female. The Trust has a target to meet, but one scale is tipping the other. The higher paid male staff are the CEO and DoLA positions at the top of the scale.

What is the succession plan to change the position of white men at the top end of the Trust?

The CEO reported this is part of the recommendations in the development strategy. The Trust would like to work on this. 7% of males in the positions in the lower quartile is low. The Trust also needs to increase that figure. The Trust needs to find ways to have more diverse groups applying for the jobs.

AR stated that women do not negotiate salaries, adding that there are strategies available on the gov.uk website to close the gender pay gap: <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/actions-to-close-the-gap/promising-actions>

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

45/21	<p>COO Report Policies The COO reported comments had been received from Trustees regarding the policies that were due for ratification.</p> <p>AB queried the policy process during the meeting. It was agreed further discussion would take place. Ratification of the policies was delayed on this occasion.</p> <p>Third party breaches. The COO has not received a response from either of the two LAs and will continue to chase them for a response.</p> <p>Health and safety (staff) There has been a reduced number of reportable injuries and a reduction in the number of violence to staff reportable incidents.</p> <p>Subject access request One subject access request has been received regarding SEND. The school did not respond to the parent within the timescale. The parent has not taken this further. The COO has spoken to the Headteacher to ensure the school is compliant and the COO has offered additional support.</p> <p>Staff training The Central Team monitor the training for first aid and safeguarding. Training was scheduled. However, due to the number of staff absences in schools this has had to be postponed. The Trust has it in writing that the training will stay in place due to the current situation. Training will be rescheduled when the staffing stabilises.</p> <p>Marketing School photographs and marketing videos have been postponed due to staff absence. The videos will be rescheduled for after the February 2022 half term.</p> <p>Catering Pupil meal selection in classrooms was due to go live on 25 January 2022, but it has been agreed to delay this until after the February 2022 half term due to delivery issues. The Trust would like to make the experience as good as it can be for pupils. A care package is being put together for those pupils who are on Free School Meals (FSM) and off school due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Trust IT There have been no level three or five forensic monitoring alerts since the last meeting.</p>	COO/ Chair/ AB to meet
46/21	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by Item 43/21.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022

<p>47/21</p>	<p>Any other business referred from item 37/21</p> <p>Skills audit The CEO thanked the Clerk for her work on the skills audit report. The report shows the scores. The lower scoring areas, areas for development, have been highlighted in red and the development opportunities available online are included in the report for Trustees to look at the CPD opportunities if it is felt this is needed. There may be a number of Trustees experienced in a certain area and further development may not be needed.</p> <p>The information can also be used to pinpoint where to look for new Trustees.</p> <p>The Chair stated that the Clerk needed to draw the Trustees' attention to where are real gaps. It would be useful to know where there is little experience or skill.</p> <p>Finance The CFO raised that currently for orders over £5,000 schools must obtain three quotes. However, building contractors are reluctant to quote for work that they are not going to carry out.</p> <p>The CFO proposed that the threshold of needing three quotes for orders be lifted from £5,000 to £10,000 for building works temporarily until 31 August 2022. The threshold would revert to £5,000 from 1 September 2022.</p> <p>Trustees agreed to temporarily lift the threshold of requiring three quotes from £5,000 to £10,000 for building works until 31 August 2022.</p>	
<p>48/21</p>	<p>Dates of the next meetings The dates of the next Trust Board meetings are: 28 March 2022, 23 May 2022 and 18 July 2022. Meetings to start at 6:00pm.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone and for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 20:16.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Ros Garside

Date: 28 March 2022