

The Priestley Academy Trust – Trust Board

Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 18 July 2022, at 18:00-20:00
Venue	PAT Head Office
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Andrew Bruce (AB) (attended virtually) Ros Garside (RG) (Chair) Abid Hussain (AH) Ashfaq Rahman (AR) Steve Wadsworth (SW)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Director of Learning and Achievement (DoLA) 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 23 May 2022 and 13 June 2022 93/21 CEO Report 94/21 FAR sub item investment plan 96/21 COO Report 97/21 HR and Payroll tender services 98/21 RSE Briefing Paper for Trust Board July 2022 100/21 Governance paper 101/21 Staffing Paper Energy Review

The meeting commenced at 18:01.

The Chair opened the meeting, and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
87/21	Apologies for absence and their acceptance No apologies were received. The Clerk advised the meeting was quorate.	
88/21	Any other business and requests for Agenda order variations AR raised a discussion on the future Chair. MH raised energy prices.	
89/21	Declarations of interest for Items on this Agenda The CEO declared that his fiancée has previously worked for one of the HR companies to be discussed under Item 97/21.	

Signed: *S.S. Wadsworth*

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 26 September 2022

<p>90/21</p>	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2022 were approved as a true record.</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2022 were approved as a true record subject to the amendment below.</p> <p>Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.</p>	<p>Clerk (Done)</p>
<p>91/21</p>	<p>Matters arising from the Minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda Item 71/21 – The CEO reported that regarding the governance review, the TCaF funding had not yet been agreed.</p> <p>Item 73/21 – The COO confirmed the IT ticket analysis had been uploaded to the intranet for Trustees to view.</p> <p>Item 84/21 –A typing error was noted, ‘Chari’ should read ‘Chair,’ and that the election of Chair and Vice Chair is missing from the current agenda.</p>	<p>Clerk (done)</p>
<p>92/21</p>	<p>Chair’s Correspondence and Actions The Chair reported that since the last meeting AR and herself have reviewed the Performance Management for the CEO for this academic year. This was a very positive meeting.</p> <p>The CEO stated he had been very well supported through the Performance Management process. He has not been this well supported in the past. It is not just about challenge and support, and his development, but it is to do right by the children and that is a strength of the process.</p>	
<p>93/21</p>	<p>CEO Report The CEO reported that the School Improvement papers cover what had been discussed at the School Improvement Committee meeting held on 18 July 2022, as this is to do with data and attendance.</p> <p>Miriam Lord were due to convert on 1 September 2022. However, there may be a delay to the conversation due to land registry issues. The Local Authority (LA) have actioned what they needed to.</p> <p>Work with Glusburn Primary School has come to an end. The CEO and DoLA have met with the incoming Headteacher and she recognises the amount of work that has been done. The DfE would fund a ‘try before you buy’ and this has been put to the Headteacher who is interested.</p> <p>The work in North Yorkshire comes to an end on 21 July 2022. The CEO thanked the DoLA, Holly Whyte, Jo Marwood and James Routh for their work in North Yorkshire. This work has enhanced the work and reputation of the Trust.</p> <p>It was noted from the report there were senior leaders leaving and the key risks. Two senior leaders from Green Lane have been appointed as Head of School at two other Trust schools. There are secondments coming to an end and the leaders are coming back into schools and the Headteachers are to manage how these leaders fit into their teams. This has caused some instability across the group.</p>	

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	<p>AR noted that the instability in many ways is positive in terms of changes that have been made to leadership and the opportunities that have been created. The change can be seen as a risk but it has given the opportunity for Headteachers and leaders to lead.</p>	
<p>94/21</p>	<p>FAR Committee Report</p> <p>JA, as Chair of the Committee, reported the Committee discussed the budgets for 2021-22. These are more in line with expectations. Most of the schools are in deficit but this is not unexpected. The schools have a reserve of £2.6m overall which is within what is allowed to be carried forward.</p> <p>The budgets going forward and the three-year forecast for 2022-23 to 2024-25, were discussed in detail. AB sent an email with his comments and these were also discussed. Most of the schools have a small in-year surplus or a deficit to start with, but it is difficult to evaluate the income and expenditure in the projected budgets in two or three years' time. With that in mind, the FAR Committee agreed these budgets. Action will be taken by senior management to address the budgets going forward if issues remain.</p> <p>The budget for Green Lane was not approved by their Local Governing Board as the LGB meeting for Green Lane was not quorate. The LGB meeting for Westbourne could not be held before the FAR Committee meeting. It was agreed an email would be sent to the Governors at Westbourne to ask for any comments. The CFO and Clerk confirmed an email had been sent and no questions have been received. These budgets were therefore approved by the Trust Board.</p> <p>The Trust Board approved the schools' budgets for 2021-22 and the schools' forecast budgets for 2022-23 to 2024-25.</p> <p>The internal auditors have picked up some minor points during visits two and three, regarding expenses, no signed contract in an HR file and the CEO's credit card payments need to be approved. Procedures have now been put in place for this to be done.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the investment policy in detail and approved the policy. The Committee has given authority to the CEO and CFO to organise how the money will be invested.</p> <p>The CFO added there is £900,000 in the cashflow to cover the day to day running and £400,000 for capital works, leaving £2.4m to invest. The CFO's tabled investment plan sets out the proposal for separate amounts to be invested for different periods.</p> <p>Following discussion, Trustees queried the length of investments for 30 days to 12 months; particularly investing for 12 months as interest rates are increasing. Therefore, in the long term the funds may get a better rate of interest if invested for a shorter period of time.</p> <p>Trustees supported the proposal and agreed that funds can be invested up for up to six months fixed term, but not for 12 months as more interest should be gained over time.</p>	

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	<p>Would the money be needed or reinvested? If the money is not needed this year it can be reinvested.</p> <p>The FAR Committee approved the following policies: PAT Financial Reserves Policy v3.0, PAT Fixed Assets and Depreciation Policy v5.0, PAT Gifts and Hospitality Policy v2.3 and PAT Statement of Accounting v2.0.</p> <p>The Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Equity and Diversity and Charging and Remissions policies are to be ratified by the Trust Board under Item 96/21.</p>	
<p>95/21</p>	<p>School Improvement Committee Report</p> <p>AR, as Chair of the School Improvement Committee, reported the Committee had asked at a previous meeting for an overview of the schools and this was positively received in terms of the school improvement visits. The focus of the school visits, and the School Improvement Committee meeting, changes depending on what term it is. This meeting's actions were around attendance, curriculum and preparing for September 2022.</p> <p>The Committee looked at each school and spent significant time reviewing the outcomes. The outcomes are mixed. There is a dip at Key Stage (KS) 2 from 65% to 59%. A number of the Trust schools were higher and some lower. There is some concern regarding greater depth across the schools. Green Lane is not performing as well and this is down to low aspirations and how to secure these outcomes. The Committee discussed what is needed to develop these aspirations.</p> <p>The quality of the curriculum was discussed. The schools did well in reading, writing and maths, but when combined the results are not as good as the individual subjects and the match across subjects needs to be improved. Leaders spoke about is needed to improve over the next academic year.</p> <p>How do the Trust schools compare to rival schools in the same environment? That is difficult to answer as it is unknown how rival schools have done. The Trust schools are inline with some local schools, and other schools have performed better than the Trust schools. Leaders know the results have come in where they were expected. Leaders are working with Headteachers to improve outcomes and will do some forensics on the data. Schools are developing their own curriculum, therefore there was a discussion as to whether a Trust curriculum intent is useful to have to set the Trust's overall vision. On reflection, the CEO supported this suggestion.</p> <p>The CEO and DoLA have spoken to Headteachers across all the schools to make sure the curriculums are ambitious and what the Trust goals are. There are some good things going on across the Trust and good practices are being shared.</p> <p>The Chair of the Trust Board agreed it is really important to compare the schools to national as the key set of data, as we have high expectations for the children. It is about having high aspirations.</p> <p>What do parents look at when choosing a school? Parents ask are their children going to be happy and the Ofsted grading is a big driver.</p>	

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	<p>The schools are looking to make sure they are inline and above. The Trust uses the Fischer Family Trust as a benchmark to compare the performance of similar students in the top 20% (FFT20). This is an aspirational target for the schools. This has to be looked at with caution coming out of the pandemic but it is nevertheless a good benchmark for the future.</p> <p>The Committee was pleased with the KS1 data for Years 1 and 2 phonics. Overall the work leaders have done has had an impact. Two phonics schemes are being used across the Trust. Westbourne's results have dropped as they have been slow to implement a new phonics scheme this year. In contrast, Lilycroft has had a real gain. Atlas' KS1 data for writing is low, however, the central team explained this was due to the moderation. However, the Headteacher does not wish to appeal this. It is the moderator's point of view that the writing was too scaffolded, but it was right for these children. There is a big piece of work to be done for the 'class of 2026' to make sure they achieve highly and the gaps are narrowed to make sure these children are secondary school ready.</p> <p>The DoLA has put together a review paper on reading. The outcomes at KS2 this year show that the focus on reading has had an impact. The schools have individual programmes. There has been some positive work on reading and it is a key facet to continue to develop that. A reading strategy across the Trust was discussed. The Committee is pleased with the work that has been done regarding reading.</p> <p>The Committee asked for the data to be broken down into SEND, PP and tutoring and for this to be picked up at the next School Improvement Committee meeting.</p> <p>Attendance overall across the Trust is above the national average. The figures are really positive and are a reflection on the work being done in the schools. Where the figures are lower the Committee has probed. There has been a number of long-term absences and one school has lost their Attendance Officer. The Committee is pleased with the work that has been done on attendance.</p> <p>The Committee approved the PAT RSE Policy v1.2 as there have been no changes to the policy. The PAT SEND Policy will be approved in the new year as there are some amendments from the Trust SENDCos.</p> <p>The Committee asked for their thanks to be passed onto Headteachers and staff for the work they have done this year. It has been a difficult year on the back of the pandemic. The team has worked hard together for the outcomes for young people.</p>	CEO
96/21	<p>COO Report</p> <p>The COO reported there is a key risk regarding some of the hot water boilers. The COO is working on a contingency plan with the Estates Officer.</p> <p>What are the grounds for refusing the CIF bid for the hot water boiler?</p> <p>It does not have to be justified. One decision has been appealed, but we have kept trying. The boiler now needs to be replaced.</p> <p>The T&A continues to support the Trust and has written two more articles, another one is being written. The COO will try to keep sending things to the T&A.</p>	

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	<p>There will be a new suite of GDPR training available from 1 September 2022. Trustees will receive a link via their PAT email to access the training. There are four modules to the training.</p> <p>Since the last report, there has been one GDPR breach. There was no need to escalate this to the ICO. A letter was given to the wrong parent. This was brought back into school straight away and there was no need to take it any further. The Headteacher has reiterated that when handing out documentation this must be done with care.</p> <p>There have been 32 reportable injuries, but none of these require further action. The COO confirmed she has taken advice from the Health and Safety Consultant as to what needs a form completing. The COO has listed in the report what does need to be reported and schools have been informed of this. Therefore, there should be more consistency across the schools going forward.</p> <p>There have been four reportable incidents of violence to staff. No further action is required. There are no concerns, these are SEND pupils and staff are trained to deal with this.</p> <p>One complaint has been received at Stage 1 and no further action was required.</p> <p>A recruitment campaign for Heads of School at Lilycroft and Westbourne was successful. There have been 18 requests to recruit forms admitted since the last Board meeting covering various positions across the Trust and these have been approved.</p> <p>Photographs and videos for each school have now been done. These had been put on hold to make sure all schools had them done as they wanted. These can be used to market the schools and be put on their websites. Green Lane are rebranding to change their logo and signage.</p> <p>Another pupil feedback session has been held with Mellors. The children enjoyed this and they provided good feedback and suggestions. Mellors try to do what they can, but meals do have to have a nutritional element. More pupils are now having school lunches. No notice kitchen audits have been done across the schools and only minor actions were raised. All actions from the previous audit have been completed.</p> <p>There are various buildings works to be completed over summer. The Estates Officer will oversee this.</p> <p>Since the last meeting there have been seven e-safety alerts which have all been dealt with appropriately. The COO has been updated as to what has been done and there are no concerns.</p> <p>Regarding the Health and Safety injuries, Westbourne stands out with 22, is something happening?</p>	
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	<p>The COO reported this is why she has asked for clarification. Westbourne are reporting correctly. Other schools are not reporting everything. There is a delay as to when the COO receives the reports. It is important all incidents are reported correctly, especially to do with head injuries, even if there is no broken skin. Hopefully there will be more consistency across the Trust going forward.</p> <p>AR stated he had noticed during his visit that there has been a lot of work done at Green Lane. The environment keeps improving. Orchard House is a wonderful space for young people, it is transformative.</p> <p>What is the reason Trustees need to keep doing the GDPR training? If for any reason anything was to happen and there was a breach, the first question asked is does the organisation do annual GDPR training. Anything can happen by accident.</p> <p>AR has completed GDPR training and it was agreed he would send a copy of the certificate to the COO.</p> <p>The three policies brought forward from the FAR Committee to be ratified including: PAT Anti-Fraud and Corruption v2.0, Equity and Diversity v2.0 and Charging and Remissions v3.0, were discussed and approved by the Trust Board.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the following policies: PAT Financial Reserves Policy v3.0, PAT Fixed Assets and Depreciation Policy v5.0, PAT Gifts and Hospitality Policy v2.3, PAT Statement of Accounting v2.0. and PAT RSE Policy v1.2.</p>	AR
97/21	<p>HR & Payroll services tender</p> <p>The current payroll provider's contract expires at the end of October 2022. Five submissions were declined; the current provider due to significant problems, another as they were the most expensive. Three companies were invited to tender, however, one declined as they do not have the capacity. A working party including the central team executive group, Headteachers and Office Managers was put together to discuss the needs from the school. The working party agreed to recommend to Trustees: DataPlan for payroll, Fusion HR for HR consultancy and SAM People for HR administration.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CEO for his declaration and agreed it was not a direct interest.</p> <p>Following discussion, the Trust Board approved the recommendations for the HR and Payroll services.</p>	
98/21	<p>Policies Covered by Item 96/21.</p>	
99/21	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by Item 93/21 and 96/21.</p>	
100/21	<p>Governance Paper The Chair confirmed she has received an email from the Local Governing Board (LGB) Chair of Atlas, Green Lane and Westbourne of his intention to step down.</p> <p>What actions should we be taking? The CEO reported an extension to the Chair of Governors at Westbourne and Green Lane to help in the short term. A governance review needs to be agreed.</p>	

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	<p>There are some strong LGBs. Margaret McMillan's LGB is particularly strong with Governors being involved. Green Lane has a risk in that the one Governor who could be Chair does not want to be Chair. The other Governors are new. The CEO has spoken to the Headteacher regarding finding new Governors. The Board has previously discussed other Governors coming to the end of their term going onto another LGB. However, not all Governors wish to do that.</p> <p>The remits of the Boards need to be looked at and the delegated powers. Miriam Lord are to join the Trust in September 2022 and their LGB is strong.</p> <p>In the short term the LGBs need to be allowed to co-opt more governors and in the long term the Board needs to consider the outcome of a governance review.</p> <p>The Chair suggested senior leaders within other schools may wish to gain experience and development opportunities and relationships could be built with other schools.</p> <p>The Board agreed the recommendation to increase the number of co-opted governors on the LGBs for Lilycroft and Westbourne to four.</p> <p>The Board also agreed that as there are to be two vacancies on the Trust Board and recruitment was needed, as well as two Founder Members. Strength is needed at every level. Therefore, an action plan was needed to recruit more Trustees and Governors, particularly educationalists.</p> <p>It was agreed the CEO would email the Founder Members.</p>	CEO
101/21	<p>Staffing – Confidential</p> <p>The CEO raised an item regarding staffing that was discussed without staff members present. This was clerked by a member of the Board and recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
102/21	<p>Any other business referred from item 88/21</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>The CFO reported there are issues around energy prices and he has done some research. The current gas contract ends in January 2023 and the electricity contract ends in February 2022. Going to tender could increase the costs by £712,000 at today's rates. The figures are stark and are increasing. If the Trust is to wait until January 2023 the contract rates will be higher. But if the Trust is to move quickly, the CFO cannot come back to the Trust Board later for approval as the rates are changing so fast. The DfE are not going to give any more money out as there are reserves across the school sector. The DfE has done a survey but feedback is there is no movement.</p> <p>The Board agreed this could wipe out the schools' reserves or cut the offer to children.</p> <p>What increase would there be for a 12-month contract today? Can the CFO get that figure? Are we within the cap?</p> <p>The current rates are included in the energy review document. If the contracts were fixed today, they would not start until the current contracts end. The forecast figures are the worst-case scenario.</p>	

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	<p>What is the advice from brokers? To fix now. Historically prices increase in winter. The prices the CFO has been given are the same as what other financial directors are being quoted. One broker has given more information and is offering a mid-term review for if rates fall. If the contract is fixed for two years, at six months this can be reviewed and the Trust can fix again for a further two years if the rates have fallen.</p> <p>When is a decision needed to be made by? This week to secure this price.</p> <p>Following discussion, Board agreed the CFO has done some research and has checked with other trusts. They would like some flexibility in the contract. The deficit will have a huge impact on the schools' budgets. The contract is to be fixed with the option to be reviewed if the rates fall. The CFO is to ask for quotes from the broker offering this flexibility and to finalise the decision with the CEO and senior executive team.</p> <p>Future Chair The CEO reported that the current Chair has stated she wishes to step down from the Board from 31 August 2022. A formal thank you is to be made at the next meeting on 19 September 2022.</p> <p>The Vice Chair, AR, thanked RG for all her work and support. He has worked with RG for a number of years.</p> <p>The Vice Chair asked for nominations from the Board for Chair. AR added he has enjoyed working with the CEO as Vice Chair but he could not offer further support as Chair due to commitments of his own position as CEO at Nova Education Trust.</p> <p>SW put himself forward, adding that although he is a new Trustee he is enthusiastic and would like to be involved in driving the Trust forward.</p> <p>AH, seconded by AB, proposed SW for Chair. The Board unanimously agreed the election of SW for Chair.</p> <p>RG thanked the Board, stating there was a phenomenal amount of experience in the room and she has enjoyed working with everyone. RG thanked the central team and Headteachers without whom the Trust would not be possible. She personally thanked JA for his support from the start of the Trust.</p> <p>The CEO thanked SW for putting himself forward as Chair to have that continuing support. A formal handover will be done at the meeting in September 2022. RG offered to meet with SW and the CEO prior to that meeting for a handover discussion.</p>	CFO
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Signed: 

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103/21	Dates of the next meetings The dates of the next Trust Board meetings are: 19 September 2022, 5 December 2022, 30 January 2022, 20 March 2022, 5 June 2022 and 17 July 2022 Meetings to start at 6:00pm. The Chair thanked everyone and for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 19:55.	
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Signed: *S.J. Wadsworth*

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 26 September 2022