

The Priestley Academy Trust – Trust Board
Company Registered Number: 10410830

Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 5 June 2023 at 16:15
Venue	PAT Head Office
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) (attended virtually) Ruby Bhatti (RB) (attended virtually) Alex Hallam (AH) John Hinchcliffe (JH) Peter Lambert (PL) (attended virtually) Ashfaq Rahman (AR) (attended virtually joined the meeting at 16:31) Steve Wadsworth (SW) Jason Walsh (JW)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Director of School Improvement (DoSI) Michael McCarthy (MMc) – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (attended virtually) Tracey Parry (TP) – Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Chair	Steve Wadsworth
Clerk to Governors	Charlotte Heap – Governance Professional and Projects Officer
Papers Circulated	Minutes of previous meeting 20 March 2023 CEO Report External governance review of local governance COO Report PAT RSE Policy v1.0 Governance paper Terms of Reference – Local Governing Boards (LGB)

The meeting commenced at 16:15.
The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
57/22	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received and accepted for Sarah Bradley. The Clerk advised the meeting was quorate.	
58/22	Welcome to new Trustees The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. As six of the new Trustees were present, introductions were made. JW suggested a list of acronyms would be useful. The Clerk is to put together a glossary and list of acronyms to send to Trustees.	Clerk
59/22	Any other business and requests for Agenda order variations No other business or changes were given.	

Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 17 July 2023

60/22	Declarations of interest for Items on this Agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	
61/22	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 were approved by the Trust Board as a true record. Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.	Gov Prof (Done)
62/22	Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda Item 51/22 – The CEO stated extra information and additional figures are to be included in the Gender Pay Gap Report. Is the Trust in a good place regarding gender pay gap or do you keep pushing this? There are challenges as the gaps are widening. The vast majority of lower paid staff are female. The intention is to include more equity across the Trust. Item 56/22 – Can the date of the next meeting please be confirmed as it is listed on the Agenda as 18 July 2023? The Governance Professional confirmed this is an error and the next Trust Board meeting is to be held on Monday, 17 July 2023.	
63/22	Chair’s Correspondence and Actions The Chair reported he had attended a forum on strategy and the Chair’s role, dealing with relationships within a trust and what a thriving board should look like. The Chair will share the slides from the forum. The Trust held a Chairs’ Forum with the Local Governing Board (LGB) Chairs to share challenges, opportunities and experiences. The next Forum is to be held on 11 July 2023. Training was raised and suitable National Governance Association (NGA) training modules were discussed and information sent to Chairs. The Chair meets with the CEO monthly and during their last meeting, had a tour of Margaret McMillan Primary School and saw the new play area.	Chair
64/22	CEO Report The key risks are highlighted at the start of the report. Actions have been added regarding mitigating the risks. The claim for mis-sold energy brokerage, is that the recent deal that was made? It is regarding the current contract the Trust is in, the small print is different to the information given by the broker regarding the agent’s fees. References have been taken and the ‘no win, no fee’ checked. One of the risks you have referenced is the lease for the current head office and as a consequence you may move into a school. Wherever the CEO holds office, that becomes the head office. Therefore, if the central team decamped in a school, would that make that school the most important? Would it be good to hold Board meetings in each of the schools, if there was room, to be able to see the schools? Would that give that opportunity? The CEO suggested that two schools could be visited in an afternoon and the Board meeting held at the second school visited. The CEO and Chair are to speak to Headteachers and put some dates forward.	CEO/ Chair

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	<p>Discussion regarding the risks around recruitment, improving outcomes and growth is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p> <p>Regarding attendance, the national attendance figure is 94.1% for primary schools. Should the attendance figures not be compared to the national figure rather than other schools in Bradford?</p> <p>The national figure is where the Trust wants attendance to be. However, there is a specific context to Bradford and the extended leave requests. It is important to know where the schools in the Trust are in that local context.</p> <p>Bradford attendance is lower than the national but in terms of aspirations we should be looking beyond that. How can you learn from those where attendance is higher? What is the driving force going forward? What help do you need to be put things in place to improve attendance?</p> <p>The attendance network group involves every school attendance lead. However, there have been some vacancies. The network group is working together to learn from best practice within The Trust, Bradford and nationally. It will be small gains to start with but there have been some improvements.</p> <p>It was agreed the strategy for attendance would be discussed at the next School Improvement Committee meeting be held on 18 July 2023.</p> <p>There have been some issues in terms of workforce absence but improvements have been made. The right conversations have been held to make sure the right mechanisms are in place.</p> <p>In terms of staff attendance rates where are you trying to get to? If you have been forcing some attrition, where do you want to get that back to? It would be useful have a benchmark.</p> <p>It was agreed this was an action for the CEO.</p> <p>The outcome of the governance review is that local governance is not strong enough. Not all of the LGBs have the right skills and depth of knowledge. The recommendation regarding finance training is not the route we are proposing to take. We are looking to recruit more governors but it is clear we need to do something different. The proposal is that school budgets are approved at Trust Board level, not at LGB level. The Headteacher would continue to be the budget holder and make decisions with continued support from the central team, to make sure the budget fits with the school improvement plans. The scrutiny, challenge and signing off would be at Trust Board level.</p> <p>How would you involve the local governors? It is a really important part of auditing. Would you have a finance person to talk to the governing board and governors have some sort of ownership to make them aware of what is going on?</p> <p>At the moment this is not happening at local level. The LGBs would be asked to concentrate on community and school improvement, however, they would need the context and the budget information would still be made available to the LGB to give an understanding.</p>	<p>SI Committee</p> <p>CEO</p>
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	<p>Other trusts do not have LGBs, it is about the communication in the scheme of delegation and getting that right for LGBs to feel part of it. LGBs would have the awareness and that communication would continue.</p> <p>To what extent would local governors be marginalised? How will this affect the schools you are trying to bring on board? Also, as the Trust grows and the number of schools increases how will this be managed? There may be an element of marginalisation. But this has had to be done for two schools already as their budgets were not signed off at LGB level as their meetings were not quorate. Therefore, it is more procedural. The Headteachers will still have ownership of their own budgets. The Trust Board will be holding them to account. This does present some issues as the number of schools increase, but the new CFO will present the budgets and highlight the key risks. This is done at other trusts and it is manageable.</p> <p>The Trust Board agreed the recommendation to change the Scheme of Delegation so that the Trust Board approved the school budgets.</p>	
65/22	<p>COO Report The COO reported the main key risk is the unsuccessful Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids. The works total £786,000, the main bid being for updating the heating system at Lilycroft Primary School. Lilycroft is a Grade II listed building and English Heritage will not allow the pipes to be boxed in, therefore, these need to be replaced. The unsuccessful bids will be appealed. Schools have to put in a percentage and Lilycroft stated it would put in, was ten percent. Other schools have put in higher percentages and these bids have been successful.</p> <p>Over the last couple of years, the schools in the Trust have been very successful and have received a lot of funding. If the appeal is not successful, a contingency plan will need to be put in place.</p> <p>With the levelling up agenda and the issues with buildings and estates, is there any funding available that can be bid for? The new CFO will be looking at external funding. As the estate is so big, the local authority (LA) condition surveys are still commissioned for each school. A list has been created from each condition survey and uploaded to the intranet to be able to see what needs to be done and to get economies of scale.</p> <p>As Lilycroft is a Grade II listed building and if the pipes need doing, is there some other funding to try for you to maintain this historic building and to retain money for pupil outcomes? We do look at other funding and we will put in an appeal. However, because there is CIF available it is a struggle to get external funding. When the Trust grows by one more school, the Trust will be eligible for School Capital Funding (SCF) of £100,000 per year, but this will not cover everything that needs to be done. Therefore, growth taking the Trust over the threshold for CIF bids and the estates, becomes a very important conversation.</p>	

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	<p>Do you know why the CIF bid has not been successful this year? Only a small percentage of schools are awarded the funding. Some schools have committed to putting in a higher percentage of money towards the cost. A meeting is to be held with the consultant to discuss the reasons why this was unsuccessful. A Health and Safety report was submitted with this bid.</p> <p>What is the success rate going back a second time? What are the chances of being successful? This is not the second time a bid has been put in for the heating at Lilycroft. The heating system is a health and safety issue. There have been instances in other schools around the country where a pupil has got their hand stuck in piping and got burnt.</p> <p>Previously an investment policy has been discussed and Trustees agreed this. With interest rates going up and the money in reserve, has the interim CFO picked this up? The investment platform is ready to go but this is currently on hold. The interim CFO has not yet picked this up as she is 0.4 and is currently preparing for the audit.</p> <p>What is the size of the reserve that you have? The percentage target is set by Members. Some schools are over that limit. The reserves are different from school to school.</p> <p>Other key risks include cyber-attacks. IT continually looks to improve the infrastructure and perform dummy exercises. There were 24 attempts during May 2023 to log into an account from Sweden. The system blocks these. All staff have done cyber training and Trustees will have to undertake this training.</p> <p>Is it an external organisation that you work with for IT? Yes, the IT manager and IT technician support four schools within the Trust and the other two schools have their own IT technician. They all work together to maintain the system.</p> <p>Can we see the percentage risks? Yes, IT have done some work on scenarios and phishing. The COO will share this information when it is available.</p> <p>In terms of IT, the DfE is running a programme called Connect the Classroom for wifi in schools and all six schools have been successful in gaining the amounts bid for. The work will take place during the school summer holiday. The improved wifi and fibre should make a big difference.</p> <p>The tender has gone out for cleaning and five submissions have been received and evaluated. Three companies have been shortlisted to give presentations. The presentations are on 12 June 2023 and Trustees were invited to attend the presentations if they were able to attend.</p> <p>The outcome will be reported to Trustees and the new contract for cleaning will start on 1 September 2023.</p>	COO
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66/22	<p>Policies The RSE Policy has been reviewed by the RSE networking group and there has been no change to the policy other than the review date and version number.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the PAT RSE Policy v1.3.</p>	
67/22	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by Items 64/22 and 65/22.</p>	
68/22	<p>Governance Paper The CEO proposed a new MAT Development Committee to look at growth and due diligence. The COO processes the due diligence for the Trust. Due diligence was very thorough and successful for Miriam Lord. The terms of reference for this Committee are to be drafted and agreed by the Trust Board.</p> <p>The Trust Board agreed the new MAT Development Committee was a good idea.</p> <p>Membership of the existing Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee, School Improvement Committee and new MAT Development Committee was discussed.</p> <p>It was agreed the Governance Professional would circulate the terms of reference for the committees and Trustees will reply by email as to which Committee they wish to be part of.</p> <p>The Local Governing Boards do not have a terms of reference and this has now been drafted for Trustees to approve.</p> <p>The Trust Board agreed the terms of reference for the Local Governing Boards.</p>	Gov Prof Trustees (done)
69/22	<p>Any other business referred from item 59/22 There was no other urgent business discussed.</p>	
70/22	<p>Dates of the next meetings The date of the next Trust Board meeting is: 17 July 2023</p> <p>Meetings to start at 16:15</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone and for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 18:33.</p>	

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