

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


Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 17 July 2023 at 16:15
Venue	PAT Head Office
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Sarah Bradley (SB) (joined the meeting at 16:19) Alex Hallam (AH) John Hinchcliffe (JH) (joined the meeting at 16:41) Peter Lambert (PL) Steve Wadsworth (SW) Jason Walsh (JW)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Director of School Improvement (DoSI) Michael McCarthy (MMc) – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tracey Parry (TP) – Chief Operating Officer (COO) Lindsey Vollans (LV) – CEO, One Excellence Multi Academy Trust Laura Wilkinson (LW) – Finance Officer
Chair	Steve Wadsworth
Clerk to Governors	Charlotte Heap – Governance Professional and Projects Officer
Papers Circulated	Minutes of previous meeting 5 June 2023 CEO Report External governance review of local governance COO Report Cleaning tender Business case for Trust insurance PAT Equality, Equity and Diversity Policy v3.0 PAT Early Years Foundation Stage Policy v1.0 Governance paper

The meeting commenced at 16:15.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. Introductions were made as Lindsey Vollans was observing the meeting as the CEO of One Excellence Trust and this was Sarah Bradley's first meeting as a Trustee.


Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
71/22	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received and accepted for Dr Ruby Bhatti and Ashfaq Rahman. The Clerk advised the meeting was quorate.	
72/22	Any other business and requests for agenda order variations No other business or changes were given.	
73/22	Declarations of interest for items on this agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	

Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 2 October 2023

74/22	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2023 were approved by the Trust Board as a true record, subject to the amendment below.</p> <p>Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.</p>	Gov Prof (Done)
75/22	<p>Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda Item 62/22 – Amendment – following discussion it was agreed the sentence regarding the Gender Pay Gap Report should read, ‘The intention is to include more equity across the Trust’. Item 64/22 – The CEO confirmed a benchmark for staff attendance rates will be included in his report from September 2023. Item 65/22 – The COO confirmed there was no update regarding phishing scenarios as this was on going. An update will be shared with Trustees once this is available. A percentage can be brought up for the number of phishing incidents, however, the cost to the Trust for this percentage would be £20,000. The work being done by the Trust’s IT is regarding dummy phishing emails, following training around many different scenarios. This work is of more value to the Trust than paying for a percentage. Software is on the system to deal with phishing emails. Trustees agreed that if it goes wrong, the cost is the Trust’s reputation, but the testing must be done in a cost-effective way.</p>	Gov Prof (Done)
76/22	<p>Chair’s Correspondence and Actions The Chair had no correspondence to report. However, he did report he had been involved in the recruitment panel for the positions of Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Headteacher.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated the CEO and executive team for the two national awards the Trust has won, thanking the team for their efforts.</p>	
77/22	<p>CEO Report The CEO reported the key risks had changed since the last meeting.</p> <p>Discussion regarding the risks around Headteacher recruitment and growth is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
	<p>Regarding pupil attendance, a normal week averages at 94.7%. During Eid, however, attendance was 62.4%. Some children get a day for religious observance and to balance out days to make sure children are not being marked absent. The DfE has contacted the Trust regarding attendance. However, the DfE only provided links to their documents on improving attendance and were not interested in the narrative behind the attendance data. The information provided by the DfE was of no further support to the Trust but the contact was an important part of the Attendance Lead’s personal development.</p> <p>What support would you have hoped for? Link advisors can provide support. It would have been useful for the DfE to understand the context and ask questions about the data. To ask the Trust to justify why attendance is lower and to look at impact it is having. Different wording was offered to say to families but this would not provide the desired impact.</p>	

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This would have been a good opportunity to work with the local authority (LA) as the DfE allow schools to take a pupil off roll if they have left the school but not found a place elsewhere. Bradford LA will not allow schools to take anyone off roll until they have found another school place.

How does the Trust's attendance compare with the rest of Bradford?

The Trust's attendance figures compare well with Bradford. The schools do support families, for example Atlas Community Primary School have admitted four new pupils that live in another part of Bradford and members of staff transport these pupils too and from school. The schools do go above and beyond.

If the children with medical needs are taken out of the attendance figures and those families that go abroad, the average attendance figure for the Trust is 96%. The national average is 94%. Therefore, the Trust sits above the national average. The children that go abroad cannot be taken off roll.

Is attendance different to pre-Covid?

No, the strategies used are stronger and attendance has improved over the last three or four months. Persistent absence has remained the same and it does vary depending on flight prices.

Is there other benchmarking data?

It is the same picture across Bradford. Schools in other LA's can take children that have left off roll but Bradford will not allow this. Therefore, it is very hard to compare the attendance.

Why do Bradford not allow schools to take pupils off roll?

This is from a safeguarding point of view. There is no given rationale. The CEO networking group has offered to pay for a person in the LA to help with attendance and safeguarding but the LA does not intend to do this and safeguarding has to be done at school level.

What is the negative impact to the Trust when attendance is down?

Low attendance can affect reputation. The Advisory Board will look at attendance when considering growth. Therefore, it is important that the narrative is evident. The Trust's link person on the Advisory Board does understand the narrative.

Do you have the opportunity to move half term holidays to mitigate attendance during Eid?

Academy trusts do have the flexibility to set their own term dates and holidays. For the academic year 2023/24 the Trust has moved some of the training and occasional days to try to fit in with Eid. The dates for Eid do move year on year. The Trust has moved the Easter holiday to a week later and set an occasional day on 17 June 2024. However, moving holidays does impact on staff and their childcare. The central team has looked at the term dates for Bradford, Calderdale and Leeds to try to reduce the impact. A large proportion of staff live in Leeds.

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If this is a problem, could Bradford align their term dates with other locations, then it is not just the Trust?

Bradford set the initial term dates and the Trust has looked at other trusts. However, trusts all do different things to allow for religious reasons. The Trust wishes to be transparent and provide a narrative.

The Trust has appointed a new CFO to start on 1 September 2023. The CFO is very excited to be part of the Trust. She currently supports other trusts to address financial issues as an interim CFO. She has the right skill set. An end point has been agreed with the current interim CFO and she will complete the audit work and ESFA submission.

The Estates Officer has agreed to stay for another year. The recruitment to the Estates Officer position will be difficult. As the Trust grows by one more school, the schools will not have to apply for condition improvement fund (CIF) bids; therefore, this will change things significantly. The funding will then come in centrally and the Estates Officer position becomes a different job. The COO will work with the Estates Officer to look at the liabilities.

The addition of one more school will change that?

The CEO confirmed yes. The Trust has successfully received £1million in CIF bids, however, the CIF bids this year were unsuccessful. The bids are not at a high enough required level now to be on the list of successful bids. One more school will change the funding format.

The Trust has successfully won two national awards, the Trust Executive Team of the Year award at the 2023 MAT Excellence Awards in London. This award is about all the leaders in the schools and the CEO noted his thanks to all leaders across the Trust. The second award is regarding the Trust's values and the way the Trust works for the communities in Bradford. The Trust is the voice of the community and is very proud of this and to achieve the Excellence in Education award.

At the last Board meeting, the challenge to increase pupil numbers was discussed. These awards are a massive opportunity to do some PR work. Has this been considered?

The COO reported that there is an article in the T&A and this has been shared across all the Trust's social media platforms. A line will be included in all recruitment advertising going forward.

Does the local community have other social media outlets or other papers this information can be included in?

The COO confirmed there are other papers and social media sites and conversations have been started. The COO has spent a number of years building a relationship with the T&A. The Trust does have social media accounts to help increase pupil admission.

Can job advertisements be placed alongside this article?

The news articles are not paid for, they are written and included by the T&A and it could be up to two months before they are printed in the paper. The Trust has done paid articles, for example a thank you in a short time scale.

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The CEO thanked LV for providing an example of the One Excellence Multi Academy Trust's Scheme of Delegation. The new draft Scheme of Delegation and minor finance changes has been well received by the Local Governing Boards.

The Trust Board formally approved the new Scheme of Delegation to be adopted from 1 September 2023.

The DoSI reported that for teacher training the Trust has used Exceed Schools, or taken students from Bradford College and Leeds Trinity University. From September 2024 the Trust would like to start its own hub with Exceed's school centred initial teacher training (SCITT) scheme. The training provider would be Exceed but The Priestley Academy Trust would be responsible for recruiting students and aims to recruit ten students to start in September 2024, three of which will be apprentice teachers whose training will be paid for by the apprentice levy, four students will be on a salary and three unpaid. The aim is to grow this to up to 30 students. This is a successful route to grow your own. Westbourne Primary School have had 75% of their student teachers via SCITT. The Trust would like to start the recruitment process from 1 September 2023.

The risk will be financial as there will be no income for the SCITT until the students are recruited. There will be an amount the Trust has to put forward in advance to start this process, for example designing a logo and advertising. The budget will come from the central team. The other risk is capacity and time. There is an initial lead at Westbourne and that person has capacity with some time from the central team.

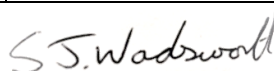
How long are the Trust and students tied in for?

It is a year to start with. It is hoped the students will be trained to be kept within the Trust after their initial training. It is up to the student. It is a good way of succession planning and for supporting middle leaders to being middle leaders and senior leaders in schools.

Regarding special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), for a child with identified needs an application is made to the LA to access an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP has funding attached based on the child's needs. Section F of the EHCP details what provision the child should have to meet their needs and support them to make progress. The provision is for health as well as education, as the child may have health needs included in the plan. However, section F of the EHCP is not totally funded. The cost of a member of support staff to provide 100% support for a pupil is £22,000 with on costs. The funding received is approximately £6,000, plus £6,000 of national funding, therefore, the total amount of funding received is £12,000 towards the cost of a member of support staff. The pupil may also require a wheelchair, or a support from the Speech and Language team.

The Trust has identified huge underfunding across the schools. This has become a bigger issue with budgets reducing. Therefore, in January 2023 the Trust commissioned a SEND Consultant to work with the SENDCos to look at the costs of the provision outlined in section F of each EHCP. Following this, the Trust has agreed to challenge the LA initially on behalf of Atlas. The Trust has still not formally received a response to the initial letter. The LA SEND Lead has met with the Trust for an emergency review meeting and offered £70,000 for eleven of the pupils.

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2 October 2023

	<p>The SEND Lead has offered to hold an emergency review meeting for the other five schools across the Trust to uplift the funding.</p> <p>As no formal response has yet been received to the initial letter, the Trust has appointed a solicitor, Stone King, to address the funding gap. The funding will be recalculated in September 2023 as some pupils will have left and others will have joined. In line with the Trust's morals and values, the provision has to be properly provided for. The Trust has made it very clear it is inclusive and will work with the LA to provide extra SEND provision.</p> <p>Can the underfunding claim be backdated? If it can be proved that there was a change in provision at the last annual review of the EHCP. EHCP's are reviewed annually. The claim can be back dated to this change.</p> <p>The Finance Committee meeting on 10 July 2023 discussed the financial position of the Trust and underfunding, how will this affect budgets? The underfunding will be looked at and what this will do to each school's budget. This will be done when the CFO starts in September 2023.</p> <p>Will key performance indicators (KPIs) be provided? The CEO confirmed KPIs will be provided in September 2023 when the new CFO joins.</p>	
78/22	<p>FAR Committee update JA, as Chair of the FAR Committee, reported that the interim CFO provided an overview of where the Trust is financially. The figures were consolidated not school by school, using a new layout. There are a number of risks. One being the capacity for independent financial analysis at school level. If the Trust is to grow a more robust system should be considered. Another risk is the falling pupil roll number. This will significantly impact the budgets financially. The increase in staffing costs and utilities also has an impact on the budgets as these are not fully funded by the Government.</p> <p>Currently the Trust reserves are forecast at £2.5million for 2023/24. However, into 2024/25 the reserves fall to £1.5million and for 2025/26 they fall further to £300,000. The forecasts are based on current financial knowledge and current scenarios. This gives the worst-case scenario. The executive team will take action to reduce costs. A general election is proposed for 2024, which may put pressure on the Government to provide further funding.</p> <p>Does the Trust do financial planning to look at the worse and likely position? Or is it an advantage to present the worst-case scenario? The interim CFO has based the forecasts on current knowledge, what is to be expected. The position can change. It is a national picture. There needs to be some flexibility from central government.</p> <p>What can be done to address the sharp decline? In private business, swift actions would taken. Staffing will be addressed. As staff leave naturally they may not be replaced. Combined age classes may also be introduced.</p>	

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	<p>Does the Trust need to grow? Growth brings more flexibility; however, this does not help per pupil funding. It will not bring in extra funding. The six schools are situated very close together and are fighting to attract the same children.</p> <p>Would the worst-case scenario normally be presented? Is this something to be concerned about? The interim CFO has presented this as central government will say that as academies have a certain amount in reserves, more money is not needed. Schools need to prove that there is a problem going forward. As the pupil numbers are decreasing the schools are reducing their pupil admission number (PAN) and as a result they are reducing their staffing. The projections are based on staffing remaining the same and with higher pay awards with no funding. This will be mapped out moving forward. The Trust does need to grow. There will be plans put in place when the new CFO is in post. There may be a change in government. The worst-case scenario does need to be presented to the Government. Green Lane is spending a percentage of reserves on improving outcomes in school. The underfunding for SEND is being addressed. In the worst-case scenario, the Trust will still have some money in reserve in three years' time. Some trusts are forecasting a deficit moving forward.</p> <p>Even starting with the legal process with the LA regarding the SEND underfunding, it is still alarming to see the reserves drop. The reserves will drop from £2.5million to £300,000 if nothing is done, but we would never let it come to that.</p> <p>Are there other avenues in the community to bring in other income? A new CFO provides the opportunity to look at income generation.</p> <p>The Trust Board approved the budgets for 2022/23 and three-year forecasts to be submitted to the ESFA.</p>	
79/22	<p>COO Report The COO reported that GDPR training will be updated in September 2023 and all members of staff, including Trustees, will be sent a link to the training.</p> <p>Since the last Trust Board meeting there have been eight reportable injuries, most of which have been members of staff. No further action is required. No advice has been received from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding the previously reported injuries. There have been four violence to staff forms received since the last Trust Board meeting. These involve pupils with one-to-one support. Management plans are in place and there is no further action.</p> <p>Seven requests to recruit have been received by the senior executive team from across the schools. These have all been agreed.</p> <p>A lot of building work will take place over the summer holiday. The Estates Officer is working with schools regarding snagging from the CIF works and refurbishment of the sports' hall at Green Lane. Work regarding Connect the Classroom and fibre funding is also to be done during the summer holiday. This will increase the wifi and fibre runs in the schools.</p>	

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<p>Is the fibre funding through the same scheme? The COO confirmed yes, this also includes a new server for Miriam Lord. This will make a huge difference to the schools.</p> <p>Regarding health and safety and fire audits, the COO will provide an overview of actions required and an action plan to take these forward. The smoothwall level three and level four alerts are from members of staff preparing lessons. The system is very sensitive. The Headteachers deal with any pupil alerts and provide feedback.</p> <p>The Trust's cleaning contract is up for renewal in January 2024. The Trust has undertaken a tender review and presentations have been carried out by three companies. If it is agreed to go against the recommendation to continue with the current provider, notice will have to be given in plenty of time, including TUPE of staff. Enviroserve are the current provider. Following the tender process, the recommendation is to remain with Enviroserve, particularly for the benefit of staff as they would have to TUPE over to a new supplier every three years.</p> <p>Does Enviroserve do a good job? Is there anything that can be done regarding the costs? The tender process cannot be negotiated. Enviorserve provide a good service which does out weigh the cost. One company was very close, but the health and wellbeing of the staff out weighed this. The schools are happy with the relationship they have with Enviroserve.</p> <p>Is the contract for three years? The contract is for three years, with the option to extend for a further two years.</p> <p>Are the costs fixed for three years? The COO confirmed yes but costs are affected by the national living wage.</p> <p>How does the tender compare with current costs? Are the costs within the budgets? LW confirmed the budgets for next year are based on Enviroserve's current costs and they are similar in comparison.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the recommendation for the Trust to remain with Enviroserve for cleaning services. The Chair is to sign to authorise the Schedule of Tender form.</p> <p>There is one year left on the catering tender. The tender process is to start in October 2023.</p> <p>Following conversation, the Trust has always gone with the DfE's risk protection agency (RPA) scheme for insurance. However, a number of insurance companies have started to offer the same level of cover. The COO has prepared a business case proposing to move to Zurich Insurance as there is a cost saving, including the increases over the three year long term agreement. Zurich Insurance provides the same level of cover and this covers what the Trust requires.</p> <p>Is there anything needed to be done regarding the excess? The COO confirmed no.</p>	<p>Chair</p>
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Signed:



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	<p>Does the insurance cover the full cost of the schools being rebuilt? Is £35million sufficient to rebuild? The COO confirmed yes.</p> <p>The cost is over the normal tender limit. The COO has spoken to the auditors who have confirmed that by preparing a business case, the Trust does not need to go through the tender process.</p> <p>Can any down side be seen? Most LAs used Zurich before academisation. Trusts are automatically signed up to the DfE's RPA. The insurance cover from by Zurich would provide a saving.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the option to proceed with Zurich Insurance from September 2023 on a three-year long-term agreement that would fix the price per pupil.</p>	
80/22	<p>Policies The COO reported that the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy had been shared with executive team and Headteachers and the only updates were the version level and review date. The Early Years Foundation Stage Policy is new and has been shared with the executive team, Headteachers and the Trust's Early Years networking group.</p> <p>Is there data to measure equality and diversity? When an application form is received, this data has to be removed before the shortlisting process. The information is kept separately and the information can be drilled down to provide data.</p> <p>Is this available for all employees? The Trust has a new system for recruitment. The data can be gathered in the background to keep diversity.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy v3.0 and the Early Years Foundation Stage Policy v1.0.</p>	
81/22	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by Items 77/22 and 79/22.</p>	
82/22	<p>Governance Paper The CEO reported that even though the Trust Board now has nine Trustees there are two vacancies and the Board could grow to 13. An interested candidate is to send in their application form who would be a good addition to the Board. There is support for each Trust Board Committee.</p>	
83/22	<p>Any other business referred from item 59/22 There was no other urgent business discussed.</p>	
84/22	<p>Dates of the next meetings 2 October 2023, 14 December 2023 at 17:30, following the AGM at 16:15, 29 January 2024, 25 March 2024, 3 June 2024 and 15 July 2024</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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