

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

Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 18 March 2024 at 16:15
Venue	Miriam Lord Primary School
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Sarah Bradley (SB) (attended via Teams) Alex Hallam (AH) (attended via Teams) John Hinchcliffe (JH) Peter Lambert (PL) (attended via Teams) Ash Rahman (AR) (attended via Teams) Steve Wadsworth (SW) Jason Walsh (JW) (attended via Teams)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Interim Chief Executive (CEO) Rowena Dixon (RD) – Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
Chair	Steve Wadsworth
Clerk to Governors	Charlotte Heap – Governance Professional and Projects Officer
Papers Circulated	Minutes of previous meeting 29 January 2024 Interim CEO report CFO Report COO Report Governance paper School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist

The meeting commenced at 16:21.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.


Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
54/23	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received and accepted for Ruby Bhatti and Tracey Parry (PAT COO).	
55/23	Any other business and requests for agenda order variations The Chair raised the CEO recruitment.	
56/23	Declarations of interest for items on this agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	
57/23	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were approved by the Trust Board as a true record. Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.	Gov Prof (Done)
58/23	Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda Item 45/23 – The Action for the CFO to look at the costs of supply and paying the real living wage is to be carried forward.	CFO

Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 3 June 2024

	<p>Item 47/23 – Are there no attrition rates for HR prior to September 2023? The new HR system has only been in place since September 2023, therefore there are no figures prior to that but this can be shown going forward.</p> <p>Was this not recorded on the old system? There was no centralised system before September 2023. We would have to go through the management information system for each school to get that information if this data was required.</p>	
59/23	<p>Chair's correspondence and actions The Chair reported he had had various communications with the team regarding the CEO recruitment process.</p> <p>The Chair has met with the Interim CEO to look at any issues and has visited Westbourne Primary School to drill down on the Raising Attainment Plan with the Headteacher.</p>	
60/23	<p>FAR Committee update JA, as Chair of the FAR Committee, reported that the meeting looked at the latest school forecasts. When comparing Autumn to Spring, the bottom line in the forecast shows an income increase of £300,000 but expenditure has increased by £600,000, giving an overall approximate deterioration of (£300,000). The deficit is made up of two parts, £195,000 is expenditure on the schools' Raising Attainment Plans and the balance is due to additional supply staff costs. The meeting raised questions regarding each individual school and their raising attainment plans questioning if funds were being utilised appropriately.</p> <p>Green Lane is one of the largest schools but is high risk due to having much higher supply staff costs. Therefore, the Committee has asked the Executive Headteacher to attend the next meeting on 20 May 2024 to provide an update.</p> <p>The CFO has placed investments with the Insignis platform to provide a return from interest. As interest rates are likely to fall, the CFO was asked to contact Insignis for the latest products available with a view to tying up funds for 12 months, as opposed to six months, to maximise current interest rates.</p> <p>Some of the schools are looking to invest their reserves into estates or IT, this is about managing reserves on short term commitments so that they are not so high. The projected balances have come down in a considered way.</p>	
61/23	<p>Interim CEO report Priority one is school improvement. The School Improvement Coordinator has carried out focused monitoring visits to Green Lane, which has led to an increase in pupil outcomes in Year 6. The School Improvement Lead has started to work through the data from the recent data drop and the School Improvement Coordinator's work has added 11% to the outcomes data for Year 6. Following SATs, the School Improvement Coordinator will then start to work with Year 5 team.</p> <p>The external reviewer, Kate Lounds, has visited Westbourne and the report have just been published. The findings were very positive and this is to go to the next School Improvement Committee meeting on 15 April 2024. There are some next steps for the geography and history curriculums.</p>	

Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 3 June 2024

	<p>Priority two is to fill open staff vacancies. 15 candidates have been shortlisted from the central team recruitment campaign for Teaching Assistants (TAs). Interviews are to be carried out week commencing 25 March 2024. Progress has been made against other appointments across the Trust and it is in a more stable position.</p> <p>How have you achieved the TA shortlisting success? We have used platforms, including a specialist SEND platform, done more advertising and placed adverts on Indeed. The team is very positive about the quality of the applicants; therefore, a number of vacancies should be filled next week.</p> <p>Is this recruitment likely to have a positive impact on the supply staff costs in the medium-term? The FAR Committee meeting discussed part of the overspend being on supply costs, so will this help to reduce this? Yes, the majority of the 14 TA places are currently being covered by supply. We would expect supply costs to reduce if recruitment at TA level is successful in the next few weeks.</p> <p>When will the Board get a view of the data drop results? This information will go to the next School Improvement Committee meeting to be held on 15 April 2024. This report will provide a comparison to the last data drop and progress against targets.</p> <p>Priority three is to work with leaders regarding training particularly on Greater Depth and this will be reported on to the School Improvement Committee meeting on 15 April 2024. More work has been done with leaders on planning. The Executive Headteacher of Green Lane has re-written the school improvement plan for the next four terms and has established a clear leadership team. Eight applications were received for the Deputy Head position, four of which were taken through to interview. There were some very strong candidates, which was very positive. This position will start in September 2024.</p> <p>Priority four was to review the financial element of the Trust. The Trust has invested in a new finance system, IMP and monies have been invested in the Insignis platform which should gain interest of approximately £30,000 to go back to schools.</p> <p>Eleven out of the twelve Priestley Partnerships teacher trainee positions have been filled. A third of these trainees are from within the Trust. It is positive that these members of staff see this as their career path. This will, however, leave some TA vacancies and these will be recruited to in the Summer term to start in September 2024.</p> <p>In Section 2 it states that a number of Trusts are paying above NJC rates for support staff. What are NJC rates? – and are we factoring this into our pay strategy? National Joint Council (NJC) is the national body that defines support staff pay across the country. There are clear criteria of responsibility and role for each scale point. Some Trusts are paying above this to attract staff. We have always stuck with local and national pay conditions. I am concerned that if we move away from the NJC rates we are leaving ourselves open to significant financial risk in the future and would welcome a conversation with Trustees on this matter. There are a number of differences between our Trust and the Trusts paying above NJC.</p>	
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Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 3 June 2024

These would be trust size so they can cope with the increased costs due to scale and also the number of support staff they employ is not as significant as Priestley as they have less children with SEND needs so can shoulder more of the cost. I do agree though we need to do some financial modelling on this to establish the full extent of the cost.

CFO

What is driving the improvement in attendance?

The national average for attendance is 94.6%, the Trust schools are below the national average.

| CEO

Focused work has been done on continuous professional development (CPD) around fluency and the School Improvement Coordinator has done some follow up work. This is now evident in classrooms. When the schools complete the Open University's reading for pleasure programme, Ofsted have given some clear indications as to what that will look like and the School Improvement Lead is currently looking at the data. It is expected that reading will have improved.

There have been changes in Key Stage One (KS1) staffing, one teacher has resigned and one teacher is leaving at Easter. This has meant phonics has not moved as far forward as hoped. Someone will be delivering phonics under the Raising Attainment Plan and new appointments have been made. That cohort has also admitted over seven new pupils who have not had previous schooling.

There is a much sharper focus this year and everything is about teaching outcomes. Outcomes should be higher this year. There was a concern regarding Green Lane but with the work that the School Improvement Lead has done and the full moderation cycle, I feel confident that Year 6 outcomes will be better.

There is a clear action plan for Green Lane but with the risks and costs at Green Lane, is it worth keeping the focus visible and raising this at Trust Board level?

S. J. Wadsworth

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 3 June 2024

	<p>A monthly team around the school has been held over the last 12 months and the School Improvement Committee has asked for a summary to go to the next meeting on 15 April 2024.</p> <p>It was agreed a School Improvement team update would be presented to the School Improvement Committee on 15 April 2024 and then reported to the Trust Board at the next meeting on 3 June 2024.</p> <p>As well as comparing pupil attendance to the national average, is it possible to give a comparison to the average for Bradford or West Yorkshire to provide more context? Yes, the attendance figures for Bradford can be included in the report, including headlines against each school.</p> <p>What is currently the biggest risk? Currently TA and SEND recruitment, I will be much happier next week following the interview process and we are making progress with these vacancies. The SATs outcomes depend on how pupils perform on the day and this is a challenge.</p> <p>The reference to KS2 outcomes is flagged as a key Trust risk but there is no mention of this in the narrative that follows. Also, from the FAR Committee papers, the benchmarking exercise carried out by Rowena suggested that KS2 relative performance was in most cases average and in one case above average. Data meetings are currently being held and we are expecting results to have improved as a result of the Raising Attainment Plan funding but this cannot be quantified at the moment. This will be presented to the School Improvement Committee on 15 April 2024 for scrutiny. The benchmarking presented to the FAR Committee related to 2021/2022 as the Government produce data two years behind the current. Last year's data, if it was available on the DfE website, would show a number of areas below at KS2 for several schools which was down to reading and/or maths. It would be my view that this still remains as a risk for the Trust. Apologies I have not included any narrative in the report for this, I will ensure risks are reflected in the narrative in future.</p> <p>Progress being made against the Action Plan is very encouraging – well done. Thank you, it has been a team effort to move this forward.</p>	<p>I CEO</p> <p>I CEO</p>
62/23	<p>CFO Report The assumptions for the medium-term financial plan will be looked at after Easter. The CFO raised a variant in the Spring term budget for Margaret McMillan Primary School and the structure of the central finance team.</p> <p>Following financial procedures, any purchase over £5,000 needs to be approved by the Trust Board. Due to a recent Forest School incident, Margaret McMillan Primary School wishes to outsource this curriculum provision to an external provider at the cost of £11,000. Margaret McMillan are projecting an underspend in speech and language provision; therefore, outsourcing the Forest School provision will not change the bottom line of their forecast but this has to be brought to the Trust Board's attention due to the value.</p> <p>Further discussion regarding the provision of the Forest Schools is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date:

3 June 2024

	<p>The Trust Board approved the variant to the funds for Margaret McMillan Primary School.</p> <p>Discussion regarding the central finance team structure is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p> <p>The CFO raised the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist as an addition to her update. These are the annual expectations and the Trust assesses the actions for financial governance. This year the Chair of the FAR Committee was involved, as well as the Chief Operating Officer, Finance Officer and Governance Professional.</p> <p>Question 18, pupil numbers, is this questioned during FAR Committee meetings? Yes.</p> <p>Question 24, estates plan and assets, when will the Trust Board have sight of this? This is not ready at the moment, but it is work in progress.</p> <p>Who is putting the estates strategy together? The Chief Operating Officer and Estates Officer.</p> <p>Have they made a start on this? Yes.</p> <p>Do we have a business continuity plan? There is a business continuity plan for the schools but there is no overarching plan for the Trust. This will be addressed in the Summer term.</p> <p>Regarding the budget assumptions for the medium-term financial plan. There are changes to the sector this year and uncertainty with a possible change in government. There is no clarity as to what the support staff inflation may be, teachers' pay and costs such as energy. If Trustees are happy with this, the CFO will proceed with the medium-term plan.</p> <p>Regarding the general annual grant (GAG) funding, the inflation figure is on the high side, should this be pitched at the maximum? Following discussion, it was agreed to reduce this from 1.45% on the previous plan to 1%.</p>	<p>CFO</p> <p>CFO</p>
63/23	<p>COO Report</p> <p>MA reported that the COO asked for two points to be raised, approval of the catering contract and the continuation of Trust's current management information system (MIS) Arbor.</p> <p>Six catering companies submitted a tender, of which three were shortlisted and these presented to the working group. One company was discounted at this stage. The working group had further questions for the two companies that were shortlisted at this stage. Clarification was asked for regarding key performance indicators (KPIs). Reassuring points were given by Mellors, one regarding pupil satisfaction. If pupils are not happy, Mellors will pay back part of the fee. This will ensure quality standards are in place, if these are not in place, the Trust will receive a rebate. The Trust would like to proceed with Mellors.</p>	

Signed:



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Date:

3 June 2024

	<p>Is the data quoted for Westbourne correct, or is that an error? This was questioned, there was a change to a member of staff and this represents a subsidiary. This is different for each school; there is no consistency as some require a higher subsidiary. Red Box provided assurance that these figures are correct.</p> <p>Trustees approved the new catering contract with Mellors.</p> <p>Trustees approved the continued use of the current MIS with Arbor for the next three years.</p> <p>Can the Trust Board have site of the questions from the staff survey? Yes, the COO can send the questions to Trustees. The results will be presented at the next meeting on 3 June 2024.</p>	COO
64/23	<p>Finance Policies for ratification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charges and Remissions v4.0 • Financial Reserves v4.0 • Gifts and Hospitality v3.0 • Risk management v1.0 • Tendering v3.0 <p>The Trust Board agreed the ratification of the finance policies approved by the FAR Committee on 11 March 2024.</p>	
65/23	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by items 61/23 and 63/23.</p> <p>The Governance Professional reported that the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy had been updated with additional text regarding Artificial Intelligence and the sharing of images. This update is to be discussed at the next senior executive group (SEG) meeting on 25 March 2025. The policy will then be sent to Trustees for ratification via email.</p>	Gov Prof
66/23	<p>Governance Paper The Trust has arranged for Ofsted inspection training delivered by an Ofsted Inspector to support governors and trustees for an inspection. This training is to be held on 24 April 2024 at 18:00 at Westbourne Primary School. The form to book onto this training can be accessed via the link below: Governor Training Request (office.com)</p> <p>Regarding Ofsted, is there anything that we could be challenged on or asked? Following discussion, it was agreed a crib sheet for each school with their strengths and weaknesses would be useful for Trustees.</p>	Trustees BH
67/23	<p>Any other business referred from item 55/23 Trustees gave an update on the CEO recruitment, with no staff members present.</p>	

Signed:



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Date:

3 June 2024

68/23	<p>Dates and venues of the next meetings</p> <p>A. 3 June 2024 at Margaret McMillan Primary School B. 15 July 2024 at Westbourne Primary School</p> <p>Trustees are invited to a tour of the school at 14:00 prior to each meeting. Meetings to start at 16:15.</p> <p>Please note the Trust Board meeting on 15 July 2024 still start at 17:30, as it will follow the School Improvement Committee meeting at 16:15.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 18:30.</p>	
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Outstanding actions:

Agenda Item	Action	By who	By when	Completed
58/23	Carried forward: CFO to look at the costs of supply and paying the real living wage	CFO	03/06/2024	
61/23	Financial impact of a 2-3% increase for TAs	CFO	03/06/2024	
61/23	Pupil attendance next steps to be picked up by the School Improvement Committee	I CEO	15/04/2024	
61/23	School Improvement team update would presented at the next School Improvement meeting	I CEO	15/04/2024	
61/23	Bradford pupil attendance data to be added to report to provide context, including the headlines against each school	I CEO	03/06/2024	
62/23	Overarching business continuity plan for the Trust	CFO	15/07/2024	
62/23	Reduce GAG inflation from 1.4% to 1%	CFO	31/04/2024	
63/23	Questions from staff survey to be sent to Trustees	COO	31/04/2024	
63/23	Results of the staff survey to presented at next Trust Board meeting	COO	03/06/2024	
65/23	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy updates to be discussed at the senior executive group (SEG) meeting on 25 March 2025	SEG	25/03/2024	25/04/2024
65/23	Updated Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to be sent to Trustees for ratification via email	Gov Prof	27/03/2024	25/04/2024
66/23	Crib sheet to be prepared for each school for Trustees	BH	03/06/2024	

Signed:

S.S. Wadsworth

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date:

3 June 2024