

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

Minutes and Actions

Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 29 January 2024 at 16:15
Venue	Lilycroft Primary School
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Ruby Bhatti (RB) (attended via Teams) (joined the meeting at 16:33) Sarah Bradley (SB) (attended via Teams) Alex Hallam (AH) (attended via Teams) John Hinchcliffe (JH) Peter Lambert (PL) (attended via Teams) (left the meeting at 17:51) Ash Rahman (AR) (attended via Teams) Steve Wadsworth (SW) Jason Walsh (JW)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rowena Dixon (RD) – Chief Finance Officer (CFO) 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 14 December 2023 Interim CEO report CFO Report COO Report PAT Pay Policy v7.0 PAT Pay Policy v7.0 Appendix 1 STPCD Pay Scales 2023-24 PAT Pay Policy v7.0 Appendix 2 JCNC Bradford Scales 2023 Estates management update Governance paper

The meeting commenced at 16:17.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
38/23	Apologies for absence and their acceptance No apologies were received.	
39/23	Any other business and requests for agenda order variations No other business was raised.	
40/23	Declarations of interest for items on this agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	

Signed: 

Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 18 March 2024

41/23	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 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)
42/23	<p>Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda</p> <p>Item 37/23 – JW raised a typing error on the date of the Trust Board meeting to be held in March. The correct date is 18 March 2024.</p> <p>Item 30/23 – The COO reported that she would provide figures for number of health and safety incidents at the end of the academic year.</p>	Gov Prof (Done)
43/23	<p>Chair's correspondence and actions</p> <p>The Chair reported he had met with the Interim CEO to review the plans for schools and that he had visited Miriam Lord Primary School.</p> <p>The Chair has had various communications regarding the recruitment for a permanent CEO. The advert has gone live, the closing date for which is 7 February 2024. Shortlisting of candidates for interview will be done in February and interviews will be held in March.</p> <p>The Chair has been contacted by the DfE to arrange a follow up meeting.</p>	
44/23	<p>School Improvement Committee update</p> <p>AR, as Chair of the School Improvement Committee, reported that there was positive feedback during the Committee meeting. The Committee had been provided with a good overview of where the schools are in terms of expected outcomes. Meetings have been held with leaders in schools to discuss targets and whether or not these are ambitious and how they are arrived at. Where there are gaps, plans have been formulated to address this between now and Easter. Raising attainment plans and strategies are in place and the Committee asked to see what a good plan looks like at the next meeting to be held on 15 April 2024. Writing is particularly weak across the Trust and some leaders have not got a handle on greater depth. Work is to be done to address this and what good strategies look like.</p> <p>Attendance across the Trust has been stated as being 95.5%, which is above that national average. Does this figure include all pupils or if some had been taken out of this figure?</p> <p>The Interim CEO reported that the figure was having taken out the context discussed.</p> <p>What is the attendance figure for the Trust including all pupils?</p> <p>The full attendance figure is 93.4%. The national average attendance figure is 94.1%.</p> <p>The challenges at Green Lane Primary School were discussed and the Executive Headteacher is spending significant time at the school and working with the Interim CEO. The Committee was pleased to hear there is a team around the school approach in place and asked for an update of what support looks like at the next Committee meeting.</p> <p>Reading has previously been a priority across the Trust. Even though writing is now a priority, there is still a significant amount of work being done on reading. The Trust's School Improvement Co-ordinator attended the meeting to report on reading. Key Stage One (KS1) maths was also touched on.</p>	

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	<p>Leaders were challenged regarding leadership and management being graded good if governance needs to be focused on. Leaders have gone away to think about the matrix.</p> <p>Atlas Community Primary School had been rag rated red for safeguarding. The Committee questioned this and was assured that this was regarding the single central record. The Committee was pleased to be informed that this was no longer an issue.</p> <p>The schools use different phonics schemes and the Committee questioned if all schools should be using the same scheme. Schools do not need to introduce a new scheme when there are other areas to be concentrating on and leaders did see the value.</p> <p>The Committee was asked to approve the PAT Early Careers Teachers (ECT) Policy and recommend it be ratified by the Trust Board. This is to be sent to Trustees via email for ratification outside of the meeting.</p> <p>There were three actions for leaders that came out of the Committee meeting: a greater depth strategy, to view a raising attainment plan and an update regarding the team around the school plan for Green Lane.</p> <p>The Interim CEO and School Improvement Lead have arranged a meeting with SB to be held on 30 January 2024 to review the School Development Plan for Green Lane.</p>	Gov Prof (done)
45/23	<p>Interim CEO report</p> <p>The first priority was to start the training for subject leads and devise a network of specialists to carry out deep dives in schools. These school visits are currently taking place. The schools' raising attainment plans have been agreed and schools are acting upon these plans recruiting staff, putting procedures in place and arranging for monitoring against these plans.</p> <p>The Trust is working towards filling open vacancies on a temporary to permanent basis depending on the particular role. Teaching staff is in a strong place and the team is looking at this year's trainee teachers, placing adverts early to secure these members of staff. The central team is looking at recruiting teaching assistants (TAs) centrally and working with recruitment agencies.</p> <p>In terms of the number of TA posts that need filling, will you be putting out individual school adverts or one for the Trust?</p> <p>The advert will be one for the Trust.</p> <p>Looking at the vacancies, a large number are required at Green Lane, is that a broad average?</p> <p>The positions at Green Lane are for special, educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support.</p> <p>One advantage of putting out a central advert is that we can make sure the adult's experience fits in order to be able to support the needs of a particular pupil. Currently some of these posts are being covered by supply but they do not wish to take a permanent contract.</p>	

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	<p>How confident are you of filling these posts in the schools in time and what is the contingency plan? There are people in 80% of the posts on a supply basis. We hope to be 50% successful in filling these positions. It would always be our priority to recruit to posts on contract rather than supply for these reasons.</p> <p>What is the impact on education of having supply staff in post? A company has been used to place consistent supply on an agreed rate. However, supply staff can change their hours and give notice. This is a challenge and does impact the most deregulated emotional pupils.</p> <p>Is it a concern if supply teachers are not in post long term? It is more likely to be TA positions that are covered by supply staff.</p> <p>What is the risk? The biggest risk at present is not having an Officer Manager in post at Atlas. We did successfully shortlist and interview, however, the selected candidate turned down the offer of the position. This position has gone back out to advert.</p> <p>Why is that role particularly so hard to recruit to? The Office Manager position is a multi-talented role. This person has to be very organised in a small school; they could be performing finance operations, whilst answering the telephone.</p> <p>Can this position be filled from another school's resources? The central team has picked up the finance operations on a service-level agreement (SLA) basis. This has been a challenge. Atlas needs a dedicated person on site to deal with people in the office and finance procedures need to be adhered to. The safeguarding concern at Atlas was due to the single central record not being up-to-date because there is no Office Manager on site</p> <p>How much more money would it be to get that person to accept the position? The central team did negotiate, offering extra work in the central team and increasing the salary to the top of the scale.</p> <p>Another priority for the Trust is engaging leadership. Meetings have been held with each headteacher. Training needs have been identified to develop senior leadership teams, including deputy heads and assistant heads. Training has also been agreed for Ofsted inspections for governors.</p> <p>How much more expensive is a supply than the full cost of a member of staff? Could we have our own bank of supply to fill that gap? This is being looked at for teaching staff, to maintain the teachers that are growing this year to retain them within the Trust. These may be employed centrally to fulfil vacancies as they arise. The mark up for the cost of supply is 18-20%. After 12 weeks they are offered a permanent contract.</p>	
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Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 18 March 2024

	<p>Could reserves be used to offer stability for the vacancies? The difficulty is that would impact the budgets going forward with cost pressures and no funding.</p> <p>But the cost of supply is increasing. The reserves are currently in a favourable position, but moving forward this is not sustainable.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding the real and national living wage</p> <p>Action: It was suggested that the CFO look at the costs of supply and paying the real living wage for TAs.</p> <p>Do other schools have the same issues? We are doing some collaborative work with over trusts looking at different job descriptions.</p> <p>It would be interesting to hear how the headteachers are; are they in a good place? Headteachers are in a good place. They appreciate the structures in place, the training available and working together.</p> <p>Trustees have visited Miriam Lord and Lilycroft and confirmed that leaders seem very positive since MA has been acting CEO.</p> <p>What additional CPD has been identified by leaders? Across the schools support with HR has been identified as a priority. Training on data narrative has been done with headteachers. There are other themes across the Trust, for example Ofsted inspections and having difficult conversations.</p> <p>Regarding the Priestley Partnerships SCITT programme, Exceed have agreed to increase the number of teacher training places from ten to twelve.</p> <p>In terms of sponsorship work, a positive meeting has been held with the Headteacher of Farfield Primary School.</p> <p>The Trust needs to grow in the long term, but in the short term with all the current leadership changes and potential Ofsted inspections, what is the reassurance that a disproportionate amount of time is not being spent on this work with all the changes? The expectations around this piece of work are being managed. The Trust is committed to the sponsorship work from a DfE perspective and it is deliverable.</p> <p>A Governance Lead was appointed to support Trustees, but this person has now left to take up another position. Keystone, who provided the external governance review at a Local Governing Board (LGB) level, has been approached to support the Trust Board.</p>	CFO
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Name: Steve Wadsworth

Date: 18 March 2024

	<p>A lot of issues at LGB level have now been dealt with, vacancies have now been filled and the LGBs are growing in strength.</p> <p>What did you gain from having done this? There was some detail provided by the Governance Lead.</p> <p>It was not quite clear what the role of Governance Lead was. What was the original proposal around that role? What was the role to deliver and why do we need that role?</p> <p>Action: MA to circulate the Governance Lead job description to Trustees.</p> <p>The national attendance figure quoted was 93.2% is the figure for Pupil Premium (PP)? The overall national attendance figure is 94.1%, where did the figure come from? The most accurate figure was used at the time of the report from the DfE's website for primary schools.</p>	I CEO
46/23	<p>CFO Report Schools have been updated with the latest management accounts and cash flow forecast. Schools are being encouraged to reduce the time in closing the month end, feedback is being received. The Trust has erred on the side of caution for energy, some savings have been made. There has been increased costs with subscriptions. There is nothing of significant concern with the budget position. The out-turn position as been updated. There are no significant messages from schools from the last forecast. The monthly meetings are well received by schools and face to face training. Trustees will be updated monthly with an annotated monthly report.</p> <p>Will you send this monthly report out? Yes. According to the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) it is good practice.</p> <p>What is the update regarding investment? The Investment Policy looks at a certain level of security and a proposal will be sent to the FAR Committee in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>The pension contribution rate increase, when is that from? The employer rate will increase to 28.68% from 1 April 2024.</p> <p>Is this advertised in the recruitment pack? This rate is for teaching staff, the pension contribution is not as high for support staff.</p> <p>Is the pension scheme only for teaching staff? The pension scheme for teaching staff is much higher, moving to 28.68%. The increase to the teaching staff pension scheme will be funded by the Government, which will be formula driven by pupil numbers. The local government pension scheme for support staff is 15%. This is reviewed every three years and is unfunded. It is a cost pressure.</p> <p>Is the teachers' pension contribution the same for other trusts? The teachers' pension contribution is the same across the country. The support staff pension contribution is local to Bradford. The Trust pays the same as other Trusts in Bradford.</p>	

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	<p>There is £0.5million difference by the end of the year? There are discrepancies month to month, considering what happened last year, there will be a margin of error. A lot of the schools' monitoring reports tend to balance out, there was an under spend of gas and electricity and they are over on reserves. The capital expenditure projects have been taken out.</p> <p>Has the falling roll number been factored into what happens with reserves? The three-year forecast shows the direction the finances are going, the projected pupil number does include a falling roll number. For October 2023 the census was better than predicted; the forecast was on the cautious side. There is a year's lag in the census funding. We are trying to make sure the pupil forecast numbers are reasonable. Office Managers have been asked to review the pupil numbers on a termly basis to give the latest position.</p> <p>Is the pay award of 3% for support staff low? The figure is unknown at the moment. The unions' Joint Consultative Negotiating Committee (JCNC) has not yet agreed anything.</p> <p>Is the General Annual Grant (GAG) funding coming in as you expect it to? This year the Government made an error in the GAG funding level, but we have no significant variances. Pupil Premium is lower, but an increase was not factored in.</p> <p>Very clear overview. Has there been any feedback or 'noise' from schools of LGB's regarding the allocation of funding from reserves, especially of Green Lane? All headteachers have supported this approach. The mechanism for calculating the contribution from each school means that those with the highest level of reserves (such as Green Lane) pay more than those with lower reserves, but the impact in relative terms on accumulated balances is consistent across schools. The contributions equate to around 6% of accumulated reserves. Because of the contribution from the Central Team's reserves, the majority of schools (4 out of 6) will get back more than they have contributed.</p> <p>The CFO put forward the proposal to move to a new budgeting software.</p> <p>The move to the IMP finance software as per the CFO proposal sounds like a very positive move. Will there be a detailed risk assessment and risk management plan associated with the implementation and transition? The CFO is working with IMP on risk management and the development of the tools mentioned. The extension of contract with the existing software provider (Access) means that the worst case scenario is mitigated by the ability to continue using Access to the end of the budgeting cycle this year.</p> <p>The proposal to move to a new budgeting forecast software, IMP, was approved by Trustees.</p>	
47/23	<p>COO Report There have been 10 reportable injury forms received since the last meeting. The overall figures will be presented at the end of the year to provide a comparison. Last year 74 forms were received. The year to date figures will be added in to the next COO report.</p>	COO

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	<p>There have been five violence to staff forms received since the last meeting, these are all SEND one to one support. This is another reason to fill the current vacancies. These pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and the Health and Safety Consultant is happy with the action being taken and staff are being supported.</p> <p>No complaints were received since the last meeting until the time of writing the report. One has been received since the report was sent out, this will be reported on at the next meeting.</p> <p>Three schools have received a freedom of information request asking if they use a third party to support the RSE curriculum. Two have been received regarding allergies.</p> <p>An audit has been done on the HR admin system, SAM People, in terms of usage and if there were any training needs. A training guide is to be shared with headteachers. An induction workflow is currently being tested and will be rolled out for onboarding recruitment and induction. Feedback will be requested to see how that will assist recruitment and retention.</p> <p>How many CIF bids have been applied for? Two bids have been applied for. The Trust has changed the support for the application as two bids have previously been unsuccessful. One bid has been put in for heating and rewiring at Lilycroft, the second bid is for the fire doors at Miriam Lord.</p> <p>Will they be successful as a lot of money is being directed to RACC and there may be no funds for CIF bids? The results of the CIF bids will be received in May 2024.</p> <p>With the number of vacancies, it would be beneficial to have the rates of attrition on the roles across the Trust and any HR cases, to get a gauge on movement within each school.</p> <p>Action: The COO to look at providing this information.</p>	COO
48/23	<p>Pay Policy v7.0 for ratification</p> <p>The Trust Board agreed the ratification of the PAT Pay Policy v7.0.</p>	
49/23	<p>Estates management The current Estates Officer has agreed to stay until 31 August 2024. The current Estates Officer works 22 hours per week, all year round, but the work he does is far more, so this would be recruited to 37 hours per week. The COO has met with other trusts to ask how they run their estates and to compare job descriptions. It is key that all possible options are looked at to ensure due diligence for financial procedures and the delivery of the position. The three options being considered are: someone starts in a similar role, or high-level position; a company is brought in to do estates management across the Trust; or, a hybrid of the two.</p> <p>With the unique estates within the Trust and the significant responsibility to maintain that and make sure they are fit for purpose from a health and safety point of view, contracting is a concern.</p>	

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	<p>A person with a huge amount of experience is needed. Can the Board support to get the right person and to do a handover?</p> <p>The reason for this report was to ask the Trust Board to agree an option going forward outside of the meeting. Headteachers are to be consulted, their feedback is important in terms of caretakers and site managers; each school is different.</p> <p>What would headteachers prefer? It is believed a person.</p> <p>We want the best for the Trust and if this may be a specific person, however, the recruitment process may be long and the position difficult to recruit to when you go out to market. However, having visited a number of the schools, Trustees agreed it was good to see that they are in good condition, which is a credit to the Trust.</p> <p>It was agreed a conclusion was needed quickly.</p> <p>Action: The COO is to write a business case to ratified outside of the meeting.</p>	COO (done)
50/23	<p>Safeguarding and Health & Safety It was agreed this was covered by items 45/23, 47/23 and 49/23.</p>	
51/23	<p>Governance Paper Trustees confirmed they had received and read the paper.</p> <p>The Governance Professional thanked Trustees for updating changes to their declarations of interest and confirmed that the register of interests had been updated.</p> <p>The trustees are listed on Companies House, but not the members? Under company law, members are similar to a company's shareholders. There is no training available to members. Members sit quietly at the top of the governance structure within an academy. There should be a clear definition between members and trustees to offer objectivity, so that members may carry out their role of assuring themselves that the Trust's governance is effective.</p> <p>If there are only three members, these are listed on Companies House as they are 'persons of significant control' as they each have a third share in the Trust. Once this share is decreased, i.e. by having a fourth member in place, members do not have to be listed on Companies House. Only the Trustees, as Directors under company law, are listed on Companies House.</p> <p>The members appoint the Trust's auditors and meet once a year at the AGM to receive the Trust's financial accounts and to ascertain that the Trust's governance is effective. They have the power to appoint and remove other member and remove a trustee from office.</p> <p>Action: The Governance Professional to circulate guidance regarding Members.</p>	Gov Prof (done)
52/23	<p>Any other business referred from item 39/23 No other urgent business was raised.</p>	

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53/23	<p>Dates and venues of the next meetings</p> <p>A. 18 March 2024 at Miriam Lord Primary School B. 3 June 2024 at Margaret McMillan Primary School C. 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 and for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 17:59.</p>	
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Outstanding actions:

Agenda Item	Action	By who	By when	Completed
45/23	CFO to look at the costs of supply and paying the real living wage	CFO	18 March 2024	
45/23	MA to circulate the Governance Lead job description to Trustees.	I CEO	18 March 2024	
47/23	Add year to date figures for reportable injury forms to next COO report.	COO	18 March 2024	
47/23	Provide rates of attrition on the roles across the Trust and any HR cases.	COO	18 March 2024	

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