

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

Minutes and Actions

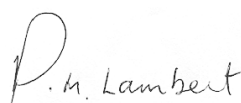
Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 15 July 2024 at 16:15
Venue	Westbourne Primary School
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Javed Ahmed (JA) Sarah Bradley (SB) (attended via Teams) Alex Hallam (AH) John Hinchcliffe (JH) (attended via Teams) Peter Lambert (PL) Steve Wadsworth (SW) Jason Walsh (JW) (attended via Teams)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – 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 - 3 June 2024 CEO report Safeguarding and health and safety report Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

The meeting commenced at 16:17.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
82/23	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received and accepted for Ruby Bhatti and Ash Rahman. The Governance Professional advised the meeting was quorate.	
83/23	Election of Chair and Vice Chair SW, previous to the meeting, had decided to stand down as Chair of Trustees as from 31 August 2024. SW invited nominations for Chair. PL put forward himself. Following discussion, AH proposed PL for Chair, seconded by JA. The decision was unanimous and SW congratulated PL. The Governance Professional invited nominations for Vice Chair. SB put forward herself. Following discussion, JH proposed SB for Vice Chair, seconded by PL. The decision was unanimous and SW congratulated SB.	
84/23	Any other business and requests for agenda order variations There was no other urgent business raised or order variations.	
85/23	Declarations of interest for items on this agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	

Signed:

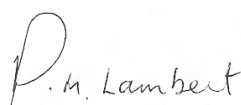


Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024

86/23	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2024 were approved by the Trust Board as a true record. Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.	Gov Prof (Done)
87/23	Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the Agenda There were no matters arising from the minutes and it was confirmed all actions have been completed.	
88/23	Chair's correspondence and actions The Chair reported he had attended an interview with Members and the CEO for a new Trustee. Following the interview, Members agreed to appoint Beth Dawson to replace JA as his term of office is coming to an end. Beth is a Headteacher of an English hub school and can bring educational experience to the Board. Discussion followed regarding induction of new Trustees. Action: Governance Professional and CEO to look at Trustee induction timetable Discussion followed regarding equality and diversity of the Board and requiring local educational knowledge. The Chair attended the Trust's Chairs' Forum meeting on 10 July 2024. The Forum is held termly, but during the meeting the Local Governing Board (LGB) Chairs asked that an additional meeting be held on 11 September 2024 to discuss further support in preparation of Ofsted inspections.	Gov Prof/ CEO
89/23	Trust growth and development The CEO presented a PowerPoint presentation on suggested growth and development strategies and points for discussion. How do you measure suitable candidates? Would it be a school that may require support to get it to 'good' or one that 'requires improvement' following inspection or newly 'outstanding'? A school may not be happy with the support they are currently receiving or there may have been a change in governance or leadership. These are all drivers for a school wanting to convert and join an academy. How many schools are there in Bradford not currently an academy? Across Bradford there are 48 schools that have not yet converted to being an academy. Eleven of which are church schools but these would not be eligible to join the Trust. This leaves 37 schools eligible to join. The next piece of work would be to map out where these schools are and at what stage they are in converting to an academy. Are there any trusts smaller than our Trust? Yes, there is a smaller trust within Bradford. What are the financial issues for the Trust and would growth address any of these issues? Would growth dilute support and focus for the schools already in the Trust?	

Signed:

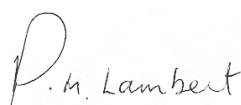


Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024

	<p>The DfE are keen for the Trust to grow and expects MATs to be bigger than Priestley. It is anticipated more mergers will be seen over the next few years. We would not want to be dissolved by another trust. Therefore, it is a high priority.</p> <p>Can you gauge the pressure from the DfE? The DfE are encouraging us to grow and this has been discussed during conversations with the DfE. Decisions are not made quickly; the process of converting may take 12-18 months from a school making the decision.</p> <p>Is there capacity to continue to improve educational outcomes and for growth? Yes, the central team is being built for growth and there will be school improvement capacity to tackle any concerns and bring other schools into the Trust.</p> <p>Are there the resources required for due diligence? Yes, we do have the capacity. The majority of due diligence is financial and operational. There is some school improvement due diligence, but there is far more in terms of human resources, consultations, project managing and working with the DfE.</p> <p>If this was left for a number of years and the Trust did not grow and potential schools joined other Trusts, is there a risk the Trust could be merged? Yes.</p> <p>From a business point of view, there is no such thing as a merger, one group has to be in charge, there can only be one CEO. What is our process for onboarding a new school or group of schools? The Chair stated the Trust has onboarded one school, Miriam Lord and this went well and the Trust has a model for this.</p> <p>The CEO stated there is a standard process to follow provided by the DfE. The process does take time, but there is no set pattern and it can vary from school to school.</p> <p>The CFO stated that growth was a priority in terms of finance in the longer term as the central team budget and reserves were decreasing. The addition of one more school in the Trust would support that.</p> <p>How much time do we have to grow? The central team budget is geared to a level of staffing that is not affordable in the long-term.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the progress being made in terms of outcomes needs to continue. It is right to discuss growth now. If there is a longer-term need to grow this would be supported as long as educational outcomes were not put at risk.</p> <p>Following further discussion, the Board agreed if a school is interested in converting, the CEO should present a case at the appropriate time.</p>	
--	--	--

Signed:



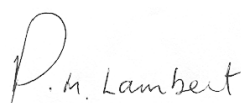
Name: Peter Lambert

Date:

21 November 2024

90/23	<p>FAR Committee update</p> <p>JA, as Chair of the FAR Committee, reported that the Committee had discussed the medium-term financial planning, which indicates the Trust is in a fairly strong position. Schools continue to experience falling pupil roll numbers. The two current three form entry schools, Green Lane and Margaret McMillan are reducing their published admission number (PAN) to become two-form entry. Going forward over the next few years, schools need to look at their model to counter for the financial impact of that and the impact on staffing. The CFO is working with the Headteachers to look at how this can be mitigated. One factor is looking at natural wastage and if that is not sufficient, redundancies will have to be considered.</p> <p>Implementation of the new budgeting system has gone well and is helping the finance team and schools.</p> <p>There has been an issue with the old finance system regarding the capital balances brought forward. The opening balances have been impacted by £266,000. The CFO, with support from the auditors, has had to make an adjustment to the bottom line in reserves, from revenue to capital.</p> <p>The internal auditors have looked at cyber security. The report has just been received by the central team and is being checked for accuracy.</p> <p>Three investments are reaching maturity. Funds are to be reinvested and the Committee discussed where the funds should be invested as interest rates are reducing. The Committee discussed whether or not the Trust should avoid organisations it has currently invested in to avoid going over the £85,000 protected by the financial services compensation scheme. These organisations will be considered to invest the funds in if their rating is AAA. £240,000 of investment has matured and £95,000 has been added and the funds reinvested to achieve 5% interest over a longer period of time with support from the FAR Committee.</p> <p>The Committee went through the management accounts and budget forecasts. There was a lot of discussion on the budgets that have been produced.</p> <p>The reserves have been at a high level previously, what happens to the reserves over the three-year forecast?</p> <p>They do come down to ten percent of our income which is in the middle of the Trust's reserve policy. We do need a level of reserves but we also need to invest. The schools have written raising attainment plans and are investing in the infrastructure for the future in the first year and still maintain healthy reserves. We have worked with Headteachers to make this a plan not just a forecast. Headteachers need to understand and own their financial plan. There are risks associated with that but it is about setting out a direction of travel that is sustainable.</p> <p>The staff costs are going down over the next two or three years, is that driven by the schools that are reducing to being two form entry?</p> <p>The numbers have come from the Headteachers. We have been very clear with the schools reducing their PAN that they will need one class less each year for the next seven years. Headteachers have been asked to think about their staffing and consider those who may be retiring or actively seeking another job.</p>	
-------	--	--

Signed:

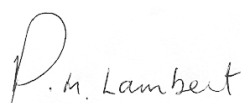


Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024

	<p>So, it is based on reduction in staffing and the numbers of pupil classes? It is not that, plus 10%?</p> <p>No, the staffing reduces for less pupils. There is a high level of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and when these pupils reach Year 6 their one to one member of support staff leaves at the same time.</p> <p>If staff do not leave naturally, when will you need to take control of that?</p> <p>There is a mixed level of confidence. One school has taken a number of new staff on with a fixed term contract and these will not be renewed. One school has also been proactive putting certain leadership into classrooms. All requests to recruit are checked by the central team from a budget point of view so that we will not be in the position to have to make people redundant.</p> <p>Where do you feel there is still a risk?</p> <p>There will be staff not on fixed term contracts and it is useful to have a plan. These risks are clearing identified in the Headteachers' plans. A lot of detail came to the FAR Committee. It is clear what each school is forecasting. There are a lot of moving elements in the budgets and we have analysed pupil numbers. Pupil numbers have increased at one school since the budget was set. Schools have been encouraged to have ownership of their budgets.</p> <p>The Committee, following its scrutiny, recommended formal approval of the schools' budgets for 2024/2025 to the Trust Board.</p> <p>The Trust Board, having assured itself that the FAR Committee had scrutinised the budgets, formally approved the schools' budgets for 2024/2025.</p>	
91/23	<p>Internal audit findings</p> <p>The Trust is to consult with Headteachers and map out business continuity plans and this is being addressed. As the reports have only just been received and need checking for accuracy, it was agreed to move this item to the next FAR Committee meeting.</p> <p>Action: Internal audit findings to be added to the FAR Committee agenda for 2 December 2024</p>	Gov Prof
92/23	<p>School Improvement Committee update</p> <p>PL, as Chair of the School Improvement Committee, reported that the School Improvement Committee discussed the outcomes from Reception through to Year 6 SATs results, which came in on 9 July 2024. The results for five of the six schools are close to the national average. The SATs results will be adjusted to take out pupils who joined school during Years 5 and 6 from a different country or have not received an education until joining that school. Progress is being made and outcomes are good and as expected. The results for Green Lane are a concern. The discussion focused on the steps being taken at Green Lane to improve outcomes next year and the School Improvement Coordinator is supporting with this. Plans are already in place for a positive start in September.</p> <p>The results for Year 2 are below national average but are in line for PAT schools as pupils come into school in Nursery at a significantly lower level than the national average. Outcomes are then secured by Year 6.</p>	

Signed:

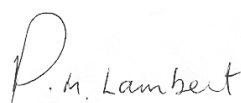


Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024

	<p>The Committee discussed the strategy for greater depth. A lot more focus is being put on greater depth and to identify these pupils, the next steps going forward and what that means in terms of curriculum to enable them to make that fast trajectory.</p> <p>There has been a Trust wide approach to Reading for Pleasure working with the Open University, including what texts should be used and which books are appropriate for different pupils at different levels. The schools are looking to moving to a common phonics scheme in the future. Three schools are currently using Little Wandle as this is viewed as being stronger. Investment will be needed to do this.</p> <p>The Committee was assured there is a greater level of rigour and there are strong action plans in place.</p> <p>How do we check the results against 2022/2023 to see if we have made progress? Action: CEO to upload the results to the intranet</p> <p>There have been resources put into Green Lane, is it too early to see their impact? It has made a difference. The School Improvement Coordinator is supporting two days a week to improve teaching and this is having an impact in classrooms but this has not yet been seen in the results.</p>	CEO
93/23	<p>CEO report The CEO reported that further sessions have been held with Headteachers and Deputy Heads to discuss the mission statement. Feedback has been taken from stakeholders. The central team has been successful with filling staff vacancies. Ten further teaching assistants (TAs) have been recruited. There are two new support staff vacancies but that have arisen in the last couple of weeks due to staff resigning.</p> <p>Discussion regarding the quality of education is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p> <p>Has the central recruiting had a significant impact? Yes, it has been really successful. Of the second round 22 applications were received, ten have been recruited. AH has supported with a piece of work on a term by term matrix and this has been sent to the HR provider to see what can be automated and updated.</p> <p>What is the process for recruiting a Director of School Improvement (DoSI)? The role has gone out to via a soft advert and on social media. Ten expressions of interest have been received so far. The full advert will go out in August 2024. Interviews will be held the third week of September 2024.</p> <p>Action: Trustees are to let MA know if they are available to be part of the interview panel</p> <p>Following discussion regarding the new mission statement, "Together, creating opportunity and aspiration for every child", the Board approved the mission statement.</p> <p>Trustees present confirmed their declarations of interest were up to date.</p>	Trustees
94/23	<p>Safeguarding and health & safety The CEO reported that the writing of health and safety risk assessments and training was being developed with leaders. The risk assessments will be made bespoke in September 2024.</p>	

Signed:



Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024

95/23	<p>Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for ratification</p> <p>Where does the content come from for this policy and is it definitely the latest information?</p> <p>The policy content is taken from the School Bus, who write the policy and check all the statutory advice and guidance to ensure the legal aspects are covered. The policy is then made bespoke by adding in Trust information, for example naming each school Designated Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>The Trust Board ratified the updated Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy v10.0.</p>	
96/23	<p>Any other business referred from item 70/23</p> <p>The CEO stated this was JA's last meeting and thanked him for all his commitment and support. JA was firstly a Governor at Margaret McMillan Primary School before becoming a Trustee.</p> <p>The Chair thanked JA on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>JA stated time had flown so quickly over his eight-year term of office, having been with the Trust since it started. He has really enjoyed his time Trust and thanked current and previous colleagues for working with him.</p>	
97/23	<p>Dates for the next meetings (meetings to start at 16:15):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tuesday, 5 November 2024 2. Monday, 16 December 2024 3. Monday, 27 January 2025 4. Monday, 24 March 2025 5. Monday, 2 June 2025 6. Monday, 14 July 2025 <p>Meetings to start at 16:15.</p> <p>Following discussion regarding venues, school visits and online attendance, it was agreed meetings should be held at PAT head office.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 19:15.</p>	

Outstanding actions:

Agenda Item	Action	By who	By when	Completed
88/23	Trustee induction and timetable	CEO/ Gov Prof	Sept 2024	
91/23	Internal audit findings to be added to the FAR Committee agenda for 2 December 2024	Gov Prof	02/12/2024	
92/23	2022/2023 results to be uploaded to the intranet	CEO	Sept 2024	
93/23	Trustees to let MA know if they are available to part of the interview panel for the role of DoSI	Trustees	10/09/2024	

Signed:

P. M. Lambert

Name: Peter Lambert

Date: 21 November 2024