

Minutes and Actions

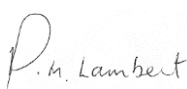
Trust Board/Academy	Trust Board
Date	Monday, 2 June 2025 at 15:45
Venue	Trust head office
Trustees Present (alphabetical)	Ruby Bhatti (RB) (attended online via Teams) Beth Dawson (BD) Alex Hallam (AH) John Hinchcliffe (JH) Peter Lambert (PL) – Chair Jason Walsh (JW)
Others in attendance	Mathew Atkinson (MA) – Chief Executive (CEO) Rowena Dixon (RD) – Chief Finance Officer (CFO) Tom Fay (TF) – Director of School Improvement (DOSI) Anne-Marie Holdsworth (A-MH) – Director of Operations (DOO)
Chair	Peter Lambert (PL)
Clerk to Governors	Charlotte Heap (CH) – Head of Governance and Compliance
Papers Circulated	Minutes of previous meeting – 24 March 2025 Safeguarding and health & safety report ESFA letter to accounting officers Strategy and Development Committee update Draft Strategy 2025-2028 School Improvement Committee update Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee update CEO report and PowerPoint presentation Admissions Policy Anti-Fraud and Corruption Charging and Remissions Financial Procedures Gifts and Hospitality Risk Management

The meeting commenced at 15:48

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. The Chair welcomed TF as this was his first Trust Board meeting.

Agenda Item	Minutes including agreements, actions and challenges	Action
58/24	Apologies for absence and their acceptance Apologies were received and accepted for Sarah Bradley (SB), and Christine Horrocks (CHo) and Steve Wadsworth (SW). The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.	
59/24	Any other business and requests for agenda order variations There was no other urgent business raised or order variations.	
60/24	Declarations of interest for items on this agenda There were no declarations of interest made.	

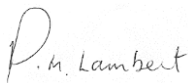
This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

Name: Peter Lambert

61/24	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2025 were approved by the Trust Board as a true record, subject to the amendments below. Agreement was made that electronic signatures could be included.	Clerk (Done)
62/24	Matters arising from the minutes not elsewhere on the agenda It was agreed all actions had been completed. Item 47/24 – JW noted the date of the S&D Committee had been quoted incorrectly. Item 51/24 – The CFO recommended amendments to include more detail to the FAR Committee update – approved by the Chair. Item 52/24 - The CFO recommended amendments to include more detail to the Gender Pay Gap update – approved by the Chair.	Clerk (done)
63/24	Chair's correspondence and actions The Chair reported he had received correspondence from Ofsted regarding the schools' inspections.	
64/24	Trustees school visit update A number of trustees visited Westbourne Primary School prior to the Board meeting. Trustees reported they were impressed by the school and its environment, its leadership team and its learning environment. Trustees were presented with deep dives into special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and maths. In both areas the expertise and passion of the leads shone through, demonstrating clearly how the curriculum and overall approach to learning is carefully tailored to address the needs of each individual pupil. the school works collaboratively across the Trust and beyond, to share best practice and to learn from others. The decline in pupil numbers in the Westbourne Nursery is a significant concern.	
65/24	Safeguarding and health & safety The CEO reported that the Trust has a new health and safety consultant, Handsam. The DOO has accompanied Handsam on the four schools' health and safety audits that have already been completed. The other two schools are to be audited shortly. The team have been impressed with the reporting so far and the schools have said the audits have been very thorough. There were no health and safety audits conducted during the last academic year. From a governance point of view, is that against policy if this was to be audited further? The agreement was for these audits to be completed last year. It is not a requirement to have health and safety audits every year. We will look at the feedback from this year's audits and have another full round of audits next year. The following year we will look at specific areas of focus. The Head of Estates role is still vacant, regarding health and safety is there an increased risk the longer this role remains vacant? This role has been made full time. There is some capacity from the central team and things are also being covered in the schools by the site staff. Is there one health and safety audit across the year? Yes, there is one audit per school each year and a fire risk assessment per school every year. Head office will also have a fire risk assessment, when Green Lane Primary School's assessment is carried out.	

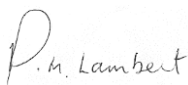
This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

Name: Peter Lambert

	Are the headteachers involved in these audits and assessments? Yes.	
66/24	<p>ESFA letter to accounting officers – 19 March 2025 The CFO reported that it was a requirement of the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) that letters that come from the Government's funding agency come to trustees to notify them of important changes and for clarity. The ESFA has now merged with the DfE.</p> <p>Are there any risks or implications due to the merge? No. If a trustee wished to speak to someone regarding funding, they would now need to contact the DfE.</p>	
67/24	<p>Strategy and Development (S&D) Committee update, incl Draft Strategy 2025-2028 AH, as Chair of the S&D Committee, reported that since the last meeting the central team has acted on the feedback and now got to the point of approval on the strategy. AH and MA have met with BD and CHo to discuss the strategy from an education point of view. A score card has now been added to the strategy with a view of this going live in September 2025. The central team have done an amazing job getting to this point, with the strategy, vision and metrics. The Committee will make sure everyone has had chance to provide feedback and that the strategy is in place for September. BD has agreed to join the S&D Committee.</p> <p>What are the next steps? At the next Committee meeting on 2 July 2025 there will be more detail regarding the metrics provided and we will get full approval of these. Action: Comments regarding the strategy or metrics to be emailed by 25 June 2025</p> <p>The CEO reported that the central team are meeting on 3 June 2025 to write the implementation plans which will be brought to the S&D Committee on 2 July 2025.</p> <p>Will the strategy and metrics be cascaded down to schools in their plans and finances? Yes. Trustees saw this during their visit to Westbourne and the school development plan.</p>	Trustees
68/24	<p>School Improvement (SI) Committee update PL, as Deputy Chair of the SI Committee, reported that the Spring data drop shows that predicted outcomes are generally improving. The schools have provided a summary of where they feel pupils are and each cohort is in terms of progression and meeting key targets. There has been some improvement across the schools since Autumn. There are a couple of areas of concern in Key Stage 2 (KS2) at Atlas Community Primary School and Westbourne Primary School. The primary reasons for this are pupil mobility and teacher illness. The SATs were held two weeks ago and there will be a brief update for information at the next Trust Board meeting. The next School Improvement Committee meeting is to be held on 15 September 2025 to discuss the SATs results in detail and what can be learnt from these.</p> <p>The Trust Inclusion Lead updated the Committee regarding the SEND review and provided evidence that progress is being made, ensuring best practice is being shared across the schools. There has been some good work done with the Local Authority (LA) and an increase to EHCP funding.</p> <p>The School Improvement Coordinator provided the Committee with an update regarding the work she has been doing with Green Lane Primary School over the last 18 months regarding the focus areas and next steps. She is now stepping back from Green Lane, with</p>	

This is a true record of the meeting

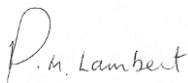
Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

Name: Peter Lambert

	the expectation that Green Lane will become more self-sufficient and she is now a Co-Headteacher at Margaret McMillan Primary School.	
--	---	--

	<p>We are seeing a lot of good work and positive feedback regarding school improvement and with the Ofsted reviews. Do we have knowledge of what is happening in neighbouring and competitive schools? In terms of sustainability and fall in pupil roll numbers, is this a local or national trend and can these good results be a driver for attracting more pupils?</p> <p>The fall in pupil roll numbers is a national trend. There has been a fall in the birth rate locally and nationally. All Bradford schools are struggling with this. The CEOs across Bradford are meeting to talk about resilience on 4 July 2025. There is work to do with the strategy, driving the image of the Trust forward with marketing regarding what it has to offer. The Trust is in conversation with a PR company. At school level, they have done leafletting and marketing. The marketing now needs to be done at Trust level as there are a lot of positives. The fall in pupil roll numbers is a significant challenge.</p> <p>At Westbourne Primary School there is a high conversion rate from Nursery to Reception. Lilycroft Primary School is full every year as they have a private Nursery on the same site. Who is responsible for sustaining pupil numbers? Is this at Trust or school level?</p> <p>At Lilycroft there has, in fact, been a fall in pupil numbers. The senior executive group (SEG) are looking at pupil numbers and migration data. SEG are looking to see if pupils leave in Autumn or Summer and if there are any themes in the data; do pupils move to another area within Bradford or further away.</p> <p>The new Ofsted reviews are very positive for PR, particularly at Atlas Community Primary School and Westbourne Primary School. Hopefully this might attract more pupils. SEG are also looking at outsourcing the use of school buildings over Summer to generate extra revenue, and plans to run workshops that to encourage more families and visitors through the door to see the excellent learning environment.</p> <p>Do we have a market share issue, or a marketing issue? Would it help if we had some degree of understanding of what the local and national data looks like?</p> <p>Data will be provided by the LA Admissions Team and will be brought to the next meeting on 14 July 2025. We are all aware of the falling rolls and the difficulties. It is understanding how long the trends will be in place, looking at different modelling and maximising marketing. The estate is a strength; there is no disruption to learning in terms of the estates and buildings. This also needs to be presented as a positive.</p> <p>Should we be looking at class sizes or the number of classes? Looking at expansion, taking on more schools, or centralising operations? Have you seen any difference in the Government's approach to maintained schools and academisation?</p> <p>There has not been a push away from academisation. The government's current approach is neutral. There are schools that are still interested in joining the Trust as there are benefits to being part of a bigger group.</p> <p>There would be value in reviewing what the plan looks like as there are a number of decision points over the next two years. Can the Board see the data to help make decisions?</p>	
--	---	--

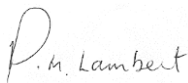
This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

Name: Peter Lambert

	<p>The data can be provided at the next meeting. The LA has said Green Lane Primary School may have to go back to being three-form entry, but our challenge back was where is the evidence.</p> <p>Action: Update on projected pupil numbers, capacity modelling and pupil attraction strategy, to be added to the next agenda</p>	Clerk (done)
69/24	<p>Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee update</p> <p>JW, as Chair of the FAR Committee, reported that representatives of Stratus9 presented to the Committee and they were questioned accordingly, regarding their background, condition improvement fund (CIF) bids, the processes and CIF latest requirements.</p> <p>The DOO reported that since the Committee meeting, the CIF bid results have just been released and one has been successful, this is for the fire doors replacement at Miriam Lord Primary School. Stratus9 are going through the information regarding the unsuccessful bids and the points threshold. The recommendation is to appeal, looking at the different sections that have may have been missed points.</p> <p>Is it correct that we can appeal but not submit any new information, just show where they may have missed something?</p> <p>Yes, no new information can be added but we may make up a number of points. The general feedback this time is that even though there are more funds available, a lower number of bids have been successful</p> <p>The short-term financial position shows a healthy picture across the Trust. However, pupil numbers have reduced in the most recent pupil census and the draft medium-term financial plans for the coming three years show early signs of concern. These are currently being reworked following the CFO and CEO's instruction to headteachers. The FAR Committee offered its support via another session following resubmission of the medium-term financial plans.</p> <p>The CFO confirmed schools have submitted another draft and the figures are more favourable but there are still concerns. There is a threshold the plans must pass before being submitted to trustees for approval. The Trust's finance manager will work through the plans with the school office managers. The CFO will then meet with headteachers to discuss key performance indicators (KPIs) to make sure everything meets policy. There are challenges with two schools indicating they may run out of reserves in the third year of the forecast. The CFO will make sure this is not the case when the plans come to trustees for approval. Staff reduction is being encouraged and for headteachers to be realistic and proactive.</p> <p>In relation to the CIF bids, if the bids are rejected at appeal, this will further impact the reserves.</p> <p>Looking at the list of successful bids, all these bids are crucial, for example, the one bid that has been successful across the Trust is for the fire doors at Miriam Lord. There is no risk of school closures due to heating or electrical bids that have been submitted.</p>	
70/24	<p>CEO report</p> <p>The CEO reported that the final Ofsted report for Westbourne Primary School had just been received. This supports some of what trustees had seen during their visit before the meeting. In terms of quality of education, the school has a tranquil atmosphere. Next steps are to increase the number of pupils at greater depth (GD). The focus has been to get pupils to expected and GD is the next stage.</p>	

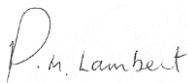
This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

Name: Peter Lambert

	<p>Atlas Community Primary School had a full Section 5 inspection. Two areas were graded good and three outstanding. This moves Atlas from requires improvement and will help with their reputation in the local area.</p> <p>The DfE were very positive regarding the progress made by Atlas and support from the Trust.</p> <p>The Chair, on behalf of the Trust Board, congratulated the headteachers of Atlas and Westbourne and their teams on their Ofsted reports.</p> <p>Discussion regarding recruitment is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p> <p>The teachers' pay award has been confirmed at 4%, it was assumed in the budgets as 3%. There is funding to cover 1% from the Government. This confirmation is in good time to support the budgets. The Trust did not receive the decision regarding the teachers' pay award until the end of July last year. The support staff pay award is still to come.</p> <p>Regarding the table within the CEO report on Integrated Curriculum & Financial Planning (ICFP) analysis, there are a number of areas rag rated red, where do these thresholds come from?</p> <p>The ICFP analysis is the benchmarking tool that schools are using. The industry standard model has been used from ISBL. ISBL is made up of school advisers employed by the DfE who work across the country. The rag rating is determined by these advisors. The green rag rating is where financially sustainable schools should ideally be operating. The red rated metrics are outside of that threshold. The ICFP helps to provide benchmarking, but the Headteachers provide contextual information about the school. There could be a clear reason why the rag rating is red, looking at the communities they serve. The schools have to deal with challenging situations, where schools in other areas may not have to.</p> <p>Looking at the national benchmarking, the average school does not have 40% of pupils on Pupil Premium and 20% of pupils with SEND. Does this put certain pressures on the schools within the Trust?</p> <p>In the CFO's previous experience in another LA, the additional needs of pupils are met through the support of a Teaching Assistant. Within our school structures, there are senior members of staff working to support with higher needs issues and safeguarding, but we may not be able to continue to afford to do this. Headteachers are being asked to look at staffing structures, as the staff to pupil contact ratio is low because senior members of staff are so often out of the classroom.</p> <p>Are the school senior leadership teams (SLT) included in the central team head office?</p> <p>This is possible, it depends how schools organise themselves. SLT could include anyone on the leadership pay scale in a school.</p> <p>The current model was needed to prepare for Ofsted, but looking at the affordability could different models be looked at?</p> <p>We can look at making savings in different ways to still achieve educational excellence, SLT is just one area that can be looked at. If a member of SLT leaves, one option is to consider not replace that person like-for-like to help bring overall costs down. Headteachers are to work with the CFO and DOSI to safeguard long term financial planning for the next ten years.</p>	
--	--	--

This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: 14 July 2025

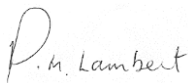
Name: Peter Lambert

	<p>Have you looked at staff providing external support to bring revenue into the Trust? Yes, we have a member of staff in one of our schools who has supported externally but our priority is to support schools across the Trust. There is potential for schools to bring in other revenue.</p> <p>Are staff paid by the national pay grades? Yes, we use the national pay scale and staff members move up this. The average teacher costs across the Trust are above the benchmarking. There are a number of long established and highly experienced teachers. The schools can either retain staff, or bring in less expensive early career teachers (ECTs). There are a lot of leaders and managers that we can more control over.</p>	
71/24	<p>Policies for approval</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admissions Policy 2026-2027 2. Anti-Fraud and Corruption v1.0 (new policy details) 3. Charges and Remissions v5.0 4. Gifts and Hospitality v4.0 5. Financial Procedures - Tendering Policy v2.0 6. Risk management v2.0 <p>The Admissions Policy was circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting for approval in order for it to be uploaded to the website and shared with the LA to be compliant.</p> <p>Further to the FAR Committee's recommendation, the Trust Board approved the updated Trust finance policies, points 2-6 above.</p>	
72/24	<p>Any other business referred from item 59/24 There was no other urgent business discussed.</p>	
73/24	<p>Dates for the next meetings (meetings to start at 16:15):</p> <p>14 July 2025 - online via Teams</p> <p>2025-2026:</p> <p>3 November 2025-in person 15 December 2025-virtual (Chair or Vice Chair to be in person to physically sign accounts)</p> <p>23 March 2026-virtual 1 June 2026-in person 13 July 2026-virtual</p> <p>AGM: 26 January 2026-in person</p> <p>The Chair, on behalf of the Trust Board, congratulated the Trust and the five schools who have been Ofsted inspected so far on their results the progress made over the last two years.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 17:26.</p>	

Outstanding actions:

Agenda Item	Action	By who	By when	Completed
67/24	Comments regarding the strategy or metrics to be emailed by 25 June 2025	Trustees	25/06/2025	

This is a true record of the meeting

Signed: 
Date: **14 July 2025**

Name: Peter Lambert