

Minutes – CLF Board of Trustees

Version:	Approved	
Meeting Date:	Thursday 12 December 2024	
Location:	Teams	
Time:	4.00pm	
Chairing this meeting	Rachel Mortlock (RMO)	Vice Chair of the Board
Trustees:	Jemma Griffiths	Trustee
	Suzanne Carrie (SC)	Trustee
	Nicky McAllister (NM)	Trustee
	Adrian Coleman (AC)	Trustee
	Tim Spratt (TS)	Trustee
	Orville Lynch (OL)	Trustee
	Zarah Morwood (ZM)	Trustee
Attendees:	Steve Taylor (ST)	CEO
	Sally Apps (SA)	Deputy CEO
	Kate Richardson (KR)	Education Director
	Alison Fletcher (AFL)	Director of CLF Institute
	Rachel Mylrea (RMY)	Director of HR
	Andy Ling (AL)	IT Director
	Martin Thomas (MT)	Director of Estates and Facilities
	Liz Tincknell (LT)	Head of Governance
	Sarah Lovell (SL)	Chief Operating Officer
	Airlie Fife (AF)	Member
	Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk
Apologies:	Bryony French (BF)	Trustee
	Yvonne Beach (YB)	Chair of the Board
	Mark Davies (MD)	Trustee
	Georgie Gough (GG)	Observer
	Susie Weaver (SW)	Education Director

Matters Arising

Action date and no	Relates to item no	Action	Owner	Update
20.06.24 03	7.2.2	SL and ST will consider introducing a policy on sponsorship and will consider engaging student voice to inform this.	SL ST	ST reported that the relationship with the proposed sponsor has ended. Update: A draft sponsorship policy will be brought to the December meeting. This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 01	2.2	The updated Terms of Reference for the board will be circulated after the meeting.	LT	This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 02	6.11.2	KR to investigate whether there are MATs that are moderating with other MATs at trust level.	KR	KR advised that she spoke to several local MATs. None are moderating formally against teaching teams. The framework is clear for KS2 and is not an accountability measure for EY. The CLF does moderate school to school outside of trust and is working with other trust leaders to talk about moderation arrangements, such as working with the English lead with another trust. A no of colleagues in the trust are trained to moderate through the Local

				Authorities, included 8 teachers for KS2. trained in schools trained to moderate through Las, 8 teachers at ks2. This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 03	6.23	SA to bring Trust Standards to the December board meeting for approval following some reflection of feedback from trustees.	SA	This is included in the papers for this meeting. This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 04	7.7	It was agreed that the board would write a letter to thank AFL and the Institute Team.	YB	This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 05	8.7.1	SA to confirm if service children are included within disadvantaged students and how the funding is received and managed.	SA	SA advised that they are included. There is a small proportion of service children in the trust – 30% of the students across the trust are PP, and within that 1.6% are service children. The funding attached is £340 per child so lower than that for PP. The funding comes in the same way as other PP funding and unlike SEND funding is not attached to individual students but is for the school to determine how to best use the funding to uplift the performance of the whole group. This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 06	9.7.2	SL to consider adding a key trail to the finance paper around staff shortfalls due to vacancies.	SL	SL advised that due to the inclusion of statutory accounts for this meeting, this will be added to the next finance paper. Ongoing
10.10.24 07	10.12.1	SL to ensure the website for RPS and any other new joining school that has not been refreshed to CLF standards is taken down and a holding page be put up instead.	SL	SL advised that colleagues have spent time updating the RPS website and it is on track to move to the new CLF website template. That and the other 2 remaining schools should be fully complete by February. This item has been completed - Closed
10.10.24 08	10.14.2	RMY to include regional and national staffing data in future reports.	RMY	RMY advised that the paper for this meeting includes a narrative around turnover and sickness. Regional and national data will be included in future reports. Ongoing.
10.10.24 09	12.2.1	YB will communicate with trustees directly regarding a pre-meeting for trustees.	YB	This item has been completed - Closed

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	RM welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above.	
1.2	The CLF Board Terms of Reference were reviewed and approved.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2024 were approved.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	The action table has been updated above.	
4.2	ZM noted that at the last meeting, there had been a discussion around the quality of school meals provided at some academies (following the trustees visit to 3 WSM academies), as well as the question around what happens to food waste. ZM asked if the trust had looked into any other providers or if they could provide further information about food waste. MT advised that Aspens have been contracted to undertake the food offering across the trust.	

	The contract is not due for renewal for some time. In terms of student voice, the trust carries out surveys periodically. The most recent survey was at Waycroft School. A theme emerged from that survey about a particular menu item and that has been acted on. In terms of food waste, from January, Aspens is implementing a new food waste tracker which will produce data for plate scrapings and counter waste across the trust. This will allow reporting on that matter. At LHA, the Principal has made some changes to the normal menu; the offer is based around what the children wish to eat.	
5	Strategic Developments	
5.1	CEO Report	
5.2	Lime Hills Academy	
5.2.1	SA provided a summary of the LHA journey to date. In order to provide further temporary accommodation for LHA students (due to the further delay of the new build) modifications were made to the original WHA site to adapt the ground floor for use by LHA students. The project went well and KS3 and KS4 LHA students moved into the building in September 2024. Later in September 2024 an issue with the door locks came to light and it emerged that doors of the wrong specification had been put in place. This meant students could breach the doors and move about the building and this had a significant impact on the culture of the school and the wellbeing of staff. The DfE replaced the door locks on outer doors but have not yet carried out the necessary changes to internal doors, despite ongoing discussions. ST advised that this is one of the highest areas of risk for the trust, particularly as LHA is in the Ofsted window.	
5.2.2	MT advised that as a solution to this, the Head of Estates and Projects has contacted the suppliers direct who are attending on site to fix the doors next week. The trust will pay for the works and will make a claim to the DfE for the reimbursement of the costs.	
5.3	Questions from trustees	
5.4	Are you saying there is a risk to the Ofsted judgement at LHA, if it were inspected in the near future, due to the situation with the doors?	
5.4.1	Yes. It is a complex situation. Having doors that do not operate as they should has meant that the students have behaved in a way that is not consistent with good behaviour, and this has impacted on the culture of the academy; it may take some time to rebuild that.	
5.5	Why did it take so long to identify the issue in the first place, and then subsequently for it to be resolved?	
5.5.1	The issue was first raised with the DfE on 5 October 2024. At that point the DfE recognised it was an error in their own project management processes, and they committed to resolving it. We believed, through project management meetings, that this was challenging for them but that it was in hand. There was a partial resolution with the external doors being corrected, but when the required remaining remedial works did not materialise, we escalated the matter further, on 5 December 2024. The trust has acknowledged that there is a real risk that the money paid to resolve the issue will not be reimbursed by the DfE, however, the works were considered urgent and necessary due to the need to keep the school open and safe.	
5.6	Given that the identification of the issue took a month, and then there was a further period of two months where nothing was achieved remedially, due to the DfE, do we need to take a serious look at how these risks were managed and consider lessons learned?	
5.6.1	The issue only came to light when the doors were kicked by a student; until then, we believed the right specification was in place. The only difference in the specification is the strength of the magnet used in the doors, and this was not something we could identify visually.	
5.7	Is it possible to review the sign off process that took place ahead of opening in September to check if there is a gap in the process?	
5.7.1	Yes. It would be an appropriate action for the PPI Executive Group.	
5.7.2	ACTION: The PPI Executive Group will review the process around sign off for the WHA adaptations to accommodate LHA students to see if there are lessons that can be learned for future projects.	ACO MT

5.8	CLF Partnerships	
5.8.1	ST noted that KR's paper on partnerships has been included as an appendix to the CEO Report. Partnerships is not a discreet strategy and is not separated out in the plan but is embedded in the work of all teams. It is the area with the most work still to do by 2030 and there has been investment at trust level to add capacity to drive this work forward. The work on CLF Partnerships is in addition to the exciting work already taking place in academies.	
5.8.2	KR advised that as part of the work on partnerships the trust is exploring setting up a charity. This has been in discussion less formally for the past 3 years. KR confirmed that the project is still in the exploratory phase and that should it move ahead it will need board approval at some point in the future.	
5.9	Questions from trustees on the CEO Report	
5.10	Regarding the declining number of pupils for primary schools, when will you have reasonably good insight into what the pupil numbers will look like for Reception classes across the trust next year?	
5.10.1	Informal allocations will come through in March, and more formal numbers will be confirmed in May. We know we are going to be in line or slightly down on last year's primary numbers and this will impact on the budget. Discussions are taking place with SL around the budget and consideration is being given as to what a strong school improvement offer looks like in smaller schools. At the last two Finance Executive Group meetings, members of that group looked at pupil projections, trends and forecasting. We are accurate at forecasting pupil numbers. At the point of the October 2024 census for example there were 4755 primary pupils on roll against a forecast of 4753.	
5.10.2	ACTION: Primary pupil numbers will be discussed at the March board meeting.	SL
5.11	Is there anything that can be done in the short term before March in terms of pupil numbers? There might be some strategic decisions that can be taken to inform that process ahead of the September intake. Should we be looking longer term in relation to pupil forecasting? What does the next 5 to 10 years look like?	
5.11.1	We have reduced the PAN at SA, BPA and Wicklea in response to projected pupil numbers over the next few years. We are continually reviewing the position and looking ahead to ensure timely decisions are made. We are keeping close to the Local Authorities in which we operate to understand the demographics. It is very hard to forecast beyond the next 3 years.	
5.12	Risk Register	
5.13	Thank you for sharing the risk register it provides insight into the challenges across the trust. It would be helpful to see it ordered by severity of risk, rather than category in the future. Are there risks, that need to be added, around threats that would impact on the trust's ability to deliver the core and sub-strategies? Or do you think the strategies are on track to be delivered and are without risk?	
5.13.1	The risk register is scrutinised in detail at various sub-committees and Executive Groups, including the Audit Committee. We might look again to consider generic risks to the success of the CLF Strategy to 2030. We have just talked about pupil projections and might also consider the widely discussed sector wide recruitment and retention issue that would be a threat to the core strategy around investing in CLF people. We talk about disadvantage all the time and the ongoing challenging scenario for vulnerable families and the widening gap at KS4; this is central to our commitment to equity for education for 2030. Another sector wide issue that could impact the delivery of our strategy is SEND.	
5.13.2	ACTION: The risk register will be reviewed ahead of the next meeting with consideration given around whether further risks need to be added to include threats to the delivery of the CLF Strategy 2030.	ST
6	Operations Report	
6.1	Questions from trustees	

6.2	In terms of recruitment and retention, greater diversity is needed through the staff body and Academy Council, is there an update on that? It is particularly difficult to find quality staff for our special provisions, and again more difficult to find diverse staff. Is there something we can do together with SCITT to improve this?	
6.2.1	It is on our plan. The update provided in the Operations Report this time is around some of the new things we are doing. We are already advertising in different places and using social media to attract passive candidates and expand our reach. We acknowledge that we are not diversifying our staff body as quickly as we would like, and we need more targeted work around this. This year the SCITT cohort is more diverse, and we are keen to grow future teachers through our own SCITT. This will continue to expand the diversity of our teachers, and we then need to look at what we are doing in terms of retention.	
6.3	It is good to hear the measures in place. How fruitful has this been in terms of the take up in seeing an increased number of applicants from the sectors you are trying to attract?	
6.3.1	We are struggling to recruit a high number of applicants from all backgrounds. Some roles have a better response than others. We need to increase the applicant pool generally; there are a range of roles to which we struggle to recruit. We examine the data around this in the People and Wellbeing Executive Group meeting and we have seen that we have begun to increase our numbers of starters from a variety of ethnic backgrounds; our challenge is retaining those members of staff, and we have a lot of different measures in place to ensure we do this.	
6.4	Do you carry out exit interviews so that you have a clear understanding around why staff are leaving?	
6.4.1	We do offer them, but we do not have high take up rates. A survey is sent out online, but we do also offer face to face if people wish to talk to someone. The data may be collected locally but we are not necessarily collating it at trust level if delivered face to face and due to the low number completed it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions about why people are leaving. We will continue to pursue this, to try to increase the number of exit interviews. This also forms part of our wider voice strategy. A whole staff Edurio survey will take place next Spring, and this will include metrics around the risk of resignation.	
6.5	Have you been able to partner with any other trusts that might have closed this gap nationally? Is there some learning that will benefit the CLF?	
6.5.1	We reflected on this when AFL was working in Birmingham, where the gap is smaller in terms of diversity. This might also be true in London. There are specific issues in particular locations. In Bristol there is a lack of global majority staff in leadership roles more generally. It is also worth noting, that where the CLF has seen considerable growth over the last couple of years, it has typically grown in less diverse areas, geographically. It might be useful at the June or July board meeting to look at the data of the make up of the staff body across the trust as a whole and see how it has developed year on year.	
6.5.2	ACTION: RM to provide data at the June or July meeting to show the diversity of the staff body of the whole trust to see how it has developed year on year over the last three years.	RM
6.6	You have mentioned work done via social media to improve recruitment, particularly in terms of diversity. What work is being done face to face? Is there work going on with the local universities to attract PGCE students to the CLF?	
6.6.1	We have our own SCITT so do not currently look to local universities, but we do ensure we have good face to face representation at events such as the Bristol Jobs Fair, to ensure the CLF brand is known. The diversity in our SCITT cohort is higher than any ITT cohorts in universities in the same regions. Recruiting to ECT posts from our SCITT trainees will broaden the diversity in the CLF ECT cohort.	
6.7	As the trust expands geographically, should we then be thinking about having discussions with other universities as far north as Birmingham and south to Exeter?	

6.7.1	Our recent growth has meant the expansion of the HR team and there is now real expertise within that team, and within the Communications Team, in terms of diverse recruitment and they are focused on diversity as a key priority.	
7	Education Report	
7.1	Key Stages EYFS to P16	
7.1.1	RM congratulated the Executive Team on the Ofsted outcome for UVA.	
7.1.2	SA noted that the Education Report details that board approval is sought for the Trust Standards. A discussion around the proposed standards took place at the last meeting and at the request of trustees, the Executive Team further reviewed the proposed trust standards and made some changes. The revised trust standards are included in the Education Report. The Chair and Vice-Chair are supportive of the revised standards.	
7.1.3	TS advised that, as per his email to the Chair, he felt he could not approve the revised trust standards without further clarity or information regarding the following three points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary phase - It is not clear what the percentages represent; • Secondary Phase - How realistic are the targets given and how can these be compared to previous years when that data is not included? • Attendance – How realistic are the targets given that the education paper details that currently only one secondary school is meeting national standards? TS asked what would happen in a year's time if the trust standards were not met.	
7.1.4	RM advised that the primary percentage is the percentage of children making the DfE expected levels of progress at the end of Year 1. The pass rate is 80%. The target is ambitious but there are trusts that do achieve 95%. SA advised that the secondary phase previous year's data was shared at the last meeting and could be reshared if helpful. The targets set for attendance are ambitious but are achievable. ST advised that the question of what to do if the standards are not met, is for the board to decide.	
7.1.5	Following further discussion, the board were asked to approve the trust standards. Six of the seven trustees present voted to approve the trust standards. One trustee did not approve the trust standards. <u>Decision: The trust standards were deemed approved.</u>	
8	CLF Institute	
8.1	Questions from trustees	
8.2	Can you highlight the three main risks for the CLF Institute?	
8.2.1	The areas of concern are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the funding for the teaching school hub; • Recruitment into the SCITT programme; • The role of the professional development programme. Details are included in the CLF Institute report.	
8.3	Are we going to have enough teachers next year?	
8.3.1	There are twice as many trainees in the SCITT this year and there is diversity in the trainees. The numbers look promising for September 2025, and we are proactively seeking to recruit from that pool for English, maths, science and primary in the Spring, as well as for other hard to recruit subjects such as computing and design and technology. We also have some salaried trainee places this year. Recruitment to teaching training in our areas was strong last year compared to both the previous year and to national figures. We recognise the recruitment cycle for trainees to 2025/26 is a more difficult market to convert to accepted offers but are focused on strong communications with those applicants throughout the process to keep them interested.	
8.4	There is some difficulty in recruiting strong candidates to special schools and alternative provisions. Is there any separate funding for it, like for hard to recruit subjects such as science? Is anything being done within the trust to train people up to work in these areas?	

8.4.1	We are offering trainees a primary with SEND route which is relatively unusual in the sector. We have a good example of a primary trained SCITT trainee now working in a special setting and we do sometimes recruit staff from special provisions to join the SCITT. There is not currently a secondary route like this, the secondary route is subject specific. In the teaching school hub, we also have a New to Special programme that runs for ECTs to complement the main programme and that is helping.	
8.4.2	Outside of the work going on in the SCITT, we are also working with agencies that focus on staff drawn to work with the cohorts that we support. The challenge is more prominent in some areas. It is easier to recruit specialist staff in Bristol than in Weston-Super-Mare, for example. We continue to work with wider agencies and networks, such as the South West networks for special schools, and we share recruitment strategies.	
9	Finance	
9.1	Finance Report	
9.1.1	The report includes an update on this year's financial position for 2024/25 which is on track to deliver the budget. SL advised that there are no current risks to highlight. Last year the year ended on a strong financial position with over £10m in reserves.	
9.2	Questions from trustees	
9.3	The supply budget is a concern. It is showing at £1.7m above budget. Given that when children have supply staff the quality of lessons is much less strong, and that this is a huge amount of money, is there anything that can be done about this?	
9.3.1	£1.7m is an incredible amount of money to spend. For context, the total CLF budget is now £150m. We have discussed supply previously. Some of it is cover required where we have been unable to recruit, and some is absence cover due to sickness or where colleagues are training. We do track the reason for supply and some academies are using more than others. Just over half of the spend is on teachers, the rest is on TAs and support staff. We are focussed on bringing the spend down, both to ensure savings and to ensure quality teaching for students.	
9.4	Do you have the figure for last year's supply spend?	
9.4.1	Last year the spend was around £3.2m. It is not a like for like comparison, this year, due to the number of academies that have joined the trust recently.	
9.5	CLF Annual Accounts 2023/2024	
9.5.1	SL advised that the Bishop Fleming external audit report has been shared, alongside the CLF Annual Accounts for 2023/24. The external audit report identifies 2 low risks. One is around staff signing contracts. This was in a school pre-transfer to the trust and the due diligence processes have been reviewed to prevent this in the future. The other risk was related to the transfer of the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre and the speed in which the financial controls were able to be put in place.	
9.5.2	SL reported that the annual accounts have been reviewed by the Finance Executive Group and have been shared with the Audit Committee. The external auditors Key Issues Discussion Document has been reviewed and discussed by the Audit Committee.	
9.5.3	The board were asked to approve the CLF Annual Accounts for 2023/24 ahead of them being shared with the members at the AGM meeting. <u>Decision: The board approved the accounts.</u>	
9.5.4	The board were asked to approve the going concern statement. <u>Decision: The board approved the statement.</u>	
10	Governance	
10.1	Governance Report	
10.1.1	LT advised that the paper includes updated data on the number of complaints, Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests received. There are a lower number of complaints reaching the formal stage, due to the positive way in which academies are resolving informal concerns. A further update will be provided next term.	

10.2	Terms of Reference (TOR)	
10.2.1	The revised TOR are included in the papers. Trustees are asked to approve them.	
10.3	Questions from trustees	
10.4	The TOR for the People and Wellbeing Executive Group shows that membership includes a secondary Principal and primary Principal. Should there also be representation from a special school Principal, if we want the committee to consider wellbeing for all?	
10.4.1	The absence of representation from special provision is an error and we can amend that. We do want to have representation from across our phases and provisions and while it provides good information for the People and Wellbeing group it is also good professional development for those Principals involved. This year we will have another Edurio staff survey, and the People and Wellbeing group will then have access to some top line analysis so will have some direct staff voice to consider too.	
10.5	Is there a rationale for wishing to reduce the quoracy for the Growth and Development committee from 3 members to 2?	
10.5.1	We did have a conversation around this change. We do rely on trustees being available for a range of sub-committee and executive group meetings and recognise that they are busy and cannot always attend every meeting. For the discussions that take place in this committee, 2 members felt a suitable number, particularly as this committee recommends things to the board rather than making decisions itself.	
10.6	<u>Decision: The board approved the revised Terms of Reference subject to the amendment agreed for the People and Wellbeing Executive Group TOR.</u>	
10.7	Policies	
10.7.1	It is proposed that the board approve the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-contracting Policy • Sponsorship and Ethical Funding Policy • Trustee and Councillor Expenses Policy 	
10.7.2	Questions from trustees	
10.7.3	How much does the trust pay out in trustee and Councillor expenses in a year?	
10.7.4	Very few claim. It is a small amount of money; I would need to check the data to confirm the exact amount.	
10.7.5	ACTION: SL to provide information on the total amount claimed as expenses by trustees and Academy Councillors across last year.	SL
10.7.6	<u>Decision: The board approved the three policies as proposed.</u>	
10.8	Delegated Authority Framework – Partial Delegations	
10.8.1	It is proposed that for appeals against dismissal the partial delegation is amended to allow appeals to be heard by one trustee and two Academy Councillors.	
10.8.2	<u>Decision: The board approved the change to the partial delegations for appeals against dismissal.</u>	
11	Any Other Business	
11.1	ST thanked RM for stepping in to Chair the meeting at short notice. ST thanked trustees for their time and the investment they make in the trust.	
11.2	Future meeting dates: 6 February 2025 13 March 2025 8 May 2025 19 June 2025 10 July 2025	
11.3	The meeting closed at 18.38 hrs.	

Actions to take forward

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12.12.24 05	10.7.5	SL to provide information on the total amount claimed as expenses by trustees and Academy Councillors across last year.	SL	