

Minutes - Board of Directors

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Thursday 19 June 2025
Location: Online
Time: 4.00pm

Chairing this meeting Yvonne Beach (YB) Chair of the Board
Vice Chair: Rachel Mortlock (RMO) Vice Chair of the Board
Trustees: Mark Davies (MD) Trustee
 Suzanne Carrie (SC) Trustee
 Adrian Coleman (AC) Trustee
 Tim Spratt (TS) Trustee
 Orville Lynch (OL) Trustee
 Bryony French (BF) Trustee
 Zarah Morwood (ZM) Trustee
 Nicky McAllister (NM) Trustee
 Jemima Griffiths (JG) Trustee

Attendees: Steve Taylor (ST) CEO
 Sally Apps (SA) Deputy CEO
 Susie Weaver (SW) Education Director
 Kate Richardson (KR) Education Director
 Alison Fletcher (AFL) Director of CLF Institute
 Rachel Mylrea (RMY) Director of HR
 Andy Ling (AL) Interim COO
 Martin Thomas (MT) Director of Estates and Facilities
 Liz Tincknell (LT) Head of Governance
 Helen Davies (HD) Finance Director
 Wendy Hellin (WH) Clerk
 Airlie Fife (AF) Member
 Kyana Gitahi (KG) Observer
Apologies: Sarah Lovell (SL) COO
 Georgina Gough (GG) Trustee

Matters Arising

Action date and no	Item no	Action	Owner	Update
10.10.24 08	10.14.2	RMY to include regional and national staffing data in future reports.	RMY	RMY advised that there will be data in the paper for June/July. Reporting is routinely carried out in August and that is a good point to reflect the national picture. Update – this information has been included in the HR update paper. Closed.
12.12.24 04	6.5.2	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	RMY	An update will be provided at the June or July board meeting. Update - A short summary is included in the Operations report. Closed.
13.03.25 01	6.2.1	MT will share a lessons learned report around works completed to convert	MT	An update has been included in the appendix to the operations report. Closed

		part of WHA at the next board meeting.		
13.03.25 02	6.2.6	SCA funding allocation will be an item for the next board agenda.	YB MT WH	This is included in the Operation Report. Closed.
13.03.25 03	7.1.7	Headline information across Post 16 provision will be included in the next Education Report.	SA	Update – This will be given in the meeting in the form of a slide. It has been shared with the Education Scrutiny group. Closed.
13.03.25 04	7.1.9	It was suggested that in the next Education Paper context be added where academies with the same risk rating are differentiated in some way.	SA	This is included in the paper as suggested. Closed.
13.03.25 05	9.6.1	Cash flow will be discussed at the next Finance Executive Group meeting and a report will then be included in the Finance Report for the October board meeting.	SL	This has been discussed in the March FEG meeting and will be reported to the July board meeting. Ongoing.

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	YB welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 8 May 2025 were approved.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	The action table has been updated above.	
5	Education Report	
5.1	Education across the key stages	
5.1.1	SA noted that there was a request at the last board meeting to include context in the paper around schools with the highest risk; that is now included in the Education Report. Headline data from Post 16 has been shared in the Teams chat page for this meeting.	
5.1.2	Q: Page 5 shows the KS4 outcomes. Data is tracking below the national average of 65% and last year the trust achieved 63%. Are you suggesting the trust will reach the KS4 national average of 65% this year?	
5.1.3	The tracking shows we have made greater gains between mock 1 and mock 2 than ever. There is a very focused RA plan in place. It remains to be seen if we will achieve the national average mark, but it is more possible than it has ever been at this point in the year.	
5.1.4	For KS2, it appears that for both reading and maths, data is below where we were last year, although only by a small amount. What are the reasons for that dip in data?	
5.1.5	The 18 primary academies in the data set include the 8 primary academies that more recently joined the trust. We know those schools bring brilliance into the trust, and they also bring some risk. In 7 of 8 academies a significant risk is outcomes at KS2. We are relatively pleased with the impact of the raising attainment strategies in place; however, improvements take time and there will likely be a lag in the data for those academies. The DfE reporting cohort will only include the 10 primary academies that have been in the trust for a long time. We are cautiously optimistic that we will make a real difference, especially for those children experiencing disadvantage.	
5.1.6	Are you cautiously optimistic that you will match last year's standards for KS2 outcomes?	
5.1.7	To meet the figure reached last year (61% combined) would require something quite phenomenal and this is the reality of working with new schools that come in with a low	

	starting point. We are confident we have had positive impact on those schools, and that the existing 10 schools have improved. We have seen that through the writing moderation. We are hopeful we will make last year's figures, but the reality is that it might be a longer journey to get back to 61%. If we were comparing like for like, in terms of just the 10 schools then it is more than likely that we would exceed the results from last year.	
5.1.8	The increase in data between mock 1 and mock 2 is significant. Is that due to some deliberate practice or strategy you have put in place?	
5.1.9	We have had a range of different raising attainment approaches. In addition, the curriculum in place will support Year 11 to make progress. We do need to remember these are an internal measure. It is a large data set, with over 1000 students sitting the same assessment, but we still exercise some caution around that. To date, we have trusted this data as a broad picture across the trust and generally the outcomes do land very close to our prediction. We also are very good at predicting the order of schools in terms of their summer outcomes so can be confident that our data is reliable. The improvements this time have come from a combination of these approaches rather than one single thing.	
5.1.10	There are some academies that have received a good Ofsted judgement recently, but they have tipped into a risk rating of 5, where other schools in that position have not. Can you explain how you decide which academies should be risk rated as 5 (highest risk) compared to other similar academies?	
5.1.11	There are a range of factors that are considered when deciding on an academy's risk rating, and this includes things such as a change in leadership, strength of governance, outcomes etc. For some, we keep a watching brief over a period of time and then may get to the point where we have seen enough positive things to reduce the risk, or the opposite. On paper it may look like the risk should reduce due to the inspection outcome, but the Executive Team will have detailed knowledge around the context of the academy. In this instance, for the academy in question, the leader has been absent for some time, so we have kept the rating higher.	
5.1.12	One academy has had two short-notice inspections in a relatively short timeframe. This puts additional workload and stress on to staff. What is causing the repeat interest from Ofsted?	
5.1.13	We believe they were driven by complaints about safeguarding, behaviours and attitudes, which were responded to satisfactorily. The inspections concluded that steps to improve behaviour and secure positive attitudes to learning are in place and that safeguarding is effective. If this had not been the case, it could have triggered a full inspection.	
5.1.14	Are you able to provide the attendance figure for the CLF and for national for the previous year for secondary, primary and special/AP? Can this be included in future reports on attendance?	
5.1.15	Yes, we will share these in the Teams chat for this meeting and will include them going forwards. ACTION: Where attendance data is reported, it will include the CLF data and previous year's data for each of secondary, primary and special/AP phases.	SA/KR
5.1.16	Where attendance data is shown for special/AP, is that overall data for all categories of special schools and APs?	
5.1.17	National data is not gathered for special schools with an SEMH designation. We have gathered information for AP but cannot do so for pupils with SEMH in a special school, so it is not the same comparison. The national figure is quite low, and our data does not compare too badly to that, but our ambition is higher, and we have chosen to put in the attendance standard for those schools. Children with SEMH do have more challenges, in terms of attendance, compared to other SEND categories. Each of the special schools in the trust have a different context and cohort. One has children that are not timetabled to be in school but are receiving provision in their home; these do not count towards the attendance. The Ofsted	

	inspectors did not challenge the attendance figures at LHA; it is helpful that the context is taken into account.	
5.1.18	Congratulations on the recent Ofsted inspection outcomes. There have been 7 inspections over 8 weeks. How are the team managing that? How is everyone in terms of wellbeing?	
5.1.19	Thank you for asking. It has been particularly pressured. It matters to us that academies and leaders are recognised for the work they do. We support our teams through the inspections and that does take a lot in terms of our leadership capacity, but we recognise the importance of this reputationally and for school leaders. It has caused us to reflect on how to make best use of our capacity during those times so that we can support the academies as needed and keep the wider trust running smoothly. Overall, the team is coping well, and we are good at checking in with each other.	
5.2	Safeguarding	
5.2.1	The safeguarding update is included as an annex to the Education paper and includes an update on partnership working due to the rising rates of serious youth violence. SW has met with NM as link trustee for safeguarding. Safeguarding audits have now taken place across the trust with Steve Bane and Adele Rice leading these in 41 settings. The audits were rigorous and informative and action plans have been produced in response to any findings.	
5.2.2	NM advised that the depth of the safeguarding audits, together with her regular meetings with SW, mean that the board can be assured and confident that there are effective safeguarding practices across the trust.	
5.2.3	ACTION: YB reminded all trustees to complete the annual safeguarding trainee if they have not already done so.	ALL
6	CLF Institute	
6.1	AFL highlighted the key headlines from the CLF Institute report and invited questions from trustees.	
6.2	Q: SCITT recruitment looks strong; is that still ongoing?	
6.3	Yes, we have 110 applications so far, which is around 20 more than the same point last year. Applications are still coming in and we may have to close some subjects where they are now at capacity.	
7	Governance Review	
7.1	CST Review Report – information and discussion	
7.1.1	All members of the Executive Team except for the ST, SA, AL and LT left the meeting for this agenda item. LT presented the findings of the review and each of the recommendations was discussed by trustees.	
7.1.2	Following discussion, trustees agreed the following recommendations: 1a: Reconstitute the executive groups to board committees with delegated responsibilities to carry out the detailed oversight of relevant aspects of the board's accountabilities on behalf of the board 1c: Maintain the Board link role for safeguarding, rather than constitute a committee as suggested by the review. Provide three short briefings per year authored by trustee (supported by the Lead Officer) and the annual report (authored by the Lead Officer) 1d: Oversight of health and safety to transfer to Operations sub-committee 4b: Retain the Member's Review Day	
7.1.3	A discussion took place around the suggested possible responses to recommendation 1b: Limiting the number of members of the executive team present for the full board meeting with the expectation that other members of the executive team attend only for their specific item if they are presenting a report.	
7.1.4	Feedback included the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees felt that the high number of Executive Team members attending the board meetings is unusual and not replicated across boards in other organisations. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending board meetings adds to the workload for Executive colleagues and could impact their wellbeing. • The current position is that Executive colleagues are advised to attend the board meeting to present their paper and are welcome to leave the meeting once the relevant item is complete. However, that is not typical; colleagues are choosing to stay for the duration of the meeting. • It was suggested that one consideration might be that Executive colleagues are invited to the board briefings only, rather than full board meetings; another was that Executive colleagues could join the meeting, via Teams, for the agenda item on their paper only. • There are benefits for Executive colleagues in terms of gaining experience of board meetings, writing board reports and responding to questions; this has a positive effect on succession planning. It could be considered that colleagues can reap similar benefits by attending the sub-committee meetings, rather than the board meetings. • It can be helpful for new trustees to have the opportunity to meet all the Executive colleagues through the board meetings and gain a better understanding of their roles. • It is important in the decision making to consider what routes will lead to improved governance. • It is helpful to keep in mind the cost (financial and other) of meetings, and whether that is appropriate for what the meeting is trying to achieve. Consideration could be given to re-ordering the agenda so that any items requiring wider Executive colleague attendance are covered first, and those colleagues then leave. • It is important that everyone attending the meeting is giving the meeting their full attention; if colleagues have limited capacity and need to complete some work during the meeting, they should not attend. The number of laptops open and being used during a meeting can be distracting. It was noted that some colleagues like to take their own live notes during meetings or need to retrieve live data to respond to a question. • Some trustees felt the only Executive colleagues attending should be the CEO, DCEO and COO and that they felt somewhat constrained to ask questions with the wider Executive team present. • It can be the case that the discussions become operational, rather than remaining strategic, when the full Executive Team are present. 	
7.1.5	<p>It was agreed that further time will be given to the CST governance review at the July board meeting to allow decisions to be made on the recommendation around Executive Team members attending full board meetings, and on the other recommendations as yet not discussed.</p> <p>ACTION: CST Review Report will be added to the July meeting agenda for further discussion and approval.</p>	YB LT
7.1.6	Following a short break, Executive Team colleagues were invited back into the meeting.	
8	Strategic Developments	
8.1	CEO Report	
8.1.1	The CEO report has been shared at Flag E. There were no questions from trustees on the report.	
8.2	Strategy 2030 update	
8.2.1	<p>ST provided an update on the strategy for the next academic year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final strategy will be launched at the October conference; it is still a work in progress. • The discussion with trustees at the board briefing on 8 May was helpful and has fed into the development of the strategy. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further work was completed at the leadership away day on 2 June, and there is one more away day on 30 June to continue finalising the strategy. • The three core elements of the strategy will remain the same. • The plan is becoming tighter as the year 2030 approaches. • The focus for this year will shift to People, with the strapline – Inclusive excellence : High expectations. • Next year the shift will be to focus on the third core element: Partnerships, although some strands of work are already underway. • Winning aspirations (KPIs) are starting to be written against each of the three areas. • This year there was a separate plan for professional services; this year there will be one single plan combining both. • There will be three core enablers that will replace the sub-strategies; these will be led by an Executive Officer. Team plans will be in place beneath these. • Each academy will have a top sheet for their AIPs; an example was shared with trustees. • The final draft strategy will be brought to the Strategic Review meeting in July for trustees to consider. 	
8.2.2	Questions from trustees	
8.2.3	In terms of EDI, how are you ensuring there will be more representation on the board and in the Executive Team?	
8.2.4	There are four main headings to the strategy, and one is diversity. We are actively seeking to diversify the team and one of the winning aspirations will be the ethnicity pay gap. Senior staff are paid higher salaries, so we are not just focused on ensuring a higher headcount, but on providing opportunities for global majority staff to consider leadership roles. Kyani shadowing my role this week is an example of the programmes we are offering. Our commitment is to see the pay gap shorten alongside increasing diversity right across the trust. We have shared examples of what the winning aspirations might be, so that academies can think about how they are ensuring they create diverse teams.	
8.2.5	Once the strategy has been agreed and shared, how will the Academy Council be made aware of the academy’s specific strategy (the AIP) as well as the wider strategy of the trust?	
8.2.6	The Academy Council will be involved in regular review of the risk register, SEF, AIP and Academy Council report from the Principal. The top sheet of the school will detail the main strategic commitments of that school. There is a shift next year in that targets will be set against the strategic priorities and Academy Councils will be engaged in the process. We have not set out the terms of that engagement; some may choose to do this through the meetings the Chair has with the Principal. Part of the agenda for the recent COAC meeting included a discussion around the planning and how it links to the wider trust strategic plan. This is the start of a strengthening of the conduit between the board and local Academy Councils, through the COAC group.	
8.3	Growth Rationale 2025/26	
8.3.1	The growth rational paper is included at Flag F. This has been tweaked following discussion at the recent Growth Committee meeting.	
8.3.2	Questions from trustees	
8.3.3	It is an excellent paper, thank you. Will there be an impact on other schools if the trust continues to grow?	
8.3.4	The increase in scale adds capacity. Even if schools joining are initially weaker on paper, there will be some bright spots that can be shared with other schools in the trust. The new joiners bring intellectual capacity in addition to resource capacity. Standards across the trust remain strong following the high number of inspections in recent weeks.	
8.3.5	End of Questions	

8.3.6	NM thanked ST for the growth rationale panel and noted that whilst it is the right direction of travel for the trust, there needs to be some consideration around managing governance as the trust continues to grow. NM reported that there are capacity challenges currently in terms of securing people for panels and for the scrutiny committee meetings. Members are being asked to attend additional meetings due to a lack of sufficient numbers.	
9	Operations Report	
9.1	Kingsmead School	
9.1.1	AL advised that the DfE have now confirmed that all transfer conditions have been met and that the School Funding Allocation (SFA) will be signed next week. This is a significant milestone in the transition process.	
9.2	Estates and Facilities	
9.2.1	MT highlighted that there are four main items in the report; two have been discussed through matters arising. The paper provides progress updates for several key projects including new builds, which are mostly on track. It also details some contract benchmarking for the cleaning and catering contracts. MT advised that there will be some changes implemented to those contracts following that work, to deliver some cost savings for this year and next.	
9.3	IT - MFD procurement	
9.3.1	AL spoke to the paper at Flag H which proposes a 3-year procurement for Multifunctional Devices (MFDs) across all CLF sites, with an option to extend by two additional 1-year periods. CLF invests around £225k annually in MFD leases, totalling approximately £1.1 million over the potential five-year award. IT colleagues have worked with HD, Finance Director, to ensure a compliant procurement process. The proposal has been shared with, and has the agreement of, the PPI group. ACO advised that the group reviewed the proposal in some detail. The contract should bring about savings of around £50k per year for a like for like service. Once the new contract is in place, the focus will then shift to considering ways of reducing the need to print at the current volume, in line with the environment strategy. <u>Decision</u> – the board approved the MFD procurement proposal.	
9.4	HR	
9.4.1	RMY shared a presentation that detailed the feedback collated from the Edurio Survey. The results have been shared with the Executive Team and with Principals who are starting to review the feedback. Once fully considered, the feedback will be used to shape the inset days and will feed into plans for next year. The slides will be shared in the meeting folder. RMY invited questions from trustees.	
9.4.2	Questions from trustees	
9.4.3	The report mentions two tribunal claims. What stages are they at and what are the potential risks?	
9.4.4	One has been concluded through ACAS. For the other we have received the ET1 and responded with an ET3 to our insurers. We will carry out an appraisal of the risks once we know more.	
9.4.5	Slide 3 of your presentation included some comparative data to the previous survey. That column was not included in the HR paper and would have been helpful. Please can that be included going forward?	
9.4.6	Yes, we can include that going forwards. It was initially left out as the two surveys are not the same and so not totally comparable. Some additional questions were asked in the latest survey.	
9.4.7	One of the fundamental reasons for a teacher wishing to work in a MAT is that it provides better opportunities for career progression, and yet this was one of the lowest scores from teachers. Additionally, one of the main reasons given for teachers leaving is pupil behaviour. Is that for one or two academies in particular or across the trust?	

9.4.8	We have been focused on ensuring career opportunities for all staff. We have concluded the job evaluation for most of the roles and, as part of that process, have created career pathways for each of those. When the data is reviewed, it tends to be that middle and senior leaders do see career progression as a possibility. We need to do some analysis further down to see what the picture is for the rest of the staff body. In terms of pupil behaviour, this is recognised as being positive across the trust, with 31 inspections have a good or better judgement. Where there are some concerns remaining, it has been identified by Executive Team members and external regulators that behaviour is improving. There is also some context that needs to be considered when detailing what good behaviour looks like in our special and AP settings.	
9.4.9	Congratulations on the improvement in the survey response rate. That is very encouraging. Are you able to manipulate the survey outcomes to look at them through the lens of those schools newer to the trust vs those schools that have been in the trust for a number of years?	
9.4.10	Yes, we can apply filters to do that for the schools that have more recently joined us.	
10	Finance	
10.1	Finance Report	
10.1.1	The finance report is shared at flag I. Trustees congratulated SL, HD and the team on the work undertaken to unsure a breakeven position for this year's budget.	
11	Governance	
11.1	Governance report - approvals	
11.1.1	LT introduced the Governance Report at flag J. It is proposed that the Audit Committee name is changed to Audit and Risk Committee. <u>Decision:</u> The board approved the proposal.	
11.1.2	It is proposed that the terms of reference be amended to allow Chairs to serve an additional four-year term in exceptional circumstances to support succession planning. <u>Decision:</u> The board approved the proposal.	
11.2	Policies and Statements for approval	
11.2.1	LT advised that a streamlined approach to policies was being taken. Trust wide policies would be removed from individual academy websites, and instead, a link will be published that links through to the policy on the main CLF website. This will ensure there are no issues in terms of version control and will make policy management processes easier.	
11.2.2	<u>Decision:</u> The board approved the following policies and statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Slavery Statement • Attendance Policy • Remote Education Policy • Online Safety Policy • Data Protection Policy 	
11.2.3	Following discussion, the following policies were not approved by the board. They first need to be reviewed by the relevant Executive Group (P & W or PPI as appropriate) before coming back to board for approval at the July meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Policy (trust level) • Health and Safety Policy (academy level) ACTION: LT will ensure the relevant Executive Group reviews the H & S policy ahead of it coming back to board for approval at the July meeting.	LT
11.2.4	It was proposed that the CLF Anti-Fraud policy be approved by the Audit and Risk Committee in future as opposed to the board. <u>Decision:</u> The board approved the proposal.	
12	Risk	
12	Risk Register – Strategic or High	

	A summary of strategic or high risks is included at flag K. There were no questions from trustees.	
13	Any Other Business	
13.1	ST reported that next Wednesday, 25 June, the CLF 15-year celebration takes place at the CLF Institute. All trustees and members are welcome to join the celebration. Members and trustees are also welcome to join the CLF Conference taking place on 4 July at Winterstoke Hundred Academy from 9am – 3pm.	
13.2	The draft agenda for the July Strategic Board meeting is included at flag L.	
13.3	YB advised that after serving 7 years as a trustee, Suzanne Carrie (SC) will be stepping down from her role in August. There will be an opportunity to say farewell and thank you to SC at the July meeting.	
13.4	JG asked for some further information on what is involved in the Members' Review Day. ACTION: LT will provide further information on Members' Review Day to JG and GG.	LT
13.5	The meeting closed at 7.10pm.	

Actions to take forward

Action date and no	Item no	Action	Owner	Update
13.03.25 05	9.6.1	Cash flow will be discussed at the next Finance Executive Group meeting and a report will then be included in the Finance Report for the October board meeting.	SL	This has been discussed in the March FEG meeting and will be reported to the July board meeting. Ongoing.
19.06.25 01	5.1.15	Where attendance data is reported, it will include the CLF data and previous year's data for each of secondary, primary and special/AP phases.	SA/KR	
19.06.25 02	5.2.3	YB reminded all trustees to complete the annual safeguarding trainee if they have not already done so.	ALL	
19.06.25 03	7.1.5	CST Review Report will be added to the July meeting agenda for further discussion and approval.	YB LT	
19.06.25 04	11.2.3	LT will ensure the relevant Executive Group reviews the H & S policy ahead of it coming back to board for approval at the July meeting.	LT	
19.06.25 05	13.4	LT will provide further information on Members' Review Day to JG and GG.	LT	