

# Minutes - Board of Directors

**Version:** Approved  
**Meeting Date:** Thursday 23 March 2023  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams  
**Time:** 4.00pm

<b>Chair:</b>	Paul Olomolaiye (PO)	Chair of the Board
<b>Members:</b>	Bethan Owen (BON)	Vice Chair of the Board
	Anthony Cherry (ACH)	Director Leaving early
	Adrian Coleman (ACO)	Director
	Su Coombes (SCO)	Director
	Bryony French (BF)	Director
	Suzanne Carrie (SCA)	Director
	Rachel Mortlock (RM)	Director
	Nus Arshad (NA)	Director
	Deb Attack (DA)	Director
	Tim Spratt (TS)	Director
<b>Attendees:</b>	Steve Taylor (ST)	CEO
	Dan Nicholls (DN)	Executive Director of Education
	Sally Apps (SA)	Executive Principal
	Susie Weaver (SW)	Executive Principal
	Kate Richardson (KR)	Executive Principal
	Alison Fletcher (AFL)	Director of CLF Institute
	Rachel Mylrea	Director of HR
	Sarah Lovell (SL)	Chief Operating Officer
	Elizabeth Tincknell (ET)	Head of Governance
	Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mark Davies (MD)	Director
	Nicky McAllister (NM)	Director

## Minutes

Item	Description	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions, Administration, Apologies</b>	
1.1	PO welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above. PO welcomed Tim Spratt to his first meeting as a Director. Liz Tincknell was introduced as the new Head of Governance.	
1.2	The updated risk register is included for reference at Flag A*. This is a starred item.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest/Member &amp; Director Declarations</b>	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meetings</b>	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 2 February 2023 and 28 February 2023 were approved.	
3.2	PO reported that he met with BF, ACH and ACO following the emergency meeting and some of the preparation for the decisions that were asked of the board. ST noted that consideration will be given to the information provided ahead of key decisions going	

	forward, including a clear financial criterion where required as part of due diligence. Any such future meetings required will be called Extraordinary or Additional.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
4.1	SL to update the board on the proposed review of governance. SL will cover this at item 10: Governance. This action will be closed.	
4.2	SL to provide an update on the planned spend for the additional £1m at the March board meeting. SL will cover this under the finance item. This action will be closed.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Education Report</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Input from Educational Scrutiny</b>	
5.1.1	BON reported that there have been three meetings since the last full board meeting: an Executive Scrutiny meeting in January and two Academy Scrutiny meetings, one in January and one in March.	
5.1.2	The Executive Scrutiny meeting included a review of the board education paper for December, a review of mocks data and discussions around disadvantage. The recommendations from that meeting are included in the Education report at Flag D.	
5.1.3	The scrutiny of 16 March was attended by WFA, HWA, KOA and BA. It was BA and KOA's second attendance for this academic year. The recommendations will be included in the board paper for the next meeting.	
5.1.4	The scrutiny of 19 January was attended by MPA, SA and BPA. The recommendations are included in the Education report at Flag D.	
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Key Stages EYFS to P16</b>	
5.2.1	<p>DN highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges remain around pupil attendance across the trust; attendance is approximately 2 percentage points below for primary and 4% for secondary. This is in line with national, but improvements need to be made.</li> <li>A staffing shortage exists regionally and nationally; supply agencies have few staff available. Many senior leaders are needing to do cover. This is a national problem and is also reflected in SCITT recruitment.</li> <li>Any new strike announcement is on pause as the unions and government try to resolve the issues.</li> <li>The focus since Christmas is on RA; particularly for those cohorts that have been affected by the pandemic.</li> <li>National KS4 MAT data was released at the beginning of February and includes a comparison of MATs across the country. There are now 193 MATs vs 85 previously, due to increased academisation. In terms of overall Progress 8 performance, the CLF was 59<sup>th</sup> in the table and is now in the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile despite the larger set.</li> <li>Disadvantaged has been done particularly well; there is evidence of trust dividend.</li> <li>Emerging areas - the need now is to focus on leadership, recruitment, retention, standardisation, collaboration and growth.</li> <li>Five features of a strong trust were described; this helps leaders to set out how they do things.</li> <li>EPA outcome – this is an example of where the trust is able to mobilise resource and support for EPA and there has been investment in the primary curriculum. The trust seeks to work with schools in a difficult situation and the trust is proud of the results.</li> <li>The Ofsted profile has improved with all but one school now good and outstanding. This adds credibility to the trust.</li> <li>The risk assessment table is included – this moves slowly, school improvement happens over time. The table helps the trust to direct its resource to support those schools to improve.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At part of the British Council, SA went to Singapore– the blog included in the papers is highly confidential and talks about the two educational systems.</li> <li>Raising attainment at Year 6 has been a focus. The headline is that staff are relatively optimistic about outcomes across the trust; they are at least in line with last year which was the best ever.</li> <li>Assessments are now developed in every year group for KS3 and Year 10.</li> <li>There is now a link from the main page that allows any member of staff to link instantly to data and access data for their academy directly; this is part of the aim to put data in the hands of the teachers.</li> <li>There is some variation in performance across KS3 and Year 10.</li> </ul>	
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>5.4</b>	<b>There is some variance in Year 10 and 11 and quite a lot in the Year 6 mocks, particularly for maths. What is being done to improve those results?</b>	
5.4.1	There is some very direct work going on at academy level, as well as specialist and directed support from the School Improvement Team. It is clear that some of the variance will close with that intervention, and some speaks to provision over time and the work being completed there.	
<b>5.5</b>	<b>There is a national staffing shortage. What are you doing to ensure the impact of that is minimal on the CLF?</b>	
5.5.1	It is not a linear problem, there are specific pockets of challenge around the country, particularly in the north. Being close to a major city is helpful. For a small primary to lose one or two staff, it can be particularly difficult to continue to operate without challenge. The DfE are offering incentives to join the profession. One of the best ways to address the challenge is to make sure staff are retained. A range of strategies are in place for recruitment, including the recruitment of SCITT trainees into roles across the trust. The trust is working closely with AWS the master vendor for supply and has reviewed the payment structure to attract more agencies to extend the reach into supply. A new recruitment manager is in place in the CLF and is working in a more pro-active way to recruit and induct new employees. Another approach is to discuss vacancies with those employees on fixed term contracts to secure some of those into permanent roles before they leave the organisation.	
<b>5.6</b>	<b>What is the objective of the Singapore visit?</b>	
5.6.1	The visit was part of a longer-term project and is in its 12 <sup>th</sup> year. There is the same focus each year with visits hosted in London and Singapore to look at the same research question. Each year a report is shared with the DfE; sometimes it informs policy, sometimes not. There are things that work in Singapore that would not work here, but there are definitely things worth reflecting on. The draft report is currently with the DfE.	
<b>5.7</b>	<b>When a teacher joins a CLF academy, is there any known influence on their decision because that academy is part of the CLF multi academy trust? How much perception and profile of the CLF does that have on the decision of a teacher to join a CLF academy?</b>	
5.7.1	The SCITT trainees typically have enthusiasm to progress into CLF academies and between a third and a half do secure a position. Anecdotally, this is in part due to an alignment of values; the main reason cited by ECTs who come into the trust is that they want to do a good job and have a strong morale purpose. The main reason cited by those that leave the trust is that they don't feel they are able to make the difference in teaching that they thought they would. The extended 2-year ECT programme is helping but it can also be a challenge for the school. To ensure the market knows the trust supports ECTs well makes it an attractive multi-academy trust.	
<b>5.8</b>	<b>There is national data available for Persistent Absence now, with national at 23% for all settings and 25% for secondary. How does the trust compare?</b>	

5.8.1	[Trust PA data was shared in the chat function] We have been focusing specifically on those learners with less than 50% attendance and have invested time in reviewing the list of pupils and creating a centralised tracker. We are broadly in line with the national picture, although slightly better at primary for PA.	
<b>5.9</b>	<b>Safeguarding update</b>	
5.9.1	SW noted the safeguarding paper had been shared in advance and that it referred out to both the annual plan and safeguarding report. SW provided the following update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SW meets with SCO, the Link Director for Safeguarding, on a termly basis to review the strategy at a granular level and to discuss progress against the plan.</li> <li>• There is ongoing investment in PD, and this is part of the core strategy.</li> <li>• Changes in KCSIE have been taken on board and recognised at a national and local level.</li> <li>• Wider learning is taken from things like the Shawcross review.</li> <li>• Staff are working with a range of teams both in and out of the trust and is commissioning work where appropriate.</li> <li>• There are overlaps with EDI and with mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• There is ongoing work with the LA designated officers across the 3 Local Authorities.</li> </ul>	
<b>5.10</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>5.11</b>	<b>Are there any implications for us as a MAT and/or our schools and anything that we need to do differently as a result? How do we mitigate against these areas of weaker practice that have been identified by Ofsted?</b>	
5.11.1	SW provided the following response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are fully alert to the current progress and limitations in the LA (and other LAs including others we work in)</li> <li>• We are continuing to work proactively in partnership – including being in the room as we shape the next 3-year strategy and being a key player in a number of networks and groups – leading some of the response work.</li> <li>• Outlining areas of challenge in some of the existing partnerships and projects – including the Safeguarding/SEND/AP/Taskforce intersectionality</li> <li>• Strong engagement from BCC and good links – including our own Board link member (SC)</li> <li>• Clear about routes and pathways to ensure access</li> <li>• Coordinated approach in terms of escalation</li> <li>• Professional Development for leaders – to set out the landscape and support with navigation.</li> </ul>	
<b>6</b>	<b>CLF Institute</b>	
6.1	SCITT Recruitment	
6.1.1	It is a challenging year for SCITT recruitment. To date there are 30 trainees recruited which is low compared to target. Last year it was anticipated that there would be 120 recruits; this dropped to 100 and there were 82 that registered and joined subsequently. A number dropped out due to their own financial situations. Ideally the figure needs to increase to 80.	
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Re-accreditation process</b>	
6.2.1	Colleagues continue with the re-accreditation process for 2024 and all key milestones have been met.	
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>6.4</b>	<b>The Boolean Maths Hub is not featured in the CLF Institute report. How will you ensure people remain aware of the excellent work going on there?</b>	
6.4.1	There were no specific updates this time; it will continue to be reported on within the CLF Institute report going forwards.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Strategic Developments</b>	

<b>7.1</b>	<b>Strike Update</b>	
7.1.1	<p>RM shared a slide containing data pertaining to the teachers' strike, including student and staff absence, and provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All academies were open in part and accommodated priority pupils.</li> <li>• For teachers, the days with the most strike action have been the first and fourth strike days.</li> <li>• In some academies support staff took action; this represented unofficial action, and the individuals concerned have been written to.</li> <li>• There were picket lines at most secondary academies.</li> <li>• Primary academies were less affected by picket lines, but the two-day strike did see picket lines at WFA and FVA.</li> <li>• The strike was generally good natured; members of the Executive Team visited several picket lines to chat to staff and to keep relations neutral.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.1.2</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>7.1.3</b>	<b>Given the CLF values, and the moral compass of wanting to support students, how has the strike come to fruition?</b>	
7.1.4	It is national action around pay and conditions, rather than a local issue with the trust or any of the academies. Anecdotally, those on the picket line said it was about securing the right conditions and investment in education from the government. Generally, relationships between the trust and unions are strong.	
<b>7.2</b>	<b>CEO's Report</b>	
7.2.1	ST advised that the report contains a summary of the information shared with the Growth Committee when they met on 14 March. At the meeting, rather than discussing specific schools, the committee discussed the national picture with regard to academisation. ST shared the proposed 5 cluster model and how it might develop going forwards, including what would happen to the scale of the CLF if all projects currently being considered were to mature and how the additional capacity would facilitate ongoing improvements to the current academies within the trust.	
7.2.2	ST described the proposed Executive Team structure and noted that interviews take place on Monday for the new EP roles.	
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Strategic Review Report</b>	
7.3.1	SL advised that going forward progress against the 7 sub strategies will be provided within one written report. The report provided at Flag H includes reports of 5 of those sub-strategies. A verbal update will be provided by ACO on Building a Digital Culture. SCO is not present to provide an update.	
<b>7.3.2</b>	<b>Building a Digital Culture - ACO</b>	
7.3.2.1	ACO reported that this sub-strategy was aimed at building a digital culture within the CLF and ensuring all are proficient users of technology to help them work and learn. This is done through the use of a technology enabled and cloud-based approach. ACO met with CLF colleagues in December and again in February looking at five main areas. ACO reported no concerns as to progress.	
<b>7.3.3</b>	<b>Board updates</b>	
7.3.3.1	PO reported that BON is stepping down as a Director in July, and as Vice Chair with immediate effect.	
7.3.3.2	PO reported that NA has resigned as a Director and that this will be her last meeting. PO, ST and the board thanked NA for her 4 ½ years of service and wished her well for the future.	
<b>7.3.4</b>	<b>Election of Vice Chair</b>	
7.3.4.1	PO advised that he had spoken to RM who was willing to take on the role of Vice Chair. PO asked if there were any further nominations. There were none. A vote was taken. RM was elected as Vice Chair of the Board.	

<b>8</b>	<b>Finance Report</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Procurements</b>	
8.1.1	SL reported that a number of procurements are underway, as detailed in the paper. The student data MIS is a key procurement. It is progressing with options being considered.	
8.1.2	The Schools Condition Allocation for the trust is estimated to be £1.4m; this is expected to be shared shortly and plans for prioritising this spend will be discussed at the PPI Executive Group Meeting. Estates investment remains a priority.	
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Finance</b>	
8.2.1	The January management accounts have been shared. SL noted that monthly accounts are shared with PO and BF.	
8.2.2	The current position is slightly above budget due to the additional £1m. Reserves are expected to close at just over £6m. The Finance Executive Group (FEG) discussed the minimum and maximum desired for reserves as well as the purpose of reserves.	
8.2.3	In terms of expenditure, the capital works approved last year include the CAB roof, KOA canteen and the new finance system. There is £580k from the school support grant that has not yet been allocated; it is being considered whether to use this for existing school improvement or for growth.	
8.2.4	The budget setting process started in January. A detailed paper was submitted to the FEG and included the key principles for 25 budgets, which includes a new budget this year for estates. Key budget assumptions are included in the finance paper. An outline for the timeline was shared. It is hoped that there will be a clearer picture by the end of March/beginning of April.	
8.2.5	There are some budgetary challenges across the trust, largely due to a fairly flat income and costs that continue to rise.	
<b>8.2.6</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>8.2.7</b>	<b>In order to reach the forecast surplus, there is the need to still find £425k by the end of the year. Are you confident this can be achieved in cost savings?</b>	
8.2.8	This was a unique requirement included this year. At the start of the year, the budget was £3m adverse, largely due to unbudgeted staff costs and rising energy costs. Savings of around £1m were required and so far around half has been found. Some of this has materialised where schools have not been able to recruit to fill vacant positions. Academies continue to work to make savings, although not to the detriment of each individual academy or its students. It is an ongoing process, and we are reasonably confident we will find the remaining £425k.	
<b>8.2.9</b>	<b>What is the reason for teaching income to be down by £1.3m?</b>	
8.2.10	This is due to the under-recruitment, to date, of SCITT trainees as well as some other work around school improvement support that has not come to fruition.	
8.2.11	End of Questions	
8.3	BF reported that a good discussion around budget setting and assumptions took place at the Finance Executive Group meeting. The budget for HR, IT and infrastructure were signed off. Conversations took place around growth and the need to protect some finances now, in readiness for future growth.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Operations Report</b>	
9.1	SL provided the following update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment for the role of Director of Estates and Facilities takes place tomorrow.</li> <li>The focus on ensuring professional development for professional services staff remains.</li> <li>The planning permission for LHA has been delayed due to local elections; students will remain in temporary accommodation a little longer.</li> <li>The satellite site for WHA is making good progress and is set to open in September.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Project Steering Group (PSG) has been set up for Tewkesbury school that joins the trust on 1 July 2023. AL is chairing the PSG.</li> </ul>	
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>9.2.1</b>	<b>Are you confident that the necessary work will be complete, to allow Tewkesbury to join on 1 July?</b>	
9.2.1.1	Yes, we are making good progress. All the critical pieces of work have been identified. These include the legal elements. Then follows the work streams that are essential from a CLF internal perspective, but that would not delay the transfer. There are then a further series of workstreams identified to take place after 1 September; these are around embedded CLF processes and ensuring a good transition.	
<b>9.3</b>	<b>HR update</b>	
9.3.1	<p>RM provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government are in talks about the proposed teacher pay award; if rejected there may be further strike action.</li> <li>The final offer for the professional services staff has been announced; the proposal is that the same offer as last year is repeated, with a flat rate £1925 applied to pay bands. If proposed that offer will come to board for approval.</li> <li>The trust is considering the living wage with the need to attract candidates to roles and to remain competitive.</li> <li>Staff sickness has reduced by 0.7%.</li> <li>The gender pay gap will be published shortly; this has improved and was discussed in detail at the People and Wellbeing Executive Group meeting.</li> </ul>	
<b>9.3.2</b>	<b>Questions from the board</b>	
<b>9.3.3</b>	<b>How does the gender pay gap compare to the rest of the sector?</b>	
9.3.4	The CLF gender pay gap is just over 20%, compared to around 22% across the sector. The national figure is closer to 14% but there has always been a higher percentage in the education sector given that the lowest earning quintile of the workforce is occupied by a high proportion of females.	
<b>9.3.5</b>	<b>The staff survey is to be issued in April. Will it include a wellbeing question to test awareness of the guidance documents available, particularly with the link between sickness absence and anxiety and mental health issues?</b>	
9.3.6	No there is not a specific question around that. However, we plan to do pulse surveys on wellbeing. There will be specific questions around managers being aware of supporting people's wellbeing, around flexible working and personal needs.	
9.3.7	End of questions	
9.3.8	DA suggested that when considering the pulse surveys for wellbeing, there is some thought as to what the measure of success will be, and how the trust will know it is having an impact.	
<b>9.4</b>	<b>EDI</b>	
9.4.1	SW advised an overview of EDI development is included in the Operations Report. SW alerted the board to the ambition to roll out Equality Impact Assessments across the organisation. This was due to start with the Behaviour work, but it has been decided to focus this around the SEND policy development which has a degree of intersectionality.	
9.4.2	A measured approach is being taken in terms of how the trust's practices are developed in a timely way. A number of metrics are available to measure impact in this area and the trust has been deliberate in selecting a few that are more prevalent in its strategy than others. For example, there is not currently a focus on disability, however, this does come through in other strands of work.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Governance</b>	
<b>10.1</b>	<b>Governance Paper</b>	

10.1.1	SL introduced the Governance Paper at Flag K and advised that LT will present this going forwards. LT is leading the Governance Team including Charlotte Seavill (Governance co-ordinator, John Wall (DP Officer) and the clerking team. LT is looking at the tools and support available through the NGA to carry out the review of governance in light of growth and some feedback from the audit.	
<b>10.2</b>	<b>Policies</b>	
10.2.1	The following policies were approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Aid Policy</li> <li>• Online Safety Policy</li> <li>• Remote Education Policy</li> <li>• Toileting and Intimate Care Policy</li> <li>• Treasury Management Policy</li> </ul>	
<b>10.3</b>	<b>Report of the Sub-committees</b>	
<b>10.3.1</b>	<b>Chairs of Academy Council (NM)</b>	
10.3.1.1	The COAC committee met on 26 January 2023. The minutes are available in Teams. In the absence of NM, no verbal update was provided.	
<b>10.3.2</b>	<b>Audit Committee (ACH)</b>	
10.3.2.1	The Audit Committee meeting has been postponed and will take place next month.	
<b>10.3.3</b>	<b>Finance Executive Group (BF)</b>	
10.3.3.1	The Finance Executive Group met and discussed the treasury policy, charging and remissions, reserves, budgets and growth.	
<b>10.3.4</b>	<b>Premises, Projects and ICT Executive Group (ACO)</b>	
10.3.4.1	ACO reported that the PPI group met on 7 February and received an update from IT and premises. The risks pertinent to the PPI group were reviewed as usual with nothing of note to report to board. The group were pleased to note there is a full IT team in place. In terms of Estates, there has not been anyone in a Director role for the last 3 months; it is hoped that position will be filled next month. The only concern is the level of vacancies in the team and the ability to still focus on critical work as well as providing a good level of service to academies.	
<b>10.3.5</b>	<b>People and Wellbeing Executive Group (DA)</b>	
10.3.5.1	DA reported that the P & W group met at the beginning of the month. The HR strategy was reviewed with a focus on KPIs. Recruitment and retention, sickness absence and wellbeing all featured in the discussions and there was a deep dive on the HR plan around professional development and sickness absence. An update on Health and Safety was provided and the group reviewed the HR and Health and Safety risks on the Risk Register. DA noted NA's departure from the board and the P & W group and flagged that it would be helpful to consider if another Director should join the group.	
<b>10.3.6</b>	<b>Growth Committee (MD)</b>	
10.3.6.1	In the absence of MD, ST noted that an update on the Growth Committee is included in his paper. BON reflected on how quickly things have moved forward and how well informed the board has been throughout.	
<b>10.3.7</b>	<b>Remunerations Committee (DA)</b>	
10.3.7.1	There has been no meeting since the last Board meeting. Nothing to report.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
11.1	KR reminded Directors that the CLF Big Run and Big Walk takes place in May and invited Directors to sign up if they were able to. There is a Just Giving page set up for donations; all money raised will go to support CLF students to go on the Big Trip.	
11.2	The next meeting takes place on 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2023.	
11.3	The meeting closed at 18.50hrs.	