

Minutes - Board of Directors

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Thursday 22 June 2023
Location: CLF Institute
Time: 4.00pm

Chair:	Paul Olomolaiye (PO)	Chair of the Board
Members:	Rachel Mortlock (RMO)	Director, 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
	Deb Atack (DA)	Director
	Tim Spratt (TS)	Director
	Mark Davies (MD)	Director
	Bethan Owen (BON)	Director
	Nicky McAllister (NM)	Director
Attendees:	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 (RMY)	Director of HR
	Sarah Lovell (SL)	Chief Operating Officer
	Elizabeth Tincknell (ET)	Head of Governance
	Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk

Apologies:

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	PO welcomed everyone and introductions were made. No apologies were received.	
2	Declarations of Interest/Member & Director Declarations	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 4 May 2023 were approved subject to the word 'distorted' being replaced with 'applied' at 5.41.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	<i>SL to arrange for a check to be completed on the use of the name Sky Academy. SL has completed this action. The academy will be called The Sky Academy. The usual marketing checks have been carried out to ensure it is appropriate to use this name.</i>	
5	Education Report	
5.1	Education scrutiny	

5.1.1	BON reported that since the last board meeting there have been two Academy Scrutiny meetings and one Executive Scrutiny meeting. Details are included in the Education report and full minutes are available in the Board folder on Teams.	
5.1.2	<p>BON advised that ahead of the Academy Scrutiny meeting of 25 May 2023, she visited JCA, Post 16 and LHA and highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCA was a calm and purposeful setting with self-regulating engaged students and a Principal that knows the community well; • At Post 16 BON saw an excited student body in a setting with a unique offer that is very inclusive and includes Level 2 and Level 3 courses; • The Principal is leading fantastic work at LHA to ensure ongoing opportunities to work 'in the moment' and make the learning right for the students at LHA, within a safe and supportive structure. 	
5.1.3	DN noted that all Principals highly value the scrutiny process and that they also very much welcome the academy visits ahead of the meeting itself.	
5.1.4	PO commended RMO and BON for their leadership of the two cluster scrutiny panels. PO asked if the scrutiny process will need to change going forwards to reflect the growth of the trust and the increase in the number of academies. ST advised that this is part of a wider consideration around how the board retains oversight of the whole trust and ensures the effectiveness of local governance. The attendance at scrutiny meetings has always been based on risk. Going forwards a choice will need to be made around whether the panel continues to see all academies across the year or moves to a more focused risk assessed approach where lower risk academies are considered in a different way. A governance away-day is planned for September/October next year and this will be considered further at that stage.	
5.2	Key stages EYFS to p16	
5.2.1	<p>DN spoke to the Education Report, highlighting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2023 assessments and examinations are almost complete and have gone well with very good attendance from students across the trust. • There remains a challenge around recruitment and retention of staff. • Further strike action is planned for 2 dates in July. • The Ofsted table now shows that all academies are good or outstanding. The report also includes updated Ofsted information around which academic year future visits might be expected to happen. • There is a huge amount of effort still focused on improving attendance which remains a high priority, and this includes work on the Attendance Hubs. • SEND will have a higher profile in the Education Plan for next year. • A lot of BIG events have taken place recently; updates are provided in the paper; further consideration is being given as to how BIG will be organised as the trust grows. <p>PO asked that the board's thanks to the Executive Team and to the teams at BBA and SV be noted and passed back to those academies.</p>	
5.2.2	Questions from trustees	
5.2.3	Given the focus on careers and the need to work with employers for the careers fairs, how much does the trust utilise the contacts of trustees and Academy Councillors?	
5.2.4	The academies and the trust do reach out to connections through governance and trust structures. The challenge is to make sure the schools keep those direct links; there is some tension to opening them up trust wide. People do not want to over-burden their contacts. There is some sharing of particular pieces of work with sponsors too, but normally that is located and led by local careers leads in school. If a provider wishes to work at scale across the trust, that normally is fed upwards via the school lead initially. There is further work to do in this area, however, there is a lot of good practice already established.	

5.2.5	In light of LHA still developing and some of the Learn@ academies joining the trust, what learning has been taken from the recent inspection at Snowdon Village?	
5.2.6	There is a focus on the role of commissioning the places at those AP provisions and in particular, what has been commissioned for each pupil vs what the curriculum looks like for them. The reading strategy was highlighted as a strength at SV and will be important to reflect across other AP provisions. There was a focus on provision rather than on interventions, and the need to ensure the provision is right, and of high quality, for every student.	
5.2.7	The risk rating for SV is a 4. Given the recent successes is that a true reflection of risk?	
5.2.8	Although SV is robustly good, as an AP it carries some inherent risk that is different to mainstream schools. It might be worth considering a different risk rating for AP and special as the trust grows further as it is acknowledged that the risks are always going to be inherently different.	
5.2.9	Given the risk rating at KOA, are you comfortable with the amount of central support provided there, partly due to the amount of change that has happened there but also due to the quality of the estate and the daily operational challenges of running that site?	
5.2.10	KOA has been a risk rating of 5 for a period of time and has been invested in heavily in terms of resource over the last 12 to 18 months. At times, there has been too much support, and this has confused things. We have scaled this back a bit to ensure the right balance is there now, and the right people are supporting. There is a lot of support at subject level and KO is supported well by Jon Jones and SW. There is not much further that can be put in at present but there is zero complacency and KOA remains very high on everyone's agenda. In terms of the estate, there has been a lot of investment in the site, and it is much improved from where it was in 2011. A range of visitors have toured the site but as yet that has not unlocked any significant additional support or funding.	
5.3	Safeguarding	
5.3.1	SW reported that safeguarding continues to be challenged by SCO in her Board Link role. The report included in the meeting papers includes some minimal updates due to the new Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.	
5.3.2	Safeguarding audits are underway across the trust; both internal and statutory. This year colleagues have worked well with others in the team to use a tool to report back to academies with an action plan and by the end of term the annual report will be complete and will be brought to the October board meeting.	
5.3.3	SCO noted that there have been a number of critical incidents involving young people in Bristol and South Gloucestershire recently and that the Executive Team played a key role in the response of the multi-agency team, prioritising the young people involved at all times.	
5.3.4	Questions from trustees	
5.3.5	It is clear how important it is to build good relationships to improve safeguarding processes. What plans are in place to ensure effective relationships as the trust expands to Gloucestershire and Somerset?	
5.3.6	We know what makes really effective partnership and multi-agency working and will seek to build positive relationships, over time, within the new cluster areas, as well as continuing to build on the existing relationships in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.	
6	CLF institute	
6.1	AFL reported that it remains difficult to recruit to teacher training. CLF has 43 confirmed offers for SCITT trainees for next year against a target of 82. Recruitment will continue through the summer and high-quality applications are still being received. A number of trainees have accepted places but then have withdrawn due to financial concerns.	
6.2	AFL advised that the expected Ofsted inspection has still not taken place.	
6.3	The trainees finish on 7 July and are having great success in securing appointments. However, there are also a proportion of trainees that complete the course and then choose a profession other than teaching.	

6.4	The Five Counties Alliance currently has approximately 1,200 Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and 530 participants on NPQ leadership development programmes this year. Most of the Year 2 Teaching School Hub KPIs have been met. Of these there are 114 CLF ECTs (64 Year 2s, 50 Year 1s) and 130 CLF leaders engaged in NPQ programmes.	
6.5	Engagement with the Boolean maths hub remains strong. A strong transition is underway for Alf Coles to take over as Chair from Tony Coles. AFL thanked ACH for his strong leadership and support over the last few years.	
6.6	Questions from trustees	
6.7	The report states 'The last DfE schools' workforce data (from 2021) showed 12.5% of new teachers left teaching after 1 year; 23% left within 3 years; and 31.2% within 5 years.' Is there any comparable data from other trusts available?	
6.7.1	The data exists and can be provided outside the meeting.	
6.8	What is the conversion rate from graduation to an ECT in the CLF? Is one of the limiting factors due to a lack of posts available in the CLF?	
6.8.1	The conversion rate is 50% approximately. Our partnership is wider than the trust and includes schools in neighbouring trusts. Most trainees stay local to their area. The trust has pooled applications where there are shortages in certain subject areas for secondary. Currently there are more vacancies than graduates.	
6.9	Is there some potential to look to retain teachers with a promise of an appointment in the CLF?	
6.9.1	We do not make that promise but do ensure we invite trainees to panels. Despite it being an extremely competitive market, it is important that the best candidate is appointed, and this is often the CLF trainee.	
6.10	Do you tap into contacts such as CLF alumni, under graduates etc when considering trainee recruitment? Have you considered offering paid internships etc?	
6.10.1	We can do more in that area, we don't currently use all of those sources. We do get quite a lot apply for teacher training but do need to be more deliberate around paid internships etc.	
6.11	Do you have processes in place to ensure you understand the diversity of applications, offers made and accepted?	
6.11.1	We do have data, but it is skewed due to the small cohort. Our diversity is broader than most providers with approximately 15% of trainees from diverse backgrounds. The shadowing scheme for colleagues from minority backgrounds is in it's third cohort. The first year there were 2 colleagues taking part, then it increased to 5 and then 7. The programme is aimed at supporting colleagues from minoritized ethnic backgrounds into leadership roles.	
6.12	How much are you doing to try to intervene and support those trainees that are considering leaving the profession? Are you able to intervene before they make that final decision, or do you not know until it is too late?	
6.12.1	We do as much as we can to support them throughout their training and try to shelter the trainees from some of the current issues within the teacher workforce around pay and disputes. The financial incentives are very unhelpful. There is a good bursary offered throughout the training. Trainees are supposed to pay it back if they do not go into teaching but there is no mechanism to reclaim that money. We ensure the wider benefits of being in the CLF are accessible to trainees, including the support of PAC and FNN.	
7	Strategic Developments	
7.1	CEO Report	
7.1.1	There will be a report at the Board Strategic Review meeting of 13 July encompassing feedback from all Link Directors on progress of the sub-strategies, as well as planning against the ambitions of the CLF Core Strategy 2030 for 2023-2024.	
7.1.2	ST reported that the trust is a member of the Queen Street Group which held a meeting of CEOs yesterday with guest speakers Baroness Baran and Susan Ackland-Hood. There are a number of factors that are contributing to it being an unsettled time in education, not least	

	the uncertainty around the pay award for this year. The trust has budgeted for a 5% teacher pay award and it is hoped that a proportion of the award will be funded by the DfE.	
7.1.3	The report provides an update on the trust's growth projects. The positive working relationships with the DfE and other partners have continued to support the smooth running of both the formal processes and the softer induction of schools into the trust. The Regional Director for the Southwest support's the CLF's ambition to grow the special and AP provision in the trust.	
8	Finance	
8.1	Finance Report	
8.1.1	SL provided the following updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets will be presented for approval at the July board meeting. This year has seen the most challenging budget setting process due to the increased costs including the pay awards and high utility costs. The budget setting process started in January and normally ends in June with budgets presented to the board for approval before being submitted to the DfE; this year the DfE have extended the budget deadline due to the uncertainty around pay awards. The first draft budget showed a deficit of over £2m. Following further work, this has reduced to a deficit of £790k and this is the budget that has now been presented to the Finance Executive Group (FEG). Further follow up has resulted in some additional savings and the position is that the trust will be asking for approval for a much smaller deficit. The reserves of £4m will support a deficit budget. Should the pay award be funded for anything offered over 4.5%, this could potentially negate the deficit position. 	
8.1.2	BF confirmed that the budget proposal had been thoroughly discussed at the FEG meeting. BF recommended that the board are provided with further information in July on the financial opportunities and threats as well as some detail around what financial levers the board could enact if cost savings were required.	
8.1.3	PO commended the Executive Team on ensuring cost savings in excess of £1m have already been found.	
8.2	Management Accounts	
8.2.1	As of April 2023, the CLF is currently reporting a deficit of £201k, which is £502k adverse to budget.	
8.3	Questions from trustees	
8.3.1	There are two areas where there are large variances – supply costs and educational fees. What is the risk in these areas for 2024?	
8.3.2	Supply is an ongoing challenge, both in relation to absence and the difficulties in recruitment. Supply is included in the budget but often the spend exceeds the budget. Part of the reason for this is that there are challenges in appointing staff; where vacancies remain unfilled the supply cost will be offset by a saving in the teaching costs. The challenge with supply is wider than financial cost of it. It is essential that the students have a consistent education experience and that the provision in classroom is of a high quality to support this.	
8.3.3	Educational fees are a direct correlation to the income received for pupils with additional needs. This year there are more pupils with additional funding, and this is most often spent on educational resources.	
8.3.4	ACTION: SL was asked to explore the variances with supply and educational costs prior to submitting to the board meeting of 13 July 2023.	SL
8.4	Investment	
8.4.1	SL advised that the trust's approach to investment has been reviewed in order to ensure the best return for the trust. It is recommended that the trust use a product platform to achieve this and is proposing a platform used by some other trusts called Insignis Cash Solutions. SL	

	confirmed that the proposal had been reviewed by the FEG and met the requirements of the trust's Treasury Management Policy and those of the ESFA.	
8.5	Questions from trustees	
8.5.1	Have you looked at the rates you might expect and compared the return to what is currently achieved? Is a material upturn expected?	
8.5.2	Yes, there will be an increased return on the capital invested.	
8.5.3	In terms of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), does the limit that applies to individuals (£85k) apply to institutions?	
8.5.4	I believe so but we can check that.	
8.5.5	<u>Proposal:</u> The board are asked to approve the set-up and use of Insignis Cash Solutions as an investment platform.	
8.5.6	<u>Decision:</u> The board approved the proposal subject to SL confirming the FSCS position around the £85k limit for compensation.	
9	Operations Report	
9.1	Professional Services Update	
9.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Director of Estates and Facilities joins the trust on 1 July and will meet the board at the next meeting. He will focus on ensure the estates are well maintained and will consider how the estates can be used to further generate income. A Project Manager has been appointed; this role will primarily support the growth of the trust. Additional capacity to support and respond to growth will be sourced as needed. The Professional Services Plan is being updated; further information will be provided for the July board meeting. 	
9.2	Estates and Projects Update	
9.2.1	<p>SL and AL provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LHA is still waiting for planning permission in relation to the permanent site. WHA is progressing; there is a revised opening date of Term 2. The new MIS system, Bromcom, is being implemented in some primary academies this week and into some secondary academies next week. Tewkesbury Academy will join the trust on 1 July 2023. The project is going well and reaches some critical deadlines this week. The CTA was signed on Wednesday, and all is in place for the transfer date of 1 July. There is a celebration event at Tewkesbury next Friday and trustees are invited to attend. After transfer has taken place, the project will be reviewed in great depth to ensure the trust continues to refine and develop the transfer process. A PSG has been set up for each of the three Learn@ schools; AL and SA are members of each of those groups. Heathfield has a transfer date of 1 November, and the transfer arrangements are now being planned. 	
9.3	IT	
9.3.1	<p>AL provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new IT Project Engineer role has been created to provide additional capacity for growth, and to provide additional rigor and oversight for the rebuild of networks where required. The trust has secured just over £348k of funding offered by the DfE to improve the network speed in schools through the upgrading of the infrastructure. This will ensure internet connection is fast and reliable for a number of years to come and will allow the IT budget to be spent on the annual refresh of end user equipment. 	
9.3.2	Questions from trustees	
9.3.3	As you integrate the new IT, what assurances can you give the board around international security?	

9.3.4	We have now moved to a standard model for all academies, ensuring they are all on the same core network. We will rebuild the IT in the new schools this summer, modelling that same standard. This will remove that risk. To mitigate that risk until the rebuild takes place we are running penetration tests and other diagnostic work. The summer break also provides some mitigation due to the very low numbers of users on site.	
9.3.5	PO congratulate you on helpdesk survey. Amazing. Work hard to ensure we don't deliver service, it's a relationship. Reflected in survey we got. If negative had conversation, and positive stuff share fortnightly across team. Send congratulation to helpdesk team.	
9.4	HR	
9.4.1	<p>RMY provided feedback on the staff survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey sits alongside the work SA is doing on Voice to embed a culture of regular check-ins with staff, parents and pupils. • The platform used is Edurio and external benchmarking data is provided. • The response rate was 57% compared to 54% last year. • The feedback shows that scoring is particularly high around staff feeling supportive and being part of a team. Results were strong around trust perception and staff feeling connected into the trust. • The lower scoring area was around student behaviour. A lot of work is being done in that area, including a focus on professional development but it remains challenging. 	
9.4.2	Questions from trustees	
9.4.3	Have you a breakdown on ethnicity in terms of the staff survey results?	
9.4.4	Further analysis is still being carried out and this is one of the areas being examined by Saima Akhtar. The system allows you to look at sectionality on each of the questions. ACTION: RMY will provide a breakdown of responses by ethnicity in the next Operations Report to board.	RMY
9.4.5	Will that also inform a piece of work in relation to retention? A disproportionate number of black members of staff are leaving the trust. Are you able to unpick why that is the case?	
9.4.6	Yes, we can include that in the data for the next meeting. ACTION: RMY to provide analysis on why a disproportionate number of black members of staff are leaving the trust.	RMY
9.4.7	What is the Endurio external benchmark?	
9.4.8	Endurio have a strong foothold in the sector and have similar mid-term data.	
9.4.9	Where there is some variation between schools, was that variation expected, or were there some surprises?	
9.4.10	The span is interesting, and some academy response rates are quite low, while some are very high. The size of the school and therefore responses, sometimes skews the data, so we add this information to our existing knowledge; there was nothing that was particularly out of kilter to that expected.	
9.5	EDI	
9.5.1	<p>The Term 5 review has taken place, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDI Professional Development • Guidance from VWV around the topic of gender • EQIA - with a focus on the Behaviour and Attendance developments • EDI audit from Haines Watts – colleagues are working through the recommendations of the audit. 	
9.5.2	Questions from trustees	
9.5.3	How are you supporting BAME students and disadvantaged students to access work experience opportunities?	
9.5.4	There is careers coaching work taking place and we work with the LA to provide mentoring and guidance to students, as well as with Babassa. We are alert to the potential gap and associated risk.	
10	Governance Report	
10.1	Governance Paper	

10.1.1	LT reported that the governance team is working well, with Charlotte Seavill developing well in her new role. William Lamb has now joined the team as Information Governance Officer leading on Data Protection, Freedom of Information requests, subject access requests and website compliance. WL will also, in due course, lead on policy work.	
10.1.2	Work is under way with the new schools coming across to the trust. There will be some recruitment to do. The trust continues to work with Governors for Schools to recruit to the Academy Councillor vacancies. New literature is being prepared and will be distributed to all schools and out into the community.	
10.1.3	A second proposal has been received for the Governance Review. This is being explored and next steps will be confirmed at the October board meeting. ACTION: LT to confirm details of the Governance Review at the October board meeting.	LT
10.2	Health and Safety Policy	
10.2.1	The Health and Safety Policy has had an annual review. The board approved the Health and Safety Policy.	
10.3	Data Protection Policy	
10.3.1	The Data Protection Policy has been updated following annual review. BF asked if the policy could include the trust's position on parents air tagging the location of pupils. This will be considered. The policy will be brought to a future a Board meeting for approval once the issue of air tagging pupils has been considered.	
10.4	Provider Access Policy Statement	
10.4.1	The board approved the Provider Access Policy Statement.	
10.5	Charging and Remissions Policy	
10.5.1	The board approved the Provider Access Policy Statement.	
10.6	Modern Slavery Statement	
10.6.1	The board approved the Modern Slavery Statement.	
10.7	Trustee and Councillor Expenses Policy	
10.7.1	The board approved the Trustee and Councillor Expenses Policy.	
10.8	Renewals of Terms of Office for COACs	
10.8.1	The board approved the renewal of the following terms of office for a further four years: Nicky McAllister – COAC BBA Laura Walder - FVA COAC	
10.9	Report of the Sub-Groups and Academy Council Matters	
10.10	Chairs of Academy Council Meeting	
10.10.1	NM reported that there continues to be very good attendance at COAC meetings. Chairs are presented with good information on trust wide updates from DN as well as recommendations around what the next AC meeting should focus on. There is a successful recruitment drive taking place and this needs to continue. Good discussions take place during the meeting around the success of students (particularly those with SEND and disadvantage), attendance, recruitment and retention.	
10.11	Audit Committee	
10.11.1	The next Audit Committee meeting takes place on 4 July 2023.	
10.12	Finance Executive Group	
10.12.1	This has already been covered. BF thanked the Finance team for their work preparing next year's budget.	
10.13	Projects, Premises and ICT Executive Group	
10.13.1	ACO reported that the PPI group had met and had reviewed the risks, key projects and the estate. A discussion took place about the impact of growth; unlike some of the support functions, most of the support provided for the estates is face to face, taking place on site. The group discussed the need to ensure travel was taken into consideration. The new Director of Estates (Martin Thomas) has now been appointed. ACO thanked AL for supporting the group while MT was recruited.	

10.14	People and Wellbeing Executive Group	
10.14.1	DA reported that the P & W group met last week and discussed the completion of mandatory training. There were improvements in completion of training in 4 out of 5 areas. Members of the group had received a comprehensive update on Health and Safety and had discussed the results of the staff survey. KPIs were reviewed against the HR plan and there was a discussion around recruitment and growth.	
10.15	Growth Committee	
10.15.1	MD provided an update on the Growth Committee meetings. The committee heard details about the due diligence taking place for the Redstart schools. The committee gave challenge around how Executive Team colleagues will balance the expectations for growth externally and the continued improvements required to existing academies in the trust. MD noted that the due diligence is extremely robust and thanked Executive Team colleagues involved in that process.	
10.16	Remuneration Committee	
10.16.1	The remuneration committee has not met since the last board meeting.	
11	AOB	
11.1	No further business was reported.	
12	Close of Meeting	
12.1	The next meeting takes place on 13 July 2023. The meeting closed at 7.15pm.	

Action date and no	Relates to item no	Action	Owner
22.06.23 02	9.4.4	RMV will provide a breakdown of responses by ethnicity in the next Operations Report to board.	RMV
22.06.23 03	9.4.6	RMV to provide analysis on why a disproportionate number of black members of staff are leaving the trust.	RMV
22.06.23 04	10.1.3	LT to confirm details of the Governance Review at the October board meeting.	LT