

STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 30th September 2021 at 5.30pm in Toulston Lodge, Tadcaster Grammar School

Present: Clare Thornton-Eckford (from item 5.2 – assumed the Chair from item 6), Nick Sheppard (Chair, until item 6), Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Alison Smith (from item 5.3 until item 10.5), Simon Peacock, Deborah Hastie (from item 5.5.2 until item 15), Tom Fielden (until item 10)

In attendance:

Ian Yapp (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operating Officer, STAR MAT)
Cayte Mulhern (Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead, STAR MAT)
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)

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|------------|--|---------------|
| 1.0 | Welcome and Apologies for Absence
The Clerk welcomed all to the meeting. | ACTION |
| 1.1 | There were no apologies. Deborah Hastie, Alison Smith and Clare Thornton-Eckford would be late arriving. | |
| 2.0 | Election of Chair and Vice Chair | |
| 2.1 | Clare Thornton-Eckford was nominated for the position of Chair. No other nominations were received.
Resolved:
Trustees re-elected Clare Thornton-Eckford as Chair of the Trust Board for a period of one year. | |
| 2.2 | Nick Sheppard was nominated for the position of Vice Chair. No other nominations were received.
Resolved:
Trustees re-elected Nick Sheppard as Vice Chair of the Trust Board for a period of one year.

<i>Nick Sheppard assumed the Chair, pending the arrival of Clare Thornton-Eckford.</i> | |
| 3.0 | Business Interest Forms and Declaration of Business Interests | |
| 3.1 | Trustees were reminded to complete their business interest forms. There were no declarations of interest. | ALL |
| 4.0 | Approve the Code of Conduct | |
| 4.1 | Resolved:
Trustees re-adopted the Code of Conduct. This to be applied to all Trustees and LGBs. | |
| 5.0 | Safeguarding
Prior to the meeting, Trustees had received a range of reports from Cayte Mulhern covering all aspects of key information, MAT reporting tools and initiatives in this area. | |
| 5.1 | Ms Mulhern had outlined in the reports the safeguarding work undertaken in the last 12 months. Safeguarding was all about vigilance and transparency. The Trust had introduced a DBS policy in January and Ms Mulhern confirmed the protocols for this. The CEO noted that policy was about affirming positive duties around safeguarding. | |

Clare Thornton Eckford entered the meeting

- 5.2 The Chair noted that the Trust's safeguarding procedures were highly scrutinised. Safeguarding could be a judgement limiting factor in an OFSTED inspection. It was imperative to get things right. The Trust had to demonstrate it provided a safe environment. Ms Mulhern spoke about a culture of disclosure and what the next steps might be with regard enhancing protocols.
- 5.2.1 Was there evidence to support annual checks and that this reduced risks? Ms Mulhern and the CEO were not aware of any evidence of this being a benefit. The Trust could look at renewal points and perhaps bring back a proposal to a future meeting. Any discussion on the approach would involve Mr Sheppard in his link safeguarding role. It was noted that HR had confirmed that current protocols were an example of good practice. Trustees discussed compliance and what the renewal practice and scrutiny should be. Did the Trust want to put a sell by date on DBSs? Yes, the CEO was in favour of this but there was no firm view from HR and NYCC to guide a Trustee decision. The Chair was in favour of a renewal date. Allowing DBSs to be 8 or 9 nine years old did not feel good enough, even though it might be compliant. Three years felt appropriate for a renewal date. The CEO would conduct some modelling and come back to the Trust Board, including cost factors. The CEO added that he would need to work out whether auto renewal would be cheaper than a fixed time renewal programme.

IY / CM

Alison Smith entered the meeting

- 5.3 Ms Mulhern talked about reporting systems at local (governance) level and how this data fed into an annual report to governors. Governors could see the number of referrals and those that might be subject to care plans and/or were looked after children. Also, those missing from education. Ms Mulhern noted the increase in all schools in the number of Operation Encompass notifications. Clearly more children were witnessing or were in environments where there was domestic abuse. Trustees should also be mindful of the big increase in the number of children/families opting for elective home education. There were very few checks and balances on this type of education. Equally, very little support for those opting for EHE and very little follow up within the LA. The data showed only two instances of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment recorded across the two secondary schools. There was clear underreporting, as was the picture nationally. The Trust now had really good safeguarding data across the board that could be reported to governors and Trustees. The CEO spoke about knowing the local area and understanding what was going on and generating intelligence. Ms Mulhern talked about the need to increase the level of challenge towards senior leaders and schools in governance meetings. This was why knowledge and training were so important for governors.
- 5.3.1 The Chair welcomed the reports and data. The underreporting of sexual harassment incidents was a concern. Everyone knew there were cultural and other reasons why incidents were not reported but the fact remained that this could not be right. What did the Trust intend to do about it? Ms Mulhern replied that it actually started with better education and understanding in primary schools. Building a culture of encouraging people to speak up and to make them feel safe when doing so. The overall culture needed to be 'this will be happening here'. Professionals had long been debating how the sexualisation of children was being normalised. There was a feeling that adult and children alike often 'turned a blind eye' when witnessing what could be categorised as harassment and that needed to stop. Staff had to recognise incidents and report them. This issue needed to be high on everyone's agenda. There was a need for transparency and not pretending that underreporting didn't exist. It did. Being candid about that fact alone would still not be enough. The CEO added that schools had to be better at speaking to young people about their concerns, raising awareness of harassment and building an open culture of reporting. Ms Mulhern said that the Trust was already involved in dealing with a serious incident that had been reported from outside school; which also involved police and social care. It had been made clear to staff that they should be reporting inappropriate language between students as this was harassment.
- 5.3.2 The Chair noted that the schools had to deal with matters appropriately, so as to avoid limiting judgements. Was there a method or process by which parents could report concerns? Ms Mulhern agreed that the Trust did need to think about reporting mechanisms and being explicit about what could be done to support families. Ms Mulhern gave the example of a family that had recently

reported something under equalities. This had been challenging but such events needed to be dealt with. The Vice Chair spoke about the culture of openness. Should young people be able to raise things with schools anonymously? Ms Mulhern said that TGS had set up a 'tell us' service whereby students could email in. This was not being used. However, a student support line (set up by the students themselves) received more reports. There was a brief discussion about the difficulties of dealing with and progressing anonymous reports. A Trustee noted that young people often did not want to report an incident so as not to be considered 'a grass'. The Chair noted that the end goal was to build a culture where everyone realises that things should be reported. This would only happen when young people trusted that there were effective systems for reporting and dealing with reports of inappropriate behaviour.

5.4 Safeguarding link governor forums had been established. These would be used to discuss good practice, conduct training and build up a question bank for governors ahead of safeguarding visits. Mr Sheppard had been supporting those meetings as safeguarding Trustee. Local governors would have also seen the outcomes of their setting's biennial safeguarding audit from NYCC. These audits also allowed everyone to track areas of concern and for the Trust to produce more accurate internal gradings on safeguarding performance.

5.4.1 Were actions lists generated for each school from the audits? Yes. The CEO would be discussing those actions during his continuing conversations with leaders, alongside safeguarding protocols. Where would Trustees get visibility on these actions? The collated data was accessible via a hyperlink in the report. Could the information go on the Trust section of the Google drive? Yes. Did governors see the actions list? Yes. A Trustee wanted any red flags to be made very clear to the Board. Mr Sheppard said that he had confidence in the reporting mechanisms; there weren't any cracks in reporting in terms of key information being fed through to leadership and governance. The right steps were being taken. There was further discussion about where the weak points could be and what could be done to enhance reporting and processes. Trustees agreed that everyone at LGB level had to be willing and able to ask questions and challenge appropriately.

5.5 Confidential minute.

5.6 The report from the OFSTED safeguarding inspection at Brayton had been circulated. Good practice had been seen and acknowledged. The next steps were outlined in the report.

5.7 Safeguarding review through NYCC

This had been a very valuable exercise – schools had been supported but put through their paces. Saxton undertook their review in June. All paperwork had been scrutinised. The secondary schools would be formally visited at some point this term. Both had welcomed the review.

5.8 SCR audit check

Detailed reports had been provided and circulated to LGBs. All schools had been required to submit a management response. The recommendation was to move to a common format for the SCRs. This was being explored in conjunction with the COO.

5.9 DSL supervision project

This was not a mandatory requirement but was viewed as good practice by OFSTED and was mentioned in KCSIE. The Trust had made a (financial) commitment to professional supervision for DSLs. Taking this forward was helping staff who were carrying a large safeguarding load. The Ed Psych was fulfilling the role as supervisor and trainer. Ms Mulhern was very pleased with progress to date. The Trust had also set up a SENDCo network. The Ed Psych was also supporting that group. Sharing good practice, delivering training, talking through case studies etc.

5.10 Ms Mulhern had referenced the OFSTED review on sexual abuse. The outcomes from that review needed to be focus areas within the Trist. This would also inform how to improve staff training and develop a better curriculum. This was all about supporting young people better. OFSTED were likely to use this report as a line of enquiry with schools. Quite apart from satisfying OFSTED, schools had a moral responsibility to make sure children were kept safe and their voices heard.

Y / CM

5.11 Ms Mulhern concluded by summarising the work done to improve safeguarding practices and reporting. Everyone needed to understand how training has been understood by staff and whether it was informing good practice. This was challenging as current staffing situations in schools were very fluid. The Trust had created a checklist that governors could review at each. There should be scrutiny of that checklist. Every school and LGB had sight of a training schedule, which could inform them of where the gaps were and what needed to be addressed. Trustees noted that from the LGB minutes it was clear that there needed to be more challenge in some meetings. Everyone agreed that this underscored why local governors had to have a good understanding of the topic so as to be able to ask the right questions.

5.12 Trustees thanked CM for the amount of work she had done in this area. Trustees felt a lot more comfortable talking about safeguarding should there be any external inspections.

Cayte Mulhern left the meeting

Clare Thornton-Eckford assumed the Chair from Nick Sheppard

6.0 Minutes of the Last Meetings – 15th July 2021

6.1 Resolved:

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meeting held 15th July 2021 were a true and accurate record of that meeting. The minutes were duly approved.

7.0 Action Points and Matters Arising

Discussion and decision on MAT approach to external reviews of governance	The COO was looking at procurement on this. Feedback in due course.	MB
Discuss with local chairs attendance at other LGB meetings to observe strong governance in action	Not raised at chairs' forum due to time pressure. Carried over to next forum.	IY
Trustees to arrange to attend LGB meetings to observe local governance and build knowledge	Ongoing.	
Review Equalities policy and MAT equalities agenda	The CEO noted that he was consulting on the formulation of a new policy and approach to equalities. Item deferred to the December meeting.	IY
Pass on Trustee appointment process to Members for comment	Completed.	
Complete skills audit	Completed.	
Look at the CST Assurance Framework	CTE, NS and TF had looked at this. The Chair to formally report back at next meeting. One thing was clear Trustee recruitment was required to build capacity.	CTE
Look at BCP and central services methodology	To FAR Comm.	
Consult on and finalise strategic plan	On agenda.	
Advise on future use of central budget for school improvement function	To FAR Comm.	
Remaining data reports uploaded to Google folder	Completed.	
Governance comms – what, when and by whom	Completed.	

8.0 Governance Matters

8.1 Agree any specific Trustee monitoring/link responsibilities

Safeguarding – Nick Sheppard

Working parties to be formed as necessary

A SEND link Trustee to be considered at CAS

CAS
Comm

- 8.2 Trust Board Committee Terms of Reference
Nothing to add or amend.
- 8.3 Chairs of Committees
Tom Fielden - Chair of FAR Comm
Alison Smith – Chair of CAS Comm
Nick Sheppard – Chair of Pay Comm
It was noted that Deborah Hastie would only be attending FAR committee meetings for the foreseeable future and not CAS committee meetings due to capacity issues.
- 8.4 Review of LGB performance/risk register
Trustees had been reminded of the current position for each local board. There were capacity issues on certain of the LGBs. The Governance Advisor was invited to comment on some likely pressure points as the term unfolded.
- 8.5 Governor appointments and reappointments
Resolved:
Trustees agreed to appoint David Boyes-Watson and Gabi Mitchell to the LGBs at Appleton Roebuck and Kellington respectively. Trustees rejected the application from Les Holmes to join the LGB at Appleton Roebuck.
- 8.6 Review training matrices (Board and LGB level) / Identify core training to be completed:
The GA noted that a fresh update was planned just prior to the half term break. Trustees would see the latest picture ahead of the December meeting. The Chair noted that she was currently undertaking some Board leadership training.
- 8.7 Trustee link protocol updated v4
School link roles were approved as outlined. Current text to be amended to clarify that Trustees may attend LGB meetings as appropriate.
- 8.8 Discuss monitoring/link visits for the term ahead
Peter Wilson had completed a link visit report, following his meeting with the head and chair at Brayton. All Trustees were reminded to complete link visits and reports prior to the end of term.
- 8.9 Training for pay committee members - reference attached briefing note to chairs/headteachers
This was in the diary for 20th October.
- 8.10 Consideration of publication of local board minutes: proposal for standardising of governance section of websites
This was briefly discussed last academic year. Some aspects of school websites (policy sections for example) had been standardised. The proposal was to continue to publish Trust Board minutes and Trust Committee minutes but for LGBs to indicate to stakeholders on their websites that meeting minutes would be available upon request. At the moment the approach was not consistent. Some LGBs published minutes, others didn't. With others there were gaps. Further standard phrasing for websites was outlined by the CEO. Otherwise, the Trust wanted to allow school to retain their individual identity so there were no plans for a one size fits all or standard template for websites.
Resolved:
Trustees approved the proposals with regards standard phraseology on school websites and the protocols around publishing or requesting minutes.
- 8.11 Member appointed trustee process - next steps; feedback from skills audit on current board; feedback from committee approach
There was a meeting in the diary to take this matter forward ahead of the AGM.
- 8.12 Use of Trust board CST assurance framework
The Chair had indicated that she would be pulling together a report ahead of next meeting.

IY

ALL

8.13 Position on internal and external reviews of governance

COO looking at the tender process.

8.14 Chair of Governor role paper

There had been positive feedback from chairs. Trustees also welcomed the paper. It was agreed that this should be uploaded to the MAT website and Google drive.

9.0 Update on Norton

9.1 Confidential minute.

Tom Fielden left the meeting upon the conclusion of this item.

10.0 CEO's Report

The following documents had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Main report
- Strategic Plan (final draft)
- People Strategy 2021-24
- School Improvement Strategy
- Monthly Planning
- Guide to Understanding School Data

10.1 The CEO noted that three schools had been quite heavily impacted from Covid, both from a staffing and pupil perspective. Face coverings in classrooms might well need to be an option to try to stem the number of cases. The MAT was having to take a strong stance in the face of a lack of support and guidance from the LA. NYCC had now issued some escalation protocols. The MAT would continue to monitor developments closely over the next fortnight. Schools were awaiting information on the vaccine programme – the CEO had been clear with the LA that there needed to be clear communications on this matter if things were to progress smoothly. The lack of detail from the centre was a continued source of frustration.

10.2 Resolved:

Trustees approved the final draft of the Strategic Plan.

10.3 Referring to the People Strategy, the CEO said that this had undergone a major rebuild from the first iteration. The version circulated to all was currently with HR for their input and guidance. Once in final draft, it would be shared with the Unions etc. The CEO hoped to be in a position to deliver a final version for Trustee approval at the December meeting.

10.4 Everyone was happy with the proposed peer review process as outlined in the SI strategy. Alison Smith felt that there needed to be a paragraph clarifying how school improvement was being overseen for the church schools. Ultimately, the Diocese led on this but the MAT should recognise in the document the part that it did play and indeed was playing in that process. The CEO agreed and would action the suggestion. Final approval of the strategy would be deferred to CAS Comm.

10.5 Confidential minute.

Alison Smith left the meeting during item 10.5

11.0 COO's Report

The following documents had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Main report
- Proposal on general pay awards for teaching and support staff
- Boxphish briefing papers
- Letter to EPM
- SCA Overview

11.1 The COO was in the process of closing the books for 2020/21 with Sagars. Overall, the Trust was looking at an in-year balance of circa £785k. There would be around £2m in reserve funds for

IY

IY

investment. The MAT budget showed a balance of circa £450k. The in-year position had been largely generated by large balances in the secondary schools. A Trustee noted that both schools outturns had varied wildly over the past year or so. Where had these balances come from? Did they have firm plans to use the balances? The COO said that these were true balances but she wanted to understand how the reserve balances would be spent alongside the school improvement plans over the next 3 years reallocating those monies into investment for the students. The financial control systems were now much stronger in both settings. Nevertheless, Trustees wanted both LGBs to be challenging at upcoming meetings about how budget setting was going and making sure there was a true picture of the finances.

11.2 Referring to the other schools, the COO said that three schools were looking at challenging budgets going forward. Kellington had now removed its deficit and the Kirk Fenton deficit had been dealt with by way of the short-term loan that had been agreed. The MAT had forecasted a 1% general uplift for teacher staff pay. Support staff might be receiving an uplift. Trustees were happy to approve the COO working with the unions on the details of the final agreement for support staff. A Trustees asked if the COO if she felt that the lack of uplift to teachers pay might result in industrial action. This could not be ruled out but the CEO did not think it would play out like that.

11.3 Central contracts

Several contracts were in scope for review this year. The governance contract was one of those up for renewal. The COO wanted to look at future requirements in that area and invited a couple of Trustees to join her in a scoping exercise, alongside Stone King. Richard Coy and Simon Peacock would join the COO for that. In terms of Payroll, there were some gaps in coverage following the move to Neo People. The Trust needed more internal administrative support when it came to Payroll and employee contract management. The COO was in favour of a HR administrator – the post would be cost neutral due to the savings generated by the move from EPM to Neo People.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the creation of a HR administrator post.

11.4 With regards the letter to EPM, the COO assured Trustees that matters were on the right track. The current position was duly noted by the Board.

11.5 The COO wanted to raise awareness about cyber security and some documentation had been shared with Trustees to that end.

11.6 The website compliance audits had been completed. The schools did have some areas where actions were required. Some were more immediate than others. Matters were in hand.

11.7 With reference to the SCA overview, a Trustee asked about the overspends on outlined costs. Was this a budgeting problem or was this about higher costs, such as was being seen across the trade in things like materials etc. The COO said that asbestos had been found in TGS and this had pushed up costs for one of the projects there.

12.0 **Policy Tracker**

Circulated prior to the meeting.

12.1 Trustees noted the current position of the tracker.

13.0 **Policy Review**

The following policies had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Early Careers Teachers (ECT)
- Recruitment and Selection
- Acceptable Use
- Agile Working
- Laptop/Mobile Device Agreement
- Leavers' Check List / Procedure

13.1 **Resolved:**
Trustees approved the policies and procedures as circulated, subject to suitable references from the updated KCSIE being fed into the Recruitment and Selection policies.

14.0 Items to be Delegated or Communicated to LGBs

14.1 The Clerk to ensure that LGBs were notified of approved policies.

Deborah Hastie left the meeting

15.0 Any Other Business

The STAR Gender Pay Gap Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Trustees had also received a Trustee Link visit report (Brayton).

15.1 Trustees were happy for the gender pay gap report to be published.

15.2 Trustees discussed progress with the headteacher recruitment at Brayton. Peter Wilson fed back some observations from his link Trustee meeting that were pertinent to the matter.

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting to take place on Tuesday 7th December at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Clerk

Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
Complete BI form (if not done so)	3.1	ALL	ASAP
Model approaches to DBS renewals and deliver proposal to Trustees	5.2.1	IY, CM	By next meeting
Actions lists from safeguarding audits to Google drive	5.4.1	IY, CM	ASAP
Notify Trustees of the outcome from delegated decision making re: Buddies at SHP	5.5	CTE	Upon completion
Procurement of support for external reviews of governance	7	MB	Update next meeting
Discuss with local chairs attendance at other LGB meetings to observe strong governance in action	7	IY	Next Chairs' forum
New equalities policy and Trust approach to the equalities agenda	7	IY	Next meeting
Report following review of CST framework	7	CTE	Next meeting
Amend text in link Trustee protocol	8.7	IY	ASAP
Attend to link visits	8.8	ALL	End of term
Finalise people strategy	10.3	IY	Next meeting
Finalise SI strategy	10.4	IY	CAS Comm
Notify LGBs of approved policies	14.1	Clerk	ASAP